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Practices of Transformation – Transformation of Practices

Essays in Honour of Helene Basu

Julia Koch, Helmar Kurz, Mrinal Pande, Annika Strauss (Eds.)

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Preface

The summer of 2023 will mark Helene Basu's final teaching term at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, where she has been Professor of Social Anthropology since 2006. In that time, she has guided ranks of aspiring anthropologists out of the classroom and into the field, inspiring them at every turn with an insatiable inquisitiveness. As a gesture of gratitude, we, a group of her former and current students, present her with this volume of essays. Like the cultural practices Basu spent much of her academic career carefully observing and analysing, the process of assembling this volume has been marked by constant transformation, its various texts proceeding through several liminal stages before reaching its present form. We are very grateful to the authors, for their patience and for their contributions, without which this volume would not have been possible.

Basu's academic and research interests have seen her contribute towards a diverse range of anthropological fields, such as practices of kinship, ritual, health, media, religion and politics. Her theoretical frameworks and analyses often seek to transcend established dichotomies (e.g., categories of the "modern" and the "traditional"), while her methodological approach engages relationships, ideas and practices at the transnational level and through their symbolic configurations across space and time. Throughout her work, she has given particular attention to the role of practices and values as well as the intricacies of power and the embodied nature of culture. Her interests exceed regional and thematic confines, revealing a scholarly mind whose scope and vision is grounded in anthropological practice and methodological musings. In the course of her career, she has established and maintained great rapport with distinguished scholars as well as her colleagues, students and research partners, some of whom have become life-long companions.

Ever since Basu took up her professorship at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology in Münster, Germany, she has directed her students' attention to the notion of "practice". More than a conceptual lens providing analysts with theoretical insights into the nature of embodiment, agency and/or actor-networks, "practice", for Basu, is primarily an invitation to attend to what people actually *do*, before investigating what their practices *mean* or how they are socio-culturally structured. Guided and motivated by these insights, her students have been encouraged to more richly explore experiences, performances,

negotiations, and transformations of practices. What is more, the practice theory elaborated by Basu turned students' attention to their own practices as researchers, lecturers and contesters of knowledge in a self-reflective way that questions their entanglements with the "field". As a result, Basu's students learned to not only describe practices as socio-culturally given but to develop a sensibility towards the transformative potentials of practices.

Among our generation of anthropologists – the last with a Magister Artium degree in the pre-Bologna period – fieldwork practices as much as post-fieldwork analyses of "data" (what Basu preferred to call "fieldwork material") was rarely discussed in the seminar room. After all, fieldwork itself was hardly part of the curriculum. Following the required coursework on the operationalization of research questions, a student's future – in terms of research – was open and fieldwork remained as unchartered and as mythical as the work up of empirical material and the ultimate write up phase. Apparently, success or failure in the field was left up to genius, chance or tenacity and the "lonely hero syndrome characteristic of the classic open-ended fieldwork" (Bundgaard & Rubow 2014: 38) was still widespread. The reflection and demystification of the fieldwork process had yet to take roots in the everyday practices of teaching.

In September 2008, a group of four MA students (Pablo Holwitt, Annika Strauss, Nadezhda Stoyanova, Agnieszka Anczykowska) and a PhD candidate (Julia Koch) set out to Bombay/Mumbai in India. The preparations for the trip entailed intensive Hindi courses with Basant Srivastav and topical seminars with Basu herself. Mumbai's Tata Institute of Social Sciences, with whom Basu had been collaborating, became something like a base camp in the megacity. The group would occasionally take a break from the field to share and process experiences.

Some of her students would accompany Basu for brief stints in the field: these experiences served as "educational shocks", preparing the students for their own fieldwork. Koch, for example, was taken to a Sidi village adjacent to the shrine of Bava Gor. To this day, she still recalls the physical manifestations of her excitement as she stood at the saint's grave squeezed in a crowd in the sweltering heat. As the rhythm of the drums sped up, people fell into a state of trance and then began to speak in tongues. Observing Sidi children moving rather undisturbed through the unfolding scene around her, Koch was confronted by her own outsiderness as well as the apparent normality of the situation for the local participants.

In December 2012, Mrinal Pande accompanied Basu to the shrine of Mira Datar before proceeding to the site of her own doctoral fieldwork in Mahuva, Gujarat. When she now recalls her emotional experiences, she recognizes that the timing and intensity of the stimuli in the field of Mira Datar presented a sense of dissonance and altered perception of the lifeworlds she was routinised into. Basu addressed Pande's reactions with the intellectual vigour that empirical work demands: the "resistance, internalization and confirmation" were all consequences of participatory research. Emboldened from anxiety to acceptance, the whole gamut of evoked emotions and experiences were set down and reported, later to be reflected on: a process that in turn would also be systematically documented.

When Basu facilitated an "Ethnopsychoanalytic Deutungswerkstatt" (see Nadig et al. 2009) and invited Maya Nadig to a collaborative Workshop in order to share stories "off the record", she succeeded in opening up a reflexive space full of new possibilities for students and young scholars. In so doing, Basu not only introduced new perspectives into the classroom, but she also acknowledged the corporeality of fieldwork, with its transformative emotional and intellectual experiences. Helmar Kurz and Annika Strauss, who participated in the workshop as students, adopted the reflexive approach and applied it in the field and later in the classroom when they themselves started to teach (Strauss 2015, 2017; Kurz 2019, 2022).

Basu illustrated that interdisciplinary collaboration as well as the inclusion of practitioners in research and tuitional settings can be a fruitful, albeit at times communication- and energy-intensive endeavor. Her students grew accustomed to the stream of invited psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, lawyers and filmmakers, who gave lectures or workshops in the department. Often, Basu would play the part of the hostess and open her home in Gremmendorf to the visiting speakers. During the summer term, students and colleagues were invited to parties in her garden. With the arrival of the winter term and the cold, classroom discussions continued in front of her fireplace while sipping on a glass or two of wine. Uncountable anecdotes from fieldwork and conferences were shared in these informal settings. In fact, it has been whispered in the corridors of the department that this or that student, inspired by these scholarly but never impersonal discussions, was able to overcome their writer's block.

Basu's anthropological inquiries range across the fields of religion, politics, mental health, emotion, migration and have resulted in many fruitful collaborations such as a six-volume encyclopedia on Hinduism, award-winning ethnographic films, multiple highly-regarded books and articles. As a principal investigator of the project "Madness and Mental Health in India: Patients between sacred/healing places and psychiatry" – part of an interdisciplinary and nationally-funded "Clusters of Excellence" research effort entitled "Religion and Politics in Pre-Modern and Modern Cultures", Basu addressed religious pluralism, mental health and migration in India (Koch 2016, Basu 2017, Pande 2017, Pande 2020). In addition to cooperating with Göttingen's Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, she also led the collaborative research project "Contemporary Indian Cultures and Economies - Interdisciplinary Discourses in Cooperation" with Mumbai's Tata Institute of Social Sciences (A New Passage to India, DAAD exchange program). Most recently, Basu participated in the project "Cultures of Decision-Making" organized by the Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 1150. Within the scope of this interdisciplinary research project, she focused on mediality and cultural narratives of marriage in India as decision-making situations, examining both lived practice as well as mass media representations (Basu 2019, Basu & Pande 2021). Basu's films are communicative and self-referential, going beyond descriptions of the outcome of conducted research. They are a practice of research in themselves. Basu institutionalized her envisaged approach in the master's programVisual Anthropology, Media and Documentary Practices at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (Basu 2009b, 2012, 2018, Basu et al. 2018).

We are grateful to Helene Basu for her tireless mentorship and the intellectual "journeys and dwellings" she guided us through. We would not be what we are today without the learning experiences she facilitated in the classroom and accompanied before, during and after our respective fieldworks. Thank you.

Julia Koch
Helmar Kurz
Mrinal Pande
Annika Strauss

Prologue

Filming Culture in the Digital Age. Helene Basu´s Film "Drugs and Prayers" on Ritual Healing and Psychiatry in North India

Frank Heidemann

In the early 1990s, Helene and I had our offices next to each other at the Institute of Ethnology at the Free University of Berlin. The institute had state-of-the-art visual equipment, including a separate room in the basement for VHS video technology. Films were screened with a 16-mm projector in the classrooms and videos were watched on TV screens. We carried the overhead transparencies, the slides and the folder with our notes under one arm and the slide projector under the other from our offices on the first floor down to the seminar room in the basement. I still remember the almost daily excitement when the slide projector went missing. Just before class, we would enter the secretary's office where the projector was kept on a shelf - at least in theory. When the shelf was empty, the hunt for the urgently needed device began. Our colleague in the front office would leave her burning cigarette in the ashtray on the desk, grab her large bunch of keys, walk down the corridor, open the offices and, after a quick glance, hurry to the next door. She would almost always manage to remember the last person who had used it, but sometimes it took a while to find what was in those days an indispensable piece of equipment.

Today, most students know slide projectors from old family photos or films from the past. Tube TVs, overhead projectors, large rolled-up maps and VHS cassettes have also had their day. Libraries have DVD collections, but they are hardly used because the latest computers no longer have a built-in optical drive. Technology has changed dramatically. Mobile phones are used to watch videos (at least on trains and planes) and, no less importantly, can produce images and videos of amazingly high quality. Small and technically advanced video cameras are available in universities or are owned privately. It is therefore not surprising that ethnologists working in the field store their own audiovisual material on their computers. For me, photography nowadays feels fundamentally different than it did in the 1980s, when we had to wait for long periods (even up

to a year during fieldwork) before the 35 mm negative film rolls from our still cameras and 16 mm film rolls could finally be sent to be developed. With the elimination of the time gap that separates shooting and viewing, a kind of suspense inherent in analogue photography has also disappeared. In the field of audio-visual documentation and communication, time and space have contracted. Sound-images are stored in micro-chips and lead an unbound social life.

Despite new audiovisual technologies and the ubiquity of digital images in research, teaching, publications, presentations and exhibitions, anthropology remains to this day what Margaret Mead critically labeled "A Discipline of Words" (1980: 3). In the recent decades, we can observe an increasing recognition of visual anthropology at major anthropological conferences as well as in the film review sections of some of the leading journals. But it still holds true what David MacDougall wrote a quarter of a century ago: Anthropology "has no lack of interest in the visual; its problem has always been what to do with it." (1997: 276). Images are part of our academic discourse, but not read with the same commitment and accuracy as texts. In electronically stored ethnographic field materials, visual data takes on considerable significance and contributes implicitly to the generation of ideas and theories. Ethnographic films are produced by numerous doctoral and post-doctoral fellows. The selection committees of ethnographic film festivals are confronted with an ever-growing number of submissions and the juries lack the same thing as the filmmakers: enough time to complete the task responsibly. In my student days, the rule of thumb for the editing process was an entire day's work for one minute of finished film. At the time, however, there were two or three minutes of source material for every minute of finished film. Today, the ratio is often 1:50 or even more, and you should accordingly plan more time for the editing process.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Helene made video recordings in Gujarat, which she used as visual field notes for teaching and public lectures. She realized the enormous value of her recordings and took the matter seriously. In Berlin, she met Angelika Schlöndorf, who was working on editing analogue films. They started working with the moving images and edited the first short clips. Andreas Samland with his background in digital editing joined them. Helene was fascinated by the impact of the short videos and decided to continue exploring ethnographic film-making. In 2007, she began her collaboration with Philipp Offermann as cameraman. In 2008 they filmed for two weeks at a Sufi shrine in Gujarat, famous for healing possession illnesses and madness induced

by spirits. At this shrine, a collaborative mental health project aiming at bringing together psychiatric and ritual healing practices had recently started (Basu 2014).

"Drugs and Prayers: Indian Psychiatry in the Realm of Saints" is the title of Helene´s first film (camera: Basu and Offermann; editing: Schlöndorf, Samland, and Basu; 55 minutes, 2009). It opens with a short text introducing the context: "In Gujarat, psychiatrists and social workers have initiated a new program for community care at a religious healing site…". The work of the NGO and the content of the film is about "davā", psychiatric care, and "duā", prayers or rituals. The first scenes offer an anarchic order of movements, voices and sounds – a multi-sensory firework. Then, for almost nine minutes the camera turns to a conversation between a psychiatrist, a young woman suffering from possession and her brother-in-law, who looks after her. The dialogues are translated into English and are easy to read in the subtitles. She says: "Taking medicine is good, but the saints also help." The psychiatrist asks, what helps more, and she answers: "Prayers! Drugs help, prayers help, too." And later, her brother-in-law: "If medicine is needed it will help. If praying is needed it will help." The film follows Dr. Ajay Chauhan, the superintendent of Medical Hospital Ahmadabad and initiator of the Davā & Duā Program, to his office, where he speaks with Sayad Chotu Miyan, the guardian of the Sayyid Ali Mira Data shrine. Both agree: "Acting wildly, beating, abusing, suicide attempts, incessant talking" … such a person "needs medicine, needs sleep, food and energy."

A few minutes later, the audience can listen to Sayed Vajid Ali, the chairman of the Mira Datar Dargah Trust. He explains his clients' problems. Ghosts and evil spirits attack them. They are objects of black magic. Priests, however, can offer help. "Those who are possessed by evil spirits go into their trances. It goes on for hours, days or months. Those who are possessed are different from the mentally ill," Ali argues. Later, a ride on a motorcycle, with filmmaker visible in the rear-view mirror, takes us to the shrine of Rasti Ma, the birth mother of the Sufi saint. A young Hindu woman explains how the evil spirit sits in her body, how Rasti Ma attacks the spirit and is going to heal her. She is an object of black magic. The medical expert offers a different interpretation: "She suffers from somatization and depression." A graphic example of multiple ontologies is presented at the end of the film. Patients are bathing in a pool of muddy water. A large board announces "that this gutter is dangerous to health as it is filled with dirty water." A group of people take full-body baths, and rest with the mud on

their skin in the sun. However, in an ironic twist, the viewers, learn that patients were advised to take a bath: "Impure spirits are punished in the dirty water".

Before Drugs and Prayers was selected for the RAI International Film Festival in London in 2011, Stephan Eisenhofer and I had a long discussion about the film. We did not hesitate to screen it at the Munich Ethnographic Film Festival in 2010, because the film documents long-term ethnographic fieldwork with a clear focus on an anthropological sub-discipline, medical anthropology, and is a wonderful introduction to an ethnographic site and it's everyday interactions. The viewer does not feel like an outsider, observing events at a distance, but as a visitor on-site, present at the temple, the shrines, the psychiatric outpatient clinics. At first, the scenes of possession appear as unusual or even extremely strange actions, but after listening to the protagonists for a longer period of time, the actions of possession lose their exotic quality. The possessed/patients sit and talk, describe their suffering and explain how it all came about. Hidden ontologies emerge on the horizon of the spoken words. The psychiatrists ask the right questions and leave room for open dialogue. They appear as sympathetic as the patients. The filmmaker establishes an equidistance between davā and duā. Two incompatible views of one and the same phenomenon coexist: not in separate worlds, but in the same frame captured by the camera. One of the film's great achievements is to show what appears to be contradictory and yet what is coexisting peacefully.

Drugs and Prayers is the anthropologist's representation of the devotees' and psychiatrists' voices. Often, a narration of a narration suffers from an enormous loss of quality through its reduction to the written form. The film, however, saves the mimic expression, the social and physical proximity of the speakers and listeners, and introduces the location at the same time, the impressive soundscape and the colorful background of the shrine. After decades, it will be interesting to see how the devotees were dressed and to hear how a Bengali person spoke Hindi. Helene's and Offermann's camerawork is not an intervention or provocation but the work of a modest observer. This consistent understated style creates a humble poetic of cultural plurality. Pluralism is not an argument, but a visible form of interaction.

The documentary is the work of an experienced anthropologist, and not of trained filmmaker. Her film is not informed by a theory of narration, an idea of a hero, an anti-hero, transformation of individual characters etc. I consider her film to be unorthodox insofar as it neither follows conventional scripts or story lines

nor overemphasizes film effects. It is the work of an anthropologist, who writes and films. The film seems descriptive, but this is not the case. A number of crucial themes in the anthropological debate on illness, on medical pluralism and mixed religious practices (Hindu/Muslim) that converge in healing are taken up, often implicitly. The art of this kind of film-making is: if you know the theory, you can find it in the film - if you don't know the theory, you can see it as a thick description. What is more, I could not detect any artificial light in the film; the microphone appeared on the screen in a few scenes; and the sound was only slightly (or not at all) enhanced in post-production. Technically, it is a minimalist film, in many respects unfiltered and always honest. The film has reached a different audience than Basu's anthropological readership. It was shown in educational institutions and discussed by psychologists and psychotherapists. Moreover, the film is a prime example of documenting cultural plurality in a distant place. The idea of a monolithic cultural other cannot be sustained after watching this documentary.

Another aspect that impressed Eisenhofer and me was the dialogue between the two sides in the aforementioned nine-minute scene of Drugs and Prayers. It was not instigated for the camera, it just happened. Obviously, the location of the take was also interesting for bystanders: young people positioned themselves in the background of the scene. They too are actors, who inscribe themselves in the film with poses and facial expressions. These bystanders are not just onlookers but co-producers of an atmosphere that fills the space. The eye of the camera is impartial and all-encompassing. The architecturally and ritually designed environment in addition to the ambient soundscape produced by those present contribute to the totality that allows the viewer to read the film. The balance between all possible points of view reaches far beyond the duality of davā and duā and encompasses the surrounding mood, which actors experienced at the moment of being filmed. The question of eye level is thus far more than a calculated balance between ritualist and psychiatrists but rather a fundamental stance of doing fieldwork. A plurality of meanings and values emerges onto the screen. When Helene confines herself to her fieldwork and does not dominate the room with her explicit questions, when she is there just as a seriously interested and patient listener, then the magic of digital technology emerges as a quiescent and unexcited participation. With digital photography and light-weight video cameras a new quality has emerged.

Christopher Pinney has shown in an essay with the programmatic title "The parallel histories of anthropology and photography" (1992) that in the nineteenth century the spirit of positivism and the search for objective visual processes emerged simultaneously. Without intending to suggest a causal connection here, however, I would like to mention that the history of anthropology in the twentieth century, with its search first for functions, then for structures, processes and finally for multi-sensory dimensions of cultural expression was also accompanied by a technological process that produced multimodal forms of representation beyond "writing culture". The hardware of photography and videography, which became handheld and easy to operate, supports a sensory ethnology that documents more than the ethnographer captures analytically. The small cameras record beyond the intention of the filmmakers. They have the potential of a dense description beyond textual representations. The combination of moving pictures and recorded sound can capture much of the space that words might otherwise obscure.

In the past decade, Helene has released three more films (see filmography). In these years, audiovisual distribution technology has offered even more possibilities in the field of documentation and distribution. Films can be stored on platforms and repositories and streamed independent of time and space. Power Point presentations are enriched by video clips as excerpts from a growing corpus of films. Photos and soundtracks lend themselves to impressive slide shows in classrooms and exhibitions. Images are not just good to look at, they are good to be discussed. More importantly, anthropological sub-disciplines that focus on sensory perception are turning to multimodal approaches. In an age of more-than-human approaches, our "discipline of words" (Mead 1980) is changing to a more-than-textual anthropology. Helene's profound films are an important contribution to this unstoppable process and unquestionably an integral part of her groundbreaking research.

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Filmography

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Contributors

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Katherine Pratt Ewing (PhD, University of Chicago) is Professor of Religion and Director of the South Asia Institute at Columbia University and professor emerita of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. Among her books are *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and Islam* (Duke, 1997), which focused on debates about Sufism and Islamic reform in Pakistan, and *Sufis and the State: The Politics of Islam in South Asia and Beyond,* edited with Rosemary Corbett (Columbia, 2020). Her current research examines the effects of shifting policies toward Sufism on local subjectivities and their implications for understanding how Islam is evolving as a living religious tradition within a fraught global order.

Nina Grube has studied Social and Cultural Anthropology and Social Sciences at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, and at Freie Universität Berlin where she has also obtained her postgraduate degree. She has done research on

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Dieter Haller (habil. 1999 Viadrina University Frankfurt/Oder) is Professor of Ethnology at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum since 2005, and he is co-founder of the Center for Mediterranean Studies. His main research interests are: history of ethnology, the Mediterranean, in particular Morocco (Tangier) and Gibraltar, trance and obsession, Sufism, borders, corruption, cosmologies, diasporas. Published monographs include: *Gelebte Grenze Gibraltar* (2002), *DTV-Atlas zur Ethnologie* (2005), *Die Suche nach dem Fremden* (2012), *Tanger – der Hafen, die Geister, die Lust* (2016), *TanGib – A Tale of one City* (2021).

Silke Hensel is full professor for Latin American History at the University of Cologne since April 2021. From 2004 to 2021 she was full professor for "Non-European History" at the University of Münster. As principal investigator of the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" she worked among other themes on German colonialism in Oceania and curated an exposition on catholic missionaries in that region during the German colonial era. Her main research focuses on colonialism's impact on colonized societies during and after formal colonial rule in Latin America as well as the history of migration and racism. She is the editor of the *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas/Anuario de Historia de América Latina.*

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Pablo Holwitt is a member of the South Asia Institute (SAI) of Heidelberg University. After receiving his MA-degree in Anthropology from the University of Münster and his PhD in Anthropology from the University of Leipzig, he headed the SAI´s India Branch Office in New Delhi. His main research interests include anthropological approaches to the body and the senses, urban politics and Indian society. His PhD-thesis has recently been published as a monograph titled *Urban Renewal in India: Accommodating People, Ideas and Lifeworlds in Mumbai´s redeveloping Chawls* (Routledge, 2020).

Ute Luig studied German Literature, Geography and Social Anthropology in Cologne, Freiburg and Kampala. After her doctorate on migrant workers in Kampala (1972) she became assistant professor at the Universities of Heidelberg and Mainz where she habilitated about the precolonial history of the Baule in Ivory Coast. She joined the Free University in Berlin as Full Professor from 1990 to 2010. Her main interests are gender studies, political anthropology, colonialism as well as spirit possession. She did long-term fieldwork in Uganda, Ivory Coast, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and after her retirement in Cambodia.

Angelika Malinar studied Indology and Philosophy at the University of Tuebingen where she gained her PhD. She held positions at the University of Tuebingen, Free University Berlin, and University of London (SOAS). Since 2009 she is Professor of Indology at the University of Zurich. Key areas of her research are epic and puranic literature, the interplay between literary forms and intellectual discourse in classical and modern Indian literature and philosophy, and the formation and institutionalization of Hindu religious traditions in the past and present. Her numerous publications include *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*, *Time in India: Concepts and Practices* (editor), and the multi-volume *Brill´s Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (co-editor).

Jos Platenkamp studied social anthropology at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands, and at the École des Hautes Études, Paris. He obtained his PhD in Leiden in 1988 with a dissertation on the socio-cosmological and ritual system of Tobelo society in Indonesia. He taught social anthropology and Indonesian Studies in Leiden from 1986 to 1993 when he was appointed professor at Münster University, Germany. There he taught social anthropology and Southeast Asian, religious and ritual studies until his retirement in 2017. He conducted fieldwork in Northeast Scotland (1976), the North Moluccas (1979, 1980, 1982),

the Central Moluccas (1989), and Laos (1996-2005). He published extensively on the anthropology of Southeast Asia, on rituals and systems of exchange, and on anthropological subjects pertaining to West-European societies.

Dorothea Schulz is Professor of Social & Cultural Anthropology at the University of Münster, Germany. Before moving to Münster, she held professorships at the University of Cologne, Germany, and Indiana University, Bloomington, USA. Dorothea Schulz's research, publications, and teaching center on the anthropology of religion, political anthropology, Islam in Africa, gender studies and media studies. In addition to numerous articles, she has published the monographs *Muslims and New Media in West Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2012) and *Political Legitimacy in Postcolonial Mali* (James Currey, 2021). Among her co-edited volumes is *Prayer in the City. The Making of Muslim Sacred Places and Urban Life* (Argument, 2012). Dr. Schulz is currently writing a book on how Muslims in Uganda position themselves as a religious minority in local and national contexts.

Pnina Werbner is Professor Emerita of Social Anthropology, Keele University. She is author of 'The Manchester Migration Trilogy' on Muslims in the diaspora, and editor of several theoretical collections on hybridity, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, migration and citizenship. Her recent publications include *Making of an African Working Class. Politics, Law, and Cultural Protest in the Manual Workers' Union of Botswana* (2014), and on village customary courts and law, jointly with Richard Werbner, *African Customary Justice: Living Law, Legal Pluralism, and Public Ethics* (2021). She has written extensively on Sufism.

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Introduction

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It is a bit daunting to write the introduction to a volume of essays in honour of a person who herself has written authoritatively about "practices of praise" (Basu 2004, 2005). Nevertheless, the question was never "if" there would be such a volume but rather "how" it would emerge in the end. As a particular practice of praise and a genre of its own, the Festschrift typically functions to introduce as well as to highlight the central themes of a scholar's work, more or less comprehensively and definitively. The publication of the Festschrift, according to the tradition, effectively transforms the recipient into an honoured "senior" of the discipline. In the present case, however, this typically valedictory gesture may in fact be a touch premature, as Helene Basu and her work are thriving. Her zest for new ideas, which she continues to explore with relentless innovation and sincerity shows little sign of abating. And so, in a spirit of playfulness that exceeds the panegyric tone of the genre, this celebratory volume should be read less as an authoritative declaration and more as a special occasion for academic voices to take up the tune. What is more – and in the spirit of Richard Schechner's notion of actors, who appropriate roles and in so doing evolve from "not" the role to inhabiting the role to ultimately arriving at a point at which "one can no longer say it is not him/her" (Schechner 2002: 72) – we contend that this volume is not not a Festschrift.

The contributions gathered into this volume enter into dialogue with Basu's academic work. They draw on rich ethnographic material from various South Asian regions (Holwitt, Werbner, Alex, Malinar, Hofbauer, Ewing), Southeast Asia (Luig), Africa (Schulz, Haller), Europe (Platenkamp, Hensel, Grube) and America (Chibnik). Each author highlights particular constellations of socio-cultural practices, objects, ideas and relations. Their analyses underscore the value of an approach, which places particular emphasis on the entanglement of social relations and symbolic representations. They also serve to confirm one of Basu's central assertions, to wit that anthropology and related disciplines move within modernity and for this reason engage in analysis beyond the dichotomy of the

"modern" and the "traditional" – any such opposition being itself grounded in modernity (see Basu 2014b: 407).

Basu's fieldwork began in the 1980s in the western Indian state of Gujarat. An undergraduate student at Berlin's Free University at the time, her primary interactions were with local Gujarati schools and their strategies to tackle questions of caste and education in rural India. She later enrolled as a doctoral candidate under Georg Pfeffer and Beatrix Pfleiderer and worked in the surroundings of the shrine of Bava Gor, which she had encountered during her initial time in the field. In her analysis, grounded in nearly two years of fieldwork, she artfully combined strands from Beatrix Pfleiderer's research on female possession at the northern Gujarati *dargah* (shrine) of Mira Datar (see Pfleiderer 1994) with kinship studies that centered on Sidi caste identity within South Asian Sufi Islam. Drawing on the many years of fieldwork that followed, Basu would later produce the film Drugs and Prayers (2009b), which investigated the interface between possession and madness/mental health at Mira Datar. The film was dedicated to her doctoral supervisor, Pfleiderer. For her habilitation, she intensified her regional focus within western India and drew attention towards the historicity of memories of kingship, kinship and asceticism in a devout Hindu community of bards, the Charan.

The firm ethnographic grounding of Basu's research built on years of fieldwork in addition to her particular focus on the anthropology of religion ultimately paved the way for what has since been considered a significant insight into the interconnectedness of symbolic worlds across the Indian Ocean (see Simpson & Kresse 2011). In the course of her fieldwork in Zanzibar, Basu observed that the local symbolic universe of trance and possession corresponds to Sufi Islamic ritual sites in Gujarat, where the Sidis had made a home. Her analysis of the transformation of potentially malevolent spirits into charisma-embodying Muslim saints contributes to a broader theoretical and conceptual toolkit that enables researchers to think comparatively and translocally at the same time (Basu 2008a,b). Basu's long-standing encounters with research partners both inside and outside Indian anthropology and sociology departments have not only resulted in a characteristically layered and nuanced analytical style but also equipped her to critique "Western" methodologies, disciplinary settings and boundaries (Basu 2008c).

In her dissertation (1995) as well as her habilitation (2004), Basu focused on ethnographic aspects of Indian lifeworlds, which had hitherto been marginalised in anthropological discourse. Basu brings to light the ritual agency of women in both theses and accounts for the multifaceted roles of "the goddess" in Indian social and religious life. Her detailed discussion of female symbolism in Indian religions – an excursus in her doctoral dissertation – would become the starting point for her habilitation on the "living goddesses" of the Charan. Whereas dominant scholarly discourse portrayed women for a long time as "victims" of caste society, patriarchy and suppression, Basu's two case studies reveal not only feminine agency but the structurally irreducible role of the feminine principle in Indian society. In contrast to the longstanding focus on women as daughters or wives, Basu's novel perspective led her to deconstruct mythical and ritual relationships between brothers and sisters, which forces a recognition of complementarity as well as enacted and valued hierarchies. As Basu noted in her dissertation, it is the brother-sister relationship of the Muslim Sidi Saints Bava Gor and Mai Mishra that enables feminine ritual agency. In the notable work on Charan living goddesses, feminine agency emerges through the understanding of women as potential sacrifices-cum-sacrifiers. The notion of living goddesses memorializes the caste's creation from the goddess Parvati's sweat and establishes a quasi-mythical sibling relationship between the Charan and certain Rajput lineages.

Transformative Practices

Since its earliest elaborations in the 1970s, the theoretical concept of "practice" has offered anthropologists as well as other human scientists an analytical means of transcending dichotomies that would seek to divide human experience (see Bell 1992: 75). In a dialectical movement, practice theory seeks to transcend the material and the symbolic, the real and the perceived, the structure and the act (ibid.: 76). Practices of transformation, to reach once more for Richard Schechner's analysis, involve permanent change and can therefore be usefully contrasted with "transportation" practices in a performance. Transportation, he argues, which is a cyclical process, sees the performer return to their point of entry (2002). On the other hand, transformation, which takes place in the course of a ritual, sees both the cycle and the performer undergo a process of permanent change. As types of performance, practices of transportation and transformation are however not mutually exclusive. They do nevertheless occur with different frequencies. While a

person may experience transportation on an almost daily basis, as Schechner notes, transformations rarely, if ever, occur and then only in a ritual context (ibid.: 72). Similarly, one may argue, the transformation of socio-cultural configurations needs to be placed on a large-enough temporal scale.

For anthropologists, "ritual" serves as a model for the study of transformative practices. Transformation is social insofar as it entails a restructuring of relationships between categories of persons, thoughts or values. It is therefore through social practices, both at the cosmological and the interactional level, that transformations take place. Practice, as Catherine Bell (1992: 81) has reminded generations of analysts since the 1990s, is in turn "(1) situational; (2) strategic; (3) embedded in a misrecognition of what it is in fact doing; and (4) able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of the order of power in the world." It therefore follows that ritual is a transformative process that takes place in time and not within a realm of timelessness. As much as ritual transforms its participants, they too continuously attribute and reattribute meanings to it, in turn changing the ritual itself through time. What is more, this transformation occurs at the level of the socially informed body: with its tastes and distastes, its compulsions and repulsions, in short, all of its senses (ibid.: 80). To speak of sense here is to speak also of sense(s) of necessity, duty, direction, reality, balance or beauty and, of course, a sense of ritual, which is also socially acquired. Thus, scrutinizing how the ritual act itself takes place reveals specific socio-cultural idioms. The careful analysis of these idioms and repertoires of "practice" as well as their representations, is at the heart of the contributions of this book.

Transforming Relations

While interdisciplinary exchanges between the social sciences and historiography have long been charged with mutual distrust where objectives and methods are concerned, Helene Basu's work has amply demonstrated the fruitfulness of a "rapprochement" (Braudel 1960) between the disciplinary fields. In accordance with such conciliatory efforts, several of the contributions in this volume analyze colonial pasts in the respective local presents and presence (Alex) or look at the past in terms of translocal entanglements currently overshadowed by a collective neglect of the colonial period (Luig, Hensel). One particular feature in much of Basu's writing is the historization of ethnographic material, whereby social figurations are tracked back into the pre-colonial period. Such an approach seems

necessary if social scientists are to distinguish between changes in single socio-cultural traits and the more thorough transformations societies experience and practice through ongoing processes of inter-cultural exchange.

By focusing on the time spans involved, historian Fernand Braudel (1960) has insightfully distinguished between three modes of historical writing: event history, "conjunctural" history - something of a middle range term - and the long durée – his focus. These modes of historical writing, he suggests, convey and thereby attune readers to distinct historical rhythms that in turn are commensurate with their corresponding time spans. These rhythms might either be consonant with the unfolding of daily life, with the more drawn out time span marking the difference between "communicative" and "cultural" memory (Assmann 2008) or with a structural dimension sedimented into a society's common sense. Basu's approach might best be said to resonate with the two last historical rhythms and the relationship between them.

Contests over the "proper" understanding of castes pervade both Indian society as well as the social and historical sciences that seek to study it. They are variously conceptualized either as categories shaped through values within a system, as practices of economic domination or as remnants of "pre-modern" times. In an effort to turn away from both static models as well as linear evolutionist or developmental thinking, Basu attends to the particular caste histories of settlements of Sidis/Siddis[1] in India and the construction of identities as intertwined with the trans-oceanic slave trade. She analyzes the shifting focus of the Gujarati Sidi communities from the ocean towards the land and into the established intersection of Sufi Islam and caste (Basu 1997, 2008d). She traces, in a similar vein, the changing political and social conditions that characterized the patron-client relationship between the Charan genealogist-praise singers and the Rajput kings across five centuries. After the formal dissolution of the Rajput kingdoms and principalities in the wake of national independence, merchant castes partly replaced the Rajputs as clients (Basu 2004, 2005). Again, her analysis encompasses the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, relating events to structural transformations through the lens of practice.

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[1] According to regional language traditions and translation conventions the spelling of the caste name differs (see Hofbauer, this volume). In this introduction we use the spelling with one 'd' when referring to the Gujarati Sidis Basu attended to mostly and 'dd' when referring to the South Indian communities.

This thorough empirical groundwork in various religious settings enabled Basu to address the caste system in Gujarat as one moving towards substantiveness in an unlocked complementarity (2013): an order of hierarchy turned into one of exclusion. She thus pioneered a practice-theoretical approach in social anthropology that mediates successfully between (ritual) events and a long durée, between a symbolic grounding of society in categories of thought and the social structures aligned with these categories.

For the seminal work on the patterns of journeying and dwelling that characterize the mobilities in and around the ocean between India and Africa, she exemplifies the usefulness of Arjun Appadurai's analytical perspective on regions, which serve as "initial contexts for themes that generate variable geographies" (Basu 2008b: 5). In order to align historians' and anthropologists' workings, she proposes a "thematic understanding" (ibid.) that assembles "strands" to highlight the quality of trans-oceanic connectedness instead of limiting the debate to the "'unity' of the Indian Ocean world" (ibid.). On this level, she argues, "anthropological concerns such as the study of cultural values, hierarchies, symbolic systems and practices can benefit from the global designs of historians and, conversely, ground the latter in the lived realities of people" (ibid.) connected to the "Afrasian Sea". Transformation then becomes visible in two dimensions: occurring at the level of involved persons, things and ideas as much as at the level of the configuration of relations through time.

The three contributions that together form the first section of this volume take up several ideas found in Basu's work and offer fine-grained ethnographic insights into particular cases in wider contexts. Andreas Hofbauer addresses the shifts in symbolism concomitant with a successful struggle for political recognition by a South Indian Siddi community. Critiquing the decontextualized application of "paradigmatic categories" such as "race" or "Indian culture" to the Siddis in Karnataka, he points to the symbolism of the drum (*dammam*), which the Siddis use to underline their claim to the status of Scheduled Tribe. Another transformation taking the relationship between Sufi saints and their followers as a point of departure, is at the center of Katherine Pratt Ewing's account, which addresses changes in publicity brought about by the introduction of new media. Grounded in long-term fieldwork in South Asia, her analysis also questions a particular American spiritual successor's (*khalifa*) piece-to-camera in a YouTube video. The video offers viewers a "vicarious visit" (this volume: 69) to the largest Indian shrine and in the process represents a segment of a network of dynamic

online and offline relationships between various Sufi orders. Dorothea Schulz's contribution on the attitudes of Christian and Muslim Ugandans towards religious plurality highlights similarities and differences in settings, which were exposed to British colonialism across the Afrasian Sea. She analyses the regulations of the "interfaces" (this volume: 78) between state and formal bodies respectively as well as kin-cum-religious groups. She also traces the continuities and changes in social forms from national independence in 1962 up until the present republican order.

A common theme linking these three contributions are local problematizations of trans-generational relationships, appearing either as contemporary challenges to the maintenance of communities or to the relationships between communities and their socio-cultural environments. In Hofbauer's account, two distinctive phases of Siddi community re-organization become visible. In the years from 1984 until 2003, formalized trans-religious groupings placed the achievement of a status as Scheduled Tribe (ST) on the agenda and downplayed anything "African" in public representations. Instead, they favored localness. Following the attainment of ST status, however, a process of re-historization occurred in which the case began to re-imagine itself as "African". In this second phase, the shift in character of the festival of Siddi Nas represents a focal point. It was formerly presided over by Hawig Brahmins, with whom local Siddis interlocked in hierarchical relationships of bonded labor (or debt bondage). Now, in stark contrast, a "spirit that comes from Africa" is addressed during the festival and the Siddis are themselves in charge (this volume: 43). It is the current crop of young Siddis, Hofbauer points out, who are ready to "Africanise" their group identity in an interplay of local and global forms of ascription. He approaches the festival as a performative space in which dancing groups deliberately employ the "technique of displaying semi-naked bodies" (this volume: 49) – a display at odds with the attitudes and styles of the elder generations. He reasons that the Siddi youth of Karnataka encounter new and other worlds in the educational institutions in Bangalore or Pune, previously out of reach. Confronted by a world where "nobody sees them as Indian" (this volume: 48), where they are perceived racially as "African" strangers, the young Siddis are forced to re-interpret their local identities.

While the position of Sidis in Gujarat was as socio-economically unfavorable as in Karnataka, the symbolic representation of three ancestor-saints as role models and anti-demons nevertheless provided a ritual space for the Gujarati

Sidis to flourish. Through the lens of the ritual practice of drumming, Basu traces the genealogies of transformation that link healing cults at the Sidis' shrines in Gujarat with East African possession cults. The Sidis' narrative of their arrival in India tells of the heroic journeys of three mythical ancestor siblings from three African regions. The ancestors, remembered by Sidis through their own stories, were soldiers and sailors: slaves make no appearance.

The eldest of the three siblings is remembered as a man, who transformed into Bava Gor from Sidi Mubarak Nobi (the blessed one from Nubia), an initiate of the Rifa'i Sufi order. Bava Gor was called from Baghdad to Gujarat in order to fight a local female demoness and subsequently embarked on a heroic quest to ease the suffering of the local population. He was unable, however, to defeat the demoness himself (the result of local Islamic values of gender segregation and piety) and so his siblings were called in to assist. The brother and eventually the younger sister made their journey by sea unlike their elder brother Bava Sidi Mubarak Nobi/Bava Gor, who had traveled by land. The younger sister, an eternally betrothed bride in the myth, finally vanquished the demoness (Basu 2008c: 246). Using the concept of "inversion", Basu provides an analysis of the blank space Muslim Sidis are able to occupy in Gujarat. Inverting local standards, the Sidis perceive their dark skin and frizzy hair as indications of blessings and magical powers inherited from their saintly ancestors. Thus, in the rituals at the shrine (*dargah*), which include drumming and ecstatic practices that contrast with most other forms of Sufism, the Sidis of Gujarat continuously perform an "African" inversion, in which memories of Africa or slavery are notably absent.

The various evaluations of particular ritual practices are a major theme in the contribution by Ewing. She places "often invisible publics constituted by different kinds of media" (this volume: 54) into perspective, thereby underlining the fruitfulness of combining concepts from media anthropology with an anthropology of religion (see Boyer 2012). Ewing ethnographically details new modes of transmitting Islamic knowledge practices online as followers begin to question the Sufi concept of "nearness to God" (*walāya*). In classical South Asian Sufi thinking, the saints, whom their followers regard as descendants of the prophet Muhammad, are able to mediate prayers to the almighty and channel blessings. Sufi relationships, characterized by a strong bond between saints (*pirs*) and their followers (*murshid*), are phrased in a language of kinship and thus represent the passing down of relatedness from one generation to the next. This transmission of the saint-follower relationship has become problematic or rather disconnected

not only within diasporic communities but within the urban spheres of Muslim-majority countries alike. Contemporary education in schools and other settings emphasizes individual achievements and analytic thinking, thereby undermining the Sufi model of making sense of the transmission of blessings and relationships through nearness. Within a "semiotic ideology" (Keane 2018), new sites of (religious) authority emerge with each new medium, in which doctrine merges with individual piety: "The teacher can be replaced by the book, which bears its own authority […]" (this volume: 62). Sufism then is partly shunned and partly re-invented as "cultural heritage", devoid of "impure" practices such as possession rituals or the consumption of stimulating substances. The re-location of Sufi practices from graves to stages moreover occurs at explicit missionary activities such as group marriages and mass meetings ("conferences"), where certain branches of South Asian Sufi orders generate and unite followers (see Koch 2016: 84-97, Koch 2017).

In the case presented by Ewing, we come to understand then how boundaries between public and private spheres are disrupted while selected forms of connectedness and community prevail. The contested transformations of Sufi orders and the broader trans-regional social order, which become apparent in Ewing's contribution help to extend Basu's own analysis of South Asian Islamic spheres of mediation and imagination. The concept of the imagination, as employed by Basu, offers social scientists and historiographers alike a tool with which to rethink "regions" as much as a global whole. Ewing shows how a young American-based successor of an old Sufi order envisages and plays his part in the formation of a global public for the younger generation as he initiates large audiences and enables followers to take the individual oath of allegiance to one's chosen saint online, thereby appealing to modern middle-class tastes.

In Schulz's contribution on religious pluralism in Mbale, Uganda, the transgenerational negotiation of religious boundaries becomes a focal point for the analysis of attitudes. She makes a compelling case for going beyond the level of person-to-person interactions to scrutinize the very ideas people attach to religious differentiation within a society where everyone is presumed to be religious (this volume: 78). The colonial creating and ordering of difference comes to the fore when Schulz focuses on "interfaces" between state and formal bodies such as meat certification institutions respectively between the state and informal groupings such as families or religious congregations. In a similar approach to Ewing and Hofbauer, Schulz calls attention to the "young adults" (this volume:

89), whose practices of testing and contesting boundaries during marriage negotiations highlight transformational dynamics. While the state vision of religious plurality is accepted in the domain of education as well as the authority that oversees the certification of meat production, the domain of inter-religious marriage reveals a dogmatic way of differentiation that young adults continue to grapple with. The Ugandan case study of pluralism as an attitude of individuals and socially organized people helps to underline the theoretical and analytical value of historicizing social structures, whose grounding in symbols and norms is orchestrated by nation-states and intermediary corporate orders.

Schulz's observations correlate with Basu's insistence that each construction of modernity includes a particular construction of tradition, which is never a "given date" but continuously made and re-made (Basu 2014c). Religious identifications are modifiable products of events as much as they are products of a community's social structures. Both are invariably shaped by a nation-state's legislation of group status. The work of anthropologists, as Schulz and Basu both demonstrate, is not to research the "traditions" *or* the "modernities" of particular cultures; it is rather to scrutinize the ways historicity comes to play formative roles. The implication of the contributions as well as of Basu's own work is that to mediate relationships is in effect to transform them. Change is therefore never an exception but is always the rule. As Basu demonstrates, transformations are generally informed by the idioms, concepts and values through which they act (ibid.: 407). What is more, transformations must be narrated, that is to say, they must be placed within and conveyed through a comprehensible order of sequences.

Narrating Transformations (and the Transformation of Narrating)

The narrative form is a necessary cultural and communicative tool in social practices of meaning making, explanation and persuasion. The American psychologist Jerome Bruner (1991) understands the narrative as an "instrument of mind in the construction of reality" (ibid.: 5) and Laurel Richardson (1995) describes the narrative as "the primary way through which humans organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes" (ibid.: 200). Nigel Rapport (2004: 75) argues that while the medium of narrational telling may vary from words to images to gestures to routine behavior, "what is invariant is the characteristic of narratives

to propagate a meaningful sequence across time and space" (ibid.). The urge for "meaning-making" is evident particularly in contexts of crisis and suffering, when decisions have to be taken or interventions are initiated to evade or change an unfavorable status quo. The medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman states that the plot lines, core metaphors and rhetorical devices that structure narratives of illness and suffering are drawn from cultural and personal models for arranging experiences in meaningful ways and for effectively communicating those meanings (Kleinman 1989). Because of their potential to order, structure and stabilize, according to Kleinman, personal narratives do not only reflect and share experiences, but also contribute, shape and create the experiences and narratives of others.

The three contributions brought together under the section "Narrating Transformations" set out to examine narratives from an analytical and methodological perspective, demonstrating in the process how they are both embodied by the ethnographer as well as by ethnography itself. Angelika Malinar's contribution constitutes a narrative analysis of the *Mahābhārata* epic. Malinar begins with a detailed and insightful analysis of a parable from Book Twelve, the "Book of Pacification" (*Śāntiparvan*), about the dangers that arise when delaying a "decision about what to do and not do" (this volume: 99). She then proceeds to tackle the role of decision-making in narration and how a transformation is narrated in the *Mahābhārata's* particular type of storytelling. Nina Grube's contribution employs a narrative ethnographic approach within a mental health context to make sense of personal experiences of crises and uncertainty among Cameroonian and Ghanaian migrants residing in Berlin. Focusing on the personal illness narratives of her informants, Grube explores how they each deal with the failure to recover and to show signs of "betterment" in the context of a crisis that becomes chronic. In her contribution, Pnina Werbner juxtaposes two "contrasting, almost oppositional" ethnographic narratives from Engseng Ho and Helene Basu about migration, diaspora and pilgrimage in the Indian Ocean (this volume: 143). The former introduces Hadrami Sufis in India, who are linked by a network of kinship and affinity to Hadhramawt in Yemen, a sacred center for the order and one to which they periodically return in order to renew their connection. The latter account concerns the Sidi (African migrants/exiles living in India), who go on annual pilgrimages to Gujarat, the site of the regional Sufi cult of Bava Gor. Werbner illustrates how these two communities form diasporas and connections linking diverging spaces, generations and temporalities in very different ways.

Basu (2019: 189) points out in one of her most recent publications, that social anthropology draws on narrative analysis in the context of ethnographic research in order to understand on the one hand how agents in diverse cultural settings attach meaning to their actions and on the other hand to understand the role of narratives concerning the production of certain social practices. The narrative form is made use of by social anthropologists as well as by their informants. Narratives are present in a social anthropologist's work on all levels and in all phases: in the research proposal, field notes, interview recordings as well as protocols and finally in the monograph, which is widely considered an important narrative product following the successful completion of fieldwork. An ethnographic text constitutes a "storied reality" (Madden 2011: 152) evolving out of a narrative approach. Barbara Tedlock (1991) argues that the stories we tell in our ethnographies are always at least twofold: one strand engages with the researcher's experiences and the methodologies applied and another portrays the people encountered in the field. The representation of the Other as well as the ethnographer's Self is what constitutes an ethnographic narrative. A reflexive approach together with the realization that fieldwork and the production of the ethnography is a "subjective" endeavor, which has to be transformed into an "objective" account according to scientific principles, is what enables social anthropology to comment on and unmask the "neutrality" of other scientific practices (Okely 1996).

In a not yet published manuscript Basu applies this reflexive approach to clinical diagnosis. In a detailed ethnographic analysis within the context of mental health care in western India, she describes the diagnostic process as permeated by social structures, values and emotions and entangled with the enacted empathy of the involved actors. Basu further explores why the narrative framing of experiences and observed (mad) behavior that arise out of clinical interactions can be understood as therapeutic tools, which initiate interventions and give rise to what she calls "moves" and "turns" that offer "choices and [make] differences" (Basu, unpublished manuscript). By analyzing turning points in the course of the treatment process, she demonstrates how these introduce new directions in the search for a diagnosis as well as relief for those involved. Furthermore, the position of the psychiatrist as decider in addition to the positions of the patient and the caregiver as receivers of decisions were continually re-negotiated. Basu cites her informant, the psychiatrist Dr. Z.: "In psychiatry, therapy begins with the first session, but diagnosis continues until the last!" (ibid.).

Receiving a diagnosis (in the form of a label) often marks a significant transformative moment for a patient and their social context. As Laurence Kirmayer (2005: 195) puts it, "[P]sychiatric diagnosis is a form of social action that may work to achieve some advantage at one level (or at one moment in time)... [but] may have adverse effects at another level." One adverse effect following (particular) psychiatric diagnoses may be stigmatization. Grube points out in her contribution that favoring one diagnosis over another can have very pragmatic reasons, which are deeply embedded in social and power relations as well as corresponding therapeutic practices. She further stresses that if a (mental health) crisis is chronic, the causes of the disorder often remain unclear. Even if there is "a diagnosis in the end, frequently a lot of time passes forming and discarding various hypotheses until a cause is determined and unspecific symptoms are rendered meaningful" (this volume: 149) Grube argues that it is only in telling their stories that her informants tentatively try to give meaning to their experiences – their narratives working "as a mode of thinking" (this volume: 138).

Rapport (2004: 75) suggests that narratives "embody a perceived order, and in their telling they maintain this order despite seeming temporal, spatial, experiential disjunctures." He argues that in a world in motion, narratives – as *modi vivendi* – provide "a place cognitively to reside and make sense, a place to continue to be" (ibid.). While a temporary crisis is likely to lead to the collapse of certain social processes, a state of constant crisis can be equally transformative, generating alternative socialities, meanings and knowledge. In the case of chronic (mental) crisis, the suspicion of witchcraft is a recurring motif (see Basu 2014b). Referring to "explanatory models" (Kleinman 1989) such as witchcraft or possession along with their corresponding methods of treatment has the potential to address the individual as well as the social disruptions that necessarily accompany chronic crisis. Psychiatric diagnosis rarely addresses mental illness this multidimensionally.

Basu applies different approaches to narrative analysis in her work in order to illustrate how transformative experiences are recounted and how socio-cultural story modes portray individuals, families and communities struggling with sudden or involuntary life turns such as mental illness, broken marriages or political changes. In one of her articles (see Basu 2011), she analyzes Indian Bollywood-, regional- and art-films and their depictions of psychiatric institutions, psychiatrists as well as the various manifestations of and responses to incidences of madness such as possession embedded in religious contexts. She illustrates

how these popular images of psychiatry convey reflections of different social contexts and understandings of Indian modernity. Movies, classic literature and myths serve as cultural templates, providing different models for dealing with life-changing transformations. Engaging with these various forms of media may even facilitate a cathartic or enlightening experience inasmuch as they question why things happen as they do. Malinar explores this dimension of narratives in her analysis of the fifth book of the *Mahābhārata* epic, the *Udyoga Parvan* or 'The Book of Effort', which questions the inevitability of the war between the two branches of the involved family. Yudhiṣṭhira, an exiled king, must decide whether to relinquish his claim to his former kingdom or to wage war in order to regain it from Duryodhana, to whom he had lost it in a game of dice. Malinar's focus rests on how decision-making itself becomes a narrated event and how doubts and disagreements over certain decisions – in particular the decision to wage a war that ruined the family – are assimilated into the chain of events. In Malinar's own words: "While the plot is well known and all characters are household names, the discussions about why he, she or they did act like this, what could have happened if things were decided differently still excite audiences and interpreters" (ibid.: x). In the course of the story, norms and obligations are doubted, pointing to the possibility of alternative life courses and thus a departure from the predetermination of social norms like caste, life-cycle rituals and kinship rules. The plot therefore integrates other possible outcomes, thereby opening up space in which alternative storylines can be imagined.

In her analysis of the postcolonial novel Wizard of the Crow by Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Basu (2019) identifies the decision-making phase of the narrative process as the "liminal phase". As with the story of King Yudhiṣṭhira decision-making here is narratively framed as embedded in cultural practices and interactively enfolding social processes. At the end of the story, "fate" prohibits the main character from following a life course that he had consciously chosen for himself. Similarly in the *Udyoga Parvan*, "the power of 'fate' (daiva, diṣṭa)" (Malinar, this volume: 108) is given as an explanation for the failure to avert war. According to Malinar, this is what connects the world of the story with that of meta-diegetic or "didactic" contexts: "'Fate' is what is 'fabulated', the narrated plot, the sequence of events that seems settled before its narration" (this volume: 120). She further states that the recourse to fate could even be interpreted as a calling up of "tradition", that is, what has been laid down

in the written *Mahābhārata*: "the fate of the story 'as told' therein" (ibid.). Malinar points out that the epic in its written form has indeed become a highly influential version, though one which has not effaced other possible story lines and living traditions of the epic.

Malinar's analysis of the *Udyoga Parvan* ultimately exemplifies how a narrative can simultaneously constitute both "a mode of reasoning and a mode of representation" (Richardson 1995: 200). In this regard, the ethnographic narrative is no different than other narratives. John van Maanen (1995: 3) thus designates ethnography as a "storytelling institution", which follows "specific compositional practices […] to fashion a cultural portrait" (ibid.: 5). In her article for instance, Werbner discusses how Basu, in a "fine-grained" ethnography, describes the Sidi diaspora as one embodied through practice rather than memory:

> For all their poverty and low status in India, Sidis are a distinctive, richly endowed group, commanding a whole field of healing and, indeed, of joyful celebration. What makes their shrines famous and unique is their capacity to bring fertility and exorcise demonic and evil spirits through music, percussion and dance. This is, indeed, what links them to Africa. (this volume: 167)

Werbner praises Basu's "innovative" conceptualization of the notion of diaspora, which acknowledges that sensory, embodied practices create mythical connections to other places and times.

Basu's approach to ethnographic narratives can also be described as innovative. During the last decade, she has turned her attention to the medium of film as yet another possible mode of ethnographic exploration and analysis. Her most recent ethnographic film How We Got Here: Decision Matters (2018) tells the story of an Indian family, which she came to know during the course of her fieldwork in Gujarat in the late 1980s. Over the course of the film, Basu evocatively weaves images and poems into the patchwork of protagonists' stories at the heart of her narrative. She emerges in turn with an ethno-poetic meditation on whether and how one's life – with all its predictable but also unforeseeable and sometimes unwanted turns – provides the material for a meaningful narrative. This is a ubiquitous question that concerns humanity at large but one whose answers may indeed vary depending on the narrative modus vivendi.

Re/Creating Order

Practices of transformation, as Victor Turner (1968a,b) demonstrates in his ethnographic work on Ndembu culture, call for rituals in order to negotiate and re/create order. Accordingly, rites of passage restructure social relations, catalyze transformations of status and roles and prevent social crises in communities. The "liminal phase" in rituals constitutes a state of "antistructure" and "communitas" through which animosities and conflicts subside. Social order and hierarchies dissolve and are (re)shaped and created in the aftermath of shared experiences. For Turner, the ritual process constitutes a performative practice of transformation insofar as it is an opportunity for participants to display "social drama" and through the unfolding and negotiation of shared experience develop alternative models of reality (Turner 1982, see Schechner 2002). Other anthropologists have applied this model to practices of possession, e.g., in Sri Lanka (Kapferer 1983, 1984), Sudan (Boddy 1988, 1994), India (Sax 2004, 2009) and Brazil (Kurz 2013, 2015, 2017).

Each of the three contributions in this section refers in a particular way to religiously informed realms of re/creating order. Ute Luig explores the significant role Buddhist institutions play in processes of individual and social healing following the traumatic experience of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. She investigates the establishment of a post-revolutionary order that reflects and interprets the past to establish future pathways in accordance with present needs of the survivors. Pablo Holwitt delivers another example of how past, present and future intersect in practice. He illustrates how "modern" forms of housing activism in India rephrase "traditional" aspects of spiritually-informed legal and moral values: "old" patterns are related to "new" challenges to negotiate and (re)create an alleged, desired and/or contested social order. In a similar manner, Dieter Haller investigates how human/non-human relationships among Moroccan Sufi adepts are set out and arranged and how related practices transform in contexts of socio-cultural change.

This analytical emphasis on (re)creating order through practices of transformation is notably present in the work of Helene Basu (2002), who views these practices across different contexts through the lens of socially negotiating the Self and the Other. Focusing on India, Basu examines possessing agents such as ghosts, spirits, deities and/or regional heroes, understanding such phenomena as part of efforts to (re)create (mental) health and gender status categories as well

as social relations: all of which occur within the broader cultural work of adapting to or resisting "modernization" processes. She describes the embodied experiences of these agents within possessed persons as an aesthetic refinement of the staged performances of divine dramas (Basu 2010a,b). Furthermore, her fieldwork at the shrine of a Muslim saint in Gujarat led her to observe that within the context of possession, healing practices are evocative of transcendental law court proceedings, in which ritual trials for spirits are carried out (Basu 2010c, 2015). Ritual participants, she notes, create and display certain sets of "Sufi aesthetics and emotion" and an allegedly shared "morality of the poor", contradicting official narratives on "crime" as inappropriate and sanctioned behavior. Related discourse deviates from the norms of a so-called mainstream Sufi Islam and thus establishes a somewhat parallel or alternative Indian modernity.

Addressing the Afro-Indian ethnic minority of the Sidi, Basu (2007, 2008a), explores entanglements of space and time in processes of social memory and diasporic identity formation within the hybrid context of Sufi Islam and African-derived possession practices. She illustrates how a translocal migration of practices and their transformation involve aspects of politics and power in a performative display of cultural resistance and adaptation. Participants in spirit possession practices (re)create identity within a frame that can be understood as a "third space" (Bhabha 1994) of negotiation and in which drums and dance establish sensory modes of interaction and communication.

Basu (2014a) further engages with these sensorily embodied and performative dimensions of possession, viewing the phenomena of "hearing disembodied voices" as located on a spectrum between "madness" and spiritual meaning. She addresses spaces of interaction and negotiation at the intersection of religion and psychiatry and thus divergent explanatory models and conceptions of person, spirit and mind (Basu & Steinforth 2017). Building on alternative theories of madness, she explores transgressions in social relationships and related moralities among human and non-human agents and observes how performative and sensory modulations in healing rituals linked to spirit possession support participants to transform from a state of "patiency" to one of "agency" (ibid.).

In cooperation with William S. Sax, she also investigates legal issues in the context of spirit possession and healing (Sax & Basu 2015). Secular institutional practices of modernization and medicalization the world over have set about criminalizing and counteracting Indigenous and/or particular cultural efforts to respond to affliction in locally meaningful ways: negotiating "normality"

and "anormality" within realms of "tradition" and "modernity". Her analysis of the Indian NGO project Drugs and Prayers (Basu 2014b) and its work at the Gujarati Sufi saint shrine of Mira Datar highlights the asymmetrical nature of the relationship between "religion" and "psychiatry". Attempts to encourage cooperation between religious and psychiatric institutions, she observes, fail due to diverging expectations and conceptualizations of modernization processes, implementing Western concepts of rationalization and individualization and dismissing divergent approaches. Accordingly, she points to the existence of alternative modernities (see Gaonkar 2001, Basu 2014c) in which healing practices transform according to their specific context and environment.

Established under colonial rule, psychiatric institutions have globally merged with local concepts and approaches (Basu & Steinforth 2017, see Kurz 2018a,b). As a result, the logics of modernity (e.g., dichotomies of nature-culture, mind-body, rational-irrational, normal-anormal) interfere with personal experience, socio-cultural environments, local politics and global economies. It is in this context that "possession" phenomena constitute a set of widespread practices of transformation with the objective of (re)creating order. However, they also unfold as continuously transformed practices in response to "modernization", that is as ongoing culture-specific dynamics of change, adaptation and development corresponding to systems of (political) power and (social) control (Basu 2009a, Basu & Steinforth 2017).

The example of Indian psychiatric reform illustrates how practices of possession are perceived to display psychopathologic issues rather than providing salutogenic resources. It also demonstrates the questionable universalization of "modern Western" values, approaches, and discourses as well as the effects of the resulting contestations on local religious knowledge and practice (Basu 2009a, 2010a). What is more, the impact of "modern" economic and political transformations may also challenge "traditional" hierarchies (e.g., caste in India) and transform balances of interdependent social groups into competition and contests of difference (Basu 2013). Basu's approach, therefore, is innovative insofar as it provides an anthropological perspective that, rather than addressing structures or functions of practices, focuses on their diversification and transformation in accordance with particular socio-cultural settings, frames and environments.

Each of this section's contributors engages with the fruits of such an approach, addressing con-/re-/transfigurations of (re)creating order, which are en-

acted through human practice, informed by knowledge, and shaped by lived experience. Luig's investigation of Cambodian state developments and the healing role of Buddhism following the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime builds on Basu's research on (mental) health practices in postcolonial India as well as related agencies of modernization located at the intersection of the secular state and religious institutions. In her historically informed account, she illustrates how Khmer healing practices of exorcising possessing spirits counteracted colonial attempts to integrate and consolidate biomedicine. The revolution of 1975 – with its aim to create a new society by destroying the former order – produced a somewhat ambivalent transformation of healing practices: "Western" doctors and nurses were persecuted, but biomedical technologies remained a resource, at least for the new elites. "Common people" were forced to rely on "traditional" medicine, although diagnosis and therapies were separated from their religious connotations, and a ban on Buddhism was established. However, as Luig demonstrates through several case studies, throughout and especially in the aftermath of the revolution, religious strategies of healing and social reconstruction grounded in Buddhist practices of spiritual retreat helped to transform experiences of distress and affliction by affirming their sense of agency through practices of (self)care, thereby empowering local actors to "remake a world".

Holwitt compares Basu's descriptions of "divine courts and occult law" (Basu 2010c) within Sufi saint shrines in Gujarat to housing activism in the Indian state of Maharashtra, with its metropole of Mumbai. His approach focuses on social dynamics that reveal contextual and ideological shifts and flexibilities within performative negotiations in dynamics of contemporary housing challenges. He succeeds in destabilizing accepted modernization theories (including those that rest on modern-nonmodern, rational-irrational and secular-sacred binaries), which emerge from his analysis as replications of postcolonial hegemonies. Holwitt provides ethnographic data on the performative and mediational dimensions of law, which he regards as "embodied" and located somewhere between agency and patronage, that is as bearing aspects both of hierarchies and their transformation. He proceeds to discuss the translation and transformation of social rules and related practices from one context to another as well as the role of media in the (re)production of authority and power relations. In the course of his analysis, he transfers the concept of non-human agency in possession rituals to the realm of "modern" institutionalized legal authorities.

Haller's contribution takes up Sufi practices, their transformation, and the human-spirit relationships in Morocco, bringing this section back to Basu's discussion of the importance of attending closely to sensory perception and embodied states in ritual practices of possession. He focuses on the notion of "boundaries" between humans and spirits, order and disorder and, in a self-reflective turn, on conceptualizations of Self and Other in ethnographic fieldwork, observing that attempts at rational comprehension often interfere with disturbing doubts and experiences of incomprehension. The cognitive-rational and sensory-emotional levels of perception in the realm of spirit possession ought to be regarded and therefore anthropologically investigated, Haller urges, as a fluid movement between – and a transformation of – categories. This perspective also highlights the (re)Arabization of Sufism in contrast to alleged non-rational forms of (re)creating and developing Sufi practices and knowledge and their significance within a non-Western alternative Arabic modernity.

Taken together, the contributions by Luig, Holwitt and Haller provide distinct and innovative perspectives on practices of transformation – and the transformation of these practices – in aesthetic, economic, political, religious, and socio-cultural terms. They serve as a series of reflections on how practices of transformation continuously change within divergent contexts of modernization and processes of re/creating order.

Things in Motion

Commodities and possessions are at the core of economic anthropology. Viewed through the lens of gift giving, they become the focal points of exchange theory and social anthropology. Indeed, these "things" are the very stuff of material culture. As their meanings and values shift through time and space, they provide a window through which to interpret and understand the particularities of human existence, history and cultures. The contributions in this section of the Festschrift explore the social lives of things/objects as they move across networks, mediate social relationships and acquire an agency of their own. Gabriele Alex attends closely to the biographies of lithographic prints, tracing and deconstructing their circulation and movement in everyday practice. In so doing, she examines the transformations that occur to both the prints as well as the perception of them, tracing how these transformations unfold or are facilitated by the market. Michael Chibnik focuses on the making and marketing of wood carvings in two artisanal

communities in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico and evaluates the creation and maintenance of formal organizations that enable and foster economic cooperation in international markets. Josephus Platenkamp discusses a highly popular auction program broadcast on German television that stages common market transactions and inquires into the disjunction between gift and commodity exchange. Photographs and photography are the focus of Silke Hensel's contribution, which explores the variety of possible meanings attributed to photographs and the photographic act in the context of German missionary work in Oceania and their publication in Germany.

This section's conceptual focus is on things and the social life that characterizes them as they are taken up and circulated. Appadurai (1986: 3f.) suggests that values of things shift as they move and are exchanged through the different regimes of value that are brought together in that moment of exchange. He further proposed that things have a social existence, that the material that constitutes objects has a social history and takes on different objectivities as the subjectivities come into contact with it. In his own words:

> [We] have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things. Thus, even though from a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context (ibid.: 5).

Giving a provisional definition of commodities as "objects of economic value", Appadurai contends that value is embodied in commodities that are exchanged and it is possible to reveal the social relations that aid in creating and defining such objects. Thus, an object that may have been utilitarian in one context can take on new values and meanings when transferred to another social domain such as the market or museum. The social lives these things/objects come to lead are constituted through the acquisition and loss of value, changes in signification as well as perhaps by becoming nonexchangeable or even sacred only to then sink back into mere commodity status (Ferguson 1988). Attending to the social life of things is ultimately an examination of the various ways' objects come to hold value for individuals as well as societies at large. An identification of the different semiotic and agential possibilities disclosed through the paths or "itineraries" taken by things allows for a consideration of the webs of interpretation that arise by virtue of the socio-politics of things' present and future dispositions as well

as the mutual transformations of these things and the actors interacting with them (Bauer 2019, Joyce & Gillespie 2015).

The agential dimension of things/objects inherent in the foregoing analyses is strongly present in the work of Helene Basu (2005, 2014c, 2016), which draws on the practice theory frameworks laid out by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Anthony Giddens (1984), who both highlight the recursive nature of practice and structure/agency in daily life. Indeed, for Basu, the question is very much one of how the agentive power of objects is intertwined within the networks of humans and non-humans. In order to upend the subject-object binary in representations of human and non-human roles, she engages with the work of Bruno Latour and his "actor-network theory" (1996) and shows how objects are not just acted on by human actors but also have the capacity to act on these actors, in turn shaping and constraining subsequent human action (Basu 2014c, 2016).

Along these lines, the authors in this section have set out to deconstruct objects and practices as they cross boundaries within frames of economic and symbolic networks, connections and forms of cooperation, as well as through gift and commodity exchanges. As things/objects make references to cultural and material dimensions, these frames are shown to transcend market interactions, insofar as they resist the clear differentiation between exchange and non-exchange. Gift and commodity exchanges then do not necessarily correspond to the opposition of "modern" and "non-modern" economies but rather interlock and mutually reinforce each other – both in the past and in the present (Sax & Basu 2015). At the same time, these objects are re-entangled in worlds beyond the market, re-formatting their identity into new contexts of meaning.

An interrogation of the constructive dimension of markets as well as the performative dimension of representation further enables the authors to demonstrate how markets both operate and enable action. Here we look at economic actions that transform social transactions and become calculable through particular metrics and languages. In tracing the journey of the divine lithographs from "colored paper" to deities and then to antiquities or rubbish, Alex contextualizes the transformation of a religious object, as it moves into and is taken up by museums, thereby distinguishing it either as aesthetically meaningful, as a scientific specimen or as a story being told. Focusing on the lithographic revolution, which led to depiction of deities from the Hindu pantheon, she classifies lithographic

motifs in India into four categories: devotional, mythological, historical and feminine. She further describes the transformative cycle of the devotional and mythological lithographs, which are called the *cāmi paṭam* in the Tamil language.

The trajectory of these lithographs, from devotional objects to antiquities, allows them to be invested with their own social agency in a manner equivalent to persons, or more precisely, social agents. Alex discusses, for instance, how bodily practices that accompany interactions and proximity to these objects have a transformative effect on the devotee. In this manner, the material objects can be seen to exercise a kind of agency, encompassing a range of relationships that can transform the venerator's mood as well as the course of life events in accordance with a desire for positive outcomes. Moreover, drawing on actor-network theory, she likens these art objects to actants that operate in an ensemble together with the living – and at times deceased – family members of a household. They thus become part of a diachronic network of family histories, memories, aspirations and kinship connections. Her contribution deals with the journey of the object materially and figuratively, its different life-cycles endured as visual products, from being acquired or discarded to being fed into other economic and symbolic networks.

The artisan organizations associated with the making and selling of art objects is the focus of Chibnik's article, which stresses the need to carefully examine the practices of different groups of Mexican woodcarvers, their available choices as well as the socio-cultural, economic and historical reasons behind the privileging of certain art objects over others into market representations at different times and places. The art objects in question are Mexican *alebrijes,* brightly painted and imaginative woodcarvings/sculptors with long-standing cultural significance. Chibnik explores the cultural and economic entanglements that influence the rise and fall of the woodcarving cooperatives that produce *alebrijes* and finds in individual as well as group decision-making practices an explanation for the emergence and persistence of industrial replicas in the *alebrijes* market. Furthermore, he provides an historical sketch of the artisan organizations and related state policies in the Oaxacan towns of San Martín Tilcajete and Arrazola that acts to contextualize the artisans' participation in cooperative activities.

Drawing on his historical research, Chibnik identifies two conditions that favour the formation of cooperatives among the Oaxacans. Forms of collective action, he argues, might be adopted as a remedy against certain immediate threats to the economic livelihoods of the actors involved. Cooperatives might also

emerge as a result of state policies that encourage the creation and survival of such organizations. An essentially cultural phenomena, cooperation, he contends, is a possible choice so long as mutual benefit is a shared goal. Chibnik proposes that although Oaxacan individuals are inclined to work together for the good of the group, setting self-interest aside, they are still rather particular about the extent to which they are willing to cooperate as well as the form such cooperation ought to take. Though they come together to purchase wood, send representatives to sell finished pieces at exhibitions and collectively organise community fairs, the woodcarvers nevertheless are reluctant to share carving and styling techniques. He further observes that individual woodcarvers seek to monopolize the attention of possible buyers, envying entrepreneurial artisans and their work.

Chibnik then turns his attention towards the project developed by Basu as part of the Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 1150 "Cultures of Decision-Making". Building on Basu's conclusions that universalizing theories of decision-making pay far too little attention to cultural variability and historical circumstances, Chibnik's own analysis of decision-making as practiced in Oaxacan cooperatives stresses the need for sustained ethnographic attention to historical transformations. It is through attention to these historical processes that he is able to observe how Oaxacans come to make decisions about which activities to collectively focus on, about the organization of artisan fairs as well as the acquiring of copal, a resin used to make the varnish for their woodcarvings. A similar instance of sustained ethnographic examination of historical transformations can be found in Basu's work on the Sidis and the Charan community in Western Gujarat (Basu 2005).

The contribution by Platenkamp, a former colleague of Basu's, attends to the dynamic of auctions as played out on television, placing emphasis on the relation between the social value and the financial worth of a thing/object and examining the process by which the monetary worth of objects is transformed. The object of his analysis is the highly successful German television programme, *Bares für Rares* (this roughly translates into "Cash for Curiosities"), which showcases the social dynamics of the market, enacted in short-lived transactions of buying and selling alienable objects. Though market economics stipulates a rational actor, who sets out to maximize gains while minimizing costs, Platenkamp demonstrates how the inalienability of commodities with a certain provenance and value can overshadow the actors themselves and play a key economic role.

In drawing on theoretical models of gift and commodity exchange, he calls attention to a transformation that occurs over the course of the show's proceedings, namely the recasting of inalienable heirlooms into alienable goods and commodities into gifts. Moreover, the social identity of buyer and seller appear to be largely irrelevant to these proceedings, from the evaluation of the object's financial worth to the eventual transaction. The roles of these anonymous actors are in effect reduced to that which is immediately relevant to the price-building process of demand and supply. And yet, a closer look reveals the blurring of gift-giving practices and the "economics" of the market transaction, which in this instance serves as the accomplishment of a moral endeavor.

The gift exchange is as a form of social action that primarily serves to develop or perpetuate social relationships and in which the reciprocal transfer of inalienable goods, which are valued as social beings or subjects, remains subservient. Commodity exchange, on the other hand, aims at purchasing alienable goods, which are valued as inanimate objects by virtue of receiving a monetary evaluation. When the two types of exchange co-occur in the same social system, Platenkamp argues, they tend to be designated as socially and morally disjoint forms of transactions that are conducted in distinct spheres or cycles of exchange. His analysis, however, demonstrates that market exchange is not always impersonal. Rather, it can serve to create types of social bonds and mutual obligations between exchanging parties. The commodity, like the gift, can possess a quality of the giver and thus manifest a form of inalienability. The seller, as Platenkamp shows, when dealing with an inherited object to which social and emotional values have been attached, can be seen to rationalize the thing's uncertain trajectory that will extend ultimately to the buyer – a non-kin individual.

For Silke Hensel, it is the trajectory of photographic technology and the photograph which opens up a discursive space in which to attend to how colonial representations of things and relations changed over time. Her contribution explores the roles different colonial and non-colonial actors played in the production of these representations. Photography, literally "writing with light", refers both to a technological practice as well as the production of the thing itself, i.e. the photographic object. The irregular circulation of photographic objects becomes the central theme in Hensel's discussion of knowledge production in the mutual but unequally shared history of a German Catholic missionary order and people in Oceania. While photographs in the form of portraits could create opportunities for success for local people, the majority of photographs travelled on

a one-way trip to Europe, where they would appear on postcards or in yearbooks directed towards a German audience.

Citing the material turn in anthropology, Hensel reflects on the impact the distribution of the missionaries' photographs had on their home society. Having acquired colonies relatively late in the day, Germany, who took over from the Spanish in Micronesia, decided to continue the Catholic mission, which Spanish Capuchins had established. The image fed into German (Catholic) society was one of European superiority and activism. One of the postcard motifs popular at the time depicted the hard work missionaries had to perform in order to spread the gospel and "civilize" the local population. Notably, photographs on postcards, which highlighted activities such as farming and building, further promoted the idea of objectivity prevalent in the early years of the development of the photographic medium. Yet, as Hensel demonstrates, the manipulation of pictures and the crucial link between photograph and caption lay in the hands of the German missionaries, who used photography to both advance their cause and status back home as well as to reaffirm their superiority vis-à-vis the local population.

While Hensel's interpretation of photographic objects and their circulation in Germany foregrounds the role of the missionaries, her analysis nevertheless invites questions of whether and how other colonial actors (e.g., administrators, the military and settlers) as well as the local population participated in the creation of these images. The "things set in motion" in this instance were not only the photographs but the representations of Self and Other at the time of encounter.

The contributions in this section demonstrate that objects and things can characterize different kinds of exchangeability at different points (past, present or future) in their social lives. Or to return to Appadurai (2006: 15), "[t]hus, today's gift is tomorrow's commodity. Yesterday's commodity is tomorrow's found art object. Today's art object is tomorrow's junk. And yesterday's junk is tomorrow's heirloom." This emphasis on the shifting meanings of things/objects across time and space runs thread-like throughout the contributions in this section, whether analyzing transformations in the "commodity phase of the social life of any thing" (as in Platenkamp's contribution here), the "commodity candidacy of any thing" (referring to Chibnik's contribution here) or the "commodity context in which any thing may be placed" (discussed in Alex's and Hensel's contributions here). All four papers privilege things as having social lives, in which they come to have value and agency. Anthropologists, therefore,

ought to remain cognizant of the ways in which the objects and the field as a whole are implicated in contemporary situations. If things/objects are mobile, that is, marked by their movement across networks of existence, their transformations may be productively addressed as "itineraries", which as a concept draws attention to the path of movement of a thing as well as the conditions conducive to their activity or state of rest.

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For those familiar with Helene Basu's ideas and work as well as those coming to them for the first time, let this volume act as an ensemble of academic voices resonating in time to the tune of her rich anthropological output. In compiling the present volume, we have sought to reflect the diverse methodological and conceptual as well as experiential and theoretical aspects of her work and to relate these aspects to a broader academic framework of anthropological inquiry. To do this, we attend to the vibrant and eclectic research interests of her friends and colleagues, lending a ready ear to the various ways in which they engage with and respond to her ideas. Each of the four sections that follow shed light on the relationship between what is distinguished as cultural or symbolic and what can be called "social order". They highlight respectively the transformation of relationships, narrations of transformation, re-creations of order, and things in motion. Practices in themselves are proved to be effective, potent, and self-asserting. In a word, practices transform and are in turn transformed.

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Transforming Relations

The *Dammam* Drum and the Struggle of the Siddis of Karnataka against Inferiorization

On Castes, Religions, Tribes, Races and Africanities

Andreas Hofbauer

Who are the Siddis of Karnataka?

A population of African descent, whose ancestors were slaves, has long lived in the interior of Karnataka, probably for centuries.[1] Clear parallels exist between the history of these communities and those known in the Americas as Maroons, Quilombos and Palenques. We can understand the origin of all of them as an attempt to create a form of sociability beyond the area of direct control of the old slaveowners. Yet substantial differences also exist: one links to the fact that the so-called Siddis have been incorporated into the Indian caste system. It is this situation, indeed, that makes the inequality/discrimination theme especially complex and constitutes a major analytic challenge for any comparison with the forms of racism known on the American continent[2]. This short essay, though, proposes to focus on how a process of re-evaluating cultural traditions was initiated as part of the fight against inferiorization and for the acquisition of Scheduled Tribe status: how the label "Africa" acquired a new political importance and how a drum – the *dammam* – was transformed into a kind of ethnic symbol.

The Siddis of Karnataka divide internally into three groups: the biggest group, which identifies as Catholic, possesses names mostly of Portuguese origin and speaks Konkani, the same language spoken in Goa. The Muslim Siddis, for their part, speak Urdu as a mother tongue, historically associated with Islamic influence. Finally, there exists a third group, the Hindu Siddis, who also speak the Konkani language. While most are believed to have served as slaves to the Portuguese who had settled in Goa, another portion may have migrated or fled

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[1] On different aspects of African slavery in India, see, for example, Harris 1971, Pinto 1992, Chauhan 1995, Basu 1995, 2003, Robbins & McLeod 2006, Campbell 2008, Jayasuriya & Angenot 2008.

[2] For a deeper exploration of this topic, see Hofbauer 2015 and 2021.

from Bijapur, an Islamized kingdom situated to the northeast of the region today inhabited by the Siddis. The history of the Hindu Siddis is even more enigmatic. In an important historical study, the Indian researcher Cyprian Lobo (1984: 14) advances the idea that they were originally Christian – having fled initially from Goa – and that, subsequently forced to work for the Brahmins and becoming extremely dependent on them, they assimilated the religious practices of their masters.

All the Siddi subgroups have generally been treated with disdain by the non-Siddi Indians who live nearby. They have been seen as a single group, as one more caste that tends to be situated, in the caste hierarchy, between the Marathas and the so-called untouchables. The Siddis usually consent to this positioning, feeling themselves superior to the "untouchables", also known as Dalits (Hofbauer 2015). It should also be noted that the subgroups have traditionally avoided intermarriages and that the integration of the groups into the religious communities to which they belong has occurred, in all three cases, in such a way that they came to assume subaltern positions within them. Throughout India, the caste logic also affected universalist religions and consequently impregnated the forms of living together within Muslim and Christian communities. Thus, until about 40 years ago, a period when just one church existed in the region (Haliyal district), the Siddis were obliged to stand in the last row of the church during Sunday masses and maintain a small space between them and the other worshippers. It can also be observed that the non-Siddi population continues to avoid marriages with Siddis even when they belong to the same religious community. This limited information points to a complex world of differentiation and inferiorization in which the Siddis are inserted.

Whether and to what extent the caste logic and/or the skin colour/race factor are responsible for the aforementioned processes of differentiation (inclusion and exclusion) and discrimination have been the topic of academic polemics. Among the few studies existing on the Siddis, we can perceive two antagonistic lines of interpretation. Most of the Indian researchers emphasize the integration of Siddis into national society in order to explain both the cultural characteristics and the forms of discrimination experienced by the group. The first substantial work (Palakshappa 1976) treats the Siddis as one more inferior caste that had incorporated Hindu culture entirely. In his historical report on the Siddis in the 1980s, which served as the basis for the later claims of Scheduled Tribe status, Lobo also highlighted the element of integration. The Siddis could be classified,

he argued, as a tribal society whose lifestyle was not substantially different from other inferior castes from the region (Lobo 1984: 13).

Pashington Obeng, for his part, a Ghanese-American researcher who has visited the region regularly since 1998, disagrees with the analyses of Indian colleagues, accusing them of having exaggerated the importance attributed to the cultural assimilation factor and the division of the Siddis into three religious groups – Christian, Islamic and Hindu. Opposing the interpretations of the Indian scholars, Obeng stresses the race factor, both as a criterion of discrimination and as a factor of identification and seeks to bring to light those experiences that all Africans and their descendants share. His analysis points to relations and connections that, according to the author, link the African Indians – a term that he prefers to the concept Siddi, though it is not used by the natives themselves – to Africa and to other Afro-diasporic worlds. He seeks to prove that a common cultural core exists among all the Siddis and compares their practices with cultural phenomena from Bantu Africa to reveal the Africanity hidden in Siddi cultural practices (Obeng 2007: 249). Thus, Obeng concludes that the African Indians "created and indeed preserved aspects of their culture and their religion", which has contributed to the affirmation of "their racial identity". Obeng also illustrates that, through his studies, he aims to provide an impetus to future investigations into counter-hegemonic positionings of diasporic Africans and into the diverse connections and networks among them (Obeng 2007: 249).

In my view, these two analytic lineages present the same problem: in one case (Palakshappa, Lobo), the authors employ a substantialized conception of Indian culture, while in the other case (Obeng), a notion of race is naturalized. Treating paradigmatic categories like race, ethnicity, and culture, but also caste and tribe, as ahistorical essences, though, makes it impossible to adequately understand those processes that involve the construction of differences and the disputes over them. I argue that the interplay of inclusion and exclusion never ceases to be structured. At the same time, it is important that we recognize the role of the agents: they are the ones who strategically put into practice signs and meanings, thereby positioning themselves in the game of differentiations.

A more accurate evaluation of the relations between phenotype and social hierarchies, therefore, requires including in our analysis the contexts in which processes of differentiation and discrimination occur and through which the respective categories are constructed and re-evaluated continually by the social agents themselves. It is important to bear in mind, for example, that the majority

of the population of northern Karnataka are dark-skinned and that the Siddi themselves do not tend to use skin colour as the main marker of difference: they differentiate, in first place, between people with curly hair and people with straight, long hair. The term race is not part of the everyday vocabulary of the majority of the Indian population, though this does not mean that phenotypical differences and preferences for light skin are not sensitive issues (witness the enormous success of whitening creams, including among Siddi women).[3] And we have also seen that the Siddis identify themselves as a group situated above the Dalits among whom there are people with lighter-coloured skin than the Siddis.

The conquest of Scheduled Tribe status as the starting point for a revision of history and cultural practices

In my conversations and interviews with elderly Siddis, I recorded many histories of degrading and discriminatory treatment in diverse kinds of social contexts: on the buses they were forced to sit right at the back; in markets they were frequently tricked by vendors; in schools, police stations and so on they were put through experiences they described as humiliating. It was common and may still happen that people from higher castes avoided physical contact with them.[4]

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[3] Undeniably a long tradition also exists in India of valorising lighter skin colour. At the end of the nineteenth century especially, there were efforts by researchers and colonial administrators (see, for example, Risley 1891) to explain caste differences in terms of racial-biological criteria. These ideas, like the biologized version of the Arian invasion theory (used to explain the domination of a white race over local populations, but subsequently also to protest against discriminations and defend the subjugated races against Brahmin invaders – see the ideas of the first great Dalit leader Phule (Dirks 2001: 237) – left their marks in the imagination of India's populations. Although the occurrence of people with lighter skin among the Brahmins is certainly more frequent than among the lower castes, and the number of people with dark skin is very noticeable among the "untouchables" (Dalits), it should be recognized that there are people with different skin tones in all the castes and subcastes (jatis). It is also the case that there are, in those groups that are placed in the social hierarchy below the Siddis, people with lighter skin colour than the majority of the Siddis. It is these kinds of realities that have the potential to undermine overly narrow and linear associations between caste and race or between "castism" and racism, as occurs both in the reflections of a certain Dalit elite and in works on Siddis oriented by pan-African or Afro-centrist theses.

[4] The words of a Hindu Siddi elder, interviewed by Charles Camara, provide an insight into diverse aspects of the inequalities and discriminations felt by the Siddis of the older generation: "Several times I have experienced humiliation at government offices. I had to wait

Virtually all my interlocutors over the age of 45 years have extremely harsh life stories to tell. The young Siddis, who helped me in the conversations, invariably used the term slave to translate into English two modalities of bonded labour that were very common in the region until very recently: both *jitadalu* and *maneyalu* refer to the provision of unremunerated work linked to a relation of extreme dependency on one person, generally justified by supposed debts and/or money loans. While the *maneyalu* mostly worked in the houses of Brahmins (in the Yellapur region) or those of the Lingayats or Marathis (Haliyal), *jitadalu* worked in the fields of the landowners.[5]

What led the Siddis to subject themselves to such a degrading relationship was almost always a process of indebtedness.[6] This not infrequently involved fraudulent negotiations in which the Brahmins exploited, on the one hand, their superior hierarchical position and, on the other, the lack of formal education of the Siddis – which made it extremely difficult for them to obtain support from legal institutions, which for their part were very weak, further worsening the situation of the Siddis.

Today, debt slavery can be considered a thing of the past, even though living conditions remain extremely hard. The transformations that have been taking place, even if at a slow pace, are due in part, as we shall see, to the struggle of the Siddis, which culminated in the acquisition of Scheduled Tribe status in 2003. An old Siddi leader told me, with some pride, that the first political entity of the Siddis (AKSDA) organized one of the first actions to free people from

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outside the building whereas others were allowed to sit in the waiting room. Sometimes I had to wait the whole day because others were given preference. I can tell you numerous examples when Siddis were cheated in the grocery shops and on buses. In the grocery shops it was a custom to give a lesser amount of rice or sugar to us Siddis. If we ever dared to complain we were not allowed to buy from that shop again; this was exceedingly difficult as there was only one shop in the area. On buses if a Siddi was seated he had to stand up and give the seat to any other caste person. […] These days were horrible; it makes me cry to think of it" (see Camara 2004: 105).

[5] Boys aged six or seven were very often sent by their father to the house of a Brahmin with whom they established an agreement: the child would work for the "master" for 3, 4, 10 or even more years and, in exchange, the family would be released from all its debts and sometimes receive a small amount of some agricultural product each year. It was also not uncommon for an entire family to be subjected to slavery of this type.

[6] I also heard of cases in which the parents decided to hand over one of their children due to their inability to feed him or her.

their bonded labourer condition and recalled the strong resistance of the Brahmins to this mobilization. Today dependency on landowners is not so direct and brutal as 30 years ago, although many Siddis, even if they possess a small plot of land, still need to temporarily perform jobs for Brahmins or Lingayats (a local higher caste).

It was in the context of the struggle to acquire Scheduled Tribe status[7], finally obtained in 2003, that the first associations emerged with the aim of uniting the Siddis beyond their internal religious divisions. The first important organization was created in 1984 (All Karnataka Siddi Development Association: AKSDA)[8] with the support of the priest and anthropologist Cyprian Lobo, a key figure in the coordination of the project that called for the inclusion of the Siddis in the Scheduled Tribes list. In a survey sent by Lobo as a report to Indian authorities, he sought to prove that the Siddis are a tribe like many others living in India: they met all the criteria that the government used at that time to recognize a group as a tribe.[9] The Jesuit anthropologist highlighted characteristics such as segmentary organization but used neither the particular origin of the population or specific cultural practices as an argument. On the contrary, in the report he claims that the Siddis had not preserved anything of their culture (Lobo 1984: 13).

It was only at the turn of the new millennium that new discourses emerged, which, with the goal of strengthening a supra-religious Siddi identity, began to underline the common African origin and the shared cultural practices. Again, this process received impulses from outside. Bosco Kaweesi, a social assistant of Ugandan origin with strong ties to the Adventist Church, encouraged young Siddis to study in colleges in Bangalore or Poona, organizing church funding for their accommodation and teaching. Pashington Obeng, a pastor from the Wellesly Hills

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[7] In theory, Scheduled Tribe status guarantees access to specific rights, such as: receipt of a basic food basket; financing for house construction; study grants (or exemption from college and university fees); allocated places for civil service (admin) jobs; and the right to land.

[8] Later the Siddi Development Project (1990) and the Siddi Development Society (1995) were founded. The majority of Siddi organizations had a relatively short lifespan: generally, they receive funds from national and/or international institutions (they count on the collaboration of agents from the church and/or social assistants) and, not infrequently, the end of the funding results in the termination of the group's activities.

[9] Apparently, the government followed the guidelines presented in the Handbook of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (issued in 1968) in order to define what a tribe would be. The manual cites four basic criteria: tribal origin, primitive way of life, settlements situated in remote and difficult to access areas, and also "general backwardness in all respects" (see Lobo 1984: 90).

Congregational Church and a specialist in religious studies, also became engaged in transformative political-social projects, stimulating contacts and dialogues between young Siddis and black Americans (for example, via donations of computers to a Siddi NGO).[10] All the efforts to combat discrimination and fight for specific rights, which can generally count on important strategic support from non-Siddi allies sympathetic to the group's situation, have also affected the way in which local leaders now look at its contemporary reality and its history: a new interest was generated in local traditions and the leaders felt induced to reinterpret and even transform them. A process of revision and revalorization of these practices and customs was, therefore, stimulated that had the potential to signal union and solidarity beyond internal religious divides.

The integrative force of *dammam*

It is no coincidence that, in this process, the *dammam* drum was chosen as a maximal symbol of the desired supra-religious Siddi identity, becoming almost a kind of ethnic symbol.[11] This type of drum is indeed a cultural element that forms part of the lived world of the three groups and is not used by their neighbours. The *dammam* is composed of a hollow tree trunk whose ends are covered by stretched hide, which, in accordance with tradition, should be from a deer. Following the ban on hunting this animal (1984 Forest Act of India), some people began to use goat skin, which, however – the Siddi *dammam* players criticize – is unable to reproduce the same highly appreciated traditional sound. To play the instrument, the person sits on the ground and places the trunk horizontally on their feet. Generally, just one *dammam* drum is played at a time, but at one marriage I saw and heard two *dammam* drums in action simultaneously.

In the past, one of my young Siddi interlocutors told me, the *dammam* was played not only at all the festivals assembling a large number of Siddis – marriages, funerals, ceremonies held in honour of the ancestors, and so on – but so

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[10] This specialist is the author who has most published on the Siddis of Karnataka in the last decades.

[11] As well as *dammam*, other popular music and dances exist like *fugidi* and *sigmo*, which are also presented, albeit less frequently, at events in which Siddis participate. There also exist other musical instruments used by the Siddis – such as the *dolki*, a drum similar to the *dammam*, but smaller, used exclusively by Islamic Siddis in religious ceremonies, or the even smaller *gumta* drum (a clay body with a pangolin skin) which frequently accompany the *dammam*; the *gumta* is also played by various neighbouring non-Siddi groups.

too in the population's everyday life – at the end of the working day, in people's homes, especially when someone visited. Playing the *dammam* apparently had various "functions", therefore: above all, it was a source of entertainment at a time when the region had neither recorded music or televisions; it brought people together, stimulating conversation and the exchange of ideas.

My attention was drawn to the fact that apparently none of the many *dammam* songs refers to the period prior to the Siddis migrating to the forests in the northwest of Karnataka state: I heard nothing about another kind of life in Africa or about the suffering caused by enslavement under the control of Portuguese or Islamic masters. The songs tell of the life of the Siddis, things that apparently never change; several of them refer to everyday activities and the way they should be executed – for example, one song is about hunting in the forest, fishing in the rivers and lakes, others provide instructions on how to dance. There are also those songs, Ramnath Siddi says, that seek to translate people's "inner feelings". Thus, the lyrics to one of the songs expresses the anguish of a Siddi bride who wishes to see the face of her future husband but knows that she will only do so on the day of the wedding. Pain, suffering, joy, happiness, but also work and health problems are recurrent topics in the *dammam* music. It seems, therefore, that through *dammam* playing, certain customs and collective norms are remembered and affirmed, at the same time as some songs provide space for day-to-day misfortunes, including those personal feelings that cannot be openly shown in daily life. The fact that this society only had contact with writing a relatively short while ago further increases the social importance of lyrics like those cited above.

During the period of his childhood, Ramnath Siddi told me, each settlement had at least one *dammam* – the tradition of playing the drums remained alive and well as described above until about two decades ago. More recently, though, the tradition of *dammam* music has undergone some alterations. The number of *dammam* drums in the Siddi communities began to decline, this young Hindu Siddi, aged 34, observed, linking this fact not only to the ban on hunting (curbing the manufacture of the traditional drum, which requires the use of deer skin), but also the spread of television in the region. People no longer gather around the *dammam* when they welcome visitors to their homes; thus, playing the drum no longer includes one of its basic traditional functions, namely the promotion of collective conviviality and the strengthening of community ties.

Today people prefer, as leisure, to watch a TV program and the *dammam* is remembered and requested only when a large collective festival takes place.[12]

While the *dammam* was and still is primarily played in private celebrations and somewhat reserved spaces, today it also appears – and increasingly so – in other circumstances. Whenever the Siddis affirm themselves in public as a cohesive group and defend their rights as a Scheduled Tribe, the *dammam* is present. Thus, the *dammam* drum had to be there on 1 October 2013, when around 4,000 Siddis celebrated ten years of Scheduled Tribe status in Yellapur. On this occasion, various *dammam* drums were carried on the shoulders of participants on a long march across the small town, arriving in a large field in the centre, the place where official commemorations are held. Speeches were made by political leaders, but there was also a cultural program with dances, a number of them accompanied by the *dammam* beat. It was in the context of the political struggles accompanied by the quest to construct a supra-religious Siddi identity that *dammam* drumming acquired new uses and meanings.

It is also emblematic that *dammam* has become one of the core symbols of the Siddi Nas festival. Each year (in April or May) this festival brings together more than 500 people belonging to the three Siddi subgroups. The event, increasingly seen by the Siddis themselves as the most important political manifestation expressing the union and solidarity among all Siddis, is celebrated in a deep dense forest next to a stream in the Sathumbail region.[13] At the origin of the festival is a religious ceremony perceived by most of the region's population as similar – if not identical – to Hindu ritualistic patterns: in it not just coconuts and various kinds of fruits, but chickens too and a sheep are offered to Siddi Nas. In one of the first ethnographic studies of the Siddis, Palakshappa (1976: 84) describes, in a few words, the Siddi Nas celebration as a festival (ritual) performed by Brahmins (Havig Brahmins) in which the Siddis played a secondary role: assisting the Brahmin priest, they offered flowers and coconuts. Today the priest holding the festival is in fact a Siddi. And, for him, Siddi Nas is a spirit that comes from Africa.

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[12] In the Haliyal region some weddings already take place without drum playing. At the same time, at this kind of ceremony, the presence of a sound system, which the Siddis tend to rent from a store in Haliyal or Yellapur, has become increasingly popular.

[13] Since the site is in Yellapur taluk (administrative district), close to Gullapur, there is a predominance of Hindu Siddis among the participants. Muslims are the group least represented at this event.

Dammam and Africa

Today the Siddi Nas festival not only counts on the presence of leaders from the Siddi community: it is common for local politicians and even others from the State government to turn up at the event and make use of the moment to address the audience. The common African origin of the Siddis is an element always remembered and repeated various times in the speeches, which typically emphasize the importance of union for strengthening the fight for the implementation of specific rights.

The innovations and reformulations of this festival apparently emerged as a political strategy that aimed to unite the Siddis in the struggle against discrimination and for Scheduled Tribe status. It was at the turn of the millennium that the director of a local NGO (Green India Foundation) and the old leaders, including a popular Siddi religious leader, met and the group decided to transform the Siddi Nas ceremony, celebrated until then in a family context, into a larger festival. From 2001 the Siddi Nas commemoration gained another dimension: the religious ritual was embedded within a wider program of events, spanning political discourses and presentations of music and dance. It also began to be held each year rather than every three years as in the past. It can be perceived, therefore, that the reformulations constructed through (re)positionings around a local tradition lead to a divinity (spirit) from a private home being transformed into a divinity (spirit) of a "tribe under construction": thenceforth it would represent all Siddis, irrespective of their religious belonging. According to Mohan Siddi, another young Siddi leader, attempts were made to hold Siddi Nas in a temple. All of them were thwarted, however (the walls of the temple fell down and other misfortunes happened – which, for this Hindu Siddi, was a sign that Siddi Nas loves nature and wishes to stay in the middle of the forest).

Since the reformulation of the festival, diverse presentations of Siddi Dammam Dance (dances and songs accompanied by the *dammam*) have constituted a fixed component of the cultural program. One variant of these performances calls special attention due to some peculiar characteristics that diverge markedly from local traditions: in it the young dancers tie mango leaves[14] and/or

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[14] In the Hindu tradition, the mango leaves symbolize new life, fertility, prosperity, and joy (see Obeng 2007: 127).

neem leaves[15] around the waist and paint their faces and bodies. In 2016, I observed that a group of young men performed with a bone painted on their cheeks and wearing chicken feather headdresses.

Young people dance, sing, and sometimes imitate gestures of African "warriors" to the sound of the *dammam*, acting out what they imagine to be an African "tribe". While there apparently exists a larger number of groups composed of young men,[16] girls have also begun to perform – always separately – their own interpretations of Siddi Dammam Dance (and there are already groups formed by children too). It is also significant that the older generation takes no part in this type of presentation (I never saw any Siddi, man or woman, over the age of 35 participate in one of these groups). Appearing half-naked in public is seen by elderly people as something strange or even shameful.

In 2013, I was directly involved in the presentation: the young dancers of the Amazing Siddi Voice group came down from the stage, surrounded me, "secured" me and made me sit in the middle of the stage. Performing the role of wild warriors, "armed" with wooden sticks, they danced around me, looking at me and my camera with curiosity and suspicion. Their facial expressions sought to express incomprehension and puzzlement. Holding my camera, I ended up performing the role of an intruder in an African tribal community: the exotic outsider was me. The audience laughed a lot. The presentation was a huge success and was heavily commented on afterwards.

Squatting in the middle of the stage, staring up and seeing half-naked bodies jumping all around me, I felt my mind swarm with images and ideas I knew from studies of the history of anthropology and old comics that today we would classify as racist, or at the very least politically incorrect. This scenario filled with symbols in which I had become part evoked in me associations with theses that had been elaborated in the early years of anthropological thought and with notions of alterity disseminated by colonial and racial discourses. For me, it was as though I had returned to an already old universe of images and meanings that, as postcolonial critics have argued, contributed fundamentally to denying "non-Western others" the status of subjects, citizens, and with this the right to equality.

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[15] The scientific term for this tree is *Azadirachta indica*, called neem or nimtree.
[16] In the 2005 festival, Obeng registered only male dancers (Obeng 2007: 127) and in 2013 there was still no female group.

At the same time, though, I clearly perceived that this same representation elicited in the audience meanings of another kind that, at this moment, apparently have a much greater importance for the Siddis. Their self-representation as a "primitive tribe", which was at the origin of the conquest of Scheduled Tribe status, allowed them to create a feeling of solidarity and group identity (Hofbauer 2019: 243ff.).

In this sense, the Siddi Dammam Dance variant can also be read as a performative display of the concept that played an essential role in the conquest of special rights: Scheduled Tribe. The presentation, which seeks to combine the notion of tribalism with Africanity, seems to appeal to an increasing number of Siddis, especially the younger generation. Not committed to any specific religious symbolism, it possesses the potential to stimulate and consolidate a feeling of solidarity and a group identity beyond the internal religious divisions.

In the case of this dance, it is possible, therefore, for us to observe the process of invention of a (new) tradition. This cultural innovation matches both the legal requirements that guarantee the obtaining of benefits of a Scheduled Tribe (the criteria "primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness"[17] are displayed performatively) and the internal political needs to unite the group. Unlike the playing of the *dammam* in people's homes (as described above), this type of Siddi Dammam Dance is enacted only at official events: it primarily aims to flaunt, in public, the "originality of the group" and, in this case of the Siddi Nas festival, also seeks to affirm the cohesion and unity of the Siddi population.

Since Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) we have known that all traditions are invented; however, some are more consciously invented and manipulated than others. In this case, we are dealing with a representation initially developed by the Sidis[18] of Gujarat.[19] According to a dancer interviewed by Beheroze Shroff

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[17] See the document issued by the Lokur Committee (1965) and also the Handbook of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (issued in 1968).

[18] Different written forms exist in the Roman alphabet – Sidi, Siddi (or, less common today, Siddhi) – which are also explained by regional differences and by the linguistic diversity within the group. Sidi is the form preferred to describe the descendants of Africans in Gujarat; in Karnataka, meanwhile, current usage favours Siddi (in Pakistan the variant Sheedi is predominant).

[19] In Gujarat there have existed for some time groups that tour promoting Sidi music and dances in India and even outside the country.

(2004: 172), a professional artist from Udaipur (Rajasthan) suggested to the Sidis that they use "an exotic African style" of clothing in their performances, which would become a custom. Sometimes, the dancers of the so-called *goma* dance (a local dance of the Sidis of Gujarat) also add peacock feathers to their attire (the bird symbol of India). One of my interlocutors told me that, at the turn of the millennium, some young Siddis from Karnataka saw a presentation of the Sidis of Gujarat on the internet (YouTube). They liked the idea and decided to imitate the performance. "We needed to show that we are tribal" remarked my companion of many long conversations.

At another encounter two years later, the same Siddi leader expressed his extreme discomfort with the commercialization that increasingly shapes the characteristics of this type of performance. Remuneration for the presentations (at the Siddi Nas festival, each group receives 10,000 rupees from the local government) has stimulated the formation of more and more groups, which began to perform at diverse localities outside the Siddi area (including in large cities like Bangalore), at a series of events to which they are invited.[20] Some people complain that the members of these groups are unconcerned with the collective, with the construction of a common identity, interested only in financial questions and personal promotion. Some traditionalists are upset by some of the innovations that have emerged in this context: for example, the hit songs played on the local radios that have been incorporated into the musical repertoires of some groups, who reproduce them (in Kannada – a language of the State – which is not the maternal language of any subgroup), adapting them to the rhythms of the *dammam*.

At the same time, it should also be observed that the proliferation of the performance groups provided a new momentum to the production of the *dammam* drums, whose use had been fading somewhat. However, the requirement of mobility – the need to travel to sometimes distant places – has also led to modifications to the main instrument itself. Not only the drum skin may be altered (goat instead of deer) but the actual body of the *dammam* (trunk) has begun to be made lighter to facilitate transportation during these travels: thus, smaller drums have emerged, for example. What should be presented as Siddi tradition and in what

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[20] Obeng recorded that at the historical conference on the African Diaspora in Asia held in Panjim (Goa) in 2006 there was the presentation of three Siddi groups, two from Karnataka and one from Gujarat (Obeng 2007: 137).

form, especially in the emblematic Siddi Nas festival, was always and continues to be a matter of dispute among the leaders (younger and older). As there is no one fixed group responsible for the organization of this event, small changes and readaptations occur annually that also reflect different positionings vis-à-vis the self-representation of the Siddis, revealing the view of the leaders concerning the way in which the Siddis should represent themselves not only inside but above all outside the group. Likewise, whether and to what extent the festival should assume a more religious or political character or become a major cultural-folk-loric entertainment event.

Final remarks

Without doubt it is the schooled youths – or "educated" youths, as they themselves like to say – who have assumed an increasingly important role in creating a new dimension to the sign of Africanity. This is a small group that formed in colleges, some of them in universities in Bangalore or Poona, where they learned about other worlds that, for their parents, seemed very distant and often difficult to comprehend. In the places and schools where they studied, they were frequently the only Siddis and tended to be seen by most Indians as strangers – that is, as African "foreigners". The lengthier education allowed them to reflect from another place on their lives inside and outside the villages. In these educational institutions, they sometimes had the opportunity to enter into contact with people (professors and researchers) interested in the life and history of the Siddis. It was in these contexts and dialogues that some of them "discovered things" about which their parents' generation had no information: that in the seventeenth century, in a region situated 500 kilometres north of their homes, there was a kingdom governed by an African called Malik Ambar, that Janjira Island (to the south of Mumbai) was controlled by African descendants until the Independence of India, and that there exist other populations denominated Siddi living in the state of Gujarat and the city of Hyderabad. In parallel with these discoveries, many of them became increasingly sensitized to the discriminations suffered in this "other world" in which nobody sees them as Indian: the fact that the Siddis have lived in small villages or in the Indian forests for centuries and are one of the many Scheduled Tribes is known only to the other castes and groups (Havig Brahmins, Lingayats, Marathas) living in the Uttara Kannada region (northwest of Karnataka state). In Dharwad, a city located some 50 kilometres from their homes, the

Siddis are generally seen and treated as African immigrants. Acts of discrimination and inferiorization occurring in these circumstances are no longer direct outcomes of the caste logic.

We also know that not only the relations between caste and colour/race have been the focus of lengthy political and academic discussions dating back to the nineteenth century at least: each of the categories has also been the subject of disputes within the academic world and beyond (see Hofbauer 2015). Similarly, notions like Africanity and Indianity are contested categories, meaning that it makes little sense to define them outside of specific contexts – that is, without seeking to understand the identifications and alliances constructed around them by the subjects themselves through discourses and social practices. "Africa" has always been present as a sign among the Siddis. However, its meaning and social importance have undergone changes over time. We have seen that it was in the context of the fight for rights and against inferiorization that Africa acquired political importance as a sign. It was at this moment when a spirit of union had to be created beyond internal religious divisions and when parts of the community were seeking to form outside alliances that the play of identity gained fresh momentum. Old habits and customs acquired new meanings and new symbols emerged.

Even new traditions were created, as in the case of the Siddi Dance performance. The use of the *dammam*, traditionally played to bring people together in the late afternoon and especially on festive days for everyone's enjoyment, acquires an important political connotation in these public presentations. Here, the technique of displaying semi-naked bodies – an aesthetic that to some extent breaks with the long saris, full-length trousers, and long-sleeved shirts that "envelop bodies" – functions primarily as an identity statement. This identity dimension has been joined more recently by another involving commercialization and folklorization, criticized by the traditionalists: in diverse villages, groups of young people are formed that from time to time travel to cities outside the Siddi area to present this type of performance in exchange for money. This innovation also reveals the divergences – if not the implicit conflict – between generations, insofar as, for older people, this aesthetic clashes with the values and traditions learned over their lifetimes – which also contain marks of the teachings of their – traditionally non-Siddi – religious leaders: priests, mullahs, Brahmins.

The identification processes and the construction of alliances and networks in which individuals and groups are involved are multiple and generally

point in more than one direction, although among these identifications and alliances some always acquire greater strength. It is above all a group of educated youths, who, glimpsing the possibility of articulating the fight on a level that transcends the local plane, began a process of creating new translocal and even transnational networks: imaginary networks (through new identity representations), virtual networks (via electronic media) and also non-virtual networks (via personal contacts). One factor that should not be underestimated in this process is learning of the English language, which opens doors for educated young people that remain closed to the majority of Siddis. They themselves are fully aware of the inherent potential of learning this language and are thus themselves also the biggest propagandists of teaching English.[21]

In the future, two parallel phenomena may occur: an increase in the dispersal of the Siddis on the Indian subcontinent and beyond (there is a growing number of Siddis working on the Arabian peninsula) and, at the same time, a strengthening of the self-identification of the Siddis as part of a global African diaspora. In any event, all the indications are that the sign "Africa" will continue to act as an identity framework destined to live and compete with others. The importance and meaning of the evoked Africanity will always depend on the contexts, power games and strategic projects developed by individuals and Siddi subgroups themselves.

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[21] In the schools, English – one of India's official languages – tends to be taught only as a third language after Kannada and Hindi. Only those young people who frequent colleges outside their region have the chance to learn the basics of English, allowing them to hold a conversation and read texts in the language.

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Creating New Sufi Publics at an Old Sufi Shrine

Katherine Pratt Ewing

A search for Sufis on YouTube may draw the viewer into a vicarious visit to the thirteenth-century shrine of Moin ud-Din Chishti in Ajmer, India, in the company of a Sufi *shaykh* with a long white beard, wearing a turban in the Turkish style. Accompanied by South Asian Sufi music, we drive until the streets become too narrow, then navigate the crowds on foot before arriving at the Chishty Munzil (house), just outside the shrine itself. The *shaykh* is Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, a spiritual leader of the Naqshbandi Haqqanis, a rapidly growing branch of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order that emerged from Turkey in 1973. Shaykh Hisham has travelled to India from his current home in the United States. He is guided on his journey through the narrow streets by a younger man, dressed in the garb of an elite Indian Muslim. This is Haji Syed Salman Chishty, a *gaddi nashin* (spiritual and hereditary successor) of the great saint of the Chishti Sufi order. In this transnational encounter, Shaykh Hisham settles onto a carpet on the roof of the building, which overlooks the shrine itself. One of the men sitting near him holds up a smartphone to record a video, and the *shaykh* speaks – not to the audience present in front of him – but to the phone. He offers a blessing for the thirteenth-century Chishti saint and then says, in English: "From the high mountains of India, the high *auliya* (friends of God) of Moinuddin Chishti, sending salaam around the world [...]."[1] How should we read this deflection of the *shaykh*'s gaze away from the local audience before him toward a different kind of public as he begins to speak? What does this moment shaped by a new form of technological mediation tell us about Sufi practice, the Sufi orders, and Sufi publics[2] in an age of new media?

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[1] Https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=w6A-C0dzyXs (last checked 18/10/2021).

[2] I follow Michael Warner's use of the concept of "a" public or "publics" to mean the kind of public that "comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation" (Warner 2002:50). Warner contrasts this understanding of a public from "the public" as the social totality and an audience that comes together in a visible space. In the present case, the texts that constitute a public through their circulation are not limited to printed texts but include other media such as YouTube.

The problem of religious mediation appears from unexpected vantage points in Helene Basu's work, which has engaged related questions about Sufi practice, ritual communication, and the globalizing forces of modernization. Her essay Davā and Duā: Negotiating Psychiatry and the Ritual Healing of Madness begins with a scene in which pilgrims approaching a shrine to a popular Sufi saint in Gujarat encounter a different form of modern communication intended to reshape the shrine's public: posters announcing the availability of psychiatry at the shrine (Basu 2014: 162). In earlier work she has traced the communicative role of music associated with the movement of African cults of affliction across the Indian ocean in Arab sailing ships across three centuries and the resultant plural societies that developed along the Indian coast (Basu 2008). Her work encourages us to think about Sufi practices and linkages from the perspectives of the often invisible publics constituted by different kinds of media.

A key question raised in recent years by anthropologists has been how new media are producing new publics with distinctive characteristics. Stressing the effects of changing forms of mediation on political engagement, collective action, and intersubjective engagement, Charles Hirschkind, Maria José A. de Abreu, and Carlo Caduff have suggested that the nature of publics themselves have changed (Hirschkind et al. 2017). Changing logics of the relationship between public and private challenge the very notion of a public or publics, such that, as Rosalind Morris has suggested, social media "enable communications without relation, connection without mediation" (Morris 2013: 106). This new logic produces a "withering of the dialogic forms of engagement, a shift to an ideology of publicity that emphasizes connectivity and circulation over relationality and response" (Hirschkind et al. 2017: S7), thereby bringing new kinds of publics with attenuated – or at least different kinds of social ties – into being. Given that a central aspect of Sufi practice has been the intense interpersonal engagement of Sufi *shaykh*s and their followers, what are the implications of new forms of mediation for the organizational practices of the Sufi orders and the relationship between shaykhs and their followers in an era when Sufism is viewed with skepticism and even condemnation by many Muslims?

The words, sounds, and images of the YouTube video of a meeting between an American Sufi leader and a *gaddi nashin* of one of the most important Sufi shrines in India can be read in relationship to a complex field of competing images and very different deployments of YouTube, Facebook, and the personal website by Sufis and other Muslims. These two Sufis in particular have used the

media in ways that upend some of the usual rituals of status and authority within Sufi orders while pushing against powerful global forces that would seek to delegitimize Sufism itself as unIslamic and archaic. Their interlocutors are a public that is different from the close circles of followers associated with most *shaykh*s of the Naqshbandi, Chishti, and other Sufi orders since many members of this public do not experience face-to-face interactions with their *shaykh* or with each other. And these *shaykhs* are competing for followers who might otherwise be drawn to a very different kind of website created by Muslims who assert that most aspects of Sufi practice, and sometimes even Sufism itself, are unIslamic and unmodern, thereby threatening the recruitment of a younger generation to the Sufi orders. More controversially for many Muslims, these two Sufis are also engaging a public that does not identify as Muslim but is drawn to Sufism's spirituality.[3]

Based on a reading of the encounter between the two *shaykh*s memorialized (at least for now) by YouTube, this chapter examines how certain modern Sufis are striving to embody a continuing tradition in ways that keep them within the fold of well-known Sufi orders with deep historical roots while simultaneously engaging the potential of new media to appeal to Muslim youth in response to the pressures of secular and Islamist modernities. Though many Sufis and Sufi orders have some kind of presence on the internet, often a Facebook page, these two Sufis are each engaging the internet in new ways that change the possibilities for experiencing Sufism and imagining oneself in relationship to the Sufi *shaykh*. With these transformations, do we see a new ideology of connectivity and a withering of dialogic relationality, as Hirschkind, de Abreu, and Caduff have suggested, or is something else going on?

Sufism's problems

Prevailing forms of Sufi organization and connectivity include a focus on the Sufi *shaykh* or *pir*[4] as teacher and healer who maintains personal ties with a community of followers. Kin terms express relationships within the community: followers of the same *shaykh* or *pir* are *pir-bhai* (brothers of the same *shaykh*), and

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[3] Kabbani has written: "The Sufis have stretched the bounds of this principle to the point where they do not even see any difference between their religion and other faiths. They opened their doors to accept all other religions without distinction" (Kabbani 2010, quoted in Dickson 2014: 417).

[4] *Pir,* the Persian term for elder, is used in South Asia to refer to a Sufi *shaykh*.

the *shaykh* of one's *shaykh* is one's *dada-pir* (grandfather *pir*). Though the kin terms are metaphorical, the *pir* often designates his own son or other close relative as his successor, and children of followers are typically initiated into the Sufi order of their parents. The connection between *pir* and follower is thus passed down through generations. The shrine containing the graves of this lineage of *pir*s are a focal point of ritual activity that draws followers together for weekly *zikr* (recitation of the names of God and devotional phrases) and the annual '*urs* or celebration of the *pir*'s death.

But many Sufi-oriented communities are losing their young people. This is especially visible in diasporic Muslim communities, though it is also true in Muslim-majority countries, especially among urban youth. I recently visited the Shah Jalal Mosque and Cultural Centre in Cardiff, Wales, where the Sufi ritual of *zikr* is held on Thursday evenings. An independent UK mosque directory describes the mosque as being of the Fultoli Sufi orientation.[5] Founded by Bangladeshi migrants to Wales, the mosque has a school in the basement where children receive an Islamic education. But my guide, who was himself raised in the mosque, told me that the community is now undergoing something of a crisis. He said that young people are not following in the footsteps of their elders, partly because there is no way to train as an imam within the Fultoli Sufi tradition in the UK.[6] The mosque does have a Facebook page[7] (links to the mosque's own website are nonfunctional), with posts of quite a few smartphone-generated videos, but the site is clearly not aimed at attracting the attention of the youth of the community, who are native English speakers. Much of the content is in Bengali. When I consulted the Facebook page in April 2019, one post, with a title in Bengali, was a video of a meeting. The audience was all male, nearly all graying, and the language of the meeting was Bengali. Other videos commemorated holidays and celebrations of the children's accomplishments in Quran memorization. But it is not a site where one might learn more about Islam or Sufism. In fact, the site provides no evidence of the mosque's Sufi orientation to an outsider's first perusal. The most dynamic video I saw on the site, with evidence of young adults

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[5] See the link https://mosques.muslimsinbritain.org/maps-mobile.php?id=573 (last checked 15/11/2021).

[6] Bulbul Siddiqi (2018: 122), in his discussion of the Tablighi Jamaat in Britain, also mentions that the Fultoli Order is less popular among second and third generation British Bangladeshis than other organizations.

[7] Https://www.facebook.com/ShahJalalMosqueCardiff/ (last checked 15/11/2021).

in attendance, was of a guest lecture on "friendship", with difficult-to-hear audio, given by a Deobandi imam who is based at another Cardiff mosque.[8] To the youth of the community, the mosque is undoubtedly a site of attachment to family, familiar rituals, and ancestral roots, the place where one learned the Quran as a child, but it is also a world compartmentalized from one's social and work life as a citizen of the UK and, perhaps, as a university student or a young professional.

This disconnect between Sufi orientations and second- and third-generation diasporic Muslims is not limited to this particular Sufi order. Ron Geaves has traced a broader history of the slow development of Sufi institutions in the UK and the failure of Sufi groups such as the South Asian Ahl-e Sunnat ul-Jama'at (also known as Barelvis)[9] to retain the interest of Muslim youth (Geaves 2000, 2006). Factors he identified include the rural, uneducated background of many of the Barelvi-oriented migrants to Britain and the resultant difficulty in recruiting Barelvi imams for mosque leadership, the ethnic particularly of Sufi communities, and the focus of Sufi leaders on retaining ties to their local shrines in South Asia. These issues were all in evidence at the mosque I visited in 2019.

Based on his own research on the Chishti order in the 1990s, Geaves also noted a trend that is directly relevant as background to the meeting between Muhammad Hisham Kabbani and Haji Syed Salman Chishty that I described at the opening of this chapter:

> The *sajjada nishin* who maintain the *dargah* at Ajmer refuse to establish centres of Islam in Britain where the *tariqa* can be organized. They maintain the focus of attention on the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti or his descendants in the subcontinent. Remittances are collected to maintain the shrine centres and visiting *shaykhs* from the shrine help keep the attention of their audiences on problems in the subcontinent rather than organizing themselves in a British context. (Geaves 2000: 87ff., quoted in Geaves 2006: 146)

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[8] This Imam, Mufti Bilal Syed, is Deoband-trained, and himself has visibility in the media. He was, for instance, interviewed by Dr. Mansur Ali as part of a public lecture series at the Cardiff University Islam UK Centre. https://vimeo.com/90856737 (last checked 15/11/2021).

[9] "Barelvi" is the term often used to identify this movement, which took shape in response to nineteenth-century reformist efforts in South Asia to curtail popular practices associated with shrines and Sufi *pir*s.

As we shall see, this description of the Chishti *sajjada nishin*s,[10] with their focus on local activities at the shrine in Ajmer, does not apply to the relatively youthful Haji Syed Salman Chishty.

Another key problem for the Sufi orders and their recruitment of young people is the competition. Reform movements such as the Jama'at-i Islami have for decades focused their attention on youth—as I saw in Pakistan in the 1980's, where the Jama'at-i Islami had an active organization targeted at students located on Punjab University's campus in Lahore, Pakistan. The reformist Deobandis also originated in South Asia. Though they do not deny the validity of Sufism per se, they do reject most popular practices associated with *pirs* and the shrines, which they call *bid'ah* (unlawful innovation). They have placed great emphasis on education, establishing a vast global network of *madrasas* that not only train many of the imams of their own mosques but also provide a pipeline of imams even for Barelvi-oriented mosques in diasporic communities.

Geaves has identified what he called a "counterattack" by Barelvi-identified Sufis in Britain against the incursions of reformists with the introduction of charismatic *shaykhs* to Britain beginning in the 1980's (Geaves 2006: 150). He noted their rather limited success at recruiting Muslim youth, in contrast to two non-Barelvi Sufi organizations: the Naqshbandi Haqqanis and the Idara Minhaj ul-Qur'an. The Idara Minhaj ul-Qur'an is especially notable for innovative organizational forms borrowed from reformist organizations such as the Jama'at-i Islami.[11] The original leader of the Naqshbandi Haqqanis was Shaykh Nazim al-Qubrusi. Based in Cyprus, Shaykh Nazim was notable for his extensive travel, with regular visits to Haqqani followers in several countries. Geaves noted that he succeeded in reaching Muslims in the UK who found the practices of their parents old-fashioned. Shaykh Nazim appointed *khalifas* (spiritual successors) in the US and Europe, with US-based *khalifa* Muhammad Hisham Kabbani being especially visible. It is Muhammad Hisham Kabbani whose visit to Ajmer and meeting with Haji Syed Salman Chishty were recorded for an internet-based public.

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[10] The terms *sajjada nashin* and *gaddi nashin* are often used interchangeably and refer to either the rug or couch on which the *shaykh* sits. Haji Syed Salman Chishty is one of many *gaddi nashins* who are descended from Moin ud-Din Chishti and share in the maintenance of the shrine and its activities.

[11] Its leader, Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadiri, spent many years in Canada before returning to Pakistan to engage in politics in 2012. See Hermansen 2020 for a recent discussion of Tahir ul-Qadiri's teachings and activities.

The internet is another challenge for Sufism. The development of effective educational institutions and new organizational forms is no doubt important for revitalizing the Sufi orders, as Geaves has suggested. But at least as significant for the recruitment of Muslim youth to a specific orientation to Islam is the internet, and the power of the internet is to some extent independent of powerful organizations such as the Jama'at-i Islami or the Deobandi educational institutions. Many young Muslims today turn directly to the internet to learn about Islam. When they do, they are likely to come across sites like IslamiCity.org, which promotes a very specific sort of Islam as the only proper Islam.[12]

Scholars of Islam have noted how technological changes – the printed book (Robinson 1993), radio (Messick 1996, Larkin 2009), TV (Abu-Lughod 1993), audiocassettes (Hirschkind 2006), and the internet (Anderson 1999) – have altered the nature, scope, and sites of religious authority, undermining the monopoly of the traditional *ulama* and leading to a proliferation of sources of knowledge and authority (see Krämer & Schmidtke 2006: 12). But these changing forms of mediation, even when they facilitate the possibility of speaking outside of established institutional frameworks, do not ensure that a range of voices and messages will be heard. As Jon Anderson has noted, Islam first reached the internet through the work of what he called "technological adepts" who had the skill to bring the Quran and Hadith online and whose own training was in the analytic skills of the sciences rather than in the hermeneutic skills associated with a religious education (Anderson 2003: 894f.), resulting in an online focus on texts and debates about how to lead a proper Muslim life. This focus was a particular concern for Muslim students who had moved to places like North America and Europe for higher education.

Furthermore, back in the 1990s, Saudi-linked initiatives were quick to colonize the Islamic corner of the internet, seeking to modernize Islam by stripping Islam of innovations that have accrued over centuries in order to return to the model of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. Naqatube, the Saudi answer to YouTube, offers a filter that seems to exclude Sufis altogether. A search for "Sufi" on the United States-based Islamictube – which has attempted to rival YouTube for

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[12] The IslamiCity website was established around 1997. See Lawrence (2002: 242f.) for a discussion of IslamiCity and its Saudi roots. Lawrence presents an overview of the major Islamic websites active at the turn of the 21st century.

the attention of Muslims – similarly turns up no hits. When Sufi practices are occasionally mentioned on IslamiCity, it is only to dismiss them as superstitious traditions that have no place in the modern world. YouTube itself, with its open format and automatically generated links to other YouTube posts, is thus one of the few places where the Muslim seeker may stumble across anything related to Sufism, and most of these initial hits are for Sufi music performances.[13]

Internet presentations of Islam are thus heavily biased against Sufi approaches. On most of these Islamic websites, Sufis are simply invisible. This anti-Sufi bias, going as far as the idea that Sufism is not even a part of Islam, has roots in the colonial period. Sufism as a term was a colonial construct, first coined by British Orientalist scholars in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Ernst 1997: 8).[14] Sufism was delineated in colonial sources through conceptual splits that constituted its boundaries. One split was a bifurcation between, on the one hand, the Sufi as mystic and producer of literature that Orientalists brought to the Western world through translation and, on the other hand, the living holy man or *pir* who was studied by colonial anthropologist/administrators and monitored as a dangerous wanderer, a corrupt hereditary descendant of a Sufi ensconced at a shrine, a charlatan purveyor of talismans and superstition, or an ecstatic whose religiosity stood for dangerous excess. They thus emphasized living Sufis as corrupt charlatans and the practices associated with shrines as ignorant superstitions. I heard echoes of this split in Pakistan in the 1970s and 80s when I was conducting research there: many people did not recognize *pir*s associated with shrines as having any connection to Sufism, which they associated with well-known Sufi poets. There is, of course, a class dimension reflected in this judgement. Middle class, literate Lahoris who viewed them-

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[13] Top hits in a google search on the term "Sufi" on May 30, 2019 turned up Wikipedia and Encyclopedia Britannica articles on Sufism, as well as the New York Times article "Who are Sufis and Why Do Some Extremists Hate Them?" (NYT November 27, 2017) https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/middleeast/sufi-muslim-explainer.html (last checked 15/11/2021). There were also three links to YouTube videos, including one intended to introduce the searcher to Sufi spirituality.

[14] It should be noted that the term "Sufism" was based on the Arabic noun "tasawwuf" (the process of becoming a Sufi). Though often used interchangeably with "Sufism", the Arabic term does not have the same significance: it does not operate within the same conceptual framework and does not refer to the same range of phenomena.

selves as modern rejected the superstitious practices of the ignorant lower classes, reproducing the European Protestant and colonial administrative view of local practices.

The traces of a second conceptual split made by colonial observers also contributes to an anti-Sufi bias among Muslims today: the concept of Sufism as a form of mysticism stemming from the individual's relationship with God was split off from "legalistic" Islam (Ernst 1997: 8). Sufism was imagined to have origins separate from the Semitic environment that produced the Prophet Muhammad, the Quran, and the institutional beginnings of Islam. Sufism was viewed as a product of Aryan Persia or central Asia and thus not really Islamic. This split facilitated the imagining of Sufism, even in its philosophical and literary forms, as something apart from and even antithetical to Islam in subsequent eras. The prejudice against practices associated with Sufi shrines thus runs deeper among Muslims than the sensibilities of diasporic Muslim youth who want to distance themselves from the ethnic, foreign habits of their parents.

Another factor making Sufism suspect among many Muslims today is the way that Sufism was taken up as an American and European popular practice apart from Islam, linked to what came to be called New Age spirituality in the 1970's. Some of these practitioners assert that Islam is not a necessary part of Sufism, which instead falls within the broader category of mysticism as a form of individual spirituality.[15] The growing public visibility of this form of Sufism detached from the Sufi orders and any particular institutional forms, communities, or practices makes the claim of a Sufi identity problematic, especially in a context where Salafis and, more generally, those who see Sufi practices as anti-Islamic are a vocal presence in local communities.

Yet another problem for Sufis in the modern world of reformist Islam and secularism seems to be the association of the Sufi with *walāya* (nearness to God): the idea that there are certain individuals who are closer to God than others and that this closeness can either confer *baraka* (blessing, spiritual power) on others or confer special status that produces a resultant social hierarchy. Even the possibility that a Sufi as a teacher can communicate specialized knowledge to a disciple through his physical presence has been attenuated: the pious Muslim can

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[15] Influential examples include Inayat Khan (1882-1927), founder of The Sufi Order in the West, and Idries Shah (1924-1996), who published the popular book *The Sufis* in 1964.

best learn how to become close to God by reading the Quran directly. A teacher may be useful only in helping one learn to read the Quran. This change reflects a modern semiotic ideology[16] about the nature of language, knowledge, individual agency, and relationality that is reinforced by the ready availability of printed books and, more recently, the internet to a growing literate and educated middle-class population.[17] In contrast to the embodied knowledge of the Sufi, which transcends language and can be transmitted through the bodily co-presence of the teacher and disciple, modern knowledge is associated with the objectifications of written language. The teacher can be replaced by the book, which bears its own authority, and the autonomous individual can learn how to be a good Muslim and even experience God's presence by reading these books, as many young Muslims have told me. The social presence of others, as in communal prayer, may emotionally help the individual forge this connection with God, but no human has the power to directly affect this connection in another or to use this language to create material effects in the world – i.e., miracles. Similarly, *baraka* cannot be captured in an object such as a talisman prepared by a Sufi healer, and a grave is just a grave – one can pray for the deceased anywhere, and the dead have no power to help the living. Sufi claims to spiritual knowledge and transmission violate this semiotic ideology, not only for those inclined toward Salafism, but even for many "ordinary" Muslims today. But a modern semiotic ideology, in which it is assumed that knowledge can be captured by the written word and not just through oral, face-to-face transmission, fits well with the potentialities of the internet. Furthermore, the internet's ability to capture and transmit the sounds of Quran recitation and the oral teachings of well-known teachers makes the experience even more immediate than the written text.

Given the mutual reinforcement of a secular, rationalist perspective and a reformist Islamic position, even the "ordinary" Muslim today tends to take an anti-Sufi, Quran-focused approach to Islam that rejects the validity of shrine visitation and the possibility that the dead saint can hear the living, as an embarrassing manifestation of ignorance that should be relegated to the past. In many parts

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[16] Webb Keane, who has developed the concept of semiotic ideology, defines it as "people's underlying concerns about what signs are, what functions signs do and do not serve, and what consequences they might produce or not produce" (Keane 2018: 65).

[17] On the effects of mass education on the nature of religious authority in the Arab Muslim world, see Eickelman (1992).

of the Muslim world, views of enlightenment and knowledge that were promoted in the colonial period have been grafted onto an enlightened, text-based Islam focused primarily on the Quran so that the general cultural milieu has moved toward a more conservative, anti-Sufi consensus that prevails, at least in public, in many middle-class circles. This is the version of Islam that is easily found and widely transmitted on the internet on sites such as IslamiCity.

Sufis and new forms of mediation

In the face of these forces that have led many to turn away from Sufism, Sufis in recent decades have turned to new strategies for pushing against their marginalization, sometimes in conjunction with national projects for promoting Sufism. These national projects typically promote a modern Sufism that does not challenge modern understandings of the material world and promotes Sufism as cultural heritage, especially Sufi music. Approaches to Sufism intended to appeal to a middle-class audience have come to play an increasingly visible role in government-linked organizations in Pakistan, with its succession of Sufi Councils. One of these councils also promoted Sufi music.[18] In India, the government has embraced Sufi shrines as sites of communal harmony between Muslims and Hindus. The shrine of Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer plays an important role in this ideological process. Even in an era when Hindu nationalists control the Indian government and have increasingly marginalized Muslims, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays attention to this shrine. In March of 2019, for instance, he met with a delegation of representatives from the shrine to give them a *chador* (a cloth to be laid on the grave) to be used at the annual 'urs (Times of India 2019). As in Pakistan, Sufis have formed nation-wide organizations, such as the All India Sufi Sajjada Nasheen Council. A recent meeting of the council was held in Ajmer and chaired by the Dewan of the shrine, Zainul Abedin Ali Khan, who is the successor to Moinuddin Chishti officially recognized by the Indian government (Business Standard News 2019).

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[18] As the Karachi newspaper Dawn wrote in 2009, the Pakistani government was establishing the *Sufi* Advisory Council, "with an aim to combating extremism and fanaticism by spreading Sufism in the country" (Dawn 2009). The article also mentioned that this council replaced an earlier National Sufi Council, which had gone dormant after hosting a Sufi music festival.

The Moroccan government, worried about Islamic extremism and Saudi influence, has been particularly active in working to rebuild public support for Sufism in recent years, both through new institutions such as the recently established Mohammed VI Foundation of African Ulama and the deployment of new media such as TV programming to educate the public about Sufism (see Lefèvre 2015: 686).[19] The Moroccan government has also promoted a widely known international Sufi Festival, which can be seen as something of a model for recent efforts to expand Sufi publics. This is the Festival de Fès de la Culture Soufie, headed by Faouzi Skali and "under the patronage" of the Moroccan King Mohammed VI.[20] As Skali, who is also an anthropologist trained at the Sorbonne, explained when I met him in Fes and he told me his life story, he was introduced to Sufism by his grandfather, who was a Sufi *shaykh,* but after getting a university education and spending time in France, he realized that Morocco's Sufi heritage was being lost because the old methods of teaching and initiation into a Sufi order were not attracting educated young people. He had the idea of creating the Sufi Cultural Festival to draw new, international audiences interested in Sufi spirituality and music. Skali, who is himself from an important Sufi family, had felt that his family's own practices were out of touch with the modern world and founded the festival to "bring the spirit of Sufism back to its early glory." At the 2017 festival, Skali invited the audience to experience a "journey in the footsteps of the great mystic Ibn Arabi, following Ibn Battuta, who traveled throughout the world, pursuing the magic of the Sufi brotherhoods."[21] The Sufi Cultural Festival, with its high-tech staging and its ability to draw large crowds who are attracted by its musical performances and a general promotion of spirituality as much as any specific doctrinal teaching, is a strategy of drawing youth to Sufism through new media. His activities demonstrate an effort to appeal to an educated middle class across national boundaries.[22]

Sufis have also turned to the internet. In addition to Sufi musical performances, which have a significant presence on the internet, especially YouTube,

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[19] This effort is closely linked to a revival of the Maliki *madhhab* (school of law) that had prevailed in Morocco before Saudi influence led to a turn to the Hanbali *madhab*.

[20] Https://festivalculturesoufie.com/ (last checked 18/10/2021).

[21] Https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/10/231125/10th-edition-fez-sufi-music-festival/ (last checked 18/10/2021).

[22] Skali has also published numerous books about Sufism in French (Skali 2000a,b, 2002, 2007).

Sufis have created websites focused on a particular Sufi order or Sufi teacher in ways that facilitate transnational Sufi networks. Even before the internet, these transnational Sufi networks began reaching across the world with increasing density as diasporic Muslim communities developed during the colonial and post-colonial eras.[23] The reinforcement of spiritual ties through new forms of mediation made possible by new technologies is not new: I recall a Sufi *shaykh* based in Lahore in the 1970's who blew his blessings through the phone line to a follower in England (see Ewing 1997: 4). In recent years, the technology of the internet allows followers to access the teachings of their *pir* and to follow events such as the *'urs* from afar. But, judging from the content of websites such as Shah Jalal Mosque in Cardiff, the orientation of many Sufi communities is to maintain existing ties with spiritual networks and families back home rather than to appeal to youth. The internet in this situation is little more than a tool to help maintain face-to-face relationality over great distances, much as the telephone has been. Francesco Piraino has similarly argued that "the internet can […] represent a new strength for religious movements without changing their communitarian forms" (Piraino 2016: 95), indicating that most Sufi groups use the internet to provide basic information about the Sufi order and reduce the distance between *shaykh* and disciples.

But there are Sufi Shaykhs who, like Faouzi Skali and his Sufi Cultural Festival, have embraced the publicity possibilities of the internet in new ways. Shaykh Hisham Kabbani and other *shaykhs* of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order are another prime example of this. Piraino suggests that their use of the internet is qualitatively different from that of most other Sufi Orders: for them, "the internet is a place where charisma is constructed and where rituals and feelings can be experienced and shared", producing what he calls a "post-modern" religiosity (Piraino 2016: 95).

There is certainly what might be called a "post-modern" quality to the moment when Shaykh Hisham turned and spoke to a smart phone instead of the audience in front of him in Ajmer. It is distinctive because Shaykh Hisham was speaking beyond his local audience at the Chishti shrine in Ajmer to the public created by a video that he knew would be posted to the internet. Shaykh Hisham's visit to Ajmer is one of the events that one is likely to encounter while looking

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[23] See Werbner 2003 for a discussion of Sufi networks linking the UK and Pakistan.

for Sufis on the internet, either on YouTube or on his active website, Sufilive. Though representing different Sufi orders, both Shaykh Hisham and Haji Syed Salman Chishty are accomplished users of the internet who promote similar messages of inclusiveness that skirt the edges of controversy as they push the boundaries of Sufi and Muslim communities. Like many other Sufis, they are visible on YouTube and have Facebook pages as well as active websites. Their sites are notable for the dynamic quality of their internet presence, with a dense web of links that can draw both the curious and the disciple alike into deepening involvement with their messages, their books, and their visual and audible presence in photographs and well-shot videos. At the meeting in Ajmer, their messages are captured on the banner hanging over their heads: "Come, come again! Whoever you are!" – a quotation from the thirteenth century Persian Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi, who is popular among New Agers. The core message of these Sufis is recruitment and unity – the creation of a new, global public that is attracted by a message very different from the one promoted by the anti-Sufi preachers who are so visible on the internet. While the Islam websites such as IslamiCity are engaged in boundary-drawing, offering detailed specifications of how the proper Muslim should and should not behave, these Sufis aim to compete on the same global turf, attracting youth by offering a message of spirituality, love, and brotherhood.

Though both of these shaykhs are members of major Sufi orders with long, venerable histories, their invitation also stands in tension with the disciplinary techniques of these orders, which are taught through personal interactions between shaykh and disciple within a small circle of fellow disciples. The openness of this public is closer to what happens when large crowds of diverse backgrounds, including many Hindus, attend festivals and musical performances at the shrine. Yet, in contrast to the experience of the crowds who are touched by the Chishtis but never get very close to the shaykh, the viewer who is drawn in through the internet gets to experience the *shaykh* as if present right in front of him, with no one to block the view. Many Sufis are present on YouTube, but most lack the kind of internet visibility that reaches into new publics.

Haji Syed Salman Chishty is one of several *gaddi nashin*s associated with the shrine of Moinuddin Chishti. It is common for ritual gatherings at the shrine to be recorded on a smartphone and uploaded to YouTube, yet few events are designed to accommodate the distant presence of a future public, an imagined community constituted through this communication. Given the importance of the

shrine, these other leaders may even have important contacts, receiving visitors such the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, or even speaking before the UN, as Dewan Syed Zainul Abedin did in 2000, but such an appearance does not translate into a recruitment strategy. Dewan Abedin's online presence emphasizes his legitimate succession as the closest direct descendant Moinuddin Chishti and his right to run certain events at the shrine, as guaranteed by the Indian courts since the colonial era. But most YouTube videos of him record events that are staged without taking the demands of the camera into account. There are often multiple smartphones in evidence, as in the video, shot by an attendee, of the important event in which the Dewan designated his son as his successor by wrapping a turban on his head. Like the rest of the attendees on the fringes, the online viewer struggles for a clear view of the ritual.[24]

The one activity at the shrine that does allow for a more developed YouTube presence is Qawwali (Sufi devotional music). The Chishti Order has always been distinctive for its patronage of music, in contrast to most other orders in South Asia, which have viewed musical performance as a violation of Sharia. Regular Qawwali performances draw large crowds of all backgrounds to the shrine. Most of these performances are rituals during which devotees approach the shaykh and the singers to shower money on them. Some may fall into trance, be caught by someone nearby, and placed prostrate before the *shaykh*. But other Qawwali performances takes the form of concerts held at a space for cultural events and are professionally recorded and posted to the internet by the recording company itself. Such performances take on the quality of cultural events that draw people of all backgrounds, analogous in some respects to the Sufi Cultural Festival in Fez organized by Faouzi Skali.

Haji Syed Salman Chishty, who has a B.A. in Economics and Commerce, has also created new cultural forms that seem to blur any line that might be drawn between "ritual" and cultural performance, drawing on new media to create a new public focused on forms of spirituality that may even blur the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslim. He has established the annual Rung Festival, where the meeting with Shaykh Hisham took place. The walls of the hall where he received Shaykh Hisham were set up as an art gallery for paintings and calligraphy with Sufi themes, and he himself is a photographer whose images of his

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[24] Https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=BDdD_at_TlA (last checked 18/10/2021).

Sufi journeys are exhibited in galleries and photography exhibitions. He speaks at conferences and universities on spirituality and interfaith dialogue, he writes articles and books in English, and his Rung Foundation promotes charitable service while spreading a message of love across 40 countries (according to the website).[25]

Shaykh Hisham is a rather controversial figure within the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order, a controversial branch of one of the main Sufi orders. The Naqshbandi Order has historically had a reformist orientation that excluded some of the "excesses" associated with other Sufi orders. Its shaykhs taught silent *zikr* and prohibited the use of music in their gatherings. The founding shaykh of this Haqqani branch of the order, Shaykh Nazim al-Qubrusi (now deceased), had urged his spiritual successors to spread knowledge of Sufism in Europe and the United States. He also made the *zikr* vocal and allowed the use of music and the *hadra* (an ecstatic dance). In contrast to the individualized oath of allegiance ceremony that characterizes initiation into most Sufi orders, Shaykh Nazim would initiate large audiences without knowing them individually. The usually intimate, private conversations (*sohbet*) between a *shaykh* and a small circle of disciples were no longer private but were circulated publicly through a variety of media, including cassette tapes and the internet (Böttcher 2006: 259). This dissolving of a line between public and private is dramatically illustrated by the intimate moments of Shaykh Nazim's final illness: videos of his last moments were taken at the hospital and streamed live on Facebook (Piraino 2016: 103).

Based on participant observation and conversations with Shaykh Nazim and his followers in several countries, Annabelle Böttcher has examined the modes of connection between Shaykh Nazim and his followers and has written of the nature of his authority and appeal.[26] In contrast to a focus on a modern semiotic ideology in which learning can be fully transmitted through books and the teacher can be no more than a knowledgeable person, Shaykh Nazim was seen as a *wali* (friend of God, singular of *auliya*) with extraordinary powers who served as a conduit through which God's blessings flowed to disciples who took an oath of allegiance that established a spiritual link that could be maintained even if he was not physically present. Followers used the metaphor of a radio

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[25] Https://www.chishtyfoundation.org/ (last checked 18/10/2021).
[26] She has provided a detailed account of his background and teachings, as well as some of the experiences of his disciples (Böttcher 2006).

wavelength that one could tune into (Böttcher 2006: 252). His teachings go well beyond the promotion of an abstract spirituality that can be communicated through media such as music at a concert. Though *baraka* works like the modern medium of radio, the source of the transmission is crucial: Like the Sufi *shaykh* whom I met in the 1970's who blew God's *baraka* contained in his breath through a telephone line, Shaykh Nazim was able to channel *baraka* through the internet.

Shaykh Nazim's *khalifa*s (spiritual successors) have focused on music and the internet to carry out their mission of revitalizing Sufism. One of his European *khalifa*s performs with his own band throughout Europe and posts videos of his music, which is a mixture of classical Sufi music, rock, and world music (Piraino 2016: 99,10). Shaykh Hisham is the US *khalifa*, and his digital presence in the form of videos, books, smartphone apps, and multiple websites engages a large and expanding public but has led to suspicion within the order as his visibility has begun to rival that of the founding shaykh himself. Garbi Schmidt offers a detailed account of the wide array of webpages established by Shaykh Hisham, as these were configured at the time she was writing in 2004. She called this network of sites, intended for a global audience, a "massive web complex" that promotes the *shaykh*'s charismatic qualities through both statements of the *shaykh*'s saintly attributes and closeness to God and a "guestbook", in which followers post their emotionally charged spiritual experiences in relation to him, including the "miracle" of having discovered him on the internet (Schmidt 2004: 117). The order's use of the internet has continued to develop in complexity and sophistication in the fifteen years since then.

The order's loose structure, fluid membership, and a laxness about adherence to Sharia bring the order toward the realm of what has been called "New Age Sufism," drawing in followers who don't necessarily see themselves as having any connection to Islam itself. It also reinforces criticisms of Sufism that have been pervasive among Muslims who are concerned with protecting the boundaries of Islam. Thus, the order has simultaneously expanded the ranks of Sufi-oriented followers, creating a new public, while at the same time contributing to a hardening of a line between Sufism and true Islam in the eyes of many

Muslims.[27] Though Shaykh Hashim has followed in Shaykh Nazim's footsteps by traveling extensively to be in the physical presence of followers, the nature of the contact is occasional and often in the form of an appearance before a large audience, analogous to his communication with a broad internet public. It is also possible to take the oath of allegiance online (Piraino 2016: 102).[28] The *khalifa*s of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order, and especially Shaykh Hashim, have made the task of building and expanding a new Sufi public one of their central goals, especially in the wake of anti-Sufi pressures such as secular modernity and Islamic reformism.

Conclusion

Shaykh Hisham, Haji Syed Salman Chishty, and others such as Faouzi Skali, with his Fez Sufi Culture Festival in Morocco, have sought to appeal to new, youthful publics by linking Sufism to a modern global culture. These include young urban and diasporic Muslims who seek new approaches to Islam that are not associated – "contaminated" – with what they perceive as the "traditional culture" of their birth community. They also appeal to non-Muslims who are attracted to Sufism's spirituality but, like many Muslim youth, find traditional Sufi practices alien and close integration into a Sufi community incompatible with the rest of their lives. These modern Sufis have recognized how music, the arts, and scholarly books, and even university lectures as forms of cosmopolitan high culture are effective as a recruitment tool for forming a middle-class Sufi public, not only through cultural events that draw large audiences but also through the presence of these events on the internet.

Yet these Sufis also recognize the importance of continuity with the Sufi Orders and the succession of Sufi saints across the centuries. The recording of a meeting between Shaykh Hashim and Haji Syed Salman Chishty at the shrine of an important medieval Sufi saint encapsulates the process of creating a new kind

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[27] Kabbani also antagonized many Muslims in the United States by attempting to represent the broader Muslim community in the wake of 9/11, serving as a liaison to US government leaders and urging Muslims to be open, tolerant and pluralistic while attacking sectarian Muslim groups (Dickson 2014: 418).

[28] Piraino provides a detailed list of the remarkable array of services offered online, including dream interpretation, responses to questions about daily life, a Sufi dating website, and a vast video collection of the speeches of Kabbani and other *khalifas* of the order.

of public for Sufism: it does not necessarily replace or disrupt older forms of connection and community, but selectively builds on them in ways that disrupt old boundaries between public and private. They are sustained by the online teachings of the *shaykh* and his ability to transmit God's *baraka* through modern media.

The meeting of Shaykh Hashim and Haji Syed Salman Chishty was a waystation on a Sufi journey, a journey similar to what Ibn Battuta undertook and wrote about in the fourteenth century, but this time recorded for a future Sufi public to experience on their computers, where they can also consult a map of Naqshbandi Haqqani centers across the world, complete with phone numbers and the schedule of meetings for *zikr* so that they can experience a face-to-face community of fellow Haqqani Sufis wherever they go. However, according to several scholars who have attempted to use this map as a guide for their own contacts, this map is to some extent a simulacrum of a dense network of living Sufi communities: many of the phone numbers reportedly do not work and the meetings for *zikr* are not always scheduled as regularly as the website suggests (see Damrel 2006, Piraino 2016: 105, Schmidt 2004). It is very much an imagined community based on connectivity, quite different from the network of Sufi lodges that received a world traveler like Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century and fostered a form of dialogic relationality that could not be transmitted through books. Though Sufis such as Shaykh Hashim use the internet to communicate a kind of presence, a *baraka*, that goes well beyond what can be gleaned through print media, it is nevertheless a form of communication that, though immediate and sometimes highly personal, is never private. I agree with Rosalind Morris (2013) and Charles Hirschkind (2017) that the result is an attenuation of relationships and a withering of dialogue. Sufism has become more appealing to many modern youths, but it has been transformed in the process.

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Between Religious Plurality and Religious Pluralism

Practicing Religious Coexistence in Mbale, Eastern Uganda

Dorothea E. Schulz

Introduction

In conversations about personal faith and religious affiliation in present-day Uganda, it is a commonsensical assumption that anyone *is* religious and may pursue his or her religious convictions unimpeded by state intervention, as long as this does not collide with public interest and order.[1] Christian and Muslim conversation partners frequently stress the "peaceful coexistence" of Uganda's many religions. At the same time, a number of Muslim leaders and activists decry the politically and economically disadvantaged position of Muslims as a religious minority in Uganda.[2] In media and other public interventions, the critics allege that Muslims bear a stigma as uneducated, backward-oriented or worse, as a fundamentalist threat to Ugandan public order; and that Muslims are not given sufficient voice in government and state administration (see Kiyimba 1986, 1989, 1990; Mutumba 2016; Musoke 2017), and in the ordering of public life in line with religious precepts.[3] In private conversations, *shaykhs* and other Muslim intellectuals maintain that governmental scrutiny and political repression, already very much in place in the 1990s, has intensified with the US-supported Global War On Terror since 2001. Whereas greater state surveillance of

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[1] The chapter draws on empirical research conducted by Schulz in and around Mbale town, Eastern Uganda, since 2011 (altogether six months), and by Wilfrida Kuta in 2018 (altogether five months). I thank Christine Chwaszcza for her insightful suggestions on how to develop the chapter's argument.

[2] While official sources estimate that Muslims make up ca. 12 per cent of the population (see the 2002 Uganda Census which fixes the number of Muslims at 12,1), Muslim critics assert that the real number ranges somewhere around 15 per cent.

[3] These critics refer mostly to the realm of banking and financial investment which, they claim, should be regulated in consideration of the Islamic injunction against charging interest on loans.

Muslim religious activity has been officially justified by events such as the Al-Shabaab bombing of popular bars in the capital Kampala in July 2010, Muslim critics assert that these official justifications, whether pointing to Al-Shabaab or to an allegedly religiously motivated resistance movement that operates from the Congolese border region in southwest Uganda, merely serve as a smokescreen to gloss over injustices committed against Muslims as members of a religious minority.[4] They, as well as many ordinary Muslim believers, also express great concern about the growing force, political influence and transnational support of born-again Christianity in the form of evangelical and pentecostal congregations. Almost in the same breath, however, they echo the above-mentioned position of numerous Christian interlocutors, that "a few decades ago", Ugandan society was "highly tolerant with respect to religion" and that social relations were shaped by mutual dependence and complementarity. These contrary statements reflect diverging views on and experiences of religious diversity in present-day Uganda yet might also indicate long-term transformations in how interreligious relations have been practiced.

In recent years, scholarship on religion in Africa has moved questions of religious plurality and coexistence to the forefront of debate, giving particular attention to relations between Muslims and Christians, and to their respective relationship to what is coined variously as traditional or local religion(s). Mirroring a broader trend toward understanding "religions in practice" (Bowen 1997, see Lambek 1993), authors depart from an earlier focus on religious leaders, intellectual controversies and normative arguments. Instead, they study the practices and self-understandings of different categories of religious actors and how ordinary believers in particular make religious community through acts of boundary drawing and, occasionally, of mutual borrowing (see Scharrer 2007, Chanfi 2008, Larkin 2008). By stressing the varied forms of Christian-Muslim interactions, the scholars counter interpretations of inter-religious relations in Africa in terms of either "conflict" or "cooperation" (see Janson 2016: 667). They also question the assumption that Muslim-Christian relations transformed only recently from peaceful coexistence to hostility and confrontation (Soares

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[4]   As proof of their vulnerable status, the critics often refer to the recent, consecutive murdering of several Muslim shaykhs and religious leaders that went unpunished.

2006). Instead, scholars point to the long-standing, pragmatic combination of diverse religious traditions (Peel 2016) and "sensational forms" (Meyer 2009) that might result in novel forms of religious "assemblage" (Janson 2016). These interventions make an important analytical point: the contingent, dynamic nature of religious boundary drawing and community making.

Yet although a focus on practice and on dynamic religious boundaries is entirely apposite, the perspective needs further elaboration, on empirical, analytical, and conceptual grounds. At an empirical level, scholars' stress on intermingling and mutual borrowing may be highly adequate in some pluri-religious settings in Africa. In other cases, however, a one-sided insistence on mixing and pragmatic cohabitation might turn a blind eye to practices of boundary drawing and claims to irreconcilable difference. What about interreligious settings in which believers tend to frame their positions in terms of mutual exclusivity, and in which social pressure requires them to take clear-cut positions? How should we conceive of these constellations and how should we distinguish them from situations of pragmatic "assemblage" and "mixing", without falling back on the earlier mentioned, contrasting models of "religious conflict" versus "peaceful interaction"?

Conceptually, it often remains unclear whether scholars who talk about religious plurality, pluralism, diversity, encounters, interaction or coexistence use these terms as concepts to identify distinct attitudes toward religious difference or whether they use the terms interchangeably. Analytically, an exclusive focus on lived religious diversity risks downplaying the potentially divisive effects of state regulation of religious coexistence. Believers' attitudes towards religious "others" cannot be understood independently from long-standing "regimes of religious governance" (Hefner 2017). Even if individual believers might favor pragmatic accommodation of religious difference and engage in mutual borrowing of religious conventions, unequal treatment of different religious constituencies by the state might foster greater divisiveness among them and encourage them to stress irreconcilable difference. Only by combining these different levels of analysis might we come up with a systematic account of modes of religious coexistence, in Africa and elsewhere. As a first step toward such an account, the chapter combines an empirical case study with reflection on the conceptual toolkit and analytical perspectives we need to bring to such analyses. To identify specific forms of religious coexistence, be they antagonistic, consensual, competitive or mutually exclusionary in orientation, we need to understand how

social and material religious engagements, along with intellectual controversies and normative argument, interact with the institutional regulation of religious constituencies, and what effects emerge from these interactions. Analysis centers on how Ugandan state regulation of religious diversity affects, and is shaped by, "lived" modes of religious coexistence in everyday life. I study these dynamics by focusing on three interfaces in which state administration intervenes directly into how citizens experience and deal with religious difference, and, in turn, gives institutional form to these lived instances of religious coexistence. The interfaces under study are: schooling, the regulation of dietary conventions as important domain of inter-religious commensality, and interreligious marriage.

Conceptual perspectives: pluralism, plurality and regimes of religious governance

In examining the interlocking dynamics of state regulation and interreligious relations, the chapter draws inspiration from Helene Basu's contribution to the jointly edited volume *Moderne und Religion* (2010). Cautioning against the re-emergence of a modernization paradigm that measures a country's "modern" status by its realization of the principle of secularity, Basu proposed to interpret relations between religion and politics as the result of global encounters and entangled modernities (see Conrad & Randeria 2002, Therborn 2003). Her discussion of how questions of secularity are treated in present-day India started out with a historical reconstruction of colonial and postcolonial Indian state regulation of religion. Helene's analytical perspective makes room for historically determinate forms of religious co-existence that shape religious and social life in contemporary India.

Along similar lines, Robert Hefner has recently cautioned against readings of religious freedom "in the modern West" as an inevitable outcome of democratization and of "faithful conformity to preconceived liberal principles" (Hefner 2017: 128). Arguing against assumptions that the principle of religious freedom came to apply to all religious groups indiscriminately and in equal measure, Hefner observed that the particular forms of regulating religious freedom in the West resulted from "path dependent struggles among different religious and class coalitions, all attempting to project their influence and public ethical ideals upward into the structures of religious governance" (ibid.). Hefner

concluded that scholars should not start from the preconceived existence of certain abstract principles, such as that of individual autonomy or religious freedom, but view their establishment as the result of situated practices, coalitions, and balances of social power that ultimately determine what ethicoreligious traditions come to be authorized as "religions", and which among the several varieties of religious governance in social contention prevail (ibid.). Following Helene Basu and Robert Hefner, I suggest that a historical reconstruction of specific "regimes of religious governance" allows us to understand how certain modes of religious coexistence were established, overruling other possible forms. This empirical account will, in turn, advance conceptual reflection on different modes of religious co-existence.

To clarify my understanding of three terms that are used extensively and often interchangeably in the current Africanist literature: the terms religious plurality and religious diversity refer to situations in which religious traditions and groups coexist in one place and time, showing various degrees of mutual tolerance. While I consider diversity and plurality to merely point to a multitude of religious practices, conventions and understandings, I understand "pluralism" to denote a particular attitude toward plurality that exceeds the mere acknowledgment of other religions and of diverse, religious and non-religious, viewpoints and related practices (see Peletz 2009). Pluralism implies the acceptance of the validity of other religious understandings and hence the recognition of normative difference.[5]

The distinction between "plurality" and "pluralism", and between "mere tolerance" and "acceptance of the validity of other religious practices", is a useful starting point to examine what diverse attitudes and lived relationships might be involved in religious "coexistence" or "interaction". We should ask whether actors, in their actions and statements, adopt a pluralistic attitude toward religious others or not.[6] We also need to consider the role of institutional structures that

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[5] Political philosopher John Rawls outlined as conditions for pluralism "non-oppression", "outcome neutrality" (i.e., no religion should be granted unfair advantage over others in state policy), and "public reason" (i.e., legislation and public policy to be supported by arguments reasonably acceptable to all). But this specification does not need to concern us here, as the chapter interrogates the subjective attitudes behind empirical forms of religious coexistence.

[6] Pluralism refers to attitudes informing relations between *and* within groups. As the pluri-religious situation of Uganda amply demonstrates, both pluralistic attitudes shape the situation in which views of proper religiosity and ritual adherence are formulated. This chapter centers on how religious actors deal with otherness across group boundaries.

mediate between the state, intermediary corporatist structures of representing religious communities, and religious actors and practices. The corporatist structures can be divided into first, state-recognized entities of religious representation, charged with implementing and enforcing state policy at different levels, notably the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC), the Muslim umbrella organization presently headed by Chief Mufti Sheikh Shaban Mubajje and represented through regional and district level chapters. Religious congregations constitute a second corporatist structure; they are regulated through group-specific mechanisms of rule application, such as sanctions or positive enforcement. In Uganda, they operate under the directives of religious leaders, yet sanctions ensuring group boundaries are also mobilized in highly informal ways, affecting how believers live religious plurality in their daily lives. The following description of the socio-religious setting of the Mbale town in Eastern Uganda serves as the backdrop to my subsequent exploration of interfaces between state religious governance and practices of religious coexistence.

Muslims in pluri-religious Mbale

In present-day Mbale, Muslims form a significant minority of about eighteen per cent of the local population (Uganda Census 2002)[7] that owes much of its political weight to the success of Muslim traders and professionals with an academic degree. Mbale hosts the main campus of the Islamic University in Uganda, which grants higher education to an aspiring Muslim middle-class and also to Christian students. Anglican, catholic, evangelical, and pentecostal churches and Seventh Day Adventists vie each other for their followership and standing.[8] Pentecostal

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[7] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Uganda (last checked 15/11/2021). In addition to Sunni Muslims, who make up the majority of Mbale's Muslim population, there are also Shi'i and Ahmadi Muslims, many of whom do not see eye to eye with Sunni Muslims.

[8] Long-standing division between Catholics and Anglicans along party lines since the colonial period are still operative today, with highly divisive consequences for the relations between members of different Christian denominations (Twaddle 1988). Catholics and Anglicans eye each other with suspicion. Along with members of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, they are quick to accuse each other of lacking moral standards, of having deserted to path of proper religiosity, and of political opportunism vis-à-vis President Museveni's government.

and evangelical Christians, in particular, stress their distance from Muslims as much as they set themselves apart from other Christian denominations.[9]

Many Muslims and Christians, especially those who hold stricter views on proper religious belief and practice, stress irreconcilable differences between Islam and Christianity, while denouncing "traditional religion" or "culture".[10] How do these points of convergence and difference manifest themselves in daily interactions?

State politics of schooling

The state system of religious administration established after Ugandan independence in 1962 follows a corporatist model that, similar to the Dutch "pillarized" model of religious governance, rests on a "consociational" (see Hefner 2017: 131) model of organizing a diversity of religiously defined interests through hierarchical structures of representation. The right to religious freedom, laid down in the (forth) Ugandan constitution of 1995, states that citizens may freely pursue their religious beliefs, practices, and membership in a religious organization "in a matter consistent with the constitution". However, as I mentioned above, while the constitution prohibits religious discrimination, in private conversations and some public outlets, Muslim activists, religious leaders and office holders, and also ordinary believers, decry the de facto discrimination of Muslims in Uganda. Their statements hold true with regard to several domains of social and public life, among them the educational sector, in which Muslims have been disadvantaged historically.

British colonial administration established regionally, ethnically and religiously founded divisions that created a volatile institutional setting for the regulation of rights, entitlements, political party affiliation, and possibilities of political participation. Among other measures, colonial administration relegated formal schooling to anglican and catholic missions that, along with the uneven granting of colonial administrative units to Muslims, Catholics and Anglicans,

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[9] Interviews conducted by Schulz (2011, 2016, 2017, 2018) and by Kuta (2018, 2019) with members of the different Christian congregations.
[10] Among these practices are, first and foremost, rituals relating to ancestor spirits, such as performing sacrifices during life cycle ceremonies to ensure general wellbeing and success.

cemented inequalities between Muslims and Christians, and among Christians (Rowe 1988, Schulz 2012a).[11]

Because of the differential chances for employment offered to Muslims and Christians in the colonial economy and administrative apparatus, a historical stigma was attached to Muslims, even to residents of the kingdom of Buganda where Muslim identity had once been an elite identity associated with the royal palace. Muslims could find employment in trade, transport, meat production, and the colonial army, occupations that were held in low esteem by those Ugandans whose exposition to missionary schooling (in particular in Central and Western Uganda) had fostered in them a self-understanding as more educated and "civilized" citizens.[12]

The lop-sided educational system continued for decades after independence (1962), when school education became a state-regulated domain (Kiyimba 1986, 1989). Starting in the late 1980s, dynamics of Muslim- Christian relations were subject to the growing influence of Saudi-inspired understandings of proper religious practice on one side, and of international evangelical and pentecostal initiatives, funded heavily by US American organizations and by African churches, on the other side. These developments reinforced tensions between Muslims and Christians and among Muslims and among Christians.[13]
After the introduction of universal primary education in the mid-1990s, and with the attendant mushrooming of private secondary and tertiary educational institutions, the national educational sector transformed significantly. More competitive and better equipped Muslim-founded schools emerged that benefitted the children of well-to-do middle-class Muslim families in the central region (around Kampala) and in Eastern and Western Uganda (Schulz 2013a). Nevertheless, the majority of Muslim children, who are of less privileged economic background,

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[11] Still today, these religious divides also generate politically highly charged relations among Christians. In recognition of their numerical and political stronger position, many Catholics (who, according to the 2002 Uganda Census, make up ca 41,9% per cent of the total population), Anglicans (35,9 per cent), and Pentecostals and other Christian denominations (ca. 8,3 per cent) view each other, rather than Muslims, as the most formidable challenge to political influence at the national level.

[12] In addition to fostering conflict along religious lines, identitarian politics have historically opposed northerners to southerners and fueled ethnically framed social divisions.

[13] It is important to note that in Uganda religious difference per se has never been an exclusive "driver" of conflict but has always intertwined with other factors of difference along regional, ethnic, social (status) lines.

still face significant educational disadvantage, largely because the educational degrees offered by many Muslim-founded schools tend to be less valued and not to qualify them for enrolment in Uganda's most prestigious secondary schools (Schulz 2013b).[14] This observation also applies to locations where relatively good institutions of secondary and tertiary learning are available, such as Mbale town. Many of the students enrolled at the Mbale branch of the Islamic University in Uganda come from the central and other regions of Uganda. Many Muslim children of the area attend Muslim-founded secondary schools, that, for various reasons, have lower educational standards. Yet their parents prefer to put their children in a Muslim-founded school, to avoid the risk of their conversion to Christianity and ensure that they grow up as proper Muslims.

Thus, even if it is rarely acknowledged officially, religious affiliation does operate as a factor of social differentiation in Mbale and elsewhere in Uganda, as Muslim students generally stand fewer chances than their Christian age-mates to find regular employment and need to search for occupational opportunities outside and beyond the career paths enabled by education (Schulz 2000). Through educational policy, the state indirectly fosters systematic inequities and competition and latent animosity between Muslims and Christians.

Pragmatic accommodation of difference: Muslim dietary prohibitions and interreligious commensality

Christians and Muslims who characterize interactions with members of the other group as "peaceful" and "tolerant", often cite as proof Christians' pragmatic dealing with Islamic dietary prohibitions. This argument is noteworthy because it contrasts with how some scholars describe the effects of religious dietary restrictions on how Christians and Muslims interact with each other. Ficquet (2006), for instance, maintains that in Ethiopia, Islamic prohibitions regarding meat and of alcoholic beverages seriously limit commensality between Muslims and Christians.

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[14] Although Muslim-founded schools (at the primary and secondary levels) are officially recognized as elements of the public educational system, most of them cannot compete with regular schools with regard to educational quality, technical equipment, and qualified teachers.

According to his interpretation, food prohibitions generate a – sometimes contested, sometimes transgressed – "dietary boundary" around which Christians and Muslims claim difference and distance from each other.

The following discussion starts from my interlocutors' portrayal of food consumption as a site and sign of peaceful co-existence to ask what "toleration" of religious difference means in this context. I will argue that the processing, marketing and consumption of meat offers an occasion for both boundary drawing and a pragmatic accommodation of religious difference.

Muslims in Mbale town and its rural surroundings maintain that Islamic dietary restrictions about meat are straightforward and uncontested, an assertion that disregards jurisprudential debate over the level of restrictiveness applying to *halal* meat (e.g., Rodinson 1965, cited in Ficquet 2006). To Ugandan Muslims, the consumption of meat slaughtered by Christians, even if they are "people of the book", is considered not only reprehensible (*makruh*) but forbidden (*haram*). *Halal* meat, produced from licit animals such as poultry, sheep, goat and cattle, not only requires that the slaughtered animal's throat be slit and bled. The slaughtering must be done by a Muslim by turning the animal's head toward Mecca and by pronouncing the bissimilah, that is, by invoking the name of God while slitting the animal's throat. Fewer restrictions exist with regard to the marketing of *halal* meat, as Muslims might consider buying meat from Christians, too, as long as it has been produced in a halal way. Many Muslims thus seem to favor a pragmatic dealing with Islamic food prohibitions.[15]

Islamic food prohibitions have been historically recognized by the Ugandan state by relegating the processing of meat to Muslims. In consequence, butchery constituted one of few occupational niches that Muslims could claim for themselves. Drawing on the colonial legacy, since the 2000s, the pragmatic acknowledgement of Muslims' dietary restrictions has led to a state-regulated meat production, in the form of a thriving halal meat market controlled and certified by the Ugandan state. The meat market, and its state-certified nature, offers Muslim men a range of occupational activities and sources of income. Indirectly, it also offers Christians a source of income as vendors of meat by guaranteeing that any meat on offer will have been slaughtered in a halal way.

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[15] As Wilfrida Kuta observed in November 2018, in villages in which the slaughtering cannot be done by Muslims, Muslims buy (non-halal) meat from Christian butchers (Kuta, field notes, Dec. 2018).

When explaining the need for a pragmatic accommodation of forms of commensality to Islamic dietary restrictions, interview partners cited as the main reason for "tolerance" the multi-religious composition of many families and the attendant need to "accommodate everyone" during life cycle ceremonies and other family festivities, such as holiday celebrations. Whenever Muslims are present during family festivities and community celebrations, meat must be slaughtered according to Islamic prescripts. This convention is broadly accepted and uncontroversial, even among Christians who draw a sharp line vis-à-vis Muslims.[16]

Still, some pastors, usually from evangelical or pentecostal churches, challenge the pragmatic accommodation of Muslim dietary prohibitions and the conflict-minimizing modus vivendi for which it stands. Most of these pastors voice their resentment of Muslims' prerogatives in the meat market only when preaching to their congregations. A few church leaders, however, have taken concrete action against what they consider undue Muslim privilege in the domain of meat production. Perhaps the most outspoken critic of the monopoly is Pastor Umar Mulinde, who converted to Christianity after having been raised in, as he put it, a "staunch Muslim family". In late 2002, Pastor Mulinde received nationwide media coverage yet also drew considerable criticism when he publicly slaughtered a pig while donning a Muslim robe in Pallisa town in Eastern Uganda.[17]

This and other instances of violent altercation in areas in which Muslims make up a significant share of the population attest to the resentment that the granting of a monopoly status to Muslim butchers might generate. For instance, in early 2003, riots broke out between Christians and Muslims in Iganga district in Eastern Uganda over this question. Angry mobs of Muslims stormed Christians butcheries claiming that these should be closed and that the monopoly over slaughtering animals should continue to be reserved for Muslims.[18] In response

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[16] For instance, in a private conversation, "John", a pastor of a mainline church in Mbale whose services I attended on multiple occasions, declared Muslims to be "non-believers" and "people who haven't found God's truth yet." Almost in the same breath, however, he recounted an anecdote involving Christians and Muslims "eating from the same bowl and sharing the same meat" during a wedding, a form of commensality with which he clearly did not take issue.

[17] Chris Obore, The Monitor, Dec 15, 2002; "Uganda: Muslims Riot, Burn Christian Butchers"; https://allafrica.com/stories/200212160421.html (last checked 15/11/2021).

[18] The Monitor, Jan 4, 2003; https://allafrica.com/stories/200301040196.html, (last checked 15/11/2021).

to the incident, in a parliamentary session of January 10, 2002, the Muslim prerogative in the meat market was officially laid down by the Ministry of Agriculture.[19]

Pastor Mulinde and other evangelical and pentecostal pastors draw on an idiom of religious rightfulness. Their rhetoric could be taken as a substantiation of Ficquet's (2006) argument that the clashes put into relief and reassert "dietary boundaries" as markers of religious difference. I would argue, however, that this and similar incidents in Uganda are not about doctrinal or ritual difference per se but, as already stated, are fueled by a resentment of Muslim control of an important market section. For instance, in 2014, a violent conflict erupted between two Muslim factions over the exclusive right to slaughter animals in Bukomansimbi, Western Uganda.[20] Another recent confrontation in Sembabule, Western Uganda, similarly pitted against each other members of warring Muslim factions (in June 2017).[21] In both instances, the altercation was traced back to conflicts between Muslim leaders over the question of who could legitimately certify halal meat.[22] Therefore, these confrontations over food did not primarily involve a process of religious boundary drawing; nor do the conflicts attest to the centrality of meat in defining relations between Christians and Muslims in Uganda (see Ficquet 2006: 44). Rather, the confrontations centered on issues of profit making and involved wrangles among Muslims over questions of legitimate religious leadership.

Discrepancies between the role of religious dietary prohibitions in Uganda and Ethiopia could be due to regional variation, with regard to how dietary restrictions and claims to religious rectitude are actually practiced, and also with regard to their social implications. But the Ugandan example could also prompt us to refine Ficquet's argument about inter-religious boundary. That is, whereas

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[19] Parliamentary session in Uganda, 10 December 2002; reported by Ficquet (2006: 43).

[20] Edward Binhe, Uganda Radio Network, 2/15/2014, "Tension as Bukomansimbi Muslims Clash Over Animal Slaughter Rights"; https://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/tension-as-bukomansimbi-muslims-clash-over-animal-slaughter-rights, (last checked 15/11/2021).

[21] Moses Muwulya, The Monitor, June 26, 2017; "Sembabule Muslims clash over slaughter of animals"; https://allafrica.com/stories/201706260022.html, (last checked 15/11/2021).

[22] For more than ten years, the national Muslim organization, the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council, has been divided over the question of leadership, with a politically powerful group of (Buganda) Muslims from central Uganda challenging the appointment of Chief Mufti Mubajje (who hails from Eastern Uganda) by President Museveni.

his discussion of Muslim dietary prescripts blurs the distinction between the production, processing and consumption of meat, in Uganda, prescriptions around meat offer an occasion for both, boundary drawing *and* conviviality and peaceful coexistence beyond religious difference, depending on which practice of dietary practice is addressed.

Two insights emerge from my analysis of how Muslim dietary restrictions are put into practice. First, the pragmatic ways in which the majority of Mbale inhabitants accommodate Muslim dietary prohibitions in their daily patterns of sociality indicate an attitude of moderate tolerance toward religious otherness. Second, state intervention into the meat market in Uganda substantiates Hefner's (2017: 130f.) argument that regimes of religious governance draw on the institutionalization of existing practices and power constellations among religious interest groups. Governmental regulation of the *halal* meat market in Uganda since the 2000s followed a local "modus vivendi" of religious difference, with the aim to minimize potential for violent altercation in a highly competitive and lucrative market.

So far, discussion centered on the dynamics of religious coexistence at the interface between the state and individual leaders whose directives affect believers' attitudes toward religious difference. To widen our analytical perspective on the complexities and partly contradictory trends of lived religious plurality in Mbale, we need to pay equal attention to issues or domains of daily life around which Muslims and Christians declare that no common ground can be found. What do Muslims and Christians in Mbale identify as points of irreconcilable difference? What happens to those who transgress these defining boundaries of religious identity and difference, and what role do Muslim corporatist structures play in this process?

Declaring irreconcilable difference

Muslims in Mbale declare religious distinctiveness and the impossibility of finding common ground with religious others on two points. The first point is conversion from Islam to another religion[23]; the second one is inter-religious marriage. Muslims' preoccupation with the risk of conversion is brought up as a

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[23] Most interpretations of Shariah forbid conversion of Muslims on the charge of apostasy, which, according to some tradition-minded Muslim scholars, is punishable by death. Other

subject of conversation and in decision-making processes, such as over the choice of boarding school or the selection of one's residential neighborhood (Schulz 2012a,b). To Muslims in Mbale, and in Uganda more broadly, the risk of conversion poses an undeniable threat to their status as a religious minority.[24] Not surprisingly, in all cases of conversion (away from Islam) of which I heard during my research in Mbale, converts faced strong pressure to refrain from conversion and harsh social sanctions in its aftermath. Each conversion decision prompted serious social disruption and the severing off of kinship ties. A few interlocutors told me about aborted conversion cases, in which conversion had been contemplated (either by themselves or close friends), yet not followed through, out of fear of social isolation.

Muslims in Mbale vehemently oppose interreligious marriage, not only on religious grounds but also as a first step toward potential conversion.[25] Muslim religious leaders to whom I talked spoke out against interreligious marriage by invoking "religious law" as reason for their rejection. The written sources of Islam distinguish between two types of interfaith marriage[26]: first, a marital union between a Muslim man and a non-Muslim woman, and second, a union between a Muslim woman and non-Muslim man. Many contemporary Muslim jurists rule out the second type of marriage referring to the Qur'an (Al Baqarah 2: 221, see Islam 2014).[27] More controversy exists about the first marriage type (between a Muslim man and a non-Muslim woman) which might be considered permissible depending on whether the non-Muslim woman forms part of the people of the book (*ahl al-qitab*), that is Jews and Christians (in which case some Muslim

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scholars refer to the Qur'anic provision "he who has embraced Islam and then abandons it will receive punishment in hell after Judgment Day" to argue that apostasy, and thus conversion, should not be considered a punishable crime. With the exception of a few states, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, states that claim to base their constitution on the Sharia do not prescribe capital punishment for apostasy.

[24] Ugandan Muslims' fear of conversion seems to be justified by actual statistics that point to a greater figure of conversions out of Islam to Christianity than the other way round (Pew Forum 2010: 12).

[25] I label "interreligious marriage" (which in the literature is frequently called 'interfaith marriage') a marital union in which partners adhere to different religious traditions.

[26] Drawing on the Qur'an (An-Nur 4:21), Islamic jurisprudence conceives of marriage as a strong contract or covenant (*mithaqun ghalitun*).

[27] The rationale for the injunction given by most of my (male) Muslim interlocutors in Mbale was that a woman's marriage to a non-Muslim man would jeopardize her faith, conduct, and observation of religious obligations because she would have to submit to her husband's authority (see Islam 2014: 40).

scholars would allow for an interreligious marriage), or not (in which case she would be considered an unbeliever, atheist, idolater or polytheist and not a permissible marriage partner). Historically, Sunni Muslim scholars have disagreed over whether marriage to a non-Muslim yet Ahl al-Sunna woman is valid or not (Islam 2014: 40f.).[28] Present-day scholarly opinions, too, range between viewing marriage between a Muslim man and a woman of Ahl al-kitab as lawful (*halal*), detested (*makruh*) or forbidden (*haram*) (ibid.: 41, Cigdem 2015: 68f.). Still, in present-day Mbale, and in Uganda more widely, religious authorities and ordinary believers strongly object to any kind of interreligious marriage, asserting that such marital union is "forbidden in Islam".[29] De facto, the option of marriage to a non-Muslim woman who falls into the category of the "people of the book" does not exist in Mbale.

Muslims' strong rejection of interreligious marriage raises the question of how they enforce their prohibition. State-supported structures of Muslim representation have no leeway in sanctioning interreligious marriage because this would go directly against the Ugandan constitution which does not lay down any restrictions on marriage on the basis of religious affiliation. How do Muslim leaders and congregations deal with this matter, which is critical to their religious sensibilities, their status as a religious minority, and their ability to live side by side with religious others? How do individual Muslims in Mbale deal with the injunction against interreligious marriage?

Rather than examine these questions with regard to Muslims more broadly, the following discussion centers on an age-status category of Muslims to whom the question of interreligious marriage is of particular concern. As I realized during my research in Mbale, "young adults", that is, those who were

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[28] The crux of the matter in deciding on the validity of such a marriage are the criteria for classifying a person as *ahl al-kitab*, with some scholars limiting the category to Jews and Christians (as the descendants of the People of Israel), and other scholars adopting a more inclusive view on demarcating ahl al-kitab (Islam 2014: 41). Even scholars who consider interreligious marriage with *ahl al-kitab* permissible do not view as desirable because it would impede the promotion of Islam.

[29] My Muslim interlocutors cited "strong expectations toward any member of a Muslim community" not to marry "outside your parents' faith". Yet *de facto*, the major burden is put on girls and women. Whether a Christian woman switches her religious affiliation to be able to marry a Muslim man or whether a Muslim girl who wishes to marry a Christian risks getting ostracized by her family and religious community: in each case, social pressure is exerted on women to either stay in line or switch religious allegiance.

about to get married or who had recently married were the ones who, time and again, brought up the issue in conversations. Their preoccupation with interreligious marriage is not surprising. After all, young Muslims, positioned at the point of transition between their status as "youth" (defined by their unmarried status) and adulthood, are the ones who have to select marriage partners and to live with the implications of their choices for their future relations with relatives, friends, and future in-laws. Their age status transition makes Muslim youth reflect on their religious affiliation and take a conscious decision in this regard. They carefully weigh the criteria for an eligible and desirable marriage partner with considerations of family approval. They also anticipate expectations and sanctions on the part of their religious congregations, which might exert pressure, either directly or through their families, to stay in line. As illustrated by Hamza's case, social pressure might discourage even those who initially agreed on entering a marital union with a non-Muslim.

I initially met Hamza through her older sister Fatim, a member of a group of women loosely associated with one of Mbale's main mosques. Before introducing me to Hamza in person, Fatim had told me Hamza had once been engaged to Luke, an Anglican Christian classmate, "in a very serious relationship, so serious that it took much […] determination on our father's side to dissolve it". Later on, Hamza explained to me that she had once been "totally resolved" to marry Luke whom she "loved very much". To convince her parents of her determination to live an independent life, she left Mbale to move in with a remote aunt on her mother's side in Kampala. But her hopes of "sitting it out" with her parents fell short when she lost her job as a sale's accountant and could no longer afford to contribute to her aunt's expenses. Also, at that time, her fiancé Luke left Uganda to try his luck as a trader on the Kenyan coast. Feeling demoralized and let down, both by her fiancé and her aunt's refusal of financial and moral assistance vis-à-vis her parents, Hamza finally returned to Mbale and agreed to get married to the son of her father's long-term (Muslim) business partner.

Anticipation of family expectations also played a role in the decision-making process of Abdoul, a ca. 35 years-old car mechanic. In his case, family pressure, particularly by his father, a well-respected elder of the Muslim community, even prompted the future wife (who was of Christian family background) to convert to Islam to enable her marital union to Abdoul. As he told me 2015,

> […] when it came to getting married to my wife Naava, we had to overcome some obstacles. Because Naava, or "Rose,", as she was then called, was a

Christian when we met first. We met through a common acquaintance, a very close friend of my sister. We immediately fell in love with each other but for a while, I, as well as she, kept at a distance, pretending we were not interested. Because […] both of us knew very well how difficult it was to convince our parents of our choice. Then finally, I took a heart, approached Naava and told her about my feelings but also […] that there was no way we could get married unless she agreed to convert to Islam because in my eyes and that of my father, this is the only true religion and my children needed to be raised in this way. It took Naava a long time, almost two years, to come to a decision […], partly because she knew that her relatives would resent her dropping out of Christianity. But ultimately, she chose to convert, out of love to me, because she appreciated my moral standards and conduct, and also because I made her see the truth about Islam. Breaking with her family's religion was hard for her but she gradually she brought her parents around. They […] agreed that becoming my wife meant she had to submit to my directives as a man and a well-informed Muslim.

For other "young adults" whom I met during my research, the same social mechanisms that prompted their heeding of religiously justified injunctions against interreligious marriage also came into play in cases of transgression. This is illustrated by Khalil, the son of my neighbor (a very respectable Muslim businessman) and frequent conversation partner during my research in Mbale. Soon after I had met Khalil for the first time in 2012, he told me – somewhat coyly behind his father's back – about his sweetheart, a "Christian girl from the neighborhood", whom he had recently fallen in love with and whom he "intended to court seriously" in spite of their "differences in faith". Whenever I returned to Mbale in the following years and asked Khalil for news about his girl-friend, he explained to me that their relationship "was still going on" yet "hampered by family considerations", an expression that clearly alluded to the difficulties they faced because of their different religious affiliations. When I returned to Mbale in late 2016, I learned from Khalil's father that Khalil and his family had "fallen out over a Christian girl" and that Khalil had moved to Dar-es-Salam where, after marrying "that Christian girl-friend" he pursued his university studies with the financial support of a remote cousin. Although Khalil's father expressed strong regret, he also made it clear that Khalil had taken the path of no return by disregarding his parents' interdiction of his marriage to a Christian. Since then, Khalil has not returned to Mbale. He maintains loose contact to his mother, to whom he occasionally sends presents, but has not been in touch with his father. Khalil faced serious social sanctions for his decision to disregard the de facto prohibition of inter-religious marriage, sanctions that were easier to shoulder when moving far away from home.

The three examples illustrate that Muslim congregations play an important role in influencing decisions regarding religious conformity. In the absence of officially enforced injunctions, Muslim authorities and congregations rely on informal sanctions and structures of influence taking to intervene in a domain they consider key to the structuring of religious coexistence, in particular vis-à-vis Christians. The informal structures of Muslim influence taking, and sanctioning operate in a field of activity outside and beyond state control. It is in this particular field that Muslim authorities and congregations enforce an attitude of non-tolerance toward religious difference. Whereas the Ugandan constitution endorses an attitude of religious pluralism and expects officially recognized structures of religious representation to follow suit and exert pressure toward an attitude of religious pluralism, religious congregations, in their role as social bodies, struggle to uphold clear-cut boundaries and non-tolerance of religious difference in certain domains of daily life.

Conclusion

This chapter made a case for an empirically grounded and historically informed argument about different modes of religious coexistence in Africa, as a first step toward developing a conceptual framework for comparative reflection on the topic. I proposed that to understand specific regimes of religious governance, we should focus on the interface constituted by state legislation and institutions on one side, and intermediary structures that represent the different religious communities vis-à-vis the state. Also, scholars should examine different domains of religious argument and practice to understand how religious actors deal with religious difference and whether their actions and statements reveal a pluralistic attitude toward members of other religious groups or not.

As illustrated by material drawn from Mbale, Eastern Uganda, we would be mistaken to reduce relationships between Muslims and Christians to one mode of coexistence. Rather, religious boundary drawing, and forms of interaction vary strongly from one domain of religious and social life to another. Analysis also revealed the prime importance of informal social structures and sanctions in defining interreligious relations. In numerous domains of daily life, kinship structures and considerations, along with other social ties, play an eminent role both in demarcating and stressing religious boundaries. Still, it is important to keep in mind that the informal social ties and sanctions might work either way in shaping

modes of religious coexistence. Social considerations might have mitigating effects on religious divisions, yet they also operate as mechanisms of control and sanction in case of transgression. As Muslims' and Christians' pragmatic dealing with Muslim dietary restrictions illustrate, holidays, family celebrations and other situations of pluri-religious commensality constitute occasions for stressing commonalities beyond religious difference. Here, kinship obligations and social ties help overcome divisions along religious lines, and hence attenuate inter-religious divisions. In contrast, in situations where religious affiliation and conformity are put to the test, such as in the case of interreligious marriage or of conversion, family obligations and pressure are decisive in demarcating and reproducing absolute difference and hence in exacerbating inter-religious divisions.

The vital importance of religious congregations as social pressure groups is highly relevant to scholarly debate on state regulation of the relation between religion and politics and of relationships between different religious groups. Insight into the vitality of religious congregations as social bodies should prompt scholars to pay closer attention to domains of social life that, while situated outside the purview of the state, constitute the site where religious actors define and live out specific (and possibly varying) forms of religious coexistence. Following Sally Falk Moore's conception of domains of normative and/or legal practice as "semi-autonomous social fields" (1978), I suggest that these domains be conceived in this way. In these fields, religious congregations, bolstered through kinship and other social ties, exert their influence largely unimpeded by state intervention and mold believers' attitudes toward religious otherness.

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Narrating Transformations

Entwined Decision-Making in the Mahābhārata Epic

Angelika Malinar

Introduction

In the long sequence of instructions that form Book Twelve of the *Mahābhārata* epic, the Book of Pacification (*Śāntiparvan*), the dying patriarch Bhīṣma tells King Yudhiṣṭhira, his victorious grandson, the following parable about the dangers of delaying a "decision about what to do and not do" (*kāryākāryaviniścaya*):

> In a pond that was not too shallow, there were three *śakula* fishes[1] that were friends. They had become companions among a prodigious number of fish, O son of Kuntī. One of these fish always knew when the right time had arrived, another was far-seeing, and the third one was dilatory. Once some fishermen drained the entire pond by means of various openings made in its lowest spots. When the far-sighted fish realized that the pond was disappearing, he told his two friends that danger had arrived: "A catastrophe has occurred for all of us that live in the water! We must quickly go elsewhere before the way dries up. He who uses sound policies to prevent future evils never puts himself at risk. Please! Let's go!" But the dilatory one among them said, "What you said is exactly right. But we need not rush yet, this is my considered opinion." Then the one who knew how to meet things with a cool head said to the far-sighted one, "When the time comes, I will omit nothing of what is necessary." This said, the very intelligent, far-sighted fish left; he went by the one remaining stream to a deep body of water.
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> Later, when the fishermen checked and saw that all the water had been drained from the pond, they caught the fish with various devices. Flopping around in the pond with no water, the dilatory fish and others flopped into one of the nets there. When he saw that fish were being strung together on a line, the cool-headed fish burrowed his way into the midst of the other fish and swallowed a piece of the line. He latched onto the stringer he had swallowed, and he waited. The fishermen believed that all the fish were tied to the line. Later as the fish were being rinsed in clean water, the fish with presence of mind let go of the rope and quickly made his escape. But the slow, dim-witted, dilatory fish was unconscious, and the dolt died because he was senseless. So, he who erroneously fails to realize that the exact moment has come perishes fast.[2]

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[1] Following the dictionaries, probably giltheads.

[2] *Mahābhārata* (in the following: MBh) 12.135.2-17, tr. Fitzgerald (2004: 511f.).

Bhīṣma uses this tale to illustrate certain attitudes that influence individual and collective decision-making processes and points out that it is essential to be aware of one's inclinations and of those involved in the decision. In his comments on the parable, Bhīṣma focuses on the fate of fish Dilatory and explains that procrastination can be risky, even life-threatening when important parameters of decision-making are ignored, namely, time and place as well as one's skills and resources. The emphasis on such parameters suggests that the tale is not only about denouncing dilatoriness and missing the right moment to do what needs to be done (*kārya*). It is also about the intrinsic connection between the different attitudes, the "friendship" between the three fishes. "Far-sightedness" is a good friend of both "knowing-when-the-right-moment-has-come" and "not-yet" and vice versa. Thus, dilatoriness is not presented as something fundamentally harmful; the issue is that fish Dilatory ignores the above-mentioned parameters and his friends. Without further ado, he self-confidently voices his "settled opinion" (*niścitā mati*), which in this case points to an idle, opinionated form of decision-making that ignores the friends' assessments. The three fishes thus represent different attitudes influencing decision-making and the interplay between them. In this way, they illustrated the inner dynamics of decision-making, which entails a scaling of different attitudes and choices concerning the parameters defining the situation.

This parable is an example of a narrative about decision-making that is not part of the epic plot but belongs to the spectrum of (sub-)tales and intra-diegetic reflections (often called "didactic" texts) that accompany the narration of the epic at different levels. The parable about the three fishes belongs to a larger discourse offered by Bhīṣma on *rājadharma*, the norms and practices a king (here: Yudhiṣṭhira) should observe to rule successfully. However, decision-making is also the topic of tales, debates, and instructions presented in extra-diegetic meta-narrations and meta-reflections as well as an intrinsic element of the epic narrative. Decisions feature as an element of the plot and preoccupy characters and narrators. At the level of the plot, decision (*niścaya, viniścaya*)[3] is a structural

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3 The Sanskrit words *niścaya, viniścaya* (derived from the verbal compound *nis* + √*ci*, to ascertain, investigate, arrive at a decision) are frequently used in the epic when referring to making decisions and settling debated issues. The two words have a solid cognitive connotation, emphasizing reflection, deliberation, evaluation, and weighing up opinions. This is also true for the word *nirṇaya* (derived from the verbal compound *nir* + √*nī*, lit. to lead away; ascertain, investigate), which also occurs in the epic. In classical philosophical discourse, it is the technical term for "conclusion" as one of the members of a syllogism

element of the narrative. On the one hand, it serves to push forward or delay the sequence of events. On the other, it points to alternative perspectives on the narrated events and the possibility of a different storyline. In some instances, decision-making becomes itself an element of the plot. The inclusion of decision-making situations contributes to the multivocality of epic since doubts about certain decisions become part of the plot. The multivocality is one reason why questions about the course of events are part and parcel of the narration and the history of the reception of the epic and its living performance traditions.

As academic studies of the latter demonstrate, the epic tale and its protagonists gave room for various individual and collective engagements in the epic tale that range from reimaginations, affective and intellectual responses to political and ritual action. While the plot is well known, and all characters are household names, the discussions about why he, she or they did act like this, what could have happened if things were decided differently still excite audiences and interpreters. The ways in which decision-making situations are included in the epic invite such diversity of versions and reactions. In the following, I shall explore some aspects of the literary function of decision-making in the *MBh*. After some general remarks about the socio-historical contexts of the treatment of decision-making in the epic and academic discussions related to it, the focus shall be on the narration of the deliberations on war and peace in Book Five of the epic, the *Udyogaparvan*.

(*anumāna*). Another word is *(adhy)avasāya* (derived from the verbal compound *adhi + ava + √so* coming to an end, settling, deciding). It also plays a vital role in philosophical discourse. In Sāṃkhya philosophy, it is the characteristic feature of the cognitive organ called *buddhi*, the faculty of discrimination, reason. In their highlighting the cognitive and intellectual dimension of decision-making, these words differ from using the verbal root √*vṛ*, choosing, prefer, and the derived noun *vara*. The latter can mean the act of choosing, the object of choice (favour, wish, what is best, or preferred) and one who chooses; in the latter sense, it is also the word for "suitor" or "bridegroom." In the epic, there are several instances of so-called *svayaṃvara*, self-choice, when a woman (usually from the warrior class, *kṣatriya*) selects a husband from a group of suitors. They are called to a royal assembly and put to the test ensuring that "the best" (*vara*) is chosen. The choice thus relates to individual and collective preferences, desires, goals, or profits, which must not necessarily reflect any compelling intellectual argument or logical reasoning as the other words suggest. These are preliminary remarks that call for a closer study of the epic usage of the vocabulary.

'Decision' as a topic of debate

Situations of decision-making appear in the MBh in deliberations about the best or appropriate course of action. They are presented as moral dilemmas and touched upon in discourses about heroism, prudence, wisdom, and what is called *kauśalya*, skillfulness in action. The MBh is thus a rich source for analyzing how decisions feature in the narrative and how epic composers addressed contemporary socio-cultural framings of decision-making. The literary analysis of the epic entails considering the historical-social contexts of the composition of the epic and its bards, patrons, and audiences. When asking for reasons explaining the weight given to decisions and decision-making processes in the epic, the probable historical context of the composition provides a clue. The period in which the epic most probably was composed (3rd c. BCE to 4th c. CE) was marked by an ideological and social pluralization that is intrinsically connected to larger political and socio-economic transformations.[4] Along with doubt and dissent, new religious-philosophical ideas and lifestyles emerged that attracted followers and caused concern and objections from the representatives of established norms and knowledge practices (Malinar 2015, 2020; Eltschinger 2012). Various sources attest to this new plurality and the controversies about it. The MBh is a fascinating source as it presents the appropriate course of action as a matter of decision-making. Norms and obligations are doubted, even rejected, which points to the possibility of alternatives to a journey through life being predetermined by social norms (caste, life-cycle rituals, kinship rules etc.). However, the epic also includes voices rejecting such doubts and the idea of having a choice as something undermining social order.[5] In epic studies, such incidents have mostly been treated under headings like "moral" dilemmas and "value conflict", rather than "decision-making". Sometimes, the question was raised whether the epic heroes are free and have a choice and make decisions. In drawing on ideas of an "ancient heroic world" pervaded by the belief in fate and cosmic predetermination, it was argued that doubts serve only to demonstrate the force of "higher" powers (such

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[4] This period can be viewed as being framed by the establishment of the Maurya empire epitomized by King Aśoka (268–233 BCE) as a point of departure and by its consolidation during the reign of the Gupta dynasty (350–550 CE); see the essays in Olivelle (2006).

[5] This feature of the epic has led scholars to view it as a text that mirrors and addresses a situation of political and intellectual "crisis"; see the discussion in Malinar (2007a).

as fate, law, divinity).[6] In this respect, the question of whether the heroes of the MBh can "really" decide and choose resonates with similar debates concerning the Greek epics.[7] This debate is intrinsically connected to the premise that only free individuals can decide, and its corollary, the idea that freedom and individuality rather preoccupy modern societies than pre-modern ones. In the latter collective interests are said to prevail. This view has also influenced perceptions and interpretations of Indian culture and society at large. Since the 19th century, it is a topic of debates across the disciplines, in particular Indology, religious studies, sociology, and anthropology.[8]

Scholars often view Indian society as being dominated by structures of kinship and caste, which deny individual choice in theory and practice.[9] Nevertheless, various academic studies point to philosophical, religious and literary discourses exploring individuality and individual agency and deal with instances of lived individuality in India's past and present.[10] While there seems to be some consensus that modern individualism is indeed something new – in India no less than in earlier Western societies – this should not lead to the conclusion that individuals and their choices do not matter in a social realm dominated by familial and caste relationships. The various ways of recognizing and dealing with the impact of individual dispositions and aspirations in sources of the past and in present-day social contexts constitute a dynamic field of (inter-disciplinary) study. Its findings help to qualify what dominance of the collective over the individual

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[6] The issue of decision-making and "free-will" was mostly discussed for the *Bhagavadgītā* (BhG; see below), the famous discourse between the epic hero Arjuna and his charioteer Kṛṣṇa about the former's refusal to fight against his relatives; see Malinar (2007a), and Wiese (2016) who analyses decision-making in the BhG by using paradigms of rational choice theory. Hill (1993) touches upon decision-making when dealing with how the epic treats guilt and responsibility.

[7] The view that Homer's heroes cannot make decisions because they do not have an integrated "self" and lack self-consciousness and the deliberative capacities necessary for decision-making was influentially formulated by Snell (1929), and criticized, for instance, by Sharples (1983) and Gaskin (1990), see also the further discussion by Rosenmeyer (1990).

[8] For a delineation of some aspects of this debate, see Malinar (2015).

[9] G. W. F. Hegel, for instance, has famously stated that the goal of Indian religions is the "annihilation of the individual" (Hegel 1827: 77). While L. Dumont (1960) acknowledges that Yoga and the other religions focus on the individual, he concurs with Hegel's opinion when he emphasizes that this "religious" individual is not a category influencing the "holistic" organization of social life.

[10] See Heesterman (1968) on individualized householder religion in ancient India; see also the biographical research by Mines (1988) and the study of female ascetics by Basu (2000).

means precisely in a particular historical-cultural period or an actual social constellation. The inter-disciplinary exchange offers fruitful perspectives, and the history of research on the issue of the "individual" in India demonstrates this no less than the study of the MBh.[11] This is also true when analyzing representations of decision-making featuring the interplay between collective and individual concerns. Anthropological studies of decision-making thus can be relevant when studying its narration in the epic.

A seminal contribution to the field is Helene Basu's documentary *How We Got Here: Decision Matters* (2018) on decision-making in contemporary India. The film strikingly demonstrates the interplay between the different levels of agency in such situations. It also shows the considerable range of attitudes toward what is experienced and produced as a social structure through the individualized handling, re-creating, and re-shaping of the repertoire of collective social practices. The complexity of the constellation emerges in the disruptions and the arrangements brought about by unexpected individual decisions and in the complicated negotiations aiming to keep or re-establish social and personal relations. Some protagonists offer poetry when commenting on what appeared to them as the course of their life that brought them "here" – wondering whether one's life provides the material for a (meaningful) narrative. These moments point to the entwinement of the fictional and factual dimension of lived reality, and conversely, to the permeable boundaries that connect literature with the life of its composers and audiences. However, it also highlights the difference between the poetics and the factuality of decision-making which complicate a reading of a literary depiction of deciding as emulating "real" decision-making. Conversely, this distinction turns "voice-over" in a documentary into an authorial voice, suggesting a "sense-making" authority imposing a narrator's view on what is documented. There is no such overall narrator in Helene Basu's film, and thus the "how" and the "here" of deciding are kept alive and open.

An essential aspect of the difference between epic literature and documentation is that decisions in a literary text are (usually) part of a plot. In contrast to lived and documented social life, which also has its share of narrativization in

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[11] See the results of a long-term interdisciplinary study of individualization-processes in religions in Fuchs et al. (2020). See Held (1935) for a study of the epic from an anthropological perspective.

putting events in a sequence, a text like the epic is framed by structures of narration assembled to unfold a plot, a fixed sequence of events. While the narration of the plot allows for all kinds of extensions (chronologically into ever older pasts and different futures, topically and spatially through side-stories etc.), variations of the plot remain limited lest a different story, a new epic is envisioned. One important factor that puts a limit to plot variations is closure. The epic is heading to an end, and this shapes the plot. Lived reality rarely unfolds "scripted" even though a social script is available (for instance, the sequence of life-cycle rituals). But even if it unfolds as "fore-told", it must not necessarily make sense to those involved. How a specific familial situation, biographical constellation etc., has been brought about, makes sense or was the result of a felicitous choice is open to the reflections, memories, and opinions of those presently "here". A literary plot "logically" or "meaningfully" includes events, agents, and multiple perspectives; it is a matter of a "there", of a "real" that is the work of (a) narration. Such inter-disciplinary considerations highlight the complex role decisions assume in narrations and narratives and provide a point of departure for the following discussion of the epic.

Decision-making in narration

From the perspective of literary theory, decision-making features as an element of any story. For instance, in the structuralist view of Vladimir Propp, deciding belongs to the spectrum of actions accorded to protagonists defining their function in the plot. Furthermore, decisions serve to mark the transition from one event to another.[12] Accordingly, numerous decisions are simply mentioned or appear as brief moments of hesitation that flag out turning points and transitions in the narration and thus serve to stabilize the plot. Such decisions are made quite swiftly by the protagonists and can aptly be reduced to the simple formula: "x or

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[12] According to Propp decision is "the act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course the action" (Propp 1968: 21). Other theorists also deal with choice or decision as a fundamental feature of narratives that marks and brings about the moves/actions of characters that constitute the plot. In contrast to Propp, Bremond points out that this element is itself subject to the narrator's choice and thus to various narrative possibilities (Bremond 1980: 387; see also Pavel 1980). The analysis of narrative semantics thus enhances the structuralist-functionalist focus on the logic of plots; see Eco (1979) and Ronen (1990).

y? y!"[13] In contrast to this, a decision can manifest a dilemma and results in extensive deliberations, thus turning decision-making into an element of the plot. In this case, decision-making is more than a narrative device in the repertoire of actions. Instead, the deliberations reveal the complexity of the constellation the protagonists face and point to the possibility of a different outcome, a different storyline. A certain ambiguity thus marks the narrative function of "decision". On the one hand, decisions mark transitions that push a story forward and can thus be viewed as a necessary and common feature of narratives. Decisions both follow and manifest the plot; in this sense, they are not "true" decisions that would influence how the story unfolds. On the other hand, when a decision is made an event in the story, this points to the plot's contingency and the possibility of another storyline ("what if ..."). The ambiguous function of "decision" can be further explored when drawing on narratological discussions of plot models and narrative modalities.[14] When seen from this perspective, decision-making is a formal element in the "logic" of the plot and an event, a thematic field mirroring and shaping narrative semantics, the organization of meaning creation in the fictional world of the story. The latter aspect becomes evident when the narration of decision-making points to the possibility of a different course of events. This situation invites dealing with the abstracted "logic" of the plot (or *fabula*),[15] and with how meaning is created and logic modalized.[16] It means paying attention to the different modalities that structure the story's fictional world and the relationships of the protagonists to that world. In literary theory, these modes are referred to as "narrative modalities" or "propositional attitudes", which play an essential role in the unfolding of narrative semantics (Todorov 1971; Pavel 1980; Doležel 1976, 1988; Ronen 1990). Sometimes one narrative modality organizes the plot;

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[13] See Rosenmeyer (1990) for Homer.

[14] For a discussion of the different narratological paradigms, see Ronen (1990).

[15] See, for instance, the definition of plot or *fabula* by Bal: "A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (Bal 1985: 5).

[16] For the "modalization" of logic-oriented plot models concerning so-called "possible worlds" theory" and the adjacent discussion about the formal structures of narrative grammar, see Bremont (1980) and Ryan (1992). This approach connects with views of plot that emphasize its unifying and aesthetic dimension as is done by Ricoeur when he describes the plot as "a mediation between the individual events or incidents and a story taken as a whole. In this respect, we may say equivalently that it draws a meaningful story from a diversity of events or incidents." (Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative Vol.2, 1985: 65, cited after Ronen 1990: 824).

in other cases, different modalities are combined, resulting in a complex story (Doležel 1978, 1980). By drawing on philosophical terminology, these modalities have been classified as ontological (what is accepted as real, possible etc.), deontic (norms, notions of obligation, permission, prohibition), axiological (morality, notions of good, bad, indifferent), epistemic (belief, knowledge, ignorance) etc. (Ryan 1985, 1992). They also shape the thoughts and actions of the characters who act in the world of the story with their respective "modal systems" or "propositional attitudes". According to Ruth Ronen, they constitute "world-representing acts of individuals" and manifest "relative worlds of the narrative universe (epistemic or knowledge worlds, hypothetical worlds, intention worlds, wish worlds, moral values, obligation worlds, and alternate worlds)" (Ronen 1990: 839; see also Ryan 1985: 722). These "relative worlds" consist of different components, which constitute the relationships among the characters. A typical constellation is a clash between "wish-world" and "obligation-world", that is, a desired object is undesirable because of normative rules prohibiting its acquisition (in MBh, for instance, Yudhiṣṭhira's claim for his property necessitates waging war against relatives). This structure can be further complicated if conflicting axiological or moral propositions are at stake that would suspend the normative barriers (for instance, when breaching the norm produces something "good"; in MBh, Yudhiṣṭhira's war against his relatives restores righteousness). In such a constellation, any action taken could produce undesirable results and confronts decision-making with a dilemma.

The modal systems of the characters are connected to the organization of the plot in various ways. Characters may share, for instance, the same ontological assumptions (in MBh, the existence of gods, demons etc.), but follow divergent normative ones (in MBh, the different interpretations of what is *dharma*, the norms and appropriate goals of action). Consequently, the plot may be semantically homogenous at one level but partitioned at another.[17] The "relative worlds" expressed by the protagonists in the narrative receive different degrees of authorization (by a narrator, for instance). When there is no solid or persistent authorization of one of these worlds, the meaning of an event or even the plot

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[17] See Pavel (1980) on different constellations and Doležel (1976), who distinguishes between stories organized through a single modal system (for instance, mystery stories through the epistemic mode) and more complex ones.

becomes an issue and invites different interpretations. These theoretical considerations provide the point of departure for the following discussion of the *Udyogaparvan*.[18]

Decision-making as an element of the plot: the *Udyogaparvan*

The *Udyogaparvan* (UdP), The Book of the Effort as van Buitenen (1978) translates, deals with the preparations for the 18 days of battle (which is the topic of Books Six to Nine) and with the question of whether the war between the two branches of the Bhārata family can still be avoided. This question arises because not all heroes are convinced that waging war is the right course of action. Some hope that the breach in the family (*kulabheda*) can be healed, others worry about their reputation and spiritual welfare, and still others doubt that the fruits of heroism (victory, fame etc.) have any value at all. The deliberations on both sides and various diplomatic missions are related in detail. Some protagonists view the failure of the attempts to avert war as manifesting the power of "fate" (*daiva*, *diṣṭa*). The UdP contains various decisions made by the protagonists. However, decision-making is also turned into an element of the plot and points to the possibility of a different course of events. In this way, the plot, the fixed sequence of events, is revealed as potentially fragile and accompanied by alternative story versions. The UdP highlights this situation when it unfolds the narrative modalities juxtaposed and entangled in the epic narrative. Axiological propositions about good and bad are confronted with deontic (referring to various normative frameworks; in MBh: the topic of *dharma*) and epistemic ones as well as with wish-worlds, intention-worlds etc. of the protagonists. This conflictive constellation can be seen as one reason why the deliberations in the UdP appear neither artificially superimposed on the narrative nor as tedious "didactic" presentations of views. The different attitudes that influence the decision-making process are voiced mostly through character speech and occasionally recounted by a narrator

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[18] In an earlier study, I have analyzed the deliberations as a literary representation of a conflict of values attested in contemporary non-literary sources, which point to the socio-historical contexts in which the epic was probably composed (Malinar 2007a); in the following, the focus is on their literary function.

(extra- or intra-diegetic). The deliberations manifest divergent interests and concerns ranging from assessments of the relative strength of the heroes and armies, the desirability of the outcome, normative issues, worries about one's social reputation, and welfare in the afterlife. The discussions between the characters also manifest the familial connections between the protagonist and evoke the (dis)affection they feel for each other. The interplay between the different levels distinguishes the epic narrative of the story of the *Bhāratas* from didactic stories (like the parable of three fishes, see above) and philosophical or normative instructions about decisions also included in the text. The entwinement of heterogeneous and even conflicting "propositional attitudes" is one reason for creating the impression that things are happening against the intentions and the efforts of important protagonists. This is made explicit in the various references to "fate" as the hidden force driving the events. Nevertheless, while the evocation of "fate" supports the idea that there was no other course than war, it also provokes doubt and dissent about this very course of events. This ambiguity will be concretized in the following discussion of some selected text passages.

Deliberations in the *Udyogaparvan*

The UdP begins with stating the subject of the decision, which constitutes the central theme of the book: Will King Duryodhana return the share of the kingdom he now rules to his cousin-brother, the exiled King Yudhiṣṭhira, who earlier had lost it to Duryodhana in a game of dice, or not? Will Yudhiṣṭhira wage war against his relatives to enforce his claim, or keep peace and prevent the destruction of the family? Depending on what Duryodhana is doing, Yudhiṣṭhira must decide whether to wage war to regain his kingdom or relinquish his claim. Since the decision of one party is entwined with that of the other, the epic presents a complex constellation of entwined decision-making. This entwinement is demonstrated already at the very beginning of the UdP. After a discussion with some family members, Yudhiṣṭhira agrees that his father-in-law should send the housepriest as an envoy to inquire whether Duryodhana will fulfil his request. At the same time, he arranges for troupes and seeks allies (5.1-5). The latter is done by Duryodhana as well. After this prologue, the further narration alternates between two scenes of action, the court of Duryodhana and his father Dhṛtarāṣṭra in

Hāstinapura and Yudhiṣṭhira's headquarters in Upaplavya. The alternations between the scenes of action are usually announced by the extra-diegetic narrator Vaiśaṃpāyana[19] who also relates other events (recruitment of allies etc.).

The two primary opponents, Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira, are not shown as lonely "deciders", immersed in private thoughts expressed in soliloquies. Instead, they engage in conversations with other family members, friends, allies, counsellors, and envoys from the opposing party.[20] The latter marks the spectrum of attitudes and relations that separates Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira and, at the same time, binds them together. Thus, apart from the two opponents, these characters also play a central role in voicing their views and contribute to the unfolding of narrative modalities. On the side of the Pāṇḍavas, it is the hero (and divinity) Kṛṣṇa, who is the brother-in-law of Arjuna, Yudhiṣṭhira's younger brother, and acts as the counsellor of the Pāṇḍavas. Kṛṣṇa mostly urges Yudhiṣṭhira to fight Duryodhana and not to relinquish his claim.[21] On the side of the Kauravas, Duryodhana's blind father Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who is also Yudhiṣṭhira's paternal uncle, attempts to prevent the war. The narration switches between the two parties. The intra-diegetic information about the state of events is circulated through envoys, mostly prominently Saṃjaya, the envoy of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and during a final diplomatic mission undertaken by Kṛṣṇa at Dhṛtarāṣṭra's court. There is no direct encounter between Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira.[22]

In the following, I shall focus on the deliberations taking place after Yudhiṣṭhira's envoy, the Brahmanical house-priest of his father-in-law, was sent to Duryodhana's court to claim the share of the kingdom. The priest formulates

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[19] The narration of the epic is organized through different dialogue-frames. The UdP (as is most of the epic) is narrated by bard Vaiśaṃpāyana who mostly tells king Janamejaya the story of the Bhāratas.

[20] Some protagonists also engage in private conversations (for instance, Dhṛtarāṣṭra with Vidura, MBh 5.33-41).

[21] Kṛṣṇa has joined the Pāṇḍavas after he had declared himself a "neutral" party since he is an in-law of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas (*saṃbandhakaṃ tulyam asmākaṃ kurupāṇḍuṣu*, *MBh* 5.5.3). When Duryodhana and Arjuna, both approach Kṛṣṇa to gain his support (MBh 5.7), he lets them choose (verbal root *vṛ* used; see above note 3) between support by his troupes (Duryodhana's choice) or by himself as non-combatant charioteer (Arjuna's choice).

[22] In the deliberations also Queen Draupadī intervenes, the wife of Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers; the latter also express their opinions. The mothers of the two opponents, Kuntī (mother of Yudhiṣṭhira who did not accompany her sons in the forest-exile and stays at Dhṛtarāṣṭra's court) and Gāndhārī, Duryodhana's mother, also play a role in the events. Their impact on the narration of the UdP cannot be analyzed within the scope of this article.

what could be called the legal basis of the claim and mentions the mistreatment and humiliation suffered by the Pāṇḍavas and stresses their military strength (MBh 5.20). This speech receives mixed reactions revealing the disaccord among the Kauravas. While grand-father Bhīṣma supports the claim, Duryodhana's friend Karṇa rejects it as unfounded. Duryodhana's father Dhṛtarāṣṭra takes side with Bhīṣma and announces that his companion Saṃjaya will approach Yudhiṣṭhira (5.21) as his envoy. This scene already delineates which positions are staked out in the following deliberations. While Duryodhana, his friend Karṇa and his maternal uncle Śakuni reject all claims and are ready to wage war, the elders, in particular his father Dhṛtarāṣṭra, keep the decision-making process going as they want to prevent the destruction of the family. This constellation resembles the one on Yudhiṣṭhira's side with the critical difference that he appears reluctant to enforce his claim. Yudhiṣṭhira's appeasing inclinations are occasionally supported by one of his brothers but are regularly criticized by his brother-in-law Kṛṣṇa, and his wife Draupadī (who also earlier in the story had urged his husband to fight Duryodhana).[23]

On the scene of the *Pāṇḍavas*

Before sending his companion Saṃjaya to negotiate a peaceful solution, Dhṛtarāṣṭra instructs him to do whatever necessary to prevent war and to tell Yudhiṣṭhira that he wants peace with the Pāṇḍavas (*dhṛtarāṣṭraḥ pāṇḍavaiḥ śāntim īpsuḥ*, 5.22.36). In carrying out his mission, Saṃjaya uses primarily axiological arguments and points to the undesirable outcome of a war. He declares that Dhṛtarāṣṭra wants peace, and states that violence is always a weak form of action. Furthermore, he suggests that Yudhiṣṭhira's respectability would be diminished by such wrongdoing. Since the consequence of a war is the destruction of the family, nothing would be gained and victory equals defeat. Says Saṃjaya: "Who knowingly would commit a deed entailing total devastation, productive of evil, infernal, destructive, where victory only amounts to defeat?" (5.25.7).[24] Yudhiṣṭhira replies that no war is undoubtedly better than war. However, it cannot be expected from him – after all he had suffered – to relinquish his claim and let Duryodhana's lawlessness (*adharma*) prevail (5.26). Next, Saṃjaya interprets Yudhiṣṭhira's insistence as pointing to egotistic greed and base motives, to the situation that

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[23] See, for instance, in her discussion with Yudhiṣṭhira at MBh 3.32-35 (see Malinar 2007b).
[24] If not marked otherwise, the passages from the UdP are cited in van Buitenen's translation.

wrath has consumed all better insight (*prajñā*). It is better to live from alms (*bhaikṣacaryā*) than to wage war, squander all spiritual merits and end up lamenting that nothing valuable has been won by the killing (5.27).

Yudhiṣṭhira responds that the yardstick for action must always conform to law, but that it is often quite challenging to know what the law is. These situations call for wise decisions, and on this note, the king turns to Kṛṣṇa: "The glorious Keśava must advise me whether I'm not to blame, when I give up war, or desert my own Law when I *do* wage war. […] We know that he knows to decide upon action." (5.28.10, 14) The attribute *niścayajña*, lit. "knower of decisions", is flagged out as the qualification needed. What this means is depicted in the following speech (5.29), which delineates Kṛṣṇa's analysis of the situation and his uncompromising stance towards Duryodhana.

At 5.29, Kṛṣṇa explains the premises that should be observed to decide the case. He points out that he always urges the Pāṇḍavas to strive for peace, and thus acknowledges Yudhiṣṭhira's axiological propositions (peace is good). Then he reformulates the conflict between normative and moral frameworks that worried Yudhiṣṭhira, and turns it into a matter of correct knowledge, or to be more precise, of exegesis. While Yudhiṣṭhira ponders about what is "good" concerning his "own law" (*svadharma*), that is, his obligations to caste (*kṣatriyadharma*) and family (*kuladharma*), Kṛṣṇa talks about law (*dharma*) in general. For him, the question is "whether Law commands a king to wage war, or Law commands the king not to wage war" (5.29.19). The "law" is positioned as an over-arching instance overruling all other authorities in imposing the principle that evildoers must be punished (even if they are family members). For Kṛṣṇa, Duryodhana is guilty of theft because he refuses to return what is Yudhiṣṭhira's property. He must be punished, and waging war is the instrument to do that (5.26-29).[25] After recounting the earlier mistreatment of the Pāṇḍavas, Kṛṣṇa declares that there is still a chance to keep the peace if righting the wrong.

Having listened to Kṛṣṇa's advice, Yudhiṣṭhira dismisses Saṃjaya with a message to all the relatives and friends, which reviews the affective bonds and

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[25] In another speech during the deliberations, Kṛṣṇa refers to the following hierarchy of "costs" when during his diplomatic mission he demands that Duryodhana should be imprisoned: "For the family abandon a man, for the village abandon a family, for the country abandon a village, for the soul abandon the earth" (5.126.48, this aphorism is also quoted by Vidura, the counsellor of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, see 5.36.16).

social obligations that are part of the situation. He ends this part of his speech with a precise formulation of the decision Duryodhana must make. His formulations mirror Kṛṣṇa's position: "either give Indraprastha which is mine indeed, or you fight!" (5.30.46). Nevertheless, his address continues in a different, more conciliatory tone (5.31). He advises Saṃjaya to plead for peace and to try to win over Duryodhana by delivering the message that there shall be peace if five villages are given to him (5.31.28ff.). The reduction of the claim underscores Yudhiṣṭhira's reluctance to use violence (but could also be read as a sign of weakness) and, at the same time, makes Duryodhana's intransigence even more reprehensible. When seen from a literary perspective, the offer fuels the drama of decision-making as it invites emblematic statements such as Duryodhana's declaration that he will not cede as much land as one can prick with the pin of a needle (see also below).

Further insights into Yudhiṣṭhira's propositional attitudes are provided in a speech after Saṃjaya's departure.[26] Here, Yudhiṣṭhira sets forth the different aspects of the decision that need to be considered (5.70). His speech demonstrates the tension between the different modal systems that imbues the epic plot and the set of the propositional attitudes accorded to him. Yudhiṣṭhira wrestles with the situation that his ideas about what is desirable match neither the moral- nor the obligation-worlds he is attached to. This conflict contrasts Yudhiṣṭhira to both Duryodhana and Kṛṣṇa. The latter are not torn apart by a contradiction between deontic and axiological parameters since both view their position as conforming to the norms (*dharma*) and their ideas of what is good and evil. However, Yudhiṣṭhira's inner conflict resonates with Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The propositional attitudes of the latter also show no homogeneity. He is torn between what is desirable for him as a father (affection for his son), axiological considerations (peace is preferable) and epistemic propositions (his insight that Duryodhana cannot win). The proximity between Yudhiṣṭhira and his paternal uncle Dhṛtarāṣṭra is an essential factor of the entwined constellation as can also be seen in the passages in which affective undercurrents emerge and become expressed belief.[27]

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[26] The narration of Yudhiṣṭhira's reaction is postponed since the scene of action is switched to Duryodhana's court to recount what happened when Yudhiṣṭhira's message was conveyed by the envoy (see below).

[27] This proximity is also pointed out by Hill (1993) who deals with the question to what extent Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Yudhiṣṭhira are made responsible for the war.

Examples of this are the beginning and the end of Yudhiṣṭhira's speech at 5.70. The point of departure is the following assessment of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's indecent intentions: "he looks for peace with us without giving back our kingdom" (5.70.8). This diagnosis of his uncle's "wish-world" makes Yudhiṣṭhira imagine what awaits him should he relinquish his claims. He concludes that it is impossible as he cannot continue to live in poverty even if modesty (*hrī*) is the principle of his life (5.70.36-41). But he dreads the prospect of war as well because it is morally "bad": "However unrelated and ignoble an enemy is, Kṛṣṇa, he does not deserve to be killed, let alone men such as they, for they are kinsmen mostly, friends and gurus, and to kill them is a most evil thing. But what is pretty in war?" (5.70.44-45). Yudhiṣṭhira then draws a glaring picture of the "warrior-law" (*kṣatriyadharma*) which has nothing heroic about it. Although it is a law (*dharma*), it is bad (*pāpa*). In his view, law is intrinsically connected to the "good", and if law demands waging war, it looks "bad". For Yudhiṣṭhira, such law even looks like lawlessness (*adharma*) resembling the situation when no law is in force. Such lawlessness is characteristic of war when the stronger mistreat, the weaker and "eat the meat" like a band of dogs (5.70.70-73).

Furthermore, a war is never over; it only leads to new fights. Therefore, one can only live happily ("good") if one gives up the law of victory and defeat (5.70.59). At this point, he seems ready to keep the peace (preferring axiological propositions) and relinquish his claims (and thus deontic concerns and his welfare): "We want neither to renounce our kingdom nor ruin the family. Peace by surrender is preferable." (5.70.68). However, then the conflict surfaces and the prospect of another humiliation, the loss of rank and status are too much to take, which overrules other anxieties. At the end of his speech, Yudhiṣṭhira comes back to his paternal uncle. He imagines that his act of peacekeeping will be laughed at by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, whose affection is all for his son Duryodhana (7.70.75). The epistemic level is surfacing and frames the end of the speech in suspecting that the axiological agreement between him and his uncle (both want peace) is an illusion based on different preconditions (familial obligations and affections). Assessing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's attitude again, he envisions an uncle who has no (familial) affection except for his son.

The analysis of the different modal systems shows that Yudhiṣṭhira's speech is an ornately crafted expression of the contradictions he is wrestling with. The speech starts and ends with Dhṛtarāṣṭra whose ambiguous actions incite both

Yudhiṣṭhira's fears and hopes. This passage resonates with the frequently expressed opinion that Dhṛtarāṣṭra is to be blamed for the humiliations the Pāṇḍavas suffered and the ensuing destruction of the family because he was unable to restrain his son. At the end of his speech, Yudhiṣṭhira again turns to Kṛṣṇa, the "knower of all decisions" (*sarvaniścayavid*, 5.70.78). In his reply, Kṛṣṇa offers (despite his reservations) to sue for peace at Duryodhana's court. The multivocality and multi-perspectivity of the deliberative process are highlighted in the following chapters, in which Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers and Queen Draupadī address the departing Kṛṣṇa stating their views and again unfolding the range of attitudes, experiences and affects (5.72-81). Even after the diplomatic mission has failed and the preparations for battle have started, Yudhiṣṭhira quarrels with the decision. For instance, after having ordered his troupes to march out, he complains that all the suffering has been in vain and asks how they can wage war against their relatives. His brother Arjuna replies that it is too late to refrain from war, and Kṛṣṇa concurs (MBh 5.151.20-26).

On the scene of the Kauravas

The situation on the opposite side is no less complicated. The deliberations of the Kauravas after Saṃjaya's return from Yudhiṣṭhira also reveal a complex constellation of conflicting propositional attitudes (5.46-69). This complexity shall be demonstrated concerning a debate between Duryodhana, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Saṃjaya (5.50-60). This debate mirrors the conversation between Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa, and Saṃjaya discussed before, and this corroborates the character-constellation pointed out before. After Saṃjaya has reported about his conversation with Yudhiṣṭhira and the strength of the Pāṇḍavas and their allies, Dhṛtarāṣṭra ponders the chances for appeasement. In doing so, he expresses his views of the Pāṇḍavas, starting with Bhīma (5.50). He recounts how ferocious Bhīma tormented his sons already in their childhood, making him responsible for the breach (*bheda*) in the family (5.50.12). Dhṛtarāṣṭra envisions how his sons will be killed by Bhīma, who is eager to take revenge for the mistreatment he suffered. Reproaching himself for not being able to stop the catastrophe he foresees, Dhṛtarāṣṭra states: "Fate always prevails, especially over man's efforts: for even though I see the others' triumph, I do not bridle my sons. [...] Of what in the end am I capable in this great danger, for I see in my thoughts the perdition of the Kurus [...] What am I to do, how am I to do it, where am I going, Saṃjaya." (5.50.47, 56, 59ab). After reviewing Arjuna (5.51) and Yudhiṣṭhira (5.52), Dhṛtarāṣṭra urges the Kauravas, not to wage war: "Not to war

were best, I think – listen to me, Kurus! […] This is my last attempt at peace, to appease my mind. If you do not want war, let us strive for peace. Yudhiṣṭhira will not ignore you" (5.52.14-16ab). After an intervention by Saṃjaya, who further fuels Dhṛtarāṣṭra's self-reproach (5.53), Duryodhana rejects his father's concerns and stresses the superiority of the Kaurava heroes. He insists that one must not submit and accept that Yudhiṣṭhira makes himself the king of only one kingdom (5.54.10). Again, Dhṛtarāṣṭra pleads with Duryodhana not to wage war ("turn away from war, for there are no circumstances in which war is condoned […] return to Pāṇḍu's sons what is rightfully theirs"; 5.57.2, 4). Finally, he even declares that he gives up his son (5.57.19).

In his reply, Duryodhana explains that he has consecrated himself for the "sacrifice of war" (*raṇayajña*). He is ready to offer as the sacrificial gift either his enemies or himself (5.57.12ff.). The affective dimension is adduced as well when Duryodhana refuses the idea of restoring the familial bonds: "I should rather surrender my life, wealth, and realm, […] than ever dwell together with the Pāṇḍavas! We shall not cede to the Pāṇḍavas as much land as you can prick with the point of sharp needle, father!" (5.57.17-18). He then explains his view on kingship and declares himself the overlord who is primarily committed to the kingdom and his subjects and not to his family (5.60; on this speech, see Malinar 2012). In the case of Duryodhana, the set of propositional attitudes is relatively homogeneous. He expresses no contradiction between his belief- and wish-worlds and the deontic and axiological propositions they imply. In his view, what is good for him is also lawful and good for his kingdom and allies.[28] Such convergence stabilizes his decision. This uncompromising attitude is summed up in declaring his indifference towards victory or defeat, being dead or alive. This intransigence makes him a true hero for some but a ruthless, even demonic figure for others. Both views are present in the epic (although with a preponderance of the latter) and the history of its reception.[29]

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[28] This attitude is also pointed out by Kṛṣṇa, who says that Duryodhana "considers *that* Law whatever he pleases" (5.29.28). Similar accusations are voiced about Kṛṣṇa when he encourages reprehensible actions in the battle to ensure the victory of the Pāṇḍavas.

[29] On the different aspects of the depiction of Duryodhana in the epic, see Malinar (2012); for various interpretations of Duryodhana in Indian literature, see, for instance, Brückner (1994) and Gitomer (1992).

As the previous discussion demonstrates, Dhṛtarāṣṭra emerges as a figure fulfilling a narrative function like that of Kṛṣṇa in that they both counteract certain attitudes of the two primary opponents. While Dhṛtarāṣṭra urges his son to find a peaceful solution (counteracting proneness to war), Kṛṣṇa insists that Yudhiṣṭhira should not relinquish his claims (counteracting reluctance to war). Dhṛtarāṣṭra's failure is mirrored in Kṛṣṇa's success.[30] Consequently, both are made responsible by other characters for the disastrous war, although for different reasons. On the other hand, when focusing on the ornately crafted ensemble of propositional attitudes accorded to the protagonists, it becomes apparent that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's wrestling with the situation resonates with the depiction of Yudhiṣṭhira. Both express contradictions between the modal systems which motivate their actions in the world of the story. This contrasts with Duryodhana's determined stance, which resembles Kṛṣṇa's. Both appear as uncompromising and unbending heroes (although in quite different ways) as they display a quite homogeneous set of propositional attitudes.

When the efforts to prevent war fail, the preparations for war and the deliberations end with the armies marching out. The final decision is not narrated as a climactic or peripatetic moment, for instance, in a "decider" statement at the end of a final deliberative monologue. The entwined nature of the decision is presented as the implicit result of the discontinuation of deliberations and diplomatic efforts. It is a decision that seems to happen rather than being made.[31] Although most characters envisioned this course of events, the decision is not authorized as conclusive or compelling, but instead appears contingent and questionable. Thus, the decision and with it, the course of events, remain an issue as the doubts and complaints demonstrate that are included in the epic.

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[30] Kṛṣṇa also points out this constellation during his diplomatic mission at Dhṛtarāṣṭra's court, when he states that war and peace depend on him and the old king (5.93.13). The entwined structure of the decision becomes manifest again when Kṛṣṇa suggests that Dhṛtarāṣṭra should restrain his son Duryodhana, and he will do the same with the Pāṇḍavas.

[31] After Kṛṣṇa reports about his failed diplomatic effort, Yudhiṣṭhira orders his troupes to march out (5.149), and Duryodhana does the same (5.150). Before the troupes march out, Duryodhana underscores his warmongering stance by sending his envoy Ulūka to convey aggressive, bellicose messages to the Pāṇḍavas (5.157-160).

Entwined decision-making in the *Udyogaparvan*

The decision-making process as narrated in the UdP can be viewed as constituting a thematic field highlighting the heterogeneity of propositional attitudes of the agents. The heterogeneity prevents a consensual and semantically stable decision. The protagonists are given room to not only to act, but also to voice and perform their "relative worlds", which are commented upon by other characters as well as narrators. The detailed account of decision-making unfolds the "crisis" that marks the transition to the next element of the plot: the war. Decision-making becomes the occasion for narrating the divergent propositional attitudes of the protagonists, which reflect and produce heterogeneity in the relationships the heroes entertain to the world of the story. This world is still represented as a "cosmos", as a shared world that the characters accept mostly as ontologically stable and familiar, populated by gods, demons, humans, ancestors etc., in different cosmic regions. Nevertheless, the axiological, normative, and epistemic modalities of its workings differ considerably, both in the organization of the epic plot as well as in the perception of its protagonists. Since there is disagreement on both sides, the pros and cons unite protagonist across the dividing lines. The outcome is not a "collective decision" manifesting an agreement on the side of the Kauravas or the Pāṇḍavas, but an entwined decision revealing the commonalities between central protagonists situated in the opposing parties (Duryodhana and Kṛṣṇa, for instance). The detailed account of the different propositional attitudes narrates the unwinding of the common basis of sociality. It carries along with it the question of why the protagonists were connected in ways that drove them apart and into a catastrophic war.[32] This is one of the reasons why the entwined decision for war turns into an event in the plot that continues to surface in the narrative.

The decision-making process reveals this heterogeneity because of the absence of an authoritative or authorial "decider" and of a joint, single "value" settling the matter. The entwinement of attitudes is not disentangled by establishing an over-arching agreement on the law or on the value that must be employed to generate consent. The otherwise mutually exclusive options war or peace allow-

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[32] Duryodhana states this when he declares that it is unbearable for him to dwell together with his cousins again. Conversely, when at the end of his earthly life, Yudhiṣṭhira is led by the god Dharma to the heavenly worlds, he refuses to go there when he sees Duryodhana residing there already.

ing quick decisions in other situations, for instance, when faced with outside aggression, appear in this case as entwined and mutually dependent on each other to the point of convergence. This situation is addressed when protagonists on both sides repeatedly state that "victory and defeat are the same". For Yudhiṣṭhira, for instance, readiness for peace amounts to defeat (relinquishing his claims). However, he also views war as a defeat even in victory (destruction of the family, loss of spiritual merit). These statements point to a situation in which familiar frameworks of decision-making are suspended. This is the case since the normative and moral set-up of the story's world is put into question by the main protagonists (loyalty to the family members, value of law, heroism etc.).

Divergent axiological attitudes and the conflict between the "relative worlds" of the characters necessitate that a decision must be made at all. Normative frameworks disintegrate, and this results in a dilemma in which both options produce undesirable results. Such constellation has been poignantly described by Niklas Luhmann in his analysis of decision-making as follows: "decisions are only needed in case of value collisions. From this it follows that values are not able to regulate decisions" (Luhmann 1996: 65). Such collisions call for judgements and normative discourses, which also in Indian contexts concern the fields of law, religion, and philosophy. In the UdP such normative judgements and assertion of values are not presented as the "final say" by an auctorial narrator or in the form of a "deus ex machina". This feature distinguishes literary narrative from didactic tales that teach specific lessons but do not engage with the modal systems driving the epic characters. The style of discourse changes when the validity of norms is at issue. In the MBh, this famously happens in Book Six, which contains the perhaps most famous non-narrative discourse about decision-making in the epic, the *Bhagavadgītā*. In this text, a new value in the form of religious-philosophical doctrine is advocated as the solution of the dilemmas debated, among other things, in the UdP and is indeed presented as a new framework of decision-making which allows a moral as well as normative justification of the decision for war.[33]

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[33] For an analysis, see Malinar (2007a). The repercussions of this discourse for the narrative are limited. Although there are echoes and responses to the doctrine included in the epic, this does not result in a significant reorganization of the plot and its narrative modalities.

Conclusion: decision-making and the possibility of other storylines

One aspect that connects the story's world with meta-diegetic or "didactic" contexts is the recurrent reference to fate (*daiva*).[34] This connection emerges when fate is viewed as a socio-cosmic power that the protagonists sometimes evoke to explain what seems inevitable. In the UdP, fate is also evoked, and it appears like a common denominator connecting the opponents. Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Kṛṣṇa, whose roles in the decision-making process show certain resemblances (see above), also repeatedly take recourse to "fate" when explaining why their efforts will fail. Before departing for his diplomatic mission, Kṛṣṇa, for instance, states: "Our great-spirited forefathers have decided (*niścita*) this in their wisdom: that the affairs of the world are contingent on both fate (*daiva*) and human effort. I myself shall do the utmost human agency allows, but I am unable in any way to take care of fate." (5.77.4-5) When the armies have marched out for battle, Dhṛtarāṣṭra says: "I think Fate reigns supreme, and man's efforts count for nothing. While I know full well the evils of war […] yet I cannot restrain my deceitful son […] nor act in my own interest." (5.156.4-5; see also 5.50.47 cited before) However, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Kṛṣṇa are not the only ones pointing out that they all are driven by fate and thus not in control of the course of events. While such statements certainly reflect contemporary notions of fate and time,[35] when seen from a literary perspective, these statements point also to the scripted nature of the events. In this view, calling out fate amounts to naming the plot. "Fate" is what is "fabulated", the narrated plot, the sequence of events that seems settled before its narration. From this kind of fate there is no escape, except in a different narration of the events. Seen from this perspective, "fate" refers to the opaqueness of the reasons that make this course of events and thus the decision compelling. The recourse to fate can even be interpreted as calling up of "tradition", that is, the

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[34] In the *Bhagavadgītā*, "highest god" Kṛṣṇa reveals himself in chapter 11 to doubtful Arjuna as the "fate", that has the form of death in battle, and calls for Arjuna to become its sign as well as the instrument of its fulfilment, see Malinar (2007a). In another incident after the battle, in Book 14 of the epic, Kṛṣṇa is challenged by a Brahmanical ascetic, who asks him why he has not prevented the war as he is the "Highest" who could have changed everything. In his reply, the god states that even he cannot change "fate", the course of events (MBh 14.52.16). In both cases, divine action is not made the resolving instance but is shown being subject to the plot and confirming it.

[35] See, for instance, Scheftelowitz (1929) and Malinar (2007a).

consensus between performer and audiences about the narration of the story, their agreement that the story must go "like this", that the plot "has indeed happened as told" (*itihāsa*). Such function of "fate" has been pointed out by David Elmer for Homer's *Iliad*: "what appears fated […] is simply what is sanctioned by the traditional and familiar form of the story" (Elmer 2013: 151).[36] In a similar vein, the form and version of the epic laid down in the written MBh constitute the "fate" that shapes the plot, the sequence of events that "happened as told". It became indeed a highly influential version of the epic, but it did not efface other possible storylines and living traditions of the narration of the epic.

As an element of the plot, the narration of decision-making in the UdP can thus also be seen as a narrative about other possible decisions. This allows catching a glimpse of other narrations of the story. It points to the situation that the epic plot was shaped in various narrations and versions (with the one written down becoming highly influential); this variety remained a characteristic feature of the MBh. The account of decision-making in the UdP points to such other narrations. In this way, it testifies to the diversity of narrators and audiences, which constituted and still constitute the textual and performative communities of the MBh. They may realize aspects of the story and different storylines that were acknowledged but not elaborated or authorized in its earliest written version. Nevertheless, the epic's history of reception and persistent relevance in the contemporary world demonstrate the vitality of these possibilities. In this way, the narration of the plot emerges as a matter of decision also for performers/narrators of the epic and their patrons and audiences. "Fate" points to the contingency of what appears as the familiar sequence of events; it indicates that performers and audiences made decisions about the storyline, about how the Bhāratas got "there".

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[36] Deliberations, processes of decision-making invite alternative outcomes. At the same time "destiny" in the narrative means "what is necessary to happen in order to bring about the telos, intention of story," in the case of the Iliad, the destruction of Troy (Elmer 2013: 142f.).

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Narratives of Mental Health Crises and Uncertainty among African Migrants in Berlin

Nina Grube

Helene Basu's work on madness/spirit possession, and ritual and biomedical psychiatric healing modalities in Gujarat, India, portrays afflicted people and their families' experiences of chaos and crises that come with falling mad/being possessed, as well as the ensuing religious and medical responses to restore social order (Basu 2009 a, b, c; 2010, 2014). It is especially this aspect of her work that is pertinent to my own research on issues of mental health and affliction among African migrants in Berlin, Germany.

However, to my counterparts the roots of their affliction and the appropriate therapeutic responses are rarely as clear-cut. In contexts of migration there can often be a lack of family or community members who notice signs of crisis, can initiate treatment, and also accompany them through the process of diagnosis and therapy. In addition, the cultural resources required for diagnosis and healing such as rituals, shrines, healers and ritual community, may not be as readily available to migrants in their current place of residence. Thus, the question of who noticed the symptoms of affliction, how these were rendered meaningful, and in what way they needed to be addressed were oftentimes at the centre of my research. This article therefore focuses on the personal experiences of crises and uncertainty in the context of mental health among migrants from Cameroon and Ghana residing in the city of Berlin, Germany.[1] It considers the varied levels of meaning pertaining to the term crisis and their relationship to normality and explores the ways in which practices become transformative and generate new knowledge and meaning.

By concentrating on the stories of Lynda, Luis and Gloria I have chosen a narrative approach. The narrative turn in anthropology since the late 1980s has not passed by medical anthropology. It was primarily Arthur Kleinman's focus on illness narratives to recount people's biographies and convey "the innately human experience of symptoms and suffering" (Kleinman 1988: 3) that promoted a narrative approach within medical anthropology. Narratives of illness and affliction shed light on the moral life worlds of patients and healers. To the interlocutor, the audience, as well as to the narrator "they give form to feeling" (Garro & Mattingly 2000: 11). For the afflicted person they also provide a pathway for making sense of experience and render seemingly disconnected events coherent and meaningful. In doing so narratives connect the personal, subjective reality to cultural concepts and knowledge (ibid.: 10, 28). An approach that can be especially useful in exploring how migrants deal with their afflictions using newly acquired health practices and knowledge against the backdrop of their experiences made before migrating.

Within the scope of this article, I am using the terms disorder, affliction[2] and crisis rather than mental illness. The latter is based on a biomedical psychiatric diagnosis which in many cases during my research did not happen since other therapeutic practices, such as for example religious healing modalities, were sought out. A dis-order, in the literal sense of the word, is an interruption of normal life, a disarrayed familiar flow of life. For example, in form of physical symptoms of illness, abnormal behaviour or events that are generally experienced as threatening and unsettling such as being laid off work, death in the family, poverty, divorce, social isolation and other social issues (Njeri Mwaura 2001: 66). Nichter (1981) has described these kinds of sources of malaise as "psychosocial distress". The term disorder alludes to a person's subjective experience of being unwell, losing their grip on reality, feeling lost, confused, or afflicted. Rather than asking "Which illness is it?", we could then ask, "Why is it?" (Crandon 1983: 154). The concept of crisis contextualises these individual symptoms of disorder. Focusing on crisis as the object of anthropological enquiry therefore allows for including general social conditions, beyond psychiatrically defined symptoms of illness. These social conditions include marginalisation, poverty, or violence. This also opens space for considering individual agency and non-

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[2] The term "affliction" goes back to Turner (1981).

biomedical therapeutic practices without falling into the trap of viewing them as "the other to biomedicine" (Good 1994: 40).

Crisis in context – crisis as context – 'critical people'

Etymologically, in English (as well as in German) the term "crisis" derives from Ancient Greek and denotes a temporally limited state of instability and indetermination. Originally, it refers to the turning point of a situation (Redfield 2005: 335). In accordance with its original meaning, a crisis is a temporally limited phase in which extraordinary or traumatic events such as natural disasters or events of violence, sickness, or bereavement interrupt the familiar flow of life. In this case therapeutic practices or interventions of any kind aim at bringing the crisis under control and restoring normality. To analyse these kinds of existential crises medical anthropology as well as the anthropology of religion usually refer to Victor Turner's seminal work on ritual and communitas (Turner 1969). Turner conceptualises crisis as a process that consists of a phase of social instability, followed by a turning point which then re-establishes social order. In terms of illness and healing medical anthropologists predominantly emphasise the role of "rituals of affliction" (Turner 1981) and the emergence of new socialities in the form of religious communities and therapeutic networks (Janzen 1992)[3]. Henrik Vigh calls these kinds of crises based on traumatic events "crisis in context" (Vigh 2008: 9). Lynda's[4] story is a good example of that: twenty-nine-year-old Lynda lives with her husband and her 18-month-old daughter in a residence hall for students located in Berlin-Mitte. The tiny flat consists of two rooms and a kitchenette; there is a communal bathroom in the hallway. I visit them one warm summer evening. Students of all nationalities sit in front of the buildings. The hallway is filled with the smell of food, the sound of music, and voices. For the interview Lynda clears her desk and two chairs for us in the small bedroom. Her husband plays with their daughter in the other room. Lynda came from Cameroon to Germany seven years ago to get her master's degree in International Law. Currently, she and her husband are both enrolled at university studying for their PhDs. They are here on student visas and are living off scholarships. Lynda says

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[3] See also Krause, Alex & Parkin (2012) for an overview of the pertinent literature.
[4] Throughout the article all names of people and institutions have been anonymised.

she has never been seriously ill in her life, apart from Malaria and colds which everyone in Cameroon regularly suffers from. She cannot remember to ever having been admitted to a hospital nor has she ever sought out traditional healers for any diseases.

Lynda tells me she is "generally very healthy, thank God". Her pregnancy also progressed without any problems. She had planned to give birth to the baby in Cameroon and then spend the first weeks with her newborn there to have the support of her mother and other family members. Due to external circumstances she in fact ended up giving birth in the US where large parts of her husband's family reside:

> Because the whole family of my husband, the mother, the sister, the aunties, all are in the US. And all are medical doctors and midwives. So, by the time when I was pregnant, and I was due, my mum was critically sick, she couldn't walk or talk, she was really sick. So, I didn't want to add any more pressure to the situation at home. And my husband's family, they told me to come over and give birth there, so I wouldn't be alone. We always consider it important in Africa to be inside the family when giving birth to the first child.

There were no complications during the delivery, but shortly after she began to feel unwell:

> I don't know, maybe after two weeks, I suddenly wasn't feeling well. I couldn't get out of bed; I was always tired and always very sad. I didn't want to eat, I didn't want to hold my daughter, I didn't want to talk to anyone. I was exhausted and just not my usual self. I have never felt that way before and everyone was worried about me. That went on for many days.

Due to her in-law's professional background in medicine, she was quickly diagnosed with postpartum depression and was put on antidepressants:

> I began to feel better then, it was like everything was blurry before and then suddenly it became clear again. But let me tell you, until today I don't really understand what was happening then. They say it was depression, but I always thought, we Africans, we don't get depression. Because in Africa things that are considered a reason for depression in Europe or in the US, they are just normal there. In Europe life is sweet but in Africa people are used to fighting hard. We don't get depressed. So, I was very surprised to learn that I have depression, but they say it's related to giving birth and that your hormones are out of balance. And in the hospital, they also said, maybe I was missing my own mother. I don't know.

Although her state improved quickly due to the medication, her aunts and her maternal grandmother begged her to come back to Cameroon:

My aunties and my grandmother, they made me go to Cameroon. I was feeling better and also my mother over there was feeling better. But they said: "Ah, there's something wrong here, you are sick, your mother is sick." So, they consulted with this traditional healer. And the healer said: "You have not performed your ancestor-rituals for quite some time now; this is why you are struck by sickness. You must go and perform these rites." We live in the town but of course everybody in Africa comes from a village, whether you live in a town or not, you always go to your ancestral village to perform rites, we always do that. But my family is also very Catholic, and the priest was very much against it, against performing the rituals. The church always says, if you are coming to church, you don't have to go there. So, we didn't do it for some time. But then, when I was there, we went to the village, and we did it because the healer said so. And we didn't want to risk my mother getting worse again – or even me. So that was that. Now everybody is healthy again.

Lynda's case illustrates a few key points well known in anthropological literature: First, sickness and affliction are often attributed to various causes (regarding mental illness see Field 1955, 1960; Fortes & Mayer 1966; Edgerton 1966; Jegede 2005; Mullings 1984); among other things they can have spiritual roots (Krause 2006; Read 2010). Second, favouring one diagnosis over another can have very pragmatic reasons. These reasons are deeply embedded in social and power relations (Last 1981) and the corresponding therapeutic practices (Basu 2009a: 24, Basu et al. 2012, Sharp 1994). Last, acting on the crisis people use "latticed knowledge" (Parkin 1995) in combination with simultaneous or overlapping biomedical as well as other therapeutic practices (Pool 1994). In the context of migration these are oftentimes situated in therapeutic transnational networks (Krause 2008).

What if the crisis is not only contained to a short period before life returns to normal? What if it persists? Crises do not always appear as sudden cracks in the normal flow of life. Crises can also emerge as the result of "slow processes of deterioration, erosion and negative change – of multiple traumas and friction" (Vigh 2008: 9) with no foreseeable end. Luis' story illustrates how crisis can take over everything and become the context of one's life. "Well, you could say that I have sort of a crisis right now, except that it's such a long time now that I'm in this crisis, it almost feels like this is how my life is now. This crisis is just a normal part of my life now, it's my normality" says Luis, my Cameroonian counterpart, when we first meet for an interview. Luis has been living in Germany for about 20 years. He came here to study the German language in Munich and then train as a nurse, after which he went on to study medicine in Berlin. Until about five years ago he had a regular residence permit based on his student status. After

it expired, he stayed on in Berlin as an undocumented migrant: "I finished my studies and then I couldn't work, I didn't find work immediately and then it got a bit complicated and then I was afraid to go and explain things [to the *Ausländerbehörde* ("Citizenship and Immigration Service")] because you get one warning and after that things have to be clear so I stayed away." He now mainly gets by with moonlighting as a nurse in home care. But it gets more and more difficult to find work due to the influx of nurses from Central and Eastern Europe and stricter official controls regarding illicit working arrangements.

The stresses and strains of having no legal documents, no work permit, and therefore no regular income are his daily companions. His precarious living situation and the permanent risk of having his ID randomly checked by the police and subsequently being expelled from the country are taking a toll on his well-being and his state of mind.

For our first interview we meet up at his cousin's house; she lives with her husband and their four children in a small apartment and can only take him in occasionally. He is therefore couch surfing at different friends' and acquaintances' homes. Luis never expected his difficulties regarding his residence permit to persist for so many years. He would love to work as a medical doctor again but cannot imagine how he should ever be able to find a position: "When you don't have an *Aufenthaltserlaubnis* ("residence permit"), you cannot find a job. But without a job, you don't get your *Aufenthaltserlaubnis*. I am caught in this absurd vicious cycle." Whenever he gets sick, he uses friends' insurance cards to see a doctor, or he visits services specifically catering to undocumented migrants like *Büro für medizinische Flüchtlingshilfe* ("office of medical support for refugees") or *Malteser Migranten Medizin*. One of his greatest fears is to seriously fall ill or have an accident so that he would be permanently dependent on medical assistance.

> The first few years it was actually okay, living like that. I worked in a *Pflegeheim* ("residential treatment facility") for mental patients, I liked the work there, and the money was okay. But now for some time, it's been really tough. I cannot work; I cannot travel home to see my family. Some nights I lie awake and I can't stop thinking, I think and think. I feel like I'm going mad in my head. But the biggest crisis that I experienced so far was when my mother died. I was here and I could not go home to bury her. It was a big shock. She was always in good health and then she died after an operation. Even though she always stayed in Cameroon, she was very well respected in our community here in Berlin, too. She was one of our elders and when she passed, everyone here mourned her. You know with people in the community here, our families back home know each other, too. Three years

> down my father also died. That was difficult because I knew that my siblings didn't have anyone left back home. Then my brother also died [in Berlin] in 2006. He had cancer. I was with him in the hospital during the whole time.

Luis increasingly feels like he is losing control over his life. He feels under pressure to financially support his siblings and other relatives in Cameroon which he is not able to do due to his current situation. He tells me that it is sometimes hard for him to get up in the morning and leave the house. Although he is very involved with Hometown Associations[5] and has an excellent social network, he increasingly feels like life in Berlin does not make any sense. The fear of getting checked by the police and being deported causes him a lot of anxiety:

> I feel nervous now all the time when I leave the house. The police often ask black people for their passports without reason, *Routinekontrolle* ("routine control") they call it. When I'm in the BVG [*Berliner Verkehrsgesellschaft*, "Berlin transport company"] I feel like everyone is staring at me, I feel like everyone knows that I'm here illegally. You are just not a real person without papers in this country, it makes you paranoid. But as I said, this crisis, it is my life now.

Luis's feeling of constant persecution and surveillance is evidence of his very real fear of being found out as undocumented. It also reveals a more general paranoia, a terror that exceeds this fear: the feeling of being watched by anyone and everyone, of not being a whole person. In his article on Sewa, a young man from Sierra Leone living in London, Jackson (2008) points out that for migrants their migration from a patrimonial to a bureaucratic society can feel like they have lost their right to exist since their status as a person is no longer based on social relations but rather dependent on abstract and impersonal rules.[6] "In this inscrutable and Kafkaesque world of bureaucratic protocols" they are facing a climate of indifference, or even worse, of malevolence in which every stranger's staring might appear as the "evil eye" (Jackson 2008: 65). In fact, Luis also suspects evil eye as one of the reasons for his problems. Bordonaro et al. (2009:

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[5] Hometown Associations (HTAs) are social and cultural clubs formed by migrants of the same region of origin (Orozco & Garcia-Zanello 2009; Mazzucato & Kabki 2009).

[6] Needless to say, undocumented migrants are not a homogenous group. Their experiences of their status may differ greatly and they may have a variety of motives to stay undocumented. Ruhs & Anderson (2008, 2010) emphasise the complexity of undocumented migrants' living situations and their agency.

6ff.) describe migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, based on their social marginalization and the constant bureaucratic threat to their existence, not only as especially susceptible to crises but as "critical people".

To capture and describe a crisis social anthropological literature has traditionally often focused on social processes in the aftermath of the crisis – the post-traumatic impact of an event, the consequences of a natural disaster, and the afterlife of war (see Hinton & O'Neill 2009; Malkki 1995; Nordstrom 1997, 2004). Vigh furthermore points out that the live worlds of many people around the world are influenced by the constant presence of violence, poverty, or illness. Crisis in these cases is "a relative constant" (Vigh 2008: 9), normality itself is crisis-laden. Veena Das (2007) describes such a reality permeated by the experience of violence. For the Punjabi families, whose stories Das narrates, life is stretched between "the event," the violent partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, and the "everyday". The experience of violence is not a one-time event, done with and remembered, but rather "the event attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the recesses of the ordinary" (Das 2007: 1). Similarly, numerous ethnographies tell about the ever present, embodied experience of violence caused by genocide (Burnet 2012), poverty, social marginalisation or illness (Biehl 2005, Estroff et al. 1991, Estroff 1993, Good et al. 2008, Greenhouse et al. 2002, Scheper-Hughes 1992, Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004). Thus, anthropological reflections on crisis and chronicity are anything but new.

Nevertheless, the theoretical framework offered by Vigh is helpful when analyzing processes of crisis. He proposes to understand crisis not solely as a disruption of normality but as the context itself in which normality is embedded, thereby emphasising the quality of instability and fragmentation of a situation rather than the temporal dimension of a crisis. The meaning of crisis thus shifts from a disruption of normality to a constant incoherence and fragmentation of social processes and subjective experiences:

> Crisis is not rupture, it is fragmentation; a state of somatic, social or existential incoherence. […] What is important to realize is that though crisis is fragmentation, it is, in a social scientific perspective, not a short-term explosive situation but a much more durable and persistent circumstance. Not a moment of decisive change but a condition. (Vigh 2008: 9)

While temporary crises oftentimes lead to the collapse of social processes, constant crisis can generate new socialities and meanings. Crisis-as-context there-

fore is to be understood "as a terrain of action and meaning rather than an aberration" (Vigh 2008: 8). Instead of acting through a crisis, agency and the allocation of meaning are then located within the crisis. Thus, crises do not simply lead to "disrupted lives" (Becker 1997) but are processes in which actors may render their situations meaningful, articulate subjectivity and create belonging. While doing so they are confronted with "uncertainty as a structure of feeling – the lived experience of a pervasive sense of vulnerability, anxiety, hope, and possibility" (Cooper & Pratten 2015: 1).

Uncertainty and the categorisation of symptoms of disorder

Medical anthropologists point out time and again that the management of symptoms of disorder and illness does not follow fixed scripts but is rather a process of trial and error deeply affected by uncertainty (Feierman 2000, Last 1981, Pool 1994, Read 2017, Whyte 1997). "Uncertainty is implicated in a complex semantic field," as Cooper and Pratten (2015: 1) write: "Uncertainty belongs to a family of concepts that also includes insecurity, indeterminacy, risk, ambiguity, ambivalence, obscurity, opaqueness, invisibility, mystery, confusion, doubtfulness, scepticism, chance, possibility, subjunctivity, and hope." When a crisis is chronic the causes of the disorder often stay unclear. Even if there is a diagnosis in the end, frequently a lot of time passes forming and discarding various hypotheses until a cause is determined and unspecific symptoms are rendered meaningful. Usually, there is more than one therapeutic option to counter the problem and therapies are being tried out and rejected. Put in another way, in response to uncertainty and distress people do not just do what their culture tells them to do.

> First, looking at local knowledge and rules, what Frederik Barth calls the cultural stuff, there is always diversity and ambiguity. This is so with respect to both diagnosis and subsequent response: there are typically alternatives available. […] Second, in as much as people are not "cultural clones," they themselves bring to these situations a range of their own individual stuff, ranging from personal history and experience, to emotional ties and responses, to calculative strategies. (Malkki 1995, quoted in Jenkins et al. 2005: 14)

In relation to migration and illness there is another dimension to this as ideas about illness informed by the context of origin are put together with knowledge and discourses prominent in the receiving society.

When I meet Luis again a few months after our first interview at an event organised by one of his Hometown Associations his appearance has seemed to worsen. He seems nervous, absent-minded, and suspects we are being watched and overheard. His legal situation has not changed, and he tells me that he has also great financial problems. His family in Cameroon increasingly puts pressure on him; one of his sisters is no longer able to pay her tuition and asks him for money daily. Luis did not tell his family in Cameroon about his difficult living situation in Berlin and not being able to work as a medical doctor: "How can I tell them, after the whole family put so much effort and money into my education in Germany? I am a doctor now; I should be able to provide for them. It puts so much shame on me that I am not able to do that." He goes on to tell me that he suffers from severe headaches and feels disheartened. Being a medical professional, he suspects that he suffers from "a mild case of depression" and that his pain might be psychosomatic caused by the stress of his situation.

In response to my questions how he defines depression he says: "Depression is a mental illness or rather an emotional illness. It is a sustained reaction to external pressure, external stress, but could also be a psychological trauma. But it also could be things within your brain that are not functioning well, you may have a physical illness that can cause mental problems, or you may have difficulties with brain chemistry, your brain chemistry may not be very good so it may manifest itself then in mental problems. But in my case what to do about it?" he asks me rhetorically; his living situation cannot be changed this easily. He continues to speculate about the causes of his misfortune: "You know I consider myself enlightened since I've been living in Europe. Cognitively, I know that misfortune is probably just happening by chance and there is no reason behind me being in this difficult situation. But lately I cannot help but wonder […] maybe there is something more to it. In my culture, people believe when someone is successful, he makes himself a target for others' envy. He is spiritually more vulnerable to witchcraft and these sorts of things, to the evil eye. Sometimes I wonder if this is actually what's happening to me and my family. I am a doctor and all my siblings went to university, too, that is considered a success story in my country. And then all these things happened, my parents died, my brother died, I am having these difficulties […]." Intentionally, he leaves the sentence unfinished.

Luis also tells me about his grandfather and his granduncle who had once taken over as traditional healers from their father. When the time came, the vocation was passed down to Luis's uncle who then passed it down to his son, Luis's cousin. And he recounts his own spiritual afflictions as a child growing up in Cameroon. When he was about ten years old, he experienced his first spiritual attack: "That's how I interpreted it then, now I see it differently. Back then, growing up, there were a lot of these spiritual stories around which would always make you afraid." He remembers being asleep, then suddenly opening his eyes and seeing a small man standing beside his bed:

> He was very old with a twisted face staring down at me. And I would scream, and I was not able to get up, I was frozen in bed. And then when I grew older, at 14, I would move to my birth town which is closer to our village, our spiritual home, and there I experienced it even more intense. I remember my grandfather had then cut me and put some herbal paste in the wound. And he gave me a ring, too, for protection. And I was sleeping, and I had the feeling that someone held my hand, and he was inspecting the ring which was my protection. Our interpretation was that a bad spirit was trying to figure out what protection I have so he could break it. That is the kind of interpretation people have. I have had a few more of these experiences; a strange hand was holding me, an invisible hand that was soft and lifting my arm. When I was 18, I was also sleeping, and I had the feeling that something was on my back, I was sleeping on my belly, and it was whispering something in my ears. So, I shook and hit, and it was nothing there. I got up and put on the lights and they went off. Now, in my culture, when you put on the light and it goes off, it is a very bad spirit that attacks you. I had to do some rituals back then because everybody believed I was being spiritually attacked. Today, I don't believe that anymore, of course. I still have these experiences when I am sleeping but today, I think its just nightmares. But even though – I can never be sure. You can never be sure about these things.

Luis' existential uncertainty as an undocumented migrant in Berlin is mirrored by his uncertainty regarding the causes of his problems. He juggles different possibilities, diagnoses himself as mildly depressed and refers to biomedical concepts that he studied in medical school in Germany. At the same time, he refers to discourses about the evil eye, witchcraft, and his earlier experiences with spiritual attacks. Just as his sentences during our conversation often stay incomplete, his search for answers and options for interventions, hangs in the balance. Due to shame, he does not allow himself to disclose his situation to his family in Cameroon, thus he cannot include them in diagnosing and resolving his affliction. Fear of being reported to the Immigration Office and being deported from the country, and possibly fearing new attacks of witchcraft – he rarely discloses

his situation to community members and friends. His life lingers in limbo; the crisis keeps on being the context.

Suspicion of witchcraft is a recurring motive in crisis-as-context. I meet Gloria through the non-profit organisation Africa Health, a project that offers social and health counselling to African migrants in Berlin. She came to the organisation needing support in looking for a new apartment in Berlin. Gloria's story is not easily retraced since her narrative often wanders and remains vague. She is in her late thirties and came from Ghana to Berlin about ten years ago with her husband. All her children were born in Berlin. Due to her husband taking a job in London, the family moved there. Her problems also began there: "My husband, he started treating me poorly there, he got angry and there were problems in the house." When Gloria got pregnant again, her husband, although not wanting another child, was unsuccessful in convincing her to end the pregnancy. It is unclear if he also physically abused her. With the support of Katy, a white British lady working at a counselling service, she moved to a women's shelter with her sons. That was when she started to feel spied on. She noticed the same car parking in front of the shelter day and night occupied by African and Indian men taking pictures of her. She suspected that Katy had initiated the surveillance. Subsequently she was treated at a hospital, most likely a psychiatric facility: "There was a Nigerian doctor there and a nurse from Ghana. I told her in my language what is happening to me, and she said, she believed me, but they gave me medicine anyway" she tells me about that time. It is difficult for her to put into words the specific reason why she was committed to the clinic and the details of how she was treated there. They appear to remain unclear even to her. When she was released from hospital, she went back to live with her husband. She discontinued taking her medication since it caused her spasms in the face and headaches. She delivered her daughter in London and then moved back to Berlin with her two middle children while her eldest son stayed in London with his father. In Berlin she has friends and a good social network. She is a member of a Ghanaian Catholic Church and is especially active in its women's group.

Gloria would like to change apartments and I assist her in dealing with the property management. It becomes increasingly apparent that she feels persecuted in Berlin as well. She feels that she needs to move out of her current apartment because she does not feel safe there. She thinks outside of her apartment there are men in parked cars shining a torch light through her bedroom window. She also has increasing difficulties using public transport and dropping her children

off at their respective schools and day care. One morning, while I am accompanying her running errands, we are waiting at a bus stop when she notices a car following the arriving bus. She tells me the driver of the car is just waiting for us to board the bus, so he can follow us home. We have to hide in the nearby entrance to a house until the car has driven by. We walk for an hour to her house because Gloria refuses to get on another bus. Answering my question why she thinks she is being watched and followed, Gloria says: "I'm not sure but I think it's something my husband does to me. It could also be my mother-in-law, maybe she sent something. I don't know how it works because when you send substances over the ocean, they lose their strength…but my mother-in-law…she doesn't like me, she's jealous […]."

I ask Gloria why her mother-in-law has reason to be jealous and she responds: "All her own children died, besides my husband – and my children, they are alive and healthy." Gloria suspects her mother-in-law in Ghana to have used witchcraft on her; a notion that her friend Agnes shares. Agnes feels that Gloria might have "problems", but she is uncertain if her paranoia is justified or imaginary, she is also doubtful regarding the possible causes: "There's always the possibility that someone did this to her. Someone in Ghana maybe? It's hard to say with these things. Also, how would someone over there send it here to her? Maybe someone here? Maybe through food or drink, this would be the most common way […] but maybe it is natural, maybe it is because of stress." In response to my question how she understands stress, she says: "You know, back home, you are never alone. There's always family, aunties, neighbours. Maybe you have your niece living with you. When you run errands, when you go to work, you can leave the children there. You don't have to worry. Here you are on your own. If you don't do it, no one does. If you don't cook, there's no food. If you leave the children at home, no one watches them. Ah! This is stress. I never knew it before, only here."

Conclusion

In this contribution I have used a narrative approach to portray experiences of crisis and uncertainty among African migrants in Berlin. By using Vigh's conceptualisation of crisis as an analytical frame I have shown that for migrants, affliction and crisis can be temporary, but they can also become the permanent context in which they live and act. Their practices in this context – ordering,

classifying, treating, healing – have a transformative effect; they continually generate new meanings and knowledge. I have illustrated the ways in which certain conditions, sometimes structural such as legal requirements, sometimes personal like an abusive marriage, may influence people's life and wellbeing. Lynda, Luis and Gloria, whose narratives I have retold here, do not move through their experiences of disorder and crises with fixed concepts and ideas of causes and effects. Rather, "to authorize the real within the precariousness of their everyday life" (Das & Das 2007: 90) to them is a process of uncertainty and dubiety.

Past experiences of witchcraft, spiritual attacks, and madness exist alongside biomedical terms and concepts like stress and depression which then again take on a whole new meaning in emic discourse. These new "idioms of distress" (Nichter 1981, 2010) articulate experiences of migration and its innate challenges. They incorporate all the difficult new experiences people make which they cannot place exactly within the framework of their "old" knowledge and experiences.[7] For "the blind complexity of the present as it is experienced" (Ricoeur 1981: 279; as cited in Good & Good 1994: 838) leaves them with uncertainty and bewilderment regarding the roots and trajectories of their affliction. It is only in telling their stories that they tentatively try to give meaning to their experiences – in that their narratives work "as a mode of thinking, a way of making sense of experience" (Garro & Mattingly 2000: 23). Canadian author Margaret Atwood (1997: 346) puts it more poetically:

> When you are in the middle of a story, it isn't a story at all but only confusion; a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boar crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It's only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself or to someone else.

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[7] I have written in greater length about this elsewhere (Grube 2011).

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Diaspora and Sufi Pilgrimage in the Indian Ocean

Contrasting Transnational Narratives

Pnina Werbner

In actively creating and recreating a sacred landscape through performance and myth-making, immigrants, exiles, ex-slaves, seamen, soldiers and itinerant wanderers make whole ruptures in time and space, re-embedding themselves in morally transcendent worlds. Pilgrimages to a sacred site, as we have argued elsewhere (Liebelt et al. 2016), reconstruct exilic suffering as the grounds for the emergence of a moral community; alternatively, migrants recreate a moral community through periodical returns, often over vast distances. In this essay I consider migration, diaspora and pilgrimage in the Indian Ocean through two contrasting, almost oppositional narratives: on the one hand, of the Sidi, African migrant/exiles living in India, studied by Helene Basu, who perform pilgrimage annually to the Sufi regional cult of Bava Gor in Gujarat; on the other hand, Hadrami Sufis in India and beyond, linked by a network of kinship and affinity, who return to Hadhramawt in Yemen periodically to renew their connection to their sacred centre. Both groups are Sufis and both originate elsewhere, but their trajectories as itinerant movers over the vast distances of the Indian Ocean highlight the potentialities of pilgrimage to renew and embed exiles in and away from home. Both examples stand in stark contrast, sociologically and emotionally, to another form of mass Muslim travel across the Indian Ocean – that of the *Hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca.

The *Hajj* across the Indian Ocean

Until the 1950s, and for hundreds of years before that, most Muslim pilgrims embarking on the Hajj to Mecca travelled by sea. They travelled thousands of miles across the Indian Ocean, from China, Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula, as well as from India, Persia and East Africa. Michael Miller (2006) traces these movements as they changed over time. He shows that "pilgrim traffic formed part of a wider, mass-transportation business" (ibid.: 192). In later years it was

an "imperial" trade (ibid.). Indeed, it was a "variation" on the transport of thousands of indentured and immigrant labourers across the Indian Ocean. But even earlier, figures were impressive: roughly ten thousand hajjis crossed from India at the beginning of the seventeenth century (ibid.: 208). The vessels in which they journeyed were small sailing craft (ibid.). With the introduction of steamers numbers increased from 31,000 in 1885 to 96,000 in 2013 (ibid.: 209). There were similar increases from Indonesia on Dutch vessels, though starting from lower numbers. Passengers were often squashed on deck (ibid.: 212f.). Shipping companies coordinated with indigenous local networks, brokers and agents (ibid.: 214ff.).

Along with the trade transporting pilgrims, pilgrims themselves traded along the way, carrying with them carpets, wine and silk, coffee, spices and pearls (ibid.: 198). They often stayed away for months and years to finance their journeys. There were specialised indigenous guides who handled travel arrangements (ibid.: 199). After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, steam ships took over the transportation (ibid.: 201). They replaced the less reliable sailing vessels (ibid.: 207) and were mostly controlled by European companies who were more organised and efficient. But during World War II the whole infrastructure collapsed (ibid.: 219f). Since the 1950s, although there were still pilgrims who came by ship, most arrived by air. They were more like tourists who complained about the food and the selection of films on board (ibid.). Either way, whether by sea or air, theoretically speaking from our perspective, Hajj pilgrimage constitutes the very opposite of diasporic pilgrimages of the kind discussed in this essay: the movement in *Hajj* was temporarily away from home, and the moral community forged in the *Hajj* was universal, obliterating differences between pilgrims. In the two alternative movements discussed in this essay, by contrast, in the first case, that of the Hadhramawtis, migrants created a durable network connecting far flung places on the vast littoral of the Indian Ocean through particularistic loyalties. In the second case, of the Sidis, an ethnically heterogeneous group created a new culture and unified sense of identity by fusing the old and the new. Both networks focused around Sufi saints, the *auliya*, "friends" of God.

Diasporic connectedness, return and rupture across the Indian Ocean

Return migration has been at the centre of the study of Sufi saints from Hadhramawt by Enseng Ho (2006). Sufi itineracy, an early form of migration, is a key trope in Sufi studies, with South Asian Sufi mystics and holy men who arrived from the Near East and Central Asia, thought to bring fertility to the land as they colonized it for Islam (Eaton 1993, Werbner 2003). In North Africa, many illustrious saints like al-Sayyid Muhammad bin Ali al-Sanusi, the Grand Sanusiya (Evans-Pritchard 1949), Ahmed Ibn Idris, who was born in Morocco but traveled throughout North Africa and the Near East (Kugle 2007), or Shaikh Ahmad al-Alawi (Lings 1971), who migrated to Algeria from the Hijaz in the Arabia Peninsula via Egypt, established vast pilgrimage cults focused on their shrines. At times they continued their peregrinations, as in the case of the Grand Sanusiya, who moved his central lodge during his lifetime further and further south into the Sahara Desert. Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rumi was born in Persia but ultimately created his lodge in Konya, in the Anatolian region, where he migrated with his family, and which has become the centre of a pilgrimage cult. So too, Naqshbandi saints migrated from Afghanistan and Central Asia to India.

Studies by Bang (2003) and Sedgwick (2005) have described the movements across the Indian Ocean of Sufi saints between the east coast of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia, and South-East Asia. Hadrami saints travelled along the coast of East Africa all the way to South Africa in the south and across the ocean to Indonesia in the west. Basu, as discussed below, studied a pilgrimage cult of saints many of whose ancestors arrived in India as black slaves from East Africa. Wherever they settled, Sufi holy men ultimately created pilgrimage cults around their tombs and shrines (Trimingham 1971). Most, however, never returned "home" – they never formed, in other words, an interconnected diaspora.

An exception to this rule has been the case of the Hadrami saints studied by Ho (2006), Alawi Sayyids who traveled from Hadhramawt on the Red Sea, in today's Yemen, across the Indian Ocean, settling on the west coast of India, in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, China, and the Malay world, most famously in Java in Indonesia. Unlike most Sufi saints, however, they and their descendants continue to return home, and to perform pilgrimage to the graves of their ancestors, the "graves of Tarim" – this, despite the fact that many early Hadrami Sufis

are buried in the distant locations where they settled, and their graves have become the centres of local pilgrimage cults. They married local women and their descendants made fortunes in mercantile trade, while continuing to maintain vast networks connecting them to one another and back to Hadhramawt. One important example was that of Sayyid Fadl Alawi, born in the Mappila hills of Malabar, Kerala to a regionally venerated Sayyid Sufi saint originating from Hadhramawt in Yemen, who was a Sufi, a scholar and a political actor who lived peripatetically between India, Egypt, the Hijaz (Mecca and Dhofar) and Istanbul, often travelling with a large entourage of family and followers. He was exiled by the British from India and died in Istanbul (see Jacob 2019).

Ho proposes that for these creoles whose mothers or grandmothers were Malay, Javanese, Buginese, Indian, or Chinese, rather than Arab,

> [t]he textual canon of genealogies contained a discourse of mobility that, from places such as Surat and Mecca, pointed a way back to Hadhramawt, and especially to Tarim, as both genealogical and geographical origin. Within this discourse, returns were valued. While daughters were required to return to origins in a genealogical sense, in marriage, sons were encouraged to return in a geographical sense, as part of the journey of education and inculcation of moral virtues. […] [These] geographical returns of sons partook in the language of pilgrimage. (Ho 2006: 223)

The author describes the travelogues of individual Hadramis as inscribing a "moral map of diasporic geography", with Hadhramawt at its moral center. Significantly, however, this moral ideology of return clashed, he found, with the experiences of second-, third-, and fourth-generation Hadramis born overseas. These youngsters' return to Hadhramawt was associated with a deep sense of alienation, oppression, and boredom, and most spent their days scheming on how to move elsewhere, whether back "home" to Java or Mombasa, or to new destinations – Australia or Canada. First-generation Hadramis may remain abroad for forty years, Ho (2006: 228) tells us, but "Hadhramawt, as home to such men, has an absolute value: the intention to return is ever present." In their "moralizing commentary" these migrant men "return to be with their families and ancestors for an authentically religious life" (ibid.).

Unlike first-generation migrants, however, for those born in the diaspora their "starting point in life is not Hadhramawt but Mombasa, Pontianak, Singapore" (ibid.). Many young Hadramis are sent back to be educated in Hadhramawt, in a school established in the nineteenth century by a wealthy Singa-

porean Hadrami migrant, to be taught Islamic virtue alongside a modern education (ibid.: 242) – but this does not make them Hadramis. Nevertheless, wherever they go in the world, their genealogies of descent from the Sayyid founders of their Sufi order, buried in Aden and Tarim, connect them to one another and to the graves of their ancestors.

Hadramis seem to fulfill key elements of the classic definition of "diaspora": they sustain a vast social network of other Hadramis living in different locations across the Indian Ocean; they foster a collective memory and nostalgia for their homeland; they display a collective commitment to investment in the homeland; they share and nurture a myth of return, travelling to Hadhramawt periodically and sending their children to study or marry there. Within their places of settlement, they retain a sense of difference from the local population although they marry local women and their shrines (in the case of individuals who become Sufi saints) are local centres of veneration and pilgrimage, integrated into a local landscape. They differ in all these senses, except the last, from other Indian Ocean voyagers who have come together in India to form an "African diaspora", initially encompassing a heterogeneous assemblage of ethnic groups.

Can we speak of an "African diaspora" in India, given its complexity in terms of origin and cultural background? For hundreds of years the Indian Ocean was traversed in *dhows*, a type of Indigenous sailing boat (Basu 2008b: 161). These vessels followed the monsoon "trade" winds, setting off from Zanzibar or Mombasa during one season and returning as the winds changed. They carried goods, African soldiers and African slaves destined to serve in the great Indian palaces of princes and *maharajas*. Wrenched from their families and tribal communities these slaves often had nowhere to return to. They came from all over east Africa, from Somalia to Kenya and Tanzania, and even beyond the coast (see Basu 2007: 303). They formed a black diaspora of a special kind.

In an article on black Africans in London, I raised the question: "Can we speak of the existence of an African diaspora over and above the multiple national diasporas in London?" (Werbner 2010: 54). Based on research conducted there in 2007-2008, I argued that the conviviality and reach of black African elite networks in London across ethnic boundaries, their mastery of a shared language of governance and their capacity as actors and activists operating in civil society, have created, collectively, a nascent black African diasporic public sphere in which the diaspora is imagined, constructed and mobilised across divisions of

language, religion, nation and class. New multicultural policies in Britain have facilitated this networking, which is grounded in ethical notions of caring, justice and ethnic permeability. In their commitments and shared interests, the emergent African diaspora is a moral community (ibid.: 134). As we shall see in the account of the black Sidi diaspora studied by Helene Basu, Sidis have evolved a shared language, common rituals and modes of conviviality, shared religious practices, and a shared myth of origin, all of which justify their description as an "African diaspora", despite their heterogeneous origins and despite the fact that they have no nostalgia for a lost homeland from which the majority of Sidis were forcibly uprooted.

The Bava Gor regional Sufi cult

In a masterly essay, Basu engages with the question of whether Sidis form a "diaspora" and in what sense. She argues perceptively that

> [w]hen Sidi refer to "Africa", they do not have a defined territory, continent or state in mind, but remember the journeys of the ancestors from Africa, their actions in Gujarat or how instruments (drums) were carried by sea to their present location in Gujarat (Basu 2007: 299).

Broadly speaking, her argument is that if Sidis do indeed form a diaspora, it is an embodied one of practice rather than of memory, an "intertwinement of cultural practices derived from Africa with the trans-oceanic spread of Islam" (ibid.: 300). In particular, "in Gujarat, the combination of Islamic practices of praying with African-derived forms of spirit possession epitomised by drumming has produced a unique regional cult of affliction practiced by Sidi" (ibid.).

This is an innovative approach to diaspora that recognises that sensory, embodied practices may create mythical connections to another place and time, unifying diasporas from different ethnic backgrounds. Regional Sufi cults can and often do encompass different ethnic groups who come together in pilgrimage to the cult centre. In the case of Sidis, they are united in a belief in their unique spiritual ritual power inherited from their ancestors. Thus, Basu (1998: 119) tells us:

> [W]hile acknowledging the ritual superiority of the Sayyid, the Sidi claim a similar though lower-order charisma transmitted by birth from their African saintly ancestors. Most Sidi are convinced that a special bakshish (gift) has been bestowed upon them by their apical ancestor, Bilal.

Bilal was the African companion of the Prophet. Whereas Sayyid saints, including those of Hadrami origin in India, are addressed as *pirs*, holy persons from

their own Sidi *jamaat* (caste) are addressed as *murshid* or *faqir*, terms used also for Sayyid saints. The point is that Sidi faqirs are perceived to be endowed with special, embodied charismatic powers expressed in ritual practice and it is these, above all, that pilgrims to their shrines, both Muslims and Hindus, seek.

Their regional cult is an ancestral cult. We are told that Sidis maintain small ancestral shrines in all their settlements, but the highest placed central pilgrimage shrine is the shrine of Bava Gor in South Gujarat. It enshrines three saints, the eldest brother, Bava Gor (also known as Nobi/Nubi), his sister, Mai Mishra, and his younger brother Bava Habash. The three are regarded as the founding ancestors of the Sidi *jamaat*. As Basu shows elsewhere, the saints' names refer to their African origins in Ethiopia (Habash), Egypt (Mishra) and the Nile region in the Sudan (Nubi) (Basu 2008: 232), but this is an implicit, not an explicit mapping. Explicit is the mythical power of the saints to vanquish demons.

Sidi pilgrimage thus hints at diasporic origins through names of places and myths of travel while being at the same time deeply embedded in the religious landscape of South Asian Sufi Islam. This is the first dimension of an "intertwined" diaspora in Basu's rich ethnographic analysis of the Sidi. The second intertwining is via a mediating cosmology connecting Gujarat in India to east Africa through a symbolic repertoire associated, on the one hand, with fertility and, on the other hand, with exorcism. A key feature of this symbolic logic is the transformation of dangerous, sterile and destructive heat into safe, fertile, heat:

> The battle between the demoness and the female saint (Bava Mishra) represents, symbolically, the transformation of female ambivalence. Negatively evaluated, uncontrolled female heat is projected upon the demoness, who embodies the terrifying aspects of femininity. The female saint, by contrast, represents in this constellation the positive or cold aspect of femininity; that is, controlled, dangerous heat is transformed into potentially nurturing motherhood. (Basu 1998: 124)

Bava Gor is a cooling saint who brings blessings, but it is his sister, Bava Mishra, who defeated the original demoness and who has the power to defeat the evil demons that constantly threaten human society. The second brother, Bava Habash, is believed to be "hot" and cures men of impotence.

Thermodynamic ideas about the dangers and reproductive powers of hot and cold substances, and the moral cosmology they represent, are deeply embedded in South Asian food and ritual, as I show in my analysis of the girls' pre-wedding *mehndi* ritual (Werbner 1986; see Basu 1998:130, Beck 1969, Kurin 1983), but they are also prevalent in many African societies (Werbner 1989). Sidi

cosmology may be consonant with African values, but it is evidently familiar to the myriad of Indian pilgrims who come to the shrines to seek healing, embedded in taken-for-granted, embodied South Asian cultural values. For a small community (5000 in Gujarat, 20,000 estimated in India) the intricate, vibrant and sheer originality of the rituals of healing created by Sidi at their central shrine complex at Bava Gor is truly remarkable (see in particular Basu 1998). The three saints are associated with different conditions:

> Most cases brought to the shrines are concerned with one of three distinct spheres of power vested in them: divination through ordeal, human fertility and exorcism. Each of these requires a different type of ritual, specifically related to one of the saints. Thus, truth ordeals are performed in the name of the senior saint, Bava Gor, who represents the highest authority and absolute truth; the female saint Mai Mishra is addressed in female fertility rituals; while exorcised spirits are banished to the trunk of a tree overlooking her shrine. The hot saint, Bava Habash, is invoked to restore virility or male fertility. (Basu 1998: 127)

These rituals, most of which emphasise thermal-cum-moral and emotional transformations, are all classified as *seva*, service performed for the sake of supplicants. The movements between cooling and heating are seen to underpin positive and negative moral and emotional conditions (ibid.: 132). By contrast, the annual Sidi *'urs* at the shrine complex mobilises the whole Sidi community, where large groups dance together and fall into trance (*hal*). Sidi trance, Basu tells us, "implies a complete abandonment of control over physical movements, with the entranced possessed by a saint who speaks through his or her body" (ibid.: 133). Finally, Sidi also participate in the *'urs* of high-status Sayyid Sufi saints. In these they fall into trance and clown around in carnivalesque abandonment (ibid.: 136). Although they receive offerings, unlike the Brahmin priests studied by Parry (1980) who are negatively tainted by these gifts, Sidis "do not absorb *dukh* (sorrow, suffering) but transform it into positive emotions of *maja* (fun and joy)" (ibid.: 135). Hence, "by adopting a discourse of emotions, the Sidi create an alternative taxonomy of values that undermines the fixed, frozen truths of the status hierarchy" (ibid.).

Before going on to discuss Sidi music, drumming and spirit possession in detail, it is worth reflecting on the implications of the emergence of the Sidi shrine ritual complex for our broader, comparative understanding of diaspora. What the Sidi Indian ethnography shows, I would argue, is that diasporic social formations and ritual practices do not simply replicate those in the society of

origin. On the contrary, diasporas are inventive and creative. In rooting themselves locally, they create the grounds on which new practices and ideas flourish. Over time these come to be highly elaborated symbolically and sentimentally. For all their poverty and low status in India, Sidis are a distinctive, richly endowed group, commanding a whole field of healing and, indeed, of joyful celebration. What makes their shrines famous and unique is their capacity to bring fertility and exorcise demonic and evil spirits through music, percussion and dance. This is, indeed, what links them to Africa, as is richly documented in Basu's detailed fieldwork in Gujarat and in Zanzibar, drawing upon comparative anthropological studies of spirit possession and healing in East Africa.

Drumming and praying

Ngoma in its African version is a healing cult of the drum. It varies from place to place and across ethnic groups (Janzen 1992), but typically refers to an organisation of performers as well as drum, song and dance performances. In one type of *ngoma* described as "sacrificial" performers merge with the ancestors in "absolute unity" (Basu 2007: 306). In therapeutic *ngoma* the aim is to "provide remedies against spirit induced diseases" (ibid.: 307). In an Islamic version studied by Janzen, "through drumming, singing and dancing the spirit is lured to disclose its identity which ultimately allows for its expulsion from the host's body" (ibid.).

The Sidi version of *ngoma*, known as *goma* or *damal*, shares much with its African counterpart, but is also distinctive. *Damal* or *dhamal* can mean "breath" (ibid.: 310), fun, and also something very exciting or intense. *Dhamal* is famously performed at Sehwan Sharif, a Sufi shrine in Sindh, where it refers to whirling dancers accompanied by drumming. Among Sidis, *goma* is an ancestral cult of *faqir* drummers and musicians. As Basu says, "[i]n Gujarat, the term goma has lost nothing of its multi-vocality: it may refer to drums, to rituals involving drumming, singing, trance-inducing dancing and possession and to local organisations of Sidi performers" (ibid.: 309). Among the many drums at shrines, the drum held most sacred is a large drum, *mugarman*, representing the prototype of the East African *ngoma* drum (ibid.; see Basu 2008b: 170).

There are two major kinds of *goma* performances. *Goma* is performed to exorcise both Muslim *jinns* and Hindu spirits of the dead known as *bhut*. Here the ancestor-spirits of the shrine "call the spirits afflicting the host in their 'drum-

voices,' expelling them through both the language of drumming and Sidi mediums as their embodied counterparts" (ibid.: 314; for a full description see Basu 2008a: 248ff.). In the final stages of the cure Sidi women go into trance, known as *hal*, possessed by Mai Mishra, the ancestral female saint, as distinct from possession by *jinns* or evil spirits. Referring to *zar* spirit possession, widely found in east Africa (Basu 2008a), Basu points out that like in *zar*, in the Sidi case, "gender and religious hierarchies are reversed: the female is stronger than the male, and African-derived practices are more powerful than Islamic ones" (Basu 2008a: 241) because Mai Mishra is the ancestral saint who vanquished the demoness, pushing her underground. Whatever the details, the "intertwinement" of diaspora in this kind of exorcist healing is materialised in the fusing of "displaced patterns of African spirit possession" with Sufi Islamic practices and their interpretation (ibid.).

A second, major kind of *goma* performance is held during the *'urs* where it is mingled with *jikar* (*dhikr*, commemoration) and *du'a* (supplicatory prayers). In this case a much larger group of Sidi performers uses a call-and-response style, with increasingly faster drumming and singing, and with women shaking and stamping the ground with rattles. The dancers encircle the tombs of the saints and enter into trance merging with their saintly ancestors. The saints "speak through" the drums (ibid.). Through trance and possession, a "moral community" is created (ibid.). As in other diasporas, food too consumed by the saints creates a link to Africa (ibid.: 172f.). This is also the occasion when grants given at Sufi shrines are redistributed (2008b: 171). Their dances on auspicious occasions such as marriage or birth are believed to bring fertility and generate laughter. Nowadays they travel in groups to music festivals to perform *goma* in newly invented costumes (2008b: 175).

So far in this essay I've presented two radically different narratives of diaspora, each of which is intertwined with Sufi pilgrimage, a movement that denies rupture. The two narratives make clear that there is no singular definition of diaspora; it also highlights the fact that both Sidis and Hadramis have forged moral communities in which their subjectivities are in a sense made whole again despite their travel and distance from a "home". But, as we have seen, pilgrimage across the Indian Ocean has also included hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who leave their homes temporarily for a sacred centre, the heart of Islam.

Conclusion: pilgrimage and diaspora in the Indian Ocean

My aim in this essay has been to highlight the conjunction between three different values – of home, of the potential alienation of diaspora, and of Sufi pilgrimage connecting displaced persons with God and His close "friends". As we argued elsewhere, a sense of rupture from home need not be permanent if it is followed by "incorporation, the building and integration of diaspora religious communities in the new country of settlement" (Liebelt et al. 2016: 33). In the case of Hadramis, incorporation has been achieved by continuing to sustain a kinship and affinal network spanning the Indian Ocean, with movement ultimately focused on sacred shrines at home; in the case of Sidis, "home" is remembered through myth, materialised in shrines and embodied in performances that weave together aesthetic performative elements and beliefs from Africa and India into a whole cloth. So too the ruptured migrant's subjectivity is made whole again through pilgrimage and embodied performance; he or she becomes a member of a viable moral community and thus a recognised, moral person. The fine-grained ethnographies of both Ho and Basu enable us as readers to capture this sense of wholeness despite the contrasting narratives attached to each diaspora.

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Re-Creating Order

Healing the Wounds of the Revolution

Ute Luig

Introduction

Forty-five years after the Khmer Rouge revolution, Cambodia is a typical post-conflict society (see. Brewer & Hayes 2011). The "post" in the term suggests that conflicts or violence have ended but without a definite closure or constant peace. During 1975 to 1979 approximately 1.8 million people died from hunger, exhaustion, or political violence. The revolution, which the Khmer call *chnam brambei khae mphei thnay* lasted three years, eight months, and twenty days, a time, which most Cambodians identify with brutal killings, the loss of relatives and friends, and constant hunger. Many scholars agree that the genocide resulted in a highly traumatized population.[1] After such a long period of horror and anxiety, certain questions arise: How do the survivors come to terms with the experience of loss, of manifold deaths, and of physical and mental suffering? What kind of resources do they draw on, what level of support can they expect from the government or from NGO's? What role does religious healing play in relation to psychotherapeutic treatment?

These problems were investigated through the lens of memory and coping strategies in the context of the Khmer Rouge revolution. My research[2] was part of an interdisciplinary research project that compared a Christian (Timor Leste) and a Buddhist (Cambodia) society and took place within the framework of the Cluster of Excellence "Languages of Emotion" at the Freie Universität Berlin. I was therefore particularly interested in the role religion played in the process of social reconstruction and its relationship to other forms of healing. Diverse medical practitioners like herbalists, spirit mediums, or experts in meditation offer their help and expertise, which is of notable interest, as they coexist and eventually compete with so-called "Western" biomedicine and psychiatry.

My paper seeks to present this *tour d'horizon*, but concentrates mainly on a healing method, which was seldom discussed in previous studies on Cambodia:

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[1] Https://tpocambodia.org/the-need/ (last checked 15/11/2021).
[2] Fieldwork took place for 3-5 months each in 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2018.

the reading of the sacred Buddhist scriptures, called *dhamma* in Pali. I became aware of this practice through close contacts with *don chees*[3] in a Buddhist monastery (*wat*) and in a Buddhist development agency, *Mother Karuna*, which is part of the larger NGO Buddhism for Development (BFD).

Following Veena Das and Kleinman's discussion of social suffering which is based on the complex relationship between "individual, social and political body" (see Scheper Hughes & Lock 1987), I provide a short overview of the political crises Cambodia has gone through. At the end of the article, I look into the development of Cambodian psychiatry and the role of the state, relating my findings to the research of Helene Basu (2010),[4] who investigated the intervention of the secular Indian state (with the aid of psychiatrists) into the practice of spirit possession therapies at an Islamic shrine. To locate spirit possession or "traditional healing" practices within the context of modernity as Basu does is necessary, as healing, in its several facets, does not take place in a social or cultural void (see Behrend & Luig 1999). That "traditional" does not mean static or resistant to change has long been accepted in anthropology, although its embeddedness in different power structures and state procedures must be stated time and again. In the following discussion, I will present:

1) a short introduction to the different forms of violence and suffering experienced during the colonial, postcolonial and revolutionary period.

2) various strategies of "remaking the world" with the help of Buddhism, Khmer Medicine, and Psychiatry.

3) three different places in which healing takes place: a wat, a Buddhist NGO and two Khmer NGOs specializing in methods of transcultural psychiatry.

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[3] *Don Chees* are female ascetics who have a long tradition of existence. They are not ordinated like nuns (*bikkhuni*). The root of the name *don chee* is *tun ji* which "is an inverted form of the term for grandmother" while the word *ji* is a prefix of deference that "in pre-Angkorian time meant ancestor, ancient one" (Guthrie 2004: 134). The Association of Nuns and Laywomen (see Löschmann 2000) resists the ban on ordination, which is politically highly controversial in Cambodia.

[4] Her inspiring article helped me very much to rethink the Cambodian example, but my knowledge of India is too limited for a sound comparison.

The conclusion will outline and compare the role of the post-revolutionary state as an agent of modernization with the social engagement of different groups in efforts to heal the "wounds of the nation".

Experiencing violence[5]

Although the Khmer Rouge are in general singled out for the brutality of their revolution, a brief glance into the country's history reveals that violence always played an important part whether during the heyday of the Empire of Angkor[6] or following its downfall. From the15th until the 18th century, Thailand and Vietnam fought for supremacy over the remains of the empire. The virtual colonization of Cambodia by its neighbours ended with the establishment of French colonial rule in 1868. The annexation of Cambodia was accompanied by relatively little bloodshed compared with other French colonies, such as Algeria. However, the colonial government implemented several structural reforms, including the change of political sovereignty as well as the introduction of taxation, a land reform, biomedicine, and forms of secular education. These transformations led to processes of social differentiation and demanded from the population a constant willingness to change and adapt. A new class of Western trained intellectuals began to develop, seizing the chance to widen their horizons through cooperation with colonial representatives (see Edwards 2007), while the majority of the population discussed how to end French domination. Right wing nationalists, the so-called *Khmer Issarak* took to arbitrary violence in the struggle for independence, whereas communist groups and the intellectual middle class were either too weak to use violence or favoured negotiations.

Finally, the young king, Sihanouk, won freedom from France in 1953. He became the hero of independence for the Khmer peasantry who worshipped him as a quasi-god-cum-king. Characteristic of his reign were the challenges of un-

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[5] I define violence in a broad sense. It includes physical violence, structural and psychological violence. The Khmer Rouge exercised structural violence through new rules like the ban on Buddhism, limited healthcare, working conditions, withdrawal of food etc. Psychological violence, on the other hand, targeted human dignity. For theories of violence, see Reemtsma (2008), Nohlen (2004).

[6] Angkor, also called the Kingdom of Kambuja, was one of the most powerful kingdoms in Asia from the ninth to the fifteenth century.

derdevelopment and increasing internal political strife, which the terror of American bombing and the Vietnam War, only deepened. Widespread carpet-bombing was the Nixon administration's answer to Cambodia's official neutrality. By conservative estimates 500,000 tons of bombs, which nearly equals what the United States deployed in the entire Pacific theater of World War II changed the often evoked "gentle land" of the Khmer into a "landscape of death", the consequences of which are still felt up to the present.

The dispute over the king's indecisive policy on the US war in Vietnam led to his deposition by the right-wing General Lon Nol in 1970. A five-year-long, extremely brutal civil war followed. The king's support of the tiny communist group, named by him Khmer Rouge, helped them to recruit sufficient cadres in the peasantry. With their help, most of them young child soldiers, the Khmer Rouge won the war in January 1975, after excesses of violence on both sides. Half a million people died during the war and more than one million fled from their villages to Phnom Penh for protection (see Chandler 1999: 1).

The revolution began in a devastated country among a demoralized people. The impoverished population of Phnom Penh, who were wary of any further military encounters, welcomed the revolutionaries in the hope of achieving peace. However, within two days the Khmer Rouge ordered an estimated two million out of the city (without food or shelter) in order to rebuild the country. Contrary to the professed ideal of a classless society, which would guarantee social equality and real independence, the Khmer Rouge introduced new social differentiations between the "old" or "base people" and the "new" or "17 April people". The "old people" represented that part of the peasantry, which had already lived in one of the liberated zones before the Khmer Rouge took power in Phnom Penh. The "new people" consisted predominantly of people from the cities and those refugees who had fled the countryside because of the US bombing terror. The "new people" suffered most during the revolution because most cadres did not trust them. They had to do the most difficult jobs, had lesser food ratios and were under constant surveillance due to their insinuated bourgeois attitudes. The new government devised a dense network of prisons and detention camps in order to make them compliant with the revolution.

In order to build a new society, the destruction of the old became necessary. This included all domains of society: economy, culture, religion, health, and even the family. The Khmer Rouge abolished all capitalist institutions, sub-

sequently confiscating private land, reorganizing labor in the form of cooperatives and communal kitchens. In this way, relations between kin were severed and families, the cornerstone of Khmer culture, were torn apart. My informants complained about the organization of work and especially the long working hours, which they conceived as slave labor. Rice was never enough and only provided, if the person had worked satisfactorily, otherwise the cadres would reduce the already meagre portions even further. Many died in the fields from hunger and exhaustion, abandoned like dogs without a proper burial, their bones scarcely covered with sand. A well-known slogan, "[t]o keep you is no profit, to destroy you is no loss" (see Hinton 2005: 19) summed up the basic attitude in which psychological and structural violence were intertwined.

The Khmer Rouge's approach to the multidisciplinary Cambodian health system, in which they radically intervened, seems to have followed this slogan. Like other former colonies, Cambodia had a multi-disciplinary medical system, consisting of biomedicine, which the French had introduced, in addition to local systems of healing, which originated in Angkor under King Jayaramajan VII (1181 to ca. 1220). According to Ovesen and Trankell "102 hospital like institutions", called halls of "diseaselessness" (*arogyasala)* existed (2010: 6), "in which 200 professionals worked, including doctors, pharmacists, astrologists and other attendants" (Cambodian Daily 22.8.2015).

A holistic approach to disease is characteristic of Khmer medicine, in which the body, the social, and the relation with the natural and transcendental world all play an important part. The Khmer medical doctors (*kru khmer*) who were at the center of the Khmer health system continued Buddhist traditions after the downfall of Angkor.[7] Local systems of therapy and healing remained deeply embedded in Theravada Buddhist beliefs and its related spiritual worlds. Khmer doctors specialized as herbalists, bonesetters, diviners and magicians. Monks, spirit mediums and specialists in meditation complemented the local medical infrastructure to which sorcerers also belonged. In Khmer cosmology, there exists no separation of religious and medical forms of healing, since a breach of social or religious norms is responsible for the causation of illness or disease.

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[7] These traditions certainly have changed in small ways, which we do not know of, but the structure of the health system has remained the same.

In accordance with their ideology of self-sustenance and independence, the Khmer Rouge government (*angkar*)[8] favored local practices and local medicine but denied their spiritual aspects. Like their French predecessors, the Khmer Rouge separated medical diagnosis and therapies from their religious connotations. The *kru khmer* were thus very limited in their treatment options for their patients. In the rural hospitals, medication centered predominantly on coconut water for injections and on local herbs, which were manufactured into pills in order to adapt their outlook to Western drugs. This transformation restricted their effectiveness because the active ingredients of the herbs could not directly enter the bloodstream (see Ovesen & Trankell 2010: 91). This modernizing strategy resulted in a twofold dilemma: for the rural population, "the herbs turned into pills" and lost their cultural value because the remedy lacked the traditional, spiritual context. My informants remembered them as "rabbit shit". For the urban population, the "modernized appearance" of the pills failed to convince them of their efficacy. Rather than promoting and empowering local medicine, the Khmer Rouge only managed to weaken it.

The same happened to the Western health care system (biomedicine), which Sihanouk had further consolidated. In the Khmer Rouge ideology, Western qualified doctors and nurses were agents of the bourgeoisie. Their permission to treat patients depended very much on the local situations. In some areas, they were forbidden to practice, while in others they were asked for help when the "revolutionary doctors" failed (see Samedy 1997). Apart from the few Chinese and Western trained Khmer doctors, the medical staff was overall quite poorly qualified and usually consisted of laymen who had received at best four weeks of training. According to Khmer Rouge ideology, the revolutionary spirit counted, not the expertise: undoubtedly one of the root causes of the failure of their health care system. The scarcity of Western drugs and their usage was another principal factor since many medical attendants did not speak English and were thus unable to follow the instructions. Ovesen and Trankell (2010: 87), however, refute certain scholarly claims (see Chandler 1993: 259) that the Khmer Rouge rejected Western medicine altogether. They argue that the Khmer Rouge

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[8] The Khmer Rouge government called itself *angkar*, which translates as organization or as parenthood (see Marston 1994). Most people did not know who or what *angkar* really was, because its leader Pol Pot did not present himself in public for a long time. *Angkar* thus represented for many a mysterious anonymous center of power.

imported large quantities of pharmaceutical drugs from China and some Western countries. They also continued to use the hospitals in Phnom Penh, albeit only for members of the Communist Party (CPK) and the military, whereas the "common people" were sent to less equipped rural hospitals.

The prohibition of Buddhism and its spiritual practices had perhaps even more dramatic consequences for the health of most Khmer than the lack of medical expertise. The prohibition violated Khmer values and the peasants' way of life, although ironically the Khmer Rouge cherished the peasants as the main revolutionary subjects. Their official[9] contempt for religion enabled them to desecrate the pagodas and monasteries (*wats*).[10] They looted the interiors, transformed some of them into pig stalls or into warehouses for rice or weapons. The houses of the monks served as prisons or torture rooms. Displaying an unabashed proclivity towards violence, the revolutionaries succeeded in transforming these secluded and peaceable worlds, where social and religious matters intertwined into settings of cruelty and brutality. In addition to the physical violence, violence of a psychological nature was also inflicted on the local population as result of the murder of those monks who refused to defrock, leaving people to cope without their spiritual advice and guidance.

According to Buddhist belief, the world consists of a multitude of very different spirits, which can be good (*boromei*) or evil (*pret*) or avenging (see Ang Choulean 1986). The *boromei* represent historical, social, and political persons, animals, or things in contrast to the individual spirits of the dead. The *boromei* choose their medium, who consults them about the causes of disease (Davis 2016). Like in many other societies, the ancestor spirits have a particular ambivalent nature. As long as people care for them, they are benign, helping them to master life, but if neglected, they become angry and cause harm. The worst case is to deprive them of a correct burial, in which the body is burned, a custom, which the government had forbidden the monks to perform. The fear of angry spirits who had not been properly buried exacerbated the plight of the population. The Khmer believe that the wandering souls of the dead roam around in the night,

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[9] In several interviews, my informants claimed that many Khmer Rouge cadres unofficially still believed in Buddhism and the power of the spirits.

[10] The word *wat* is a Thai word that was borrowed from Sanskrit vāṭa (Devanāgarī: वाट), meaning "enclosure".

threatening the health and welfare of the survivors. Left alone to cope with the challenge of propitiating the spirits, some people were seized with possession.

The destruction of important social and cultural institutions went hand in hand with waves of purges: first among the members of the former Lon Nol regime, then among the rich and the well-educated urban citizens (the "new" people). The Khmer Rouge summarily executed them without imprisonment or torture if their offense was considered serious enough. The act of killing happened most of the time in the forest, away from the public eye.[11] Death in Cambodia came at night and in secret. Moreover, it was this secrecy, which intensified the feeling of terror and impotence many people felt and described. The third wave came in 1978 and hit those communist cadres who had voiced criticism of the government as well as certain ethnic minorities like the Cham[12] and Khmer Krom. *Angkar* portrayed them as enemies from within, operating as spies for the CIA and KGB. Soldiers transferred the more important cadres to the now famous secret prison Tuol Sleng. After their confessions (see Chandler 1999), they were tortured and killed in Cheoung EK, which the post-revolutionary government has since transformed into a major commemorative shrine and tourist attraction.

In such a climate of repression and humiliation, some people reacted by withdrawing into themselves, a process which they referred to as *dam-doeum-kor* (planting a kapok tree / remaining mute). It gave them a kind of security, allowing them to distance themselves from the outside world. Chronic uncertainty provoked by the constant fear of death, anxiety about the well-being of family members as well as the fear aroused by the angry spirits of the dead led to an increasing sense of depression and despair among the population.

Others described feeling like slaves due to the hard labor they were subjected to as well as the loss of autonomy and their capacity for self-determination. A teacher summarized his emotions as follows: "We lived during Khmer Rouge time like prisoners. Except working, hardly any other activities were allowed" (Interview Wat Samdech 2010). A symbol of this cultural breakdown was suicide, especially among the elderly population. This signaled a cultural trauma that

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[11] The members of the Khmer diaspora reported a great variety of punishment and modes of killing depending on the mood of the cadres and regional ideological differences.

[12] The Chams were peasants and fishermen who migrated from the kingdom of Champa in Vietnam to Cambodia. They practice Islam and belong to one of the few Islamic minorities in Southeast Asia. Their religious and cultural autonomy was the reason that they lived in settlements among themselves although being well integrated into the wider Khmer society.

would dominate society for the next decades. According to Jeffrey Alexander (2004), "[c]ultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (ibid.: 1).

Remaking a world[13]

The unexpected end of the revolution came overnight in 1979 when a combined army of former Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese soldiers liberated the country (cf. Gottesman 2003). The new government (PRK) faced a tremendous challenge in the rebuilding of the economy and re-opening of all closed institutions, such as schools, banks, and markets. A hunger crisis also threatened. The biggest challenge however was to gain the trust of the people. For many, the Vietnamese were not liberators but rather colonizers – a reputation which grew from an unfortunate common history. Moreover, the new government's self-identification with socialism as opposed to communism did not help matters. Streams of refugees swelled up again, as many saw no future in their country. In order to gain acceptance, the PRK bowed to public pressure and re-admitted all religious groups (including Muslims and Christians), albeit initially under strict conditions. Now the major problem was in finding Buddhist monks, since over one third of the *sangha*[14] were killed; "only a few percent of the original figure are believed to have survived the era" (Kent 2003: 7). To re-enter the *sangha* again remained forbidden to the defrocked monks. Kent (ibid.) argues that it became a Buddhism of "invented tradition" because the knowledge and expertise of the *sangha* had been lost, along with precious books containing holy texts and ritual objects. Improvisation was therefore required. *Achars*[15] and *don chees* helped with the rituals and replaced the monks for some time to come. The reconstruction or the rebuilding of the *wats* quickly picked up speed as well-to-do[16] persons and politicians offered their material support.

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[13] I take this title from Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Margaret Lock 2001.

[14] *Sangha* refers to the monastic community of *bhikkhus* (monks) and in theory *bhikkhunis*.

[15] *Achars* are laypersons. Some of them are former monks, who lost their status after being defrocked. They are knowledgeable in regard to ritual ceremonies and are trusted to organize and perform them for the community.

[16] Despite the hardships suffered by the majority, some people managed to make profit.

Religious strategies of coping

The *wats* played an important role in the process of recovering from the violence and suffering of the Khmer Rouge years. The large sums of money spent by a very poor population reflect the *wats'* function as the center of village culture. After years of mistrust and tensions amongst neighbours and colleagues, survivors sought out modes of reintegration to re-establish community life. The architectural structure of many *wats,* with a mixture of sacred buildings, houses for monks and *don chees* interspersed by small gardens and one or two ponds, create an aura of peace and serenity. A *wat* simultaneously represents a sacred place that is identified with the *dhamma* as well as a secular place where villagers can meet for a chat and where children often play together in the evenings. Many *wats* are associated with a specialization, such as meditation, the healing of diseases, or theatrical performances and dance. *Wats* offer people in distress a setting in which they can find inner peace through meditation, through sermons preached by the monks, or through Buddhist texts and prayer. Nearly all of them offer education for monks who have to learn Pali, the sacred language, in addition to English, the natural sciences, math and various subjects within the humanities, which are taught free of charge. This service makes the *wat* an attractive option for the poorer sections of society, who also find shelter and food when in need. The *wats* have played and continue to play a central role in the process of rebuilding both social and individual lives. Some have taken advantage of both tasks, to rebuild society and to enable the individual to change from being a victim to become an engaged actor again. Other *wats* focused solely on healing the suffering of the revolution by concentrating on reading the *dhamma*. Wat Andeork outside Battambang is such a place (see below).

The monks (*bikkhus*) and *don chees* are the central actors in this setting, but they play different roles, which are unequally valued. In Buddhist beliefs, monks have a sacred aura, which originates from their willingness to lead an ascetic life that demands renunciation of mundane comforts and pleasure. Ordained monks have to follow 227 monastic rules, laid down in the *vinaya,* the rules of their fraternities. They contain food prohibitions, vows of celibacy, the renunciation of money and clothing regulations to cite a few. Monks are interpreters of the life and teachings of Buddha and act as servants to the community by performing ritual ceremonies, healing the sick, and blessing the believers with holy water. These duties and their ascetic way of life are the foundations of their

holiness and the reasons for their veneration by the public. In return, they receive food and gifts from the believers in gratitude for their services. After the revolution, many monks joined *wats* for redemption and purification, looking for mental and spiritual certainty as well as economic safety. At present, forty years after the revolution, a new generation sees the *wat* predominantly as an opportunity for free education or as a source of economic relief for their poor families, which also bestows them with merit. The older monks with whom I spoke, however wanted to "order their spiritual life and prepare the path for *nibbana*" (Interview in Wat Andeork 2009).[17]

In contrast to the monks, the *don chees* also devote their lives to Buddha but do not carry the holy aura associated with monkhood: the lack of ordination puts them in a minor position in the social hierarchy (see Lindberg Falk 2007). Instead, they occupy an intermediate position between laypersons and monks and are notably guided by far fewer precepts than the latter – optionally five or ten, among which are prohibitions against killing, stealing, marriage, lying, the drinking of intoxicating beverages, to name the most important (see Meas Yang 1978: 22). The *don chees* publicly demonstrate their status by either wearing a white or black *sampat* (a type of skirt) according to the number of precepts they have chosen to abide by. They also shave their heads, which represents their neutralization as sexual beings.

The inability to perform religious rituals on their own is a disadvantage for the *don chees* in the economy of merit, which represents an interchange between the monks, the laypeople, and the dead. If laypersons give alms to the monks, they acquire merit. In exchange, the monks acquire merit by offering spiritual services to the laypeople. In both cases "the resulting merit will lead to good experiences, such as rebirth in a higher form, wealth, exposure to the Buddhist teachings, the love and devotion of one's family, and so on" (Wilson 2019: 90). They can transfer the acquired merit to the dead in order to improve their

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[17] *Nibbana* (Pali; the Sanskrit name is nirvana) ends the cycle of rebirth, which is the overall aim of all monastic monks, while lay people know of the difficulty to realize it and the long process it takes. *Nibbana* begins with restraint and self-control and finally leads over to complete emptiness and nothingness. My informants just called it non-being, the extinction of the self.

chances for rebirth or as means to escape the many hells.[18] One of the highest forms of merit is the ordination of a monk: "Most Buddhist societies have believed that the act of undertaking ordination effects an ontological change, so that the resulting monk or *don chee* is different from and holier than their previous existence as a layperson" (ibid.: 91).

The *don chees* are involved in this merit economy, but their merit is smaller because they are not ordinated. They receive smaller amounts of money for their services and, if at all, smaller presents from the congregation for the labor they offer. More important is that they cannot transform their religious devotion into merit in the same way as monks do, who not only increase their own merit but also that of their parents through their ordination. Thus, *don chees* have less "symbolic capital" to invest, in Bourdieu's understanding, than monks for merit making. Consequently, they receive less public respect. From the outside, it appears that they are inferior to monks, acting as mere servants to them, but in reality, they know and understand their value for the community. Alexandra Kent concludes, "the realm of religious power in Cambodia extends beyond that of formal Buddhism and offers ways for women to transcend some of the risks and inequalities associated with their gender" (Kent 2011: 196).

First case study: the *wat* and the *dhamma* – forms of spiritual retreat

Among the many *wats* I visited, Wat Andeork is one of the best equipped – a space of comfort and spirituality created through the sponsorship efforts of foreign donors. All buildings were recently constructed and painted with bright colors. Their arrangement corresponds to the social and spiritual hierarchy that is typical for the *wat*. The *vihear*[19] is on top of a hill, close to the new buildings that were inhabited by a few monks. The majority of the *wat*'s members are *don chees* who live at the foot of a mountain range in small but comfortable houses. Wat Andeork has a reputation for providing care and assistance to young women

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[18] In Theravada Buddhism, thirty-two hells exist. They are imagined places for people, who led an immoral life or who had committed crimes. The greater the offences, the deeper the hell, from which one can only escape again through the transmitted merits of one's relatives.

[19] Main temple in the *wat*.

seeking refuge from parental and marital conflicts. Although young women expect first aid and support, when they reach out, official policy calls for returning them to their families. In fact, when I visited in 2010, there were few young women in the *wat*, the majority being in their 50s or 60s. Nareth, my interlocutor, was 76 years old and had lived for more than thirty years in the *wat*, which she considered her home. Despite her difficult life, she radiated warmth and devotion, a quality in her which impressed me deeply. "When I joined the *wat*," she told me, "I had lost total control of my life and did not know what to do next" (Interview January 2010). What had happened?

During the revolution, *angkar* allowed her to live with her husband but separated the parents from their children and grandchildren who lived in different work camps. "I was cut off from any form of communication and news of them, as from the rest of my family" Nareth recalled. Her anxieties at that time increased the more unsuccessful the search for her children became. When the Khmer Rouge were defeated and the extent of the killings and deaths became known, she became obsessed with searching for them. Unable to concentrate on anything apart from the search, she refused to cook and do her household chores: "I behaved like an insane person, just being nervous all the time" (Interview January 2010). When she finally realized that her children were dead, she looked for a "way of life without suffering, away from suffering" (ibid.). She hoped she would find this in a *wat*. Her husband, being a defrocked monk, understood her request and encouraged her to join Wat Andeork in order to find peace.

Wat Andeork was a good choice for her needs because it offered her a protected room for recovery. Her life in the *wat* was simple, her main duties were in the kitchen, cleaning, preparing vegetables, and doing part of the cooking. She slowly began to feel better. Due to listening and studying the *dhamma* she managed to overcome the loss of her children: "I learnt not to worry anymore about the past and the future" she said, "because the secret of happiness is to live in the present moment" (see Ghosananda 1992: 32). "Slowly I could think of other problems as well, instead of worrying about the whereabouts of my children. Now, I feel that life has come back to me. I feel at home in the *wat* and I am able to teach *dhamma* to the villagers" (Interview January 2010).

Nareth's suffering was typical for many women who survived the Khmer Rouge regime. Although she was able to cope with the everyday hardships of the revolution, she suffered great pain and anxiety as a result of the separation from her children. In the interviews I conducted outside the *wat*, many women raised

similar issues. If one had to answer the question of whether there was any specific female discourse about the Khmer Rouge period, it would be the concern for children. Nareth's story differs from those of other women due to her self-perceived mental disorder, which the Khmer respond to by retreating their responsibilities towards their kin or from social life altogether. Her husband understood her desire to live in a *wat* as a kind of refuge and offered his support in accordance with Khmer cultural values.

Several factors contributed to her recovery, which unfolded gradually over a long period, to wit, the seclusion from everyday problems, the structuring of her new everyday life in terms of practical work, interaction with other *don chees* and the monks as well as fixed periods of rest, which she could arrange herself. These conditions created a framework of security and safety, which she desperately needed. Das et al. (2001) have drawn our attention to the fact that control of everyday life following traumatic experiences is a sign of immense progress. In addition to the *dhamma,* it was the formalized structure of the *wat* and its ritualized timescale, which enabled her to put the pieces of her life back together again.

In Nareth's life history, as in the one that follows, reading the *dhamma* is of great relevance in the process of regaining control over mind and body. However, what content does the *dhamma* actually convey? The Pali word *dhamma* (Sanskrit *dharma*) refers to the teachings of Buddha, encompassing different levels of meaning. On the one hand, it is a tool for practicing meditation and is used as a didactic aid for achieving inner peace and harmony. It is this kind of reading that proves to be helpful in times of individual crisis and grief. On the other hand, the *dhamma* refers to the social order, including justice, civilization, nature, and morality. It took me some time to grasp the different meanings of *dhamma* reading, having first encountered the text within the limited scope of mental health issues. In 2010, however, I took part in several popular events in Battambang, where well-known Buddhist priests gave *dhamma* sermons, which they performed in a quasi-religious atmosphere in tents outside the *wats* in front of large crowds that had gathered in a festive mood to listen to their speeches. The sermons dealt with everyday topics such as giving respect to one's parents or elders, talking about family problems, or scolding young monks for their unruly behavior (concerning sex). When listening to the sermons, I found it difficult to imagine how such simple stories touching on everyday problems could heal mental disturbances. However, the performances, as well as the audiences they attracted,

lead me to understand that *dhamma* teachings also had deepfelt socio-moral implications. These became even more important, the more society felt it had lost its moral compass.

Furthermore, the complexity of the *dhamma* poses question marks in my interpretation of Nareth's story: did she refer to her medical situation when she described herself as "insane" – as I did – or did she use that word to indicate that she could no longer correctly assess the state of the world? In this case, she would have made a moral statement instead of a medical one.

A further dimension of *dhamma* was revealed by the interpretation of Hallisey and Hansen (1996: 308) who applied Ricoeur's (1994) process of textual analysis to the reading of the *dhamma* texts. They proposed to discuss the texts of the *dhamma* in regard to three possible functions: prefiguration (the effect of narratives in enlarging an agent's moral horizon), configuration (the power of narratives to expose the opaqueness of moral intention), and refiguration (the healing and transformative potential of narratives). Among the many hundreds of Buddhist texts, the Jataka stories are particularly popular. Referring often to the life of animals, they contain lessons with regard to moral behavior among animals, which are translated into the human world. They are "acts of social imagination" as Hallisay and Hansen (1996: 312) write and, as such, acts of prefiguration, which implies that they enlarge the moral horizon of the listener.

Hallisey and Hansen use the example of Patacara's life story[20] to illustrate the significance of believing bitter memories. Losing her husband and two children and being confronted with the death of her parents to whom she wished to return for help, "she lost her mind, her clothes fell off, and she wandered naked and crazy" much to the disdain of her community (ibid.: 319). The parallels to the pain, grief, loss of control, or even madness some of the *don chees* experienced are striking and it explains why this story was singled out by the Cambodian refugees Hansen interviewed. The end of the story points beyond mere identification with the Buddha to the transformative effect on Patacara's life. It is with the help of the Buddha that she is able to transcend her grief. He gives her clothing, introduces her to the principles of his teachings, and enables Patacara's mind to become clear. Through this experience, she gains insight into the real causes of her misery. Being ordained as a *don chee* in the Buddha's monastic

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[20] The version presented here was collected by Hansen among Cambodian refugees in the US.

community, "she struggles for many years to obtain higher knowledge that will free her from the suffering of her life" (ibid.: 322).

Hallisey and Hansen's text which is originally devoted to the question of Buddhist ethics is extremely helpful in expanding our understanding of suffering and healing. The serious study of Buddhist narratives allows insight into processes of coping with conflict and tragic experiences and how they can be overcome by imagination and identification with other worlds. The Buddhist concept of healing calls for confrontation with the origins of suffering and its intellectual and emotional roots. The knowledge that everything is fluid and non-permanent as well as the necessity to renounce desire places one's own suffering in a larger context. However, healing implies not only individual empowerment, but also the strengthening of social resilience. The public *dhamma* teachings outside the *wats* aim at renewing the morality of the community or society at large, a society which has lost its orientation and moral foundation. Individual and social healing is a dialectical process: one is the prerequisite for the other, as I will prove with the next case study.

Second case study: Mother Karuna Foundation – transforming personal suffering into social engagement

Maha Ghosananda, a Buddhist priest, campaigned after the end of the Khmer Rouge for peace and non-violence in Cambodia, showing the way for a whole generation of Buddhists and demonstrating through his work how suffering could be transmuted into a healing salve for oneself, one's family and one's community. The *don chees* who worked for the NGO Buddhism for Development (BFD) were guided by this ideal. The BFD, founded in 1990 by Heng Monychenda, a former monk and participant of the peace talks in Paris in 1989, is one of the most successful Cambodian NGOs. One of its primary goals is to leave the past behind and build a future based on Buddhist values. BFD has a wide variety of projects ranging, amongst other aspects, from improving agricultural practices, running HIV/Aids programs, offering credit facilities as well as leading environmental conservation efforts. Whereas the content of the programs does not differ much from other development agencies (reducing poverty, organizing help as self-help, supporting sustainability), the difference lies in the way they are implemented:

> Spiritual and economic development should not be separated into two separate realms. In Buddhism, one is not more important than the other. We have a saying, 'Nama-rupa', which means that mind and matter have to go together. Mind affects matter and matter affects the mind. (quoted from an Interview of Monychenda with Michael Bodakowski, Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, 11.11.2009).

Monychenda and his team believe that socially engaged Buddhism is the best tool for the reconciliation and reintegration of all Cambodians. The guiding principle of BFD, "[p]ut down the gun, take up the Dharma" was introduced in 1996. It applies to the Mother Karuna Foundation as well, a subunit of BFD, which a Japanese monk founded in cooperation with Heng Monychenda.

Mother Karuna consists of sixteen *don chees* and a male director. The term *Karuna* in Pali means sympathy, love and compassion, and the foundation works towards the empowerment of women and the restoration of peace and harmony in the villages. The *don chees* organize income-generating activities, like sewing classes for women, distribute food to the poor and to women with HIV/Aids, care for orphans as well as facilitating the placement of children into foster care. They also offer meditation and act as go-betweens in marital conflicts. Their daily radio program connects "Buddhism with day-to-day issues of social and moral development, human rights, and issues of gender […]" (Buddhism for Development Wat 2021).

In contrast to Wat Andeork, the *don chees* of Mother Karuna are not part of a single community, that is, they do not belong to a particular *wat* but rather to several *wats* or work "free-lance", while continuing to live at home with their families. All the older *don chees* had survived social and mental crises during and after the revolution. As with Nareth (see case study 1), they benefited greatly from their stay in the *wats* but were not content with their self-recovery. Instead, they hoped to serve the community following the model of Maha Ghosananda. Their own example, furthermore, serves as proof of an insight offered by Judith Butler, namely that grief can create community: "To mourn and to make grief itself a resource for politics does not mean to be inactive but to identify with suffering and thus to develop new forms of politics that recognize and respect the vulnerability of the other" (Butler 2004: 47).

The focus of my next case study turns to Solange, the informal deputy leader of the Mother Karuna *don chees*, who was willing to share how her own pain gradually turned into compassion and commitment to others. Solange is between forty and fifty years old and follows the ten precepts. She joined the BFD

ten years ago at a time when "I felt like floating in the river and the world became too big for me" (Interview November 2010). What had happened?

Solange, whose parents died during the revolution, lived a peaceful married life for some years after the revolution had ended. Her husband was a member of the village guard, whose task was to protect the other villagers against possible reprisals by the Khmer Rouge, who even after their defeat exercised sporadic violence in the villages around Battambang. When the threat subsided, he went to Thailand, like many poor men from the region, to work as a migrant laborer. Shortly after her husband's return, Solange began to realize that his character had changed. He behaved aggressively, beating her, without apparent cause, on several occasions. She recognized that he was "ill" and took him to a *kru khmer,* whose diagnose that "there is something bad on him" led Solange to believe that he was possessed by a bad spirit or a ghost. Unfortunately, the *kru khmer'*s treatment was ineffective. Her husband continued to beat her at night, even threatening her several times with a knife. She fled to her neighbors for support, but when he began threatening them too, the neighbors, fearing for their safety, asked her to keep away.

Out of desperation, Solange resolved to leave her husband and began selling tomatoes and other vegetables in markets to make a living for herself and her little son. However, her husband pursued her, and her suffering continued. One evening, he managed to force his way into her home, seizing her and tying her arms behind her back, as the Khmer Rouge had done with their prisoners, and put a large knife to her throat. She cried with all the energy she could muster, until her sister, who lived next door, managed to intervene, freeing Solange and phoning the police. The husband was escorted away at gunpoint and subsequently held in custody at a Battambang prison for some time. The terror of the incident, which she relived – along with all the concomitant emotions – as she recounted it to me, prompted her to flee to a *wat* hidden in the mountains of Bantey Mancheay. Not wishing to burden her married sister, she found her only form of refuge in the *wat*, which offered her physical safety, the company of other women, and material security (i.g., food and housing). It was there that she decided to become a *don chee*. During her time in Bantey Mancheay, Solange gathered new inner strength by reading the *dhamma,* which taught her to come to terms with her difficult life. Her belief in *karma* also gave her energy to change her life for the better. When she became acquainted with BFD*,* she took it as a chance for a new beginning. She felt now strong enough to do something for the

whole community. Solange now is very much engaged in empowering women who suffer from HIV/Aids and have no material support, be it from a husband or a relative. Her ability to help others appeared to give new meaning to her life. I could see how content she was when she visited the women and handed them a food parcel worth $25.

Solange's biography differs from that of Nareth in that her experience of violence did not take place during the revolution, but rather because of it. If one believes the newspaper reports from 2010, marital violence – often with fatal outcomes – was widespread in the country (see Surtees 2003). Many observers attribute the high level of aggressive behavior to PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) brought on by experiences of the revolution. In the case of Banteay Meanchey, a group of interdisciplinary researchers analyzed the consequences of labor migration to Thailand, which is typical for this province. Labor migration to Thailand reflects the impoverishment of large sections of the Cambodian population, who seek ways to support their families by taking part in Thai deforestation.[21] According to the report of Meyer et al. (2014: 200), labor migration has "significant mental and physical health impacts, given the risks for exploitation and abuse of migrant workers, particularly among those in semiskilled and unskilled positions." The authors identified anxiety and depression as particularly prevalent consequences. When these explanations were put to Solange as possible reasons for her husband's behavior, they were immediately dismissed. Pointing to her husband's spiritual obsession, she insisted on a local (religious) rationalization for his violent behavior, sharing, as she did, the BFD's skepticism on psychological diagnoses.

Solange was convinced that spreading the word of the Buddha would solve the individual and social problems in Cambodia without requiring trauma analysis, which is foreign to Cambodian culture. Teaching the *dhamma* had become a vocation for her and having come to know its liberating force through her own experience of suffering, she in turn hoped to share its healing power with others. She often quoted Maha Ghosananda's (1992: 27) slogan: "Hatred is never appeased by hatred, hatred is appeased by love." In his texts, Solange found a source of hope and now when she speaks about her care cases, among whom

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[21] Among the few (poor) families I could talk to in Banteay Meanchey, there was hardly any consciousness about the disastrous results of this type of overexploitation of natural resources.

number HIV patients, she is full of energy and compassion. Helping herself has paved the way for helping others – a practice, which the fragmented Cambodian society urgently needs. It also symbolizes "transformation through healing and healing through transformation" (see Kurz 2017).

Forms of psychological healing

Members of the BFD are not alone in their skepticism towards concepts of trauma and PTSD, concepts introduced to Cambodia by a Dutch NGO in 1990.[22] In their informative introduction to "Spirit and Mind", Basu and Steinforth (2017) recapitulate the critical discussion in psychiatry, which bifurcates into a "predominantly somatic and a predominantly psychological branch" (ibid.: 3). They criticize the consequences of the "universalist adaptation of European psychiatric models, categories and techniques" (ibid.: 4f.). In the colonial world, racist stereotypes, which produced "images of insane natives and savage madmen" (ibid.: 5), were used to express cultural differences. It took several theoretical attempts before "Kleinman's (1977) call for a new cross-cultural psychiatry" (ibid.) gained acceptance. This new approach takes into account that psychiatry is by no means universalistic but is rather part of the European scientific tradition. It is therefore necessary for a correct diagnosis to consider the respective local cultural constructions of illness and health and relate them to "personal experience, socio-cultural environment and politics" (Jenkins quoted in Basu & Steinforth 2017: 5).

Several scientists (see below) in the 1990s also criticized conventional psychiatric concepts. Psychiatrists, ethnologists, and religious scholars particularly complained that psychiatric diagnoses are often based solely on the Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) or the Classification of Diseases (ICD) without consideration for specific cultural factors. Sotheara Chhim (2013), a leading psychiatrist in Cambodia, who was among the first generation of Cambodian-trained psychiatrists, argues that PTSD insufficiently describes the mental health situation of Cambodians after the revolution. He instead diagnoses a formal cultural trauma syndrome (*baksbat*), which translates into English as

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[22] A Norwegian professor (see https://scandasia.com/8278-psychiatry-in-cambodia-founded-by-norwegian/) established psychiatry as a subject of study at the Royal Phnom Penh University in the mid-1990s. However, scientific resources are still limited: In 2011, only 38 psychiatrists worked in the country's polyclinics.

"broken body", "broken form", or "broken courage". Under this name he summarized symptoms, like *phey-khlach* (double fear), *bor-veas-cheas-chgnay* (wishing that the trauma would go away), *dam-doeum-kor* (planting a kapok tree/ remaining mute), *chos-nhorm* (submissive, easily giving in), *kob yobal* (ideas are buried), and loss of togetherness (see Sotheara Chhim 2013: 160).

Eisenbruch (1992) argues that what psychiatrists identified as psychotic behavior was locally understood as socially accepted mourning behavior, or as he frames it, a form of cultural bereavement. Again, for Obeyesekere (1985), a Sri Lankan anthropologist, depression (including PTSD) is not a form of mental disorder, but reflects that "life is suffering and sorrow, that the cause of sorrow is attachment or desire or craving, that there is a way (general through meditation) of understanding and overcoming suffering" (ibid.: 134). In Buddhist understanding, depression, Obeyesekere points out, is indicative of the reality of suffering as a normal condition of one's life. Consequently, symptoms of depression do not require medical treatment but rather religious devotion, whether through meditation, prayer, or the reading of the *dhamma* in order to live a fulfilled life. Didier (1997) supports this argument to some extent insofar as his research demonstrates that the religious practices of the *kru khmer* as well as a return to and an immersion in a familiar cultural setting facilitates a speedy recovery for patients, whose course of treatment in France had been unsuccessful.

Third case study: The Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) Cambodia in cooperation with *Kdei Karuna*

The critical discussions of a universalist psychiatry have paved the way for a different, culture-sensitive practice in the country. TPO Cambodia, founded in 1995 in cooperation with a Dutch NGO, practices under the leadership of Sotheara Chhim such a modern approach to mental health. The NGO offers, according to its website (https://tpocambodia.org/), "education, counseling, and treatment of mental disorders". Special services are available for victims of gender-based violence, prisoners, and victims of torture.[23] To prevent the further fragmentation of society, TPO also organizes intergenerational and interfamilial exchanges of

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[23] To date, over 220,000 patients and families have benefited from their work.

knowledge about the revolution, the open discussion of which had long been taboo. Additionally, TPO workers offer support to self-help groups by providing them with training as well as secure places to meet. This kind of community-based approach is important for the NGO's self-image. Before any psychosocial intervention, they enquire about villagers' needs, both socio-economic and with regard to the overall mental health situation in the village. Following these interventions, monks, who have been invited to participate, conduct ritual ceremonies, providing a friendly co-existence between psychological approaches and Buddhist religion.[24]

An even more fundamental breakthrough on the path to reaching closure is the establishment of dialogue between victims and perpetrators. TPO carries out this reconciliatory program in cooperation with another Cambodian NGO, Kdei Karuna, whose Sanskrit name translates as "compassionate action to heal". Kdei Karuna's primary aim is peacebuilding and recognition of victimhood. Together the two NGOs have developed this reconciliatory program to contribute to processes of forgiveness and the removal of guilt. In many Cambodian villages, there is hardly any communication between the two groups, although at times they live next door (see Zucker 2013).[25] It is necessary, therefore, that a Kdei Karuna team first identifies perpetrators and victims:

> Afterward, we contact each group separately in order to find out if there is a will for cooperation. If not, we talk to the friends of the perpetrator, or people he trusts, in order to persuade him or her to join. If he/she agrees to participate, a meeting will be arranged between the two groups – if necessary, in separate rooms. We then convey the messages of the victims, who most of the time want to know the reason why the perpetrators took to violence. The answer normally is because of brain washing, belief in Khmer Rouge ideology, or the need to cooperate with the local cadres. If the meeting is successful, the perpetrator will apologize to the victim, who has to accept to reach closure. (Interview with team members of Kdei Karuna in Phnom Penh, Februrary 2018).

The path to justice and reconciliation is still a long one, but the launch of such initiatives by Cambodian NGOs offers hope. The results of the Khmer Rouge

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[24] It is worth noting that internationally sponsored NGOs have also begun to invite monks to their meetings in the villages, which indicates how much Buddhism has reestablished itself as the state religion.

[25] Anthropologists are integrated into this system of silence too. When I began my research in Samroun Khnong, my proprietor advised me which houses and families I should not visit under any circumstances.

Tribunal (EECC) have been a disappointment for many Cambodians – only a handful of high-ranking leaders were brought to justice, while local atrocities remain unpunished (see Luig 2015). A local reconciliation process has presumably more chances of success, as the conflicts can be solved through cautious dialogue. Monks offer their assistance during these proceedings, legitimizing them and potentially providing the victims with the recognition they so desperately desire. This difficult search for justice, however, is further compounded by the fact that many former Khmer Rouge fighters have begun to also see themselves as victims, whose goals of equality were betrayed by *angkar*.

Conclusion

Cambodia's post-conflict situation has not yet settled. Nevertheless, many engaged individuals as well as local and international NGOs[26] continue to work hard to transform their violence-torn society into a peaceful nation. The road ahead is a long and rocky one, and yet despite the many difficulties, many Cambodians continue to display an admirable perseverance, patiently committed to overcoming the cultural trauma wrought by the revolution. The state's role in this process, however, remains markedly ambivalent. While the mixed Vietnamese/Cambodian administration consented to the re-introduction of Buddhism, their decision to, for example, turn the killing fields into (touristic) memorial sites, serves to perpetuate public trauma (see Luig 2012). The current government continues with this policy despite several political attempts to "bury the past".[27] The Hun Sen government has also recognized the importance of religion, as evidenced by the financial support and backing for the reconstruction of damaged *wats* by government representatives, who have been known to participate in ornate rituals taking place in the religious festival of *Pchum Ben* (Ancestor's Day) during which Cambodians commemorate and pay respect to their ancestors.

However, despite its otherwise ruthless policy of modernization, the current government has done little to expand psychiatric services and institutions. Compared to other countries in Asia like e.g., India, psychiatric care in Cambodia

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[26] Unfortunately, due to scarcity of space I could not consider international NGOs.
[27] Hun Sen had to revoke the amnesty he had given the Khmer Rouge leaders because he could no longer resist international pressure for an EECC tribunal (see Luig 2015).

is still relatively weak. Buddhist skepticism towards Western psychiatric therapies is another likely factor, though there has been some change, as the collaborative efforts between monks and NGOs illustrate. Together, they are working to alleviate people's suffering. Furthermore, Khmer medicine and Western biomedicine can no longer be said to merely tolerate each other as was the case during the colonial and postcolonial period. The two forms of medicine have begun to work together within specific contexts, whether in the field of mental health or towards the moral reconstitution of Cambodian society.

The monks and the *don chees* play pivotal roles in both the social and individual domains of healing. The important contributions of the *don chees* in this healing process have, however, not been sufficiently appreciated by the Buddhist *sangha* (monastic order), who continue to refuse their ordination. Despite this fact, they enjoy a sense of authority and recognition at the local level – a likely boon for the *don chees*, whose quest for official endorsement is now full swing (see Löschmann 2000). Their pioneering role is proof that in times of crisis it is possible, with the aid of the sacred *dhamma,* to transform personal suffering into a source of political action. And yet, it remains to be seen whether these local efforts will meet the challenges of national reconciliation, or whether they will fall victim to the many contradictions and conflicts of state politics and eventually fail. Though Cambodia's diverse Buddhist community has resorted to creatively engaging with the revolution's cultural trauma, the country's division of roles between state and religion is structured in such a way that it is the state, which ultimately decides on the financial and political framework for this healing and reconciliation process.

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Divine Courts and Occult Law

Reading Possession Rituals and Housing Activism in India against Each Other

Pablo Holwitt

Introduction

In this text, I intend to bring two of my previous research projects into a dialogue by comparing rituals of possession at a popular pilgrimage center in a Maharashtrian village and the work of housing activists in Mumbai. This endeavor is likely to provoke some questions: Why compare two such ostensibly disparate social contexts? How can urban housing activists be compared to rural ritual specialists when the former would most probably dismiss the latter's practices as instances of superstition and backwardness, just as many other social activists in India who aim at "educating" the populace by fighting traditional healing practices (see Quack 2015)? There are two answers to these questions: First, to uncover the social dynamics that underlie these two contexts and that become clear only in the practice of comparison. Second, to unsettle the theory of modernization and its foundational distinctions between modern and nonmodern, rational and irrational and sacred and secular that replicate colonialist techniques of dominating non-Western subjects by othering and exoticizing their lifestyles.

I compare phenomena that are commonly separated along the lines of modernity and nonmodernity. It is the capacity of comparison to attain a "critical estrangement of the lived world" (Comaroff 2010: 530) that allows to interrogate taken-for-granted assumptions. Other anthropological works have taken a similar approach, a case in point being Martin's pathbreaking comparison of ideas about immunity, flexibility and adaptability among various actors and institutions in neoliberal America, including medical practitioners, laymen and people working in the corporate sector (Martin 1994). Martin discovered that the notion of flexibility transcended boundaries between ostensibly disparate social contexts and used this insight to paint a picture of large-scale ideological shifts in American society that are not confined to any particular social context. Although I do not approach my topic on such a grand scale, Martin's use of comparison as a tool to generate insights

by creating unlikely pairings of social contexts is a good example of my approach. Rather than conducting a pre-planned, systematic selection of cases that are to be studied with a standardized set of methods, I pursue a form of comparison that constitutes what van der Veer calls "a fragmentary approach that allows us to ask questions about a larger whole" (van der Veer 2016: 11).

Anthropological critiques of assumptions underlying modernization and secularization theory are of critical importance to the argument that I pursue in this text. Modernization theory compartmentalizes the world by considering certain practices and beliefs as modern and others as premodern or nonmodern, thereby inhibiting any actual comparison between them. Especially Max Weber's argument that the modernization process leads to a demystification or disenchantment of the world is at the centre of such a modernist constitution of the world (see Sax & Basu 2015: 5, van der Veer 2016: 56). Criticizing this line of thinking, anthropologists have demonstrated that the modern/nonmodern dichotomy is a historically developed cultural construct and a tool of domination for those who are able to dictate the terms and conditions of what it means to be modern (Latour 1993). Following these critiques of modernization theory, comparison of contexts that are commonly held to belong to opposite ends of the modern/nonmodern spectrum can help to uncover both the power dynamics inherent to this discursive dichotomy as well as the feet of clay it is built upon.

My own way of thinking across the modern/nonmodern divide has been decisively shaped by the works of Helene Basu. She has contributed substantively to an inspired and engaged criticism of modernization theory and its dualist assumptions about the world (Basu 2010a, 2013). In this text, I especially build upon her eye-opening work on possession rituals in India and their deep entanglement with the modern state. These insights are the crucial point of departure for the comparison of rituals of possession and housing activism that I pursue in this text. I start by briefly summarizing the main arguments developed in Basu's and other scholars' work on the law of possession in the following section. I will especially focus on the relationship between possession rituals, court processes and the establishment of justice with a regional focus on India. The following two sections serve to introduce the empirical contexts that I am comparing. First, I present findings from my work on possession rituals at a pilgrimage center in the rural areas of the Western Indian state of Maharashtra. I then turn to my work on housing activism in the Indian megacity Mumbai. In the last section, I compare these two contexts by looking at them through the lens of three analytical

categories, namely performance, mediation, and translation. I argue that these categories constitute common elements of both empirical contexts and that accounting for these similarities makes it necessary to question some of the core assumptions of modernization theory.

Possession and law

Some of the most influential critiques of the distinction between modernity and nonmodernity have been formulated by anthropologists working in and about African societies. Paramount among these works is Geschiere's classic ethnography on the modernity of witchcraft (Geschiere 1995), in which he argues that witchcraft is not a relic of premodern thinking that has no place in the contemporary world, but that it is deeply entangled with Western commodities, modern technologies and practices of the nation state. Other scholars have expanded this argument by considering the continuing relevance of occult practices in African societies as evidence that modernity does not proceed along a uniform trajectory, but instead needs to be thought of as inherently multiple (Moore & Sanders 2001: 19). In the wake of these arguments, the artificiality of the conceptual division between modernity and tradition has been uncovered by studies that deal with the role of spirits in African politics and healing practices (see Behrend & Luig 1999, Meier & Steinforth 2013) or the occult quality of markets (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999). Among various phenomena that have been studied to question the dichotomy between modernity and nonmodernity, the case of possession is of particular interest to me in this text.

The term possession describes phenomena that can be found in various societies all over the world (Boddy 1994: 407, Lambek 1996: 439). At its most basic definition, possession connotes supernatural beings entering the body of a human being, gaining control over it and acting through it. For the duration of a possession episode, the body of the possessed human being functions as a vessel for the supernatural entity. In South Asia, the central role of the body in possession rituals is reflected in the various words used to describe possession which all "imply changes in the body of a person" (Basu 2010b: 425). It is usually by the nature of supernatural agents entering the human body that two forms of possession are distinguished, one desired, beneficial and controlled, the other one undesired, spontaneous and harmful (Schömbucher 1993: 242). These two forms of possession can be termed oracular possession and ghost possession (Basu

2010b: 420) and practices of oracular possession are often used as a remedy for victims of ghost possession.

In the edited volume The Law of Possession (2015), Basu and Sax assemble a number of cases of possession practices from all over the world to question the popular reflex to identify possession as a remnant of premodern thinking that is deemed to disappear sooner or later in a globalizing world. Instead, they propose that phenomena involving practices of possession or belief in witchcraft are to be regarded as an integral part of a world that in fact has never been modern, as phrased famously by Latour (1993). Rejecting the modern/nonmodern dichotomy, the authors trace various interconnections between the allegedly nonmodern practice of possession and the modern nation state. Basu for example reads alternative law courts as a practice of the poor to deal with the arbitrariness of the developmental state (Basu 2015: 32). She stresses the close interconnection between court trials and healing of afflictions in possession rituals at the Muslim shrine of *Bava Gor* in Gujarat and describes how ritual practices at the shrine developed in close dialogue with interventions into the organization of the shrine by the state. Rejecting a popular reading of possession rituals at Bava Gor as exploitation of the poor – which is especially favored by people belonging to higher castes and the middle classes – Basu argues that these rituals work within different notions of justice shared by the poor, which she refers to as transcendental justice. According to Basu, possession rituals are imbricated in an Indian modernity that is distinct from that imagined by more affluent and privileged sections of the society (Basu 2015: 53). In a similar vein, Sax offers various reasons why people who assume a marginal position in Indian society prefer to consult local deities over representatives of the state in dealing with misfortune and social conflicts:

> […] common people are often dissatisfied with the corruption, delay, and inefficiency characteristic of the Indian legal system. Above all, they are frightened and alienated by its impersonality, in contrast to local gods, goddesses, oracles, and healers whom they know and trust. Moreover, people want to make use of all the options available to them. Just as a modern American or European supplements his or her medical treatment with complementary medicine and/or prayer, so an Indian peasant caught up in the court system does not stop with lawyers and bribes, but seeks as much "additional help" as he can […]. (Sax 2015: 229)

The authors of the volume argue that India's rural population prefers to consult deities and their mediators over state representatives in times of need primarily

due to pragmatic reasons and degrees of (un)familiarity. It follows that state authorities and local village authorities resemble each other in respect to their task of delivering and upholding justice. This similarity leads to competition which is the reason why state authorities must frequently assert their dominance over non-state legal authorities by delegitimizing them as expressions of primitive belief, commonly referred to as "backwards" and "superstitious". Such contestations between different legal authorities thus constitute an instantiation of an imagined antagonism between modernity and nonmodernity. As one step in an attempt to overcome this limited perspective, I will illustrate the close connection between possession and the establishment of justice with recourse to my own research on possession rituals in Western India in the following section.

The divine court in Varne Abapuri

The village Varne is located in the Satara district of the state of Maharashtra in Western India and is home to approximately 200 people. Varne is mostly known for a temple for the deity *Kalbhairav* that can be reached by a short walk from the village. The inhabitants of Varne refer to the location of the temple as Abapuri which is said to derive from the Marathi words *abhay* and *puri* and can roughly be translated as "place of fearlessness". The temple is a popular pilgrimage place and especially during the annual *yatra* and the Navratri festival hundreds of devotees from various nearby villages and towns travel to the temple in large groups to participate in an elaborate ritual. This ritual involves various forms of possession – in Maharashtra commonly referred to as *angat yene* ("oracular possession") and *bhut badha* ("ghost possession") (Stanley 1988).

In Varne Abapuri a ritual expert known as the *devache jhaad* – a Marathi term that can be translated as "tree of God" – conducts regular consultation sessions at the temple. During these sessions, devotees approach him for help with various calamities and problems, including illness, family strife, financial issues or personal misfortune. The ritual office of the *devache jhaad* is closely connected to the concept of oracular possession. In order to become the *devache jhaad*, a person has to be able to receive the deity Kalbhairav in his body and perform a particular ritual task, the walk on the *khadava*. The *khadava* are a pair of silver sandals with spikes pointing upwards on which the person wearing them

must stand.[1] If the person is able to perform one walk around the temple wearing the *khadava* without showing any sign of pain or receiving wounds in the process, he[2] is regarded as having been chosen by Kalbhairav to embody him on earth. He is henceforth regarded as the legitimate *devache jhaad* who is authorized to perform the various tasks connected to this ritual office. After his death a new *devache jhaad* has to be found.

Two forms of rituals are of particular importance to the office of the *devache jhaad* and have greatly contributed to the temple's popularity as a place of pilgrimage. First, there is the walk around the temple on the *khadava* which the *devache jhaad* performs twice a year, once during the annual *yatra* and once during the festival of Navratri. Before the walk on the *khadava*, the *devache jhaad* prepares himself by observing various rules of fasting. On the evening of the walk on the *khadava*, the deity Kalbhairav is invited into the body of the *devache jhaad* through different ritual practices. Once Kalbhairav is present in the body of the *devache jhaad*, the villagers perform songs and dances for him throughout the night while he performs the walk on the *khadava*. This ritual is usually witnessed by hundreds of ecstatic spectators and the inhabitants of Varne perform various caste-specific tasks during the walk (see figure 1). At one point during the possession ritual, the walk on the *khadava* is interrupted to give devotees the opportunity to consult the *devache jhaad* for help with personal problems. During this part of the ritual, devotees assemble in the courtyard of the temple, engage in a dialogue with the *devache jhaad* and his assistants – mostly members of the temple committee – and discuss their problems. Manifest in the body of the *devache jhaad*, the deity then answers the questions of his devotees and gives them advice on how to solve their problems. The walk on the *khadava* ends with the *devache jhaad* completing his circumambulation of the temple and collapsing in front of the statue (*murti*) of Kalbhairav inside the sanctum sanctorum, slowly regaining his consciousness as a sign that the deity has left his body.

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[1] The walk on the *khadava* is connected to a popular local myth about the deity Kalbhairav in Varne Abapuri. Kalbhairav fought a demon who threw thorns in his path to stop him. Ignoring the pain caused by the thorns, Kalbhairav ran over them and killed the demon. This event is dramatically reenacted in the *devache jhaad*'s ritual walk on the *khadava* which becomes possible because the deity Kalbhairav is called into the *devache jhaad*'s body through various ritual practices.

[2] I use the male form because at the time of my research in Varne Abapuri between 2008 and 2011, only men had held the office of the *devache jhaad*.

The second form of rituals that regularly attracts devotees to the temple in Varne Abapuri is a form of weekly consultation session, occurring on every Sunday after the midday temple *puja*. During this session, the *devache jhaad* sits on a seat commonly referred to as *balangan* next to the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and receives devotees who seek his help (see figure 2). These consultation sessions closely resemble the *devache jhaad*'s dialogues with devotees during the walk on the *khadava* in form and content: The devotees present their particular case in front of the *devache jhaad* and he – together with his assistants from the temple committee – provides them with advice on what they should do to solve their problem. The only difference between these two types of rituals is that the *devache jhaad* neither walks on the *khadava* nor performs any other supernatural feat during the weekly consultations. Nonetheless, based on his ability to perform the walk on the *khadava*, devotees regard him as a legitimate medium of the deity Kalbhairav not only during the possession ritual, but also during the weekly consultation sessions.

The terms with which the weekly consultations sessions in the temple are commonly described evoke links to court proceedings. For example, members of the temple committee in Varne Abapuri refer to the temple premises as the "court of the God" (*dev darbar*). In the official pamphlet published by the committee, the following description of the weekly consultations of the *devache jhaad* in the temple courtyard can be found:

> On the day of the puja, Nana alias Shri Shriprakash Shankar Kulkarni, who is the God´s *jhaad* (tree), comes to the people gathered […] in the temple […]. At that time, he is not bound to anyone. He is there only as the rightful owner of the God´s *shivkala* (divine power). While giving solutions, he does not insult or berate anyone while he is in that state. The place where the event takes place (at the *balangan*) in the temple has an aura of a *darbar* (court). (Shri Kalbhairav Devsthan Trust 2004: 20)

This statement is significant because it draws a clear connection between the establishment of justice and the possession ritual in Varne Abapuri. Other religious sites in India where practices of possession commonly occur are also referred to as courts, for example shrines of Muslim saints in Rajasthan and Gujarat (Basu 2010b: 422), places of worship in rural Tamil Nadu (Ram 2013) or temples of the deity Goludev in the Central Himalayas (Krengel 1999: 277, Malik 2015: 202), and dialogues unfolding between diviners like the *devache jhaad* and people seeking help from them in these places of worship often bear a striking resemblance to court proceedings. In the case of Varne Abapuri, once a problem

has been presented by devotees and judged by the *devache jhaad* and his assistants, it is decided what has to be done to remedy the situation. The *devache jhaad* then instructs the people seeking help from him to perform certain tasks that he deems effective to solve the problem. These practices usually involve the supplicant giving a vow (*navas*) to Kalbhairav to perform particular tasks in exchange for the deity granting a favor and thereby solving the respective problem. These tasks can involve the giving of ritual offerings to Kalbhairav, the performance of a certain number of circumambulations (*pradakshina*) of the temple in honor of Kalbhairav or more specific ritual practices. It is left to the expertise of the *devache jhaad* and his assistants to decide which practices are effective in solving which problem.

Let me sum up the central features of possession rituals in Varne Abapuri and their connection to legal proceedings and the establishment of justice. First, through a dramatic performance involving practices of oracular possession the *devache jhaad* proves to his devotees that the deity has chosen him as his medium, acts through him and grants him supernatural powers. He is thus accepted as a judge who is authorized to decide over various conflicts and quarrels between people seeking his advice. Second, he is approached by people in need of help during regular consultation sessions. During these sessions, he addresses various concerns and requests of devotees while receiving assistance from members of the temple committee. Third, he prescribes remedies that are supposed to solve the problems of his devotees. The exact way in which these remedies work remains elusive to devotees. Nonetheless, they invest a considerable amount of hope in their efficacy and often return to the *devache jhaad* even if their problem did not get solved after their first consultation. Keeping in mind these features of possession rituals in Varne Abapuri, we now turn to the case of housing activists in Mumbai.

Embodying state law in Mumbai

The Federation of Tenants Association (FTA) is a non-governmental organization consisting of a group of housing activists who regularly conduct meetings for people seeking advice in all matters related to housing in the city of Mumbai. In the congested and contested metropolis, being able to succeed in struggles over housing is of existential importance to the urban population and even mid-

dle-class citizens can become victims of displacement in a battlefield that is characterized by legal loopholes, corruption, lack of documentation, forgery and manipulation of files. Therefore, navigating the numerous and highly complicated laws and regulations regarding housing is an existential and constant necessity for many of the city's inhabitants. As former employees of the municipal body for housing matters in Mumbai, the members of the FTA are well versed with housing laws and the ways in which legal courts work. Moreover, they have formed close personal networks with advocates who are specializing in housing laws and regulations. The organization was founded in the late 1990s with the explicit aim of preventing old residents to be displaced from the city center by processes of urban renewal. To achieve this aim, the activists offer legal guidance to residents and supply them with information on laws and regulations to help them navigate a complex labyrinth of constantly changing legal frameworks.

The work of the FTA broadly encompasses two main activities, which are public performances during visits to housing societies and more intimate weekly consultation sessions with clients. Let me begin with the public performances. The members of the FTA regularly visit housing societies in various neighborhoods all over Mumbai – usually after being invited by the elected representatives of the residential community – and inform residents about laws and regulations in matters related to housing. Most of these visits are related to offers by builders to redevelop the respective residential complex, an especially contentious topic in the city. However, the activists do not simply disperse legal information during these visits. They assemble large groups of residents, hold fiery speeches, and urge residents to be united against the trickery of builders and their attempts to lure gullible residents with false promises. During their speeches, the activists skillfully combine expert legal language with the language of the street to swear their audience to allegiance against a common enemy (see McFarlane 2011: 59) that is painted along the lines of corrupt elites and criminal builders and takes inspiration from popular media narratives about lawlessness and corruption among the affluent sections of society. Just like the walk on the *khadava* in Varne Abapuri these public speeches by the FTA are a performance in the very sense of the term with the experts being greeted by residents with various ritual offerings, being placed on a stage in front of the audience and masterfully displaying their knowledge of the law (see figure 3).

The other main activity of the FTA are weekly consultation sessions with single groups of clients. The activists conduct these meetings in a building in

South Mumbai during which clients seeking help in all matters related to housing visit the activists and present their cases to them in hope of receiving advice and legal guidance. Similar to the proceedings at the weekly healing ritual in Varne Abapuri, clients approach the activists during these meetings one after the other and present their cases in succession (see figure 4). The activists consider the cases individually and give advice to the clients on how they should proceed further. Typical cases involve eviction threats being raised against residents by state authorities, battles over ownership of properties or proposals by builders to redevelop the clients' homes and turn them into more luxurious high-rise towers. Most people visiting the FTA are entirely unfamiliar with the way courts and laws work and depend on the activists to provide them with legal guidance. Accordingly, they approach the members of the FTA with the utmost respect and reverence.

In their work, the members of the FTA exhibit a strict anti-corruption rhetoric and emphasize the authority of the law. Rigorously condemning the channels of political patronage and more visceral avenues of contestation such as street politics and public demonstrations, they consider litigations in court as the only legitimate way of fighting for one's right in the contested realm of housing struggles. In their statements and speeches, the activists actively display laws and legal courts as an arena that is somehow disconnected from the messy intricacies of personal relations and vested interests. In their eyes, the law is an authoritative text that dictates some eternal rules to which everyone has to adhere. One member of the FTA once summed up this attitude in the statement "we talk law, not politics", with the notion of "politics" basically working as a synonym for corruption. In his opinion, as most residents are unable to understand the law, it is up to activists like the FTA to translate it to them, thus providing them with the means to fight for their rights. To the activists, this is the only way to ensure that the *rule of law* is upheld and both corrupt elites as well as criminals attempting to wreak profit from ordinary people are held accountable.

The members of the FTA resemble what Hansen and Verkaaik (2009) refer to as "urban specialists". This term connotes people who wield charismatic power through specialized knowledge, connections and their ability to provide vital services to disenfranchised sections of the urban population (Hansen & Verkaaik 2009: 16). In their characterization of urban specialists, Hansen and Verkaaik draw explicit parallels between these particularly skilled individuals

and ritual diviners by referring to their ability to access and understand forms of knowledge that remain inaccessible to ordinary city dwellers.

> These are semi-public lives akin to the classical images of the ritual specialist and the diviner whose powers derive from an invisible realm of the sacred and the dangerous. The full expanse and heterogeneity of the city can be read and interpreted through these figures. Riots, political machinations, accidents, killings, scandals [...] everything becomes intelligible through stories about the cunning of hidden powerful forces and their local and often excessively visible minions – the local hustlers and big men. (Hansen & Verkaaik 2009: 16)

This argument illuminates the similarities between the activities of the FTA and the *devache jhaad*. To most of the FTA's clients, the legalese of Mumbai's housing laws is just as incomprehensible and enigmatic as the interventions of supernatural beings in the lives of the *devache jhaad*'s devotees. In accordance with their privileged access to such mysterious and potentially threatening forces, both the FTA-members and the *devache jhaad* are held in high regard by clients and devotees and become the projection surface of hopes and fears. In the following section, I will focus on the aspects of performance, mediation and translation that lie at the core of possession experts' and legal experts' practices.

Performance, mediation and translation

What is it that makes the cases of the *devache jhaad* in rural Maharashtra and the FTA in metropolitan Mumbai comparable? I argue that both the *devache jhaad* and the members of the FTA act as translators between their supplicants and authoritative sets of rules. These sets of rules are usually inaccessible to ordinary people who perceive them as highly ambiguous and arbitrary, which is why they need to be translated by experts. The ability of the *devache jhaad* and the members of the FTA to access, interpret and literally embody these sets of rules – by expertise in oracular possession and specialized legal knowledge respectively – is the basis for their authority and the reverence with which they are approached by devotees and clients who look for assistance in dealing with highly uncertain circumstances. In this section, I will elaborate on the aspects of performance, mediation and translation that I consider as common features of the case of the *devache jhaad* and the FTA.

At the most visible level, the performative registers employed by the FTA and the *devache jhaad* are strikingly similar. Both the housing activists and the possession expert perform their extraordinary abilities in front of huge public

gatherings involving large numbers of spectators, as well as during regular weekly meetings with clients that are focused on the treatment of single cases. While the members of the FTA enthral huge audiences with their fiery speeches against the corruption of elites, the *devache jhaad* does so by performing the superhuman feat of walking on nails without getting hurt by them, dramatically reenacting the defeat of a powerful demon. Both performances hold masses of people captive and establish the authority of the performers by dramatically showcasing their ability to overcome mysterious and dangerous adversaries that threaten the very foundations of society by defying the rules of proper moral conduct. Both the *devache jhaad* and the activists of the FTA thus establish an aura of righteousness through performative means.

Moreover, the performative arrangements of the weekly consultation sessions in both contexts resemble each other very closely. While the experts are seated on an elevated position, the people approaching them for help usually do so from a lower position. The *devache jhaad* is seated on the elevated *balangan* while devotees stand in front of him, and the members of the FTA sit on chairs while their clients sit on the floor. These particular arrangements of bodies in space contribute to the creation of the experts' ritual authority. Moreover, in both contexts single cases are being discussed in succession and in the form of a dialogue between experts and supplicants. It is usually the experts who decide when the discussion of a case is completed, even if the supplicants do not agree or are not satisfied. This gives the *devache jhaad* and the FTA a certain degree of control over the cases and preemptively shuts down long discussions with supplicants. Lastly, the *devache jhaad* and the FTA are assisted by various people who look after the proper conduct of the consultation sessions. In the case of the *devache jhaad*, members of the temple committee make sure that devotees address him respectfully and frequently intervene in discussions of single cases. In the case of the FTA, the same role is taken by advocates who usually participate in the consultation sessions and provide their own legal expertise in particularly complicated cases. In both contexts, elderly men – who command a certain degree of respect in society anyway – assume the central role of authority through various performative means while others help them by taking care of the less spectacular albeit no less important tasks involved in the establishment of justice.

On a less visible and more abstract level, practices of mediation constitute another common element of both social contexts. The FTA and the *devache jhaad* are both engaged in the production of belief, which is a common feature

of media in general (Meyer 2011: 29). While the FTA produces belief in state law and legal courts, the *devache jhaad* produces belief in transcendent law and local, non-state legal authorities. A crucial condition of mediators' success in producing belief is their ability to create an illusion of immediacy, or put differently, "to disappear in the act of mediation" (Eisenlohr 2011: 44). Performative means are an important element in this creation of immediacy, as reflected in the emotional speeches held by members of the FTA or the dramatic performance of the *devache jhaad*'s walk on the *khadava*. The FTA achieves such an immediate connection with its audience through rhetorical means, mixing legal jargon with colloquialisms, while the *devache jhaad* does the same by performing a spectacular feat in front of a huge crowd of devotees. In the performative act, the housing activists disappear behind the law and the *devache jhaad* disappears behind the deity. Both invoke a higher authority to take part in its charismatic power and thereby render themselves and their humanity with all its flaws invisible in the act of performance.

Furthermore, both the *devache jhaad* and the FTA tell the people seeking help from them what they need to do to alleviate their problems. They instruct the people seeking their help to conduct certain practices that are supposed to solve their issues. While the *devache jhaad* might advise a farmer, who has lost his crop to conduct certain offerings to his family deity (*kuladaivat*) or perform a particular amount of temple circumambulations to appease the deity, the members of the FTA might tell a tenant who faces the threat of eviction from a landlord to collect particular documents from one municipal office, fill them out in a certain manner and submit them to another office. In both cases, the reason why exactly these practices prove effective remains elusive to supplicants. Neither the *devache jhaad* nor the members of the FTA explain this to them, they just tell them what to do and to return if their problem does not get solved the first time. Furthermore, many clients and devotees neither have the time nor the interest to inquire into the exact dynamics of why a certain practice might be effective to solve their respective problem. Faced with urgent and sometimes existential problems, they simply trust the expertise of the FTA and the *devache jhaad* and primarily worry if and not why certain prescribed courses of action work. In other words, both urban specialists and diviners are judged according to their (ritual) efficacy. As long as they are able to solve the problems of their supplicants their authority is unlikely to be challenged.

There are also former supplicants who are themselves well versed with the workings of transcendental law or state law respectively. Usually, these are people who have experienced hardships due to ghost possession or legal problems previously and learned about remedies against these issues from experts like the *devache jhaad* or the members of the FTA. Just like victims of ghost possession who – after being cured by a ritual expert – often take up the task of becoming ritual experts and healers themselves (Basu 2010b: 423), many former clients of the FTA use the legal knowledge that they have gained in their interactions with the activists to help other people in their fight against builders. For example, during one of the *devache jhaad*'s regular consultation sessions at the temple in Varne Abapuri a woman became possessed by a supernatural being and engaged in a long discussion with the *devache jhaad* to negotiate the conditions under which the possessing agent would leave her body again. Shortly after this episode, I learned that the woman was a ritual healer herself who had experienced cases of ghost possession since a long time and turned into a medium who helped other victims of ghost possession. In Mumbai, I learned that an advocate who worked together with the FTA had been a shop owner before his shop had been destroyed as part of a builders' redevelopment project. At that time, he had approached the FTA for help and challenged the builder in court. He subsequently became a widely known legal expert himself who was regularly consulted by people from his neighborhood. These former victims had turned into mediators between authoritative sets of rules and common people, performing the same tasks as the experts whom they had previously consulted to alleviate their own problems.

Lastly, both the *devache jhaad* and the members of the FTA engage in acts of translation. These ritual and legal experts translate authoritative, yet inaccessible and incomprehensible sets of rules to the people who consult them. In this process, they establish and consolidate certain readings of the law that get dispersed among the population by word of mouth, thus transcending the spatially and temporally limited context of a single consultation session. This does not mean that people always accept the experts' translation as the only legitimate one. In many cases, both the FTA and the *devache jhaad* are subject to severe criticism and differing opinions, though these are usually not voiced in front of the experts. In Varne, I met residents who did not believe that the *devache jhaad* actually wielded any supernatural power and in Mumbai, I frequently talked to clients of the FTA who questioned their strict insistence on only following the

law in housing struggles. Nonetheless, the majority of supplicants accept the *devache jhaad*'s and the FTA's expertise as translators of the law and hold their advice in high regard.

However, it is important to keep in mind that in the process of translation contents are not simply copied from one medium into another. Instead, translation works in a much messier and more complicated fashion in which media change the content of what they mediate (Meyer 2011: 27f.). Neither state law nor transcendent law are independent from the media that translate them to the common man, no matter how strongly media might try to erase their imprint on the process of translation in order to mark their performance as particularly "authentic". The members of the FTA interpret housing laws in a certain way and accordingly direct clients towards particular courses of action and likewise the *devache jhaad* interprets common moral codes of conduct, identifies deviations from it and advises people on how to appease the deity or other supernatural forces who condemned them for their misbehavior. In both contexts, media decisively shape the content of the sets of rules they mediate.

To sum up, performance, mediation and translation are crucial elements of both supposedly *modern* practices of housing activists in Mumbai and supposedly nonmodern ritual specialists in rural Maharashtra. These aspects cut across the modern/nonmodern dichotomy that usually keeps such social contexts separate. Both legal and ritual experts rely on performative means to establish their authority and become indispensable for the people as translators of inaccessible, incomprehensible and extremely powerful sets of rules. They enable people to navigate situations of uncertainty and distress without necessarily providing explanations for them. In this process, they establish new readings and understandings of "law" and constantly reshape it in new ways.

Conclusion

What can be learned from this comparison between ritual possession specialists and legal activists? For one, as I have stated at the beginning of this text, the comparison of the FTA and the *devache jhaad* contributes to a critique of modernization theory and its constitutive division between the modern and the nonmodern. It allows for a double movement of familiarizing the exotic by accounting for the legal aspects of possession rituals and exoticizing the familiar by con-

sidering the occult quality of state law. This double movement unsettles the dichotomy between modernity and nonmodernity that undergirds assumptions of modernization theory. It also enables us to identify common elements that characterize empirical contexts which are commonly held apart by the modern/nonmodern dichotomy. To common people, state law can be just as confusing as the acts of supernatural entities. Both constitute enigmatic and authoritative forces that exert power over their lives and can only be dealt with through the consultation of translators and interpreters. Both ritual and legal experts are believed to be qualified to deal with arbitrary and strange powers, be they divine interventions in people's lives or the incomprehensible workings of the state. In this sense, legal activism and possession rituals are commonly seen as occupying opposite ends of the modernization ladder – one dealing with "modern" state law, the other with "nonmodern" rituals of possession – but actually include very similar features of performance, mediation and translation.

However, while criticizing the arrogant attitude of moderns towards nonmoderns, a comparison of legal experts and possession experts should likewise caution us to romanticize tradition over modernity. Plainly put, the *devache jhaad* and his assistants can be just as dismissive and ignorant or considerate and understanding towards devotees and their needs as the FTA-members can be towards their clients. Both social contexts involve a performative production of authority that fundamentally guides interactions between possession experts/housing activists and devotees/clients. Questioning the modern/nonmodern dichotomy therefore also means to apply the same standards to both self-proclaimed moderns and those whom they condemn as nonmodern. Such a critical perspective is imperative to transform the analytical dichotomy of modern/nonmodern into a truly symmetrical anthropological approach (Latour 1993).

Over the last decades, the critique of the modern constitution has been a major concern of anthropologists worldwide and significantly transformed foundational theoretical paradigms of the discipline. It has highlighted the extent to which people and their practices still habitually get compartmentalized into different categories of "us" and "them" and how this mode of compartmentalization guides our ways of seeing and understanding the world. With her innovative work on possession rituals in South Asia, Helene Basu has contributed highly original insights into the effects produced by the modern constitution and shaped an incisive critique of the teleological assumptions underlying this paradigm. Her work opens up the door to comparative endeavors that transcend the modern/

nonmodern divide, transform established modes of thought and cross analytical dichotomies that support dualist assumptions about the world.

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Figures

Fig. 1. The khadava walk.
The devache jhaad performs the walk on the khadava during the Navratri fes-
tival at the temple in Varne Abapuri in 2008. He is accompanied by members
of the temple committee and residents of the village Varne perform different
ritual tasks during the walk, such as adorning the devache jhaad with flower
garlands, holding an umbrella over him and cleansing the path with oil from a
torch. This annual event is witnessed by hundreds of enthusiastic devotees.
(Photo: Pablo Holwitt).

श्री काळभैरवनाथांच्या शिवकळेचे अधिकारी - बाळांगणावर

श्री. शंकरराव अनंतराव कुलकर्णी, वर्णे

श्री श्रीप्रकाश शंकर कुलकर्णी (नाना)

Fig. 2. Depiction of the devache jhaad during the weekly consultation sessions in the temple pamphlets. On the left side of the picture, the predecessor of the current devache jhaad is shown sitting on the balangan in the position in which he usually receives devotees seeking advice from him. On the right side, his successor and son – the current devache jhaad – is shown in the same position. In front of both men is a silver plate filled with ritual paraphernalia – such as flowers, gulal powder and ash (angara) – which the devache jhaad distributes among devotees during the consultation sessions. (Pamphlets distributed by the temple committee of Varne Abapuri).

Fig. 3. Members of the FTA hold speeches in front of residents in the neighbourhood of Naigaon in Mumbai in 2011. (Photo provided by informant).

Fig. 4: Members of the FTA and lawyers consult residents seeking advice in a matter of housing. (Photo: Pablo Holwitt).

Spirits in a State of Emergency

Ambivalence and Purification in a Moroccan Sufi Brotherhood[1]

Dieter Haller

This contribution has no single guiding research question. Rather, it circles around various aspects of the relationship between human and spirits: a topic, which I developed through my fieldwork, beginning in 2013, among the Sufi brotherhood of the *Ḥamdūši* in Tangier. Exposing the ethnographic experience is central to this text, though it will be embedded in current anthropological approaches towards borders, modernity, ontology and politics.

German *Ethnologie* has often been described as a science of borders and boundaries (see Streck 1995, Barth 2000, Haller 2003). Drawing borders is in all likelihood a universal anthropological category (see Simmel 1992: 221ff.) closely related to the core of the discipline – the concept of culture. Etymologically rooted in the Latin word *colere,* the word "culture" denotes the demarcation of a wild and uncultivated piece of land by the ploughing of a furrow. Culture separates a here and now from a there and hereafter and found its way from its original agriculture connotation into all areas of modern existence. Consequently, Bauman (2005) sees in the Other the central threat to modernity – understood here as the clear separation of friend from foe – inasmuch as the foreigner undermines this dichotomy through his ambivalent status. The idea of a here and a there is underpinned by a linear notion of borders already anchored in the agricultural context, but the notion of the border as a line is not the only conceivable one. Klaus Müller (1987: 28) expressively locates another aspect of the border in "Whoever [like the stranger at a border] finds it difficult to orientate himself reliably, fears losing his way, feels exposed to all kinds of dangers, believes himself threatened by harassing ferrymen, malevolent dwarves, witches and giants."

In line with Müller and contrary to Bauman, I will argue that the central threat to modernity does not lie beyond the border but rather within it. Accordingly, beings located at borders and (even more so) in border zones such as smugglers, witches, drug dealers, spirits, traffickers, fifth columns, spies, converts, defectors and anthropologists personify this threat.

Let us leave it at present with these general remarks, to which we will later return, and follow me across the Strait of Gibraltar to the Moroccan city of Tangier, where I conducted twelve months of stationary field research between 2013 and 2014, as well as various field trips since then, and where I carried out my latest fieldwork on the effects of Brexit on the area and especially on Tangier and Gibraltar (2019/2020) (see Haller 2016a,b). Border encounters take place here in great numbers, but in this article I neither want to talk about migrants across the Straits nor about ethnic borders – for example, between Arabs and Berbers. Rather, I will focus on border encounters in the field of different ontological orders: on humans and spirits, on what makes beings human and what concerns the other world. Specifically, to the *zaouia* (shrine) of the Sufi Brotherhood of *Ḥamdūši* in Tangier.

The *Ḥamdūši* of Tangier

It is an eerie place, my first informants whispered to me. Only crazy women, who are not quite right in the head go there; and prostitutes who look for good customers there; and gays. Women dance there with men in a lewd manner. It is a place that is best avoided. As a naive European, I would be particularly in danger. I had better keep away from the *zaouia*: evil things could happen.

What, at the beginning of my research, I interpreted primarily as a place of social outcasts and danger turned out to be a space in which humans and spirits mix. It was, in fact, the latter that would likely inflict mischief on the ill-considered visitor.

The term *Ḥamdūši* signifies a Sufi brotherhood or order as well as its members, whose centre, named after founder Sidi Ali Ben Hamdouch, is Sidi Ali, near the towns of Fès and Meknés. Like some other Moroccan Sufi communities, they differ in one particular aspect from other Sufi brotherhoods in Turkey and the Middle East inasmuch as the community centres not only around the mystical union with the divine but also around the contact with various spiritual

beings, known in English as *jinn*. Such a twofold characterization applies in particular to the *zaouia* in Tangier, which has a relatively small following compared to *Ḥamdūši* brotherhoods in other Moroccan cities. In Meknés and Fès, for example, *taifas* (communities) in which the mystical union is central are organized into separate *zaouias* from other *taifas*, in which the cult of the spirits plays the decisive role. In Tangier today, seekers of both directions mix at the same *zaouia*. The two *taifas* that existed in Tangier before the merger of the *zaouias* had reached a low point at the beginning of the 1990s: members, who met in a private house to direct their attention to the knowledge of the sacred texts and the mystical union, had mostly died away. The *Ḥamdūši* were also no longer of interest to potential followers at that time. Due to a poor external image and dwindling financial support by religious authorities, it was increasingly difficult to make a living through the performance of mystical rituals. The two *taifas* were subsequently merged in an effort to prevent their dying out. Furthermore, a lack of interest meant that the brotherhoods' secrets were no longer passed on orally. Today only Jawad, a group member, has knowledge of all texts and songs, while the ritual master Hamid (the *mqaddim*) watches over the rules of the community.[2]

These developments can in turn been seen to be reflected in the development of the town of Sidi Ali. The descendants of the Prophet (*chorfa*) who live in Sidi Ali are the exclusive beneficiaries of the offerings to the mausoleum and the pilgrimage (*moussem*) of tens of thousands of visitors who come to exchange their monetary power for *baraka* (blessing). Some of the *chorfa* are landowners and farmers, indirectly benefiting from visitors' expenses for lodging, food, and the purchase of sacrifices. The *moussem* was long visited mainly by fraternity members and pilgrims who wanted to enjoy the *baraka* of the two founding saints. Through an exchange of religious legitimacy and economic and political gifts, the *chorfa* are historically and currently closely linked to the Moroccan court (Makhzen) (Bergeaud-Blacker & Eck 2011).

Aïcha Qandisha

Let us now examine the spiritual beings. In Arabic the male jinni are called *ginn* (plural *ǧnūn*), while the females are referred to as *genniya* (plural *genniyat*). There are many of them in Morocco, especially the powerful spirit *Aïcha Qandisha*.

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2 Field diary 22.03.2017.

The grotto of *Aïcha Qandisha* is located in the immediate vicinity of the shrine in Sidi Ali. This grotto has become more and more popular among pilgrims than the sanctuary itself.[3] This is also the case in the *zaouia* in Tangier, where, as mentioned above, most visitors visit because of the spirits rather than the mystical entrancement.[4] In Sidi Ali today we find clairvoyants/witches (*chowafa*) who try to satisfy the pilgrims' need for the cults of *ǧnūn*. Hamid, the *mqaddem* in Tangiers, performs a tricky balancing act, seeking to satisfy both needs at the same location – traditional mystical exploration as well as the cult of spirits. Jawad, the expert in the mystical tradition, has been friends with the *mqaddem* since childhood and recognises Hamid's efforts to balance these two aspects. However, he appears to have little confidence in the success of his friend's project, often sarcastically expressing his disdain for "that rabble from the hinterland" (*la mierda de atrás*) as he calls the spirit believers, who are simply looking for something other than the "true" (read: mystically orientated) *Ḥamdūši*. But he also recognizes that the belief in spirits maintains the community, as it offers a solid economic basis for the existence of the group.

In the *taifa* of Tangier today (and partly beyond that) trance and ecstasy, offerings, as well as the transgression of the border between humans and animals or between men and women are therefore unavoidable and central components of dealing with *Aïcha Qandisha.*

Even if the *ǧnūn* are invisible to humans, their existence is testified in the Quran and in the *Sunna*. During my field research, I hardly met a Moroccan, who did not believe in their existence. According to the Quran, *ǧnūn* are beings that were created before the creation of mankind, namely from smokeless fire. They live between the angels created from light and the humans created from clay. In the Quran and in Moroccan folk Islam likewise, *ǧnūn* are bestowed their own will, which is even reminiscent of the figure of *Moaning Myrtle* in J.K. Rowling's fantasy Harry Potter novels, who was modelled on the *ǧnūn*. *Ǧnūn* can only be controlled by certain rituals; they are neither inherently good nor evil but are

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3   See Bergeaud-Blacker & Eck 2011 (n.p.): "Comme le précisait un cherif habitant près du sanctuaire: 'les visiteurs sont aujourd'hui plus intéressés par la grotte de Lalla Aïcha que par la visite rituelle au mausolée'."

4   I realized this one day in the winter of 2013/14, when a young adept from the upper class, who had moved from Fez to Tangier, complained that, "here [in Tangier] […] one has above all these women who are constantly talking about ghosts. I can't even concentrate on the [mystical] trance."

characteristically selfish insofar as they are guided by their own desires and privy to unpredictable actions.

Ǧnūn are something like the selfish twins of humans: males and females can marry each other and humans as well, they can reproduce, they are mortal, and they might be Muslims, Christians, Jews or pagans.

Humans can harm *ǧnūn* or even kill them unintentionally, while *ǧnūn* can haunt and strike people (*madroub*) and often cause adverse physical changes, such as blindness, numbness, or paralysis. They penetrate into the body and leave it almost immediately again. Or, they even take possession of humans (*maskoun*) and ride them (*mamlouk*), manifesting in symptoms typical of spirit possession as documented in many cultures: fainting fits, epileptic fits, cramps, and convulsions amongst others. In contrast to the haunted and stroked, spirits may remain in the body. Desires inflicted on individuals by *ǧnūn* can be banished, either by binding them with rituals, gifts, music, smoking substances as well as trances or by driving them out of the body.

The *Zaouia* and other places of worship

Although the worlds of *ǧnūn* and humans are separated from each other, they nevertheless flow into each other and their worlds become blurred in certain temporal and spatial contexts: before dusk and at night, at rubbish dumps, baths, stairways, door thresholds, slaughterhouses, ruins, mills, in the ground, in *wadis* and half-abandoned places. The image of merging and blurring borders is used when crossing the Straits by ferry, but also by the preferred resorts of local *ǧnūn*, which are mainly located at the seaside. Metaphorically speaking, these locations correspond to the "edge of the furrow" through which culture is staked out. They cause delirious states of mind: the Latin root *del irare* means to overstep this furrow. One such furrow is the *zaouia*, whichlies exactly above the canalized city river *Oued Ahardan* that flows underground into the sea at another place of spirits, *Sidi Mimoun*. In one corner of the *zaouia's* ritual room, we find a firehole of *Aïcha Qandisha*, where the clients bend down to make offerings, especially of candles, henna, perfume and other items that may please the *genniya*. The hole is so deep and dark that one cannot see its bottom. I suspectthat it is rather angled and does not fall straight down, otherwise one would be able to hear the *Oued Ahardan*.

Several rocks and caverns along the city's coastline are believed to have spiritual powers, where Jewish and Muslim women would offer up cocks for

sacrifice. Statements from my informants suggest that women – especially unmarried girls – went into these sea-washed caverns to ask *Lalla Jamila* to bless the fulfilment of their happiness, love, or their fertility (see Salmon 1904: 266f, Michaux-Bellaire 1921).[5] Until today, such sacrifices are performed at the source of *Lalla Rkya* and at the shrine of *Sidi Mimoun*.

Lalla Rkya had for long been hidden by a high grass bushes that covered a good part of the steep rocks beyond the kasbah of Tangier. During my research in 2018, I could find offerings like candles and other traces of female devotion to the spirits. When the wood was cut down in 2020 to turn the area into a rocky park, *Lalla Rkya* was left as the only site covered with and sheltered by undergrowth and other shrubs.

The shrine of *Sidi Mimoun* is located within the immediate vicinity of the city wall between two gates, at a place where *Oued Ahardan* briefly emerges in a water basin before it flows into the Bay of Tangier. Until the early 1920s, its waters served the dye works that once existed there. However, the shrine is located in a hidden inner courtyard hardly known outside the old town. If the hidden location and thus the shrine were better known, and guarded as part of the city's heritage, the threat posed by the projects of urban transformation would certainly be less grave. This, at any rate, is what local lovers of Tangier, who have come together in various Facebook groups, suspect. They fear that this (urban) landscape will also be transformed into as part of modernization plans, as has happened so often in Tangier, and that *Sidi Mimoun* will disappear just like the magical rock of *Lalla Jamila* (Haller 2015), which was destroyed to make way for the construction of a coastal highway ten years ago. One inevitably thinks of Lévi-Strauss' remark that the missionaries saw in the transformation of the settlement image imposed on the Bororo the safest means to guarantee and maintain its permanent conversion (Lévi-Strauss 1955: 229 quoted in Bourdieu & Sayad 2004: 461, see Bastide 1960: 114f.). But times have since changed. If the highway had been built ten years later, perhaps *Lalla Jmila* would still exist like *Lalla Rkya*.

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[5]   These cults are not limited to the Moroccan coast. Until 1921, Greek girls carried out the same practices in grottoes near Smyrna (Izmir), and after the Turkish conquest, Muslim girls did (and still do) the same in the same location. The grottoes are one of the last remaining places where Mediterranean monk seals give birth to their puppies. These seals in previous times also lived in the Tangier coast at *Plage des Petits Moines*. It is likely that the myth of Lalla Jmila is related to the fertility of those seals.

Since the times and places of the transition mentioned above are particularly dangerous for humans and *ǧnūn*, one must behave cautiously there. Now there is a dilemma: *Ǧnūn* try to expand their sphere and penetrate into the world of humans. But people cannot see *ǧnūn*, they threaten their world rather by careless behaviour and only rarely with conscious intention. This is also what my informants referred to when they first warned me from attending the rituals at the *zaouia*.

Policing spirits

Since contact between humans and *ǧnūn* is potentially dangerous for both, a way must be found to transforme the encounter into a less harmful one. In the eyes of most Sunnis, *Ḥamdūši* are Muslims, who appear to wantonly approach both social[6] and ontological thresholds as well as transgress them. Most *Ḥamdūši* also recognize that one should keep away from the *ǧnūn,* but this, is not left to the discretion of humans but rather the *ǧnūn*. The *Ḥamdūši* thus try to tame the spirits in the *Hadra* ritual, effectively transforming the *ǧnūn* by flattering and submitting to them, coming to terms with them, or if they have already possessed the client's body, by allaying their damaging effects.

The intricate way in which *Ḥamdūši* and some other Moroccan Sufi brotherhoods deal with the world of the *ǧnūn* is problematic not only for most Muslims and for Moroccan modernisers but also for nationalists. Moroccan intellectuals and Islamist modernisers – albeit for different motives – consider the *Ḥamdūši* either backward and ignorant or impure and semi-pagan.

In orthodox Malikite tradition of Islam in Morocco, it is the *fqih* who casts out demons through Quranic recitations. *Ḥamdūši*, on the other hand, work to ritually pacifiy the spirits with the use of music and the induction of trance states. In both cases, the spirits must reveal themselves, so that the ritual officiators can mitigate their harmful effects. The *Ḥamdūši* ritual specialist, the *mqaddim*, however largely seeks to reconcile the possessed with the spirit/demon, rather than attempt to expel them: one has to learn to live with them. This applies especially to the aforementioned *Aïsha Qandisha,* the most powerful demon. In the figure

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[6] The annual pilgrimage to the main shrine of the *Ḥamdūši* in Sidi Ali was discredited by the media as a "Gay Pride festival" in the past, because around the place of pilgrimage services of clairvoyants (*chowafa*) had formed, which addressed above all homosexual pilgrims and prostitutes (Field diary 22.03.2017, see Bergeaud-Blacker & Eck 2011).

of *Aïsha Qandisha,* Sudanese and Mediterranean influences historically merged in Morocco further drew on Quranic as well as pre-Islamic Berber and Sub-Saharan sources.[7]

Aïsha Qandisha and other *ǧnūn* confuse humans' desires and accordingly must be restrained as well as fine-tuned via the trance cult. This is performed in a ritual that is regularly held in the *Zaouia* on Fridays and in the course of which, the possessed are induced into a trance state through the play of instruments. Hamid, the ritual master of the *Ḥamdūši*, makes sure that those in a state of trance do not become unhappy. Sometimes, as many as three hundred people take part in the ritual, including ordinary members and lovers of the cult, men and women, the uneducated as well as intellectuals, both young and old, in addition to people from the neighbourhood and other areas of Tangier, and now with the aid of and mobile phones even clients in Belgium and the Netherlands.

I have been allowed to participate in the ritual life of the *Ḥamdūši* for seven years now, have been accepted into the brotherhood and share the life of some members in everyday contexts outside the immediate realm of the zaouia. I would like to pick out and present one of the many experiences I have had with handling these beings.

<p style="text-align:center">*****</p>

October 2013 and we are at a private meeting at the cultural centre Borj el Hajouj. We came here unplanned, because the public event, at which the Ḥamdūši performed during a cultural evening, had to be stopped. We had fled from rain and wind into the rooms below the roof of the cultural centre, the former Morgue de Tanger, and were now amongst ourselves. Only the inner circle of the brotherhood (*fuqra*) is present – as well as me, the only newcomer (I was considered *muhibb* at that time, a lover of the cult). However, as the ritual master (*muqaddem*) is not present, he has put the ritual into the hands of his son Said, whom he hoped could handle and guide the ritual and make sure that nothing unforeseen happens.

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[7]   A similar phenomenon can be found in Gujarat (Basu 2009: 161), where the origins of the specific veneration of saints of the Sidi Faquir are located in Africa.

We sit in a square room. The small flutes are playing. Maryam wears an inconspicuous grey Kandora, but she whips it off and underneath reveals a bright red grounded dress. Now she looks different than before, when she was sitting still at my feet next to one of the musicians. She starts dancing and immediately falls into a trance (*ḥāl*). Her eyes close, she almost floats in space while dancing. Another woman takes her headscarf off and ties it like a belt around Maryam's hips. Normally, women are held with shawls around their hips by other women before they go from trance to ecstasy (*ğedba*). This time, with Maryam, it is not the case. She continues to dance, wears the scarf around her waist: she is not held. A white cloth on the floor, with splinters of some of the tea glasses we used before, some broken with sharp edges. The music no longer comes from the small flutes in the opposite corner, but from big pipes (*gaitas*) and drums. The musicians get up and Maryam dances in front of them, she sings the song. She moves onto the cloth with the broken pieces and dances. This happens about two meters away from me, I'm still sitting on the floor watching everything "from below." Her feet don't bleed, she dances on them as if the splitters were smooth pebbles. From my perspective, I see only a part of what is happening. Suddenly the mood changes. A second woman, Zohra, dressed in black (the colour of Aïsha Qandisha), who previously sat among the spectators – rather absent on the outside – jumps up and begins to dance wildly, ecstatically. Maryam is still slightly floating. Zohra shakes her head, her hair flies. She throws herself on all fours and shakes her head (see Nabti 2007: 403). Then she rises again. Dina, a young woman in her mid-twenties, who looks like an intellectual with her black-edged glasses, falls to the ground perhaps half a meter away from me, throws herself on her knees and also wildly begins to throw her head back and forth, with black, long hair that is not under any headscarf. Before she falls, she takes off her glasses and hands them to me, I want to take them, but then she notices me and decides to hand them to Hanan, who is sitting next to me on the floor. Dina immediately steps into ecstasy. The musicians retreat a little more from the three women involved, someone is now standing right in front of my face and I can only follow excerpts of what is going on around them between the legs of the bystanders. But I see Zohra throwing herself at Maryam, embracing her with both arms, and at first it looks as if an epileptic woman wants to hold on to another or to embrace her in a choking hug. An aggressive fight develops between Zohra and Maryam. Meanwhile most of the women and men have gotten up and some try to separate the two, but Maryam doesn't seem to notice what's going

on. Zohra is in an aggressive rage, Dina escapes from the dance field and also the surrounding *fuqra* retreat. I also have to get up, otherwise I would be pushed or kicked against the wall. More and more people try to calm down Zohra. But the drummer, who sets the beat and now intones ecstatic rhythms, heats up the situation with his beats, so that Said (Hamid's son, the *muqaddem* of the brotherhood) and one of the *gaita* players try to get the drummer and the other *gaita* players, who were lost in their ecstatic play to stop playing. Once they succeeded, Zohra begins with insults, she seems to have gone from her ecstasy to an alert aggression. Maryam is not quite out of the trance yet, and all present interfere with screams, hands and tense bodies into the conflict.

A few days later the *mqaddim* (who didn't take part in the festival himself) asks me how I liked the festival. I thought it was very impressive and thrilling. Unfortunately, "they had argued then", I added. The *muqaddim* leaned over and whispered: "you know, it was all because of the *gaitas*. I told them not to play *gaitas,* but the musicians did." He stretched himself out: "as I, the boss, wasn't there... I would have made sure that this didn't happen." I asked: "why the *Gaitas*?" "You don't actually play them, because then the *ǧnūn* and the women get into a trance. And when the *ritual master* is not there, everything gets out of hand (i.e., there is nobody there to control the spirits)." Maryam would have begged: play the *gaitas*, play the *gaitas*! That alone wouldn't have been bad, because her *ginn* is a quiet *ginn*. But other women wanted ecstatic rhythms, especially Zohra, who is possessed by an aggressive *genniya*. Dina had heated the whole thing up, but she hadn't gone into ecstasy, she was pretending as she usually did.

Then the musicians started to change the melody to call the other *ǧnūn*. But they already had lost control: the women involved wanted different spirits, they had gone into arguments with each other, the musicians had had no overview and got involved with the spirits, his son Said had no authority to assert himself. A hopeless mess!

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As with the Sidis in Gujarat (see Basu 2008: 163), music plays a central role in the Sufi communities of Morocco. As a rule, every fuqra has a connection to a certain spirit. Special melodies (rīḥ) of the gaitas update the to the specific spirit, so that the fuqra fall into a trance when their rīḥ is played. It is the muqaddem's task to monitor this, because the spirits can be dangerous for those present if a

fuqra is in her (or his) *rīḥ*. This monitoring can either consist of observing the musician who directs the spirit in the affected person with his instrument, or it is he himself who communicates with the spirit. Only a few members of the Brotherhood in Tangier have mastered this at all. Therefore, he had forbidden the musicians to play the *Gaitas* when he was away. They ignored that, and so there was a quarrel between the two women. How can we as ethnologists explain these findings?

The anthropologist and boundaries

With this example we find ourselves at the boundary between clearly defined categories: Maryam and Zohra at the boundary between everyday consciousness and trance/ecstasy, the son of the *mqaddim* between order and disorder, the ethnologist between observing reason and disturbing incomprehension, the community between rapture and rage, the spirits between untamed egoism and being tamed.

Boundaries are often sources of instability, insecurity, threat, conflict, but they also offer new possibilities and opportunities. This becomes particularly visible in the ambivalent characterization of those who move on the boundary and thus between categories: they are respected and feared equally.

The threat of the ambiguous, the fear of twilight – or, as Fernandez (1974, 1980) writes, "the darkness at the foot of the stairs" – is thus subject to the necessity of creating categories of order in pre-modern societies. However, boundaries encompassing categories are often more zonal than linear. The dangers emanating from this zone attempt to structure and banish these societies into transitional rites, as van Gennep (1986) demonstrated in his work *Les rites de passage* and Turner (1967, 1969) with the concept of liminality.

Borders and boundaries have the potential to cause conflicts and insecurities, because anomalous objects (i.e., phenomena or persons that cannot be unambiguously assigned) call into question the cultural project of classification as a whole. Border phenomena or border crossers prove that the world is perhaps not as ordered as is generally assumed. Chaos and collapse of order seem possible. "The individual is pursued by the vision of a world without guidelines, guidelines that could be an orientation for him not to fall victim to chance or catatonia" (Gray 1979: 28, see Maffesoli 1986). And yet, whether the boundary is considered zonal or linear makes a difference.

Ontologies

When we return to the *Ḥamdūši* and deal with *ğnūn*, researchers are in an awkward position (Oppitz 1981). We observe people who perceive spirits and communicate with them, but we ourselves do not perceive them – in most cases. There are three possible ways to come to terms with this dissonance:

1) We could explain the belief in ghosts as something that is conceived of in our own society as a psychological emergency: spirits as metaphors for mental confusion (see Crapanzano 1979).

2) We could explain it functionally: the belief in the spirit thus fulfils the function, for example, of passing on responsibility for one's own dangerous deeds to the beings, or of attributing a niche to socially marginalized, as in the Tangier case, to mostly uneducated women, to express themselves (ibid.).

3) We can also say that the *Ḥamdūši* simply lack reason and remain at a backward cultural level. The belief in ghosts would disappear as a result of modernization.

These statements, of course, are based on the assumption that spirits do not exist. A completely different possibility would be to abandon European security and allow ourselves to engage with the conviction of the locals that *ğnūn* actually exist ontologically, that is, to take their claims seriously. This existence could be in the form of goats or black dogs, or sometimes in the form of spirits, which reveal themselves in trance states. Most followers of the brotherhoods strive to perceive them, and those who fall into a state of trance have the opportunity to prove this. As a follower and ethnologist who, like many others, has failed, I can at least describe the energy flows that are unleashed in space.

For the *Ḥamdūši* and seventy-five percent of world cultures, there is no doubt about the ontological existence of spirits (Bourguignon 2004: 138). What distinguishes the *mqaddem* as well as the shamans in Siberia or the trickster figures of North American Indians is that they are able to move back and forth between categories, thereby communicating with the beings and simultaneously guarding the zone of transition. On the other hand, Western modernity, which is determined at the political level by the concept of the clearly defined nation-state as well as by the clear demarcation of identities at the discursive level. This potent level of discourse – marked by the need to assign oneself to unambiguous

ethnic or religious (or, nowadays, all kinds of identitarian categories) – seems to be determined by the necessity of having clear-cut categorical boundaries.

However, as already mentioned in my introduction, border situations are dangerous, because they generate ambiguities, making their constructivist character both tangible and visible.

This is, incidentally, where Western and Salafist modernity reach out their hands; from their point of view, both those possessed by *ǧnūn*, the healer and the ritual group as a whole (in the case of the *Ḥamdūši* and others) occupy a dangerous border zone. They thus become targets for representatives of purity ideologies. For example, Moroccan nationalists fought against the Sufis after independence, accusing them of collaboration with the colonial system, obscurantism and regression. Moroccan modernists regard the *Ḥamdūši* as remnants of a world of superstition.

Secondly, they are often targeted by Islamist purifiers. Folk Islam – which is, incidentally, one of the main motivations of contemporary Jihadism – to them is a contaminated form of true faith, since it is, especially in the Maghreb, full of mystics, spirits and saints (to both Muslims and Jews). They condemn mystical access to religion as heretical and un-Islamic and try to suppress it.

Politics and the spirits

It is worth here making a small digression in order to briefly discuss the importance of the belief in spirits for the Moroccan monarchy. Both foreign and domestic politics are connected with spirituality on different ontological levels: Domestically, Sufis are seen to be a resource for and a bulwark of the monarchy – in their efforts to counteract Salafist versions of Islam. In terms of foreign policy, Morocco is currently expanding successfully into sub-Saharan markets. To back this strategy, the country supports traditional forms of Islam in Northern and western Africa, especially Sufi brotherhoods and their holy tombs and mystical traditions. This further has the advantage of strengthening the idea of a common Mediterranean and Sub- Saharan cultural zone.

In many places (see Maffesoli 1986), ritual specialists are both feared and respected: as saints, as fools, as wise men (or women) and masters, as charlatans, pouch cutters, as greyhounds, as seducers and as madmen. Ethnologists also put themselves in danger. They inhabit spaces considered inimical to science, namely at the border between rationality, logic, and objectivity, exactly those

spaces, which science, from the very beginning, had to sever and separate in order of its self-understanding – i.e., those strange ontologies, bizarre rituals, and spiritual worlds. Ethnologists, however, turn to non-rational forms of knowledge acquisition, which has at times has earned them a of a dubious reputation in the academic world even more though ethnologists do not approach their objects in a distanced manner. Those who enter worlds in which all those present participate in spirit worship and trance cults and declare them equal to academic cults will not be surprised if he or she is sometimes regarded as a charlatan, a greyhound or a mad person following her or his vices. It is probably one of the thorns that ethnology as a discipline will have to endure.

Anthropology and ethnology

Indeed, ethnology's questionable repute is for many practitioners a blemish. Many colleagues, ethnological institutes, and departmental chairs refer to themselves as anthropological in order to elude such associations. This practice of renaming is problematic for several reasons, the most significant being that ethnologists and anthropologists have different approaches in their efforts to understand the nature of cultures. Ethnologists tend to focus on culturally specific cosmologies, whereas anthropologists focus exclusively on the anthropocentric world view of the Enlightenment – humans alone in the centre.

Anthropology thus stands more clearly than ethnology in the European traditions of humanism, enlightenment and secularization, which have prevailed against a theocentric view. Ethnology, on the other hand, takes non-Western cosmologies seriously, and accordingly also questions the ontologies of Western science and knowledge practices.

Anthropologists distinguish between culture and nature, as both emanate from the power of human action (agency) as the only source of social impact. These two concepts generally have little in common with a concept of grace like the Islamic *baraka*, which is believed to befall humans. In their efforts to separate culture from nature, anthropologists are deeply influenced by the conviction that man is a recognizing subject and that the environment is an object to be recognized – an idea anchored in Christianity, which has since passed over into modern secularism. Action- and actor-centeredness is particularly evident in social sciences, which are characterized by concepts of agency, social engineering, politics of and rational choice. The idea of suffering and enduring – and even more

fundamentally that of being exposed to non-human actors – is deeply alien to this notion. Perhaps, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will slightly change this in the future.

Ethnology is different. For example, Eduardo Kohn asks in his book How Forests Think how humans can continue to define themselves through their ability to communicate when modern natural science has already proven that plants communicate with each other in order to defend themselves against enemies – how do they communicate with each other about humans, and how can humans grasp this kind of communication?

Western science generally considers such questions irrelevant. God is dead, and the imperative of self-optimization, self-improvement, and self-realization prevails. Descola (2013), in his design of four ontologies based on physicality and interiority, has opened up a scheme that could perfectly capture the differences between the Western and the popular Islamic model. In Western self-description, after 300 years of modernization, enlightenment and secularization, humans are the sole focus of a world view that can be described as naturalistic. This statement does not ignore the fact that even in the age of European modernity, competing cosmologies continue to exist. Some have been pushed to the margins of the dominant self-description and denigrated as "traditional" remnants – in some parts of Europe, animals were still regarded as guilty legal subjects until modern times (Evans 1906, Litzenburger 2018). Some are contemporary new designs.

Growing

Modernity is committed to a concept of novelty in the sense of the Latin *creare* or the Arabic *idschtihād* (Dialmy 2000, Lang 2006) and thus to creating something new. It turns away from the concept of the new in the sense of thriving, growing and renewing (Latin *crescere* or Arabic *tajdīd*). *Creare* is the basis of our capitalist self-understanding.[8] Therefore, modernity nourishes itself from forgetting. Other societies that have devoted themselves more to *crescere* are called pre-modern societies. These societies are attributed a persistence in temporality, and a contemporaneity is thus denied.

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[8]   It is no wonder that the hallmark of this culminates in the notion of the in-the-far-out ejaculated: the project.

It should be emphasized that both forms are not pure types, but merely dominant descriptions from a modernist perspective. However, these go beyond pure description, they clot to and within powerful social institutions. The understanding of modern man consists of a "buffered", that is, disengaged, distanced, disciplined, privatized, individualized and intimized, as autarkic and autonomous as possible, rational self-existing in (tendentially closed) immanence. This historically powerful edition of the "modern human being" presents itself to this day as a "subject of reason and action sworn (as far as possible) to (purpose) rationality, calculating control and instrumental power of disposal, in short: to self-empowerment [and I would add: to the imperative of self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-acknowledge and self- optimization]" as social psychologist Jürgen Straub (2015: 108) formulates. The overall interpretation of modernity, as Straub explains, "completely renounces such references to transcendence in its mere immanence and emphasizes, among other things, the 'inner' source of abundance and fulfilment as well as the autonomy of the individual subject of reason and action" (ibid.). The self-referential ego (and neither society nor the structure of relationships of beings) is at the center (Boutayeb 2014: 27). Societies that are connected to *creare* refer it to transgression specialists, or the trans-gredients, to their margins or beyond. They are the ones who represent order itself (see Maffesoli 1986). Basu (1994) showed early on how socially marginalized people (in her case, slaves) can become saints in the syncretistic communities of Indian Sufis.[9] Like slaves, the possessed in Morocco cross boundaries and, once they have mastered the situation, are often elevated to saints.[10] Indian Sidi Faqirs, like the ritual specialists of the *Ḥamādša*, possess the power of healing. Only those who have experienced possession first-hand and overcome it through laborious exercises, rituals, sufferings, and errors are able to become saints and help other possessed people. Possession itself is often a great and even existential burden for the individual. From American Indian societies, it is known that people being called to shamanhood by spiritual exercises often defend themselves with claws and teeth against this vocation, because it is hard going at the

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[9] Along with the Moroccan Sufis, the descendants of former slaves from the sub-Saharan regions are also gifted in this respect.

[10] The fact that in many cults it is the marginalized who occupy the position of ritual specialists and saints was thematized, for example, in the context of Afro-Brazilian cults (Landes 1940, Fry 1985, Parker 1986).

outset and marked by uncertainty: the true joy arises if and when the practitioner is able to master the vocation. However, those who get their possession under control (whatever that means) will be able to become saints, because they have learned to come to terms with it. In modern society, however, belief in spirits and animate natures has either been driven out, insofar as the possessed have been moved out of the community and into heterotopic spaces (i.e. locked away, lobotomized, sedated, or made functional in such a way that they are once more available and useful to the labour market), or the spirit beings are admonished to the realm of art and pop culture (i.e., Wagner's *Walküren* and Rowling's magical residents of Hogwarts), to the quirky and the droll (i.e., the *Heinzelmännchen*) or to visions of fear (i.e., horror movies).

Nevertheless, many in the West have set out and still set out to enchant the world. Some, for example, set out to acquire spirituality in an individual way: an undertaking by no means confined to the present, especially if we think of fantasy games, esoteric visits to weekend shamans, or the conversion to religious-charismatic movements– but which can also be seen in earlier epochs, such as in 19th century England, where spiritualism experienced an unexpected upswing (Webb 2009). Today, academics do this as well, conjuring up Judith Butler as a mantra or repeating the names of Hans Werner Sinn or Michel Foucault until they become their (often mediocre) doppelgangers. Or for example, in the process of receiving a doctorate, when doctoral candidates conduct inner dialogues with their pillar saints, assimilate them, and sometimes fight with them, gasping and breathing heavily. However, those who seriously believe in these forces as ontological beings and feel that they have a say in them are referred to the cause of psychotherapy or psychiatry. In fact, to challenge an exclusively anthropocentric view of mankind is difficult in societies based on self-optimization.

Descola in Morocco?

Descola distinguishes other ontologies from the naturalistic ontology of today's West, of which animism is particularly important for our case. In Moroccan folk Islam and in the Quran, animistic traits can be found when it comes to humans and *ǧnūn*.

In animism, humans are also at the centre of the world view., but they are embedded within a circle of animals, plants, natural phenomena, ancestors, spir-

itual beings, and gods. Due to a common personhood in all of these beings, humans (or their spiritual specialists like *muqqadimin* or shamans) are able to communicate with them.

Both humans and *ǧnūn,* in Moroccan folk Islam and in the Quran as in animism, possess a personal character and a sense of interiority. Physically, however, they differ: humans were created from earth and clay, *ǧnūn* from smokeless fire (see Crapanzano 1979: 168, Rosenbaum 2014: 164). During their lifetime, humans cannot see *ǧnūn* although they are visible to the counterparts, but after death, the reverse is true: while humans are able to see *ǧnūn,* the *ǧnūn* lose their ability to see humans.

Humans and *ǧnūn* have a similar social order (a hierarchical one with a king); they both marry and have children, and they adhere to religions. In animistic cultures, one does not separate between nature and culture. This is why the view that spiritual beings and gods are supernatural beings could only arise in naturalist cultures (Saler 1977: 33f.). In this respect one could also speak to a certain degree of an animistic, a pheno-centric, or cosmo-centric world view with regard to folk Islam, in contrast to the naturalistic world view of modernity. Italian philosopher Emanuele Coccia goes even further in his book The Roots of Life and speaks of heliocentrism:

> It is the sun whose energy is given to us by plants that form the atmosphere in which humans and animals move and which moves through humans and animals. Plants enable the world of which they are part and content [...] to destroy [...] the topological hierarchy that seems to rule the cosmos. They show that life is a break in the asymmetry between the comprehensive and the incomprehensive. As soon as there is life, the encompassing rests in the encompassed (is thus contained in it) and vice versa. The paradigm of this mutual entanglement was already called the breath (*pneuma*) in antiquity. To breathe means in fact exactly this experience. What preserves us, the air, becomes what is preserved in us, and vice versa, what was contained in us becomes what contains and contains. (Cocchia 2018: 23)

Coccia's approach of reflection and interweaving is not dissimilar to that of Sufi master Ibn Arabi: the comprehensive is contained in the comprehended and vice versa, and breathing techniques play a central role in Sufist rituals to reach the state of *hal*, of mutual entanglement with God. The term *rih* (in Hebrew *ruach*) is used to denote breath and music, which are employed to accomplish this.

As already mentioned, each *ǧinniya*, such as *Aïsha Qandisha*, possesses its own *rih*, which is musically refreshed during the trance-inducing rituals.

Ruach HaQodesh (Hebrew) or *Ruh al-Qudus* (Arabic) means Holy Spirit. Probably, classical Sufi practices are no more than the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (significant in Christian Pentecost). *Qandisha* would then be the verbal-horned form of *Qudus*, which was transferred to a powerful spirit coming from the south in the course of Morocco's expansion into Mali, Niger, and Songhai.

Ethnologists generally turn to cultures that ontologically believe in the existence of other beings and grant them an undeniable influence on humanity: forces that profoundly unsettle our anthropocentric world view and reason and that perform their disturbing *Danse Macabre* in the intermediate worlds of day and night, self and stranger, everyday life and the extraordinary, security and violence. It should be pointed out that it is no coincidence that Camille Saint-Saëns composed his musical masterpiece of the same name in Hotel Fuentes at Zoco Chico in Tangier, obviously incorporating the publicly visible rituals of the Sufi brotherhoods.

Spirits on the move

What of the *ǧnūn* in times of migration? Moroccan writer Mohamed Mrabet once provocatively claimed that the *ǧnūn* still exist, but that they "all fled to France, Spain and Germany. They followed the Moroccans. It is a pleasant situation for us here. The spirits have migrated to Europe" (Haller 2016a: 73). He insinuates that the faith in *ǧnūn* has lost its importance in Morocco. But this is a fallacy: I myself have not met a Moroccan who does not believe in them in seven years of research. But of course, they have also followed Moroccan migrants. Where do they disappear to in the context of migration? For Deiste,

> [E]migration to Europe does not free Moroccans from *ǧnūn*, rather the opposite: the adversities of their migration situation can weaken them and make it easier for *ǧnūn* to possess them; conversations about *ǧnūn* are constantly changing and constructing new theories in new contexts, such as the view of Holland as the country with the most *ǧnūn*, due to the identification of the latter with water (Deiste 2015: 47f.).

They are, as many suspect, driving Moroccan migrants mad: Do they turn them into slaves to their own desires, a hubris of self-realization to which Europeans also seem to have fallen prey? Is individualization, the transformation of migrants into just as buffered selves as Europeans, the result of a seduction by *ǧnūn*, who whisper in their ears: you think you are individual and no longer know how to deal with our existence, so we really do have control over you? In any case,

ǧnūn are now being accepted by some European experts, they are being integrated into psychotherapies, for example (Dumont & Hermans 2003).

Do *ǧnūn* exist or do they not? Ethnologists are here in good company, as even Kant, Schopenhauer, and Hegel seriously discussed the existence of spirits (Andriopoulos 2006). To me, the irrepressible forces that *Ḥamdūši* are able to develop in a state of ecstasy, dancing on broken glass, and drinking boiling water (to name only a few phenomena that occur in the course of possession rituals) cannot be understood by reason alone, if we were to confine our reasoning to within Western categorical knowledge.

At the moment, the German feuilleton frequently discusses the question: "What is looking at us through the eyes of other species? Can we ever escape our own heads and take the perspective of a falcon? Can there be such a thing as thinking a mountain?" (Purdy 2018). Animals are at least no longer denied individual personalities and souls, as the debate on animal rights shows; botanists have found that plants communicate with each other via animals. On the German and international book market, *Das geheime Leben der Bäume* ("The Hidden Life of Trees, Wohlleben 2015) ranks at the top of bestseller lists and focuses on the communication of plants. It is worth pointing out that before Heinrich Hertz discovered radio waves in 1887, it was difficult to imagine that that communication could take place over hundreds of kilometers. Quranic healers, the *faqihs*, today use "a unified discourse of science and religion by creating overlaps between ancient rhetoric from humoral medicine or prophetic medicine and ideas from modern biomedicine, when they identify the interference of *ǧnūn* in the human body as a kind of microbe" (Deiste 2015: 46).[11] But the nature that has been or will be discovered here reliably reflects "the norms and limitations of the imagination of its observers" (Purdy 2018).[12]

Nevertheless, perhaps there are spirits not only in people's minds: they might exist as entities beyond our ken. In any case, there are more people on

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[11] "The popular Egyptian [Huda] Ulema al-Sha'rawi (1911-1998) wrote that the hidden, like microbes, cannot be seen, but its existence is independent of human perception. The existence of microbes is as old as human creation, but has only recently been discovered by science through microscopy." (Deiste 2015: 46)

[12] "For centuries, after forests were considered kingdoms, then as factories - and in those days as cathedrals in the minds of the Romantics – it was inevitable that the 21st century would discover a networked information system among foliage and humus. A system that calls Wohlleben an impressive lack of shame as the 'Wood Wide Web'" (Purdy 2018).

earth who perceive them than those who do not. Do I believe in the spirits myself? Like most colleagues, I have my doubts about their non-existence. To endure this doubt about the exclusiveness of an anthropocentric world view, to problematize the limits of one's own thinking, to stray from the furrow of agency-centered culture, to *delirify* oneself in the wilderness, and to not exclude radically different forms of existence: these are the thorns, which ethnology must expect if it is to a) do justice to other cultures, b) counteract their renewed colonization and disempowerment, and c) hold up a mirror to the hubris inherent in our own Western world view.

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Things in Motion

Working Lithographs from Devotionalism to Antiquity

The Changing Effects and Meanings of Tamil Images of Gods

Gabriele Alex

Introduction

Since the 1980s antique shops have increasingly opened in South Indian metropolises and tourist resorts, selling furniture, household goods and all kinds of other commodities and art objects both first- and second-hand. These shops offer a wide range of items and provide an impressive insight into the material culture of South Indian houses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One category of objects for sale are prints, mainly lithographs from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century which once decorated the walls of houses, being kept as proud ornaments and objects of worship in residential buildings across castes and classes.

These lithographs constitute the first mass-produced media in India. The availability of new illustrations and their sheer ephemeral materiality (paper) gives them a limited lifespan and makes them prone to being disposed of and replaced by new prints or illustrations. They are therefore now discarded testimonies to a visual tradition that is disintegrating both materially and figuratively. The article deals with the transformations, the different life-cycles these visual products undergo, from being acquired to being discarded, perhaps just being thrown away or fed into other economic and symbolic networks.

My focus here is on lithographs depicting deities from the Hindu pantheon, the "divine lithography" (Castelli & Aprile 2005), which in Tamil are called *cāmi paṭam*, images of deities. I am especially interested in the transformative cycle these *cāmi paṭam* undergo when they turn from "coloured paper" to deities and then to rubbish or antiquities or even art objects. I will start with a brief historical sketch of the lithographic revolution and the role of the *cāmi paṭam* in household shrines. Then their journey from houses to antique shops and then to other owners will be discussed. The ethnographic vignettes in this article are based on research conducted on different stays in Tamil Nadu from 2007 to 2014.

The lithographic revolution

Lithography has a very special history in India. The first printing houses in India opened at the end of the nineteenth century, but lithography did not become a mass medium until the beginning of the twentieth. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, several lithographic printing houses opened, such as the Raja Ravi Varma Fine Art Lithographic Press Bombay, the Calcutta Art Studio and the Chitrashala Press Pune (Pinney 2004: 26f.). The Raja Ravi Varma Press is generally considered the most famous and influential press. It was founded in 1892 by Raja Ravi Varma, who, being trained in the European oil-painting tradition, introduced new accents in aesthetic representation by giving deities a "modern, coloured and vital appearance to renew their faith in them" (Castelli & Aprile 2005: 26). But, apart from the Raja Ravi Varma Press, there were a number of printing presses and artists across South Asia that produced and distributed lithographs and brought their products to the market. These lithographic motifs can be divided into four categories: devotional, mythological, historical and feminine (ibid.: 24), with the devotional and mythological supposedly being the most popular (ibid.: 25). The devotional images were specific in that the divinity was placed at the centre of the illustration and shown from the front, with open eyes looking straight ahead, allowing the viewer to make direct eye contact. The background was often in the style of European landscape painting, with pastel colours and romantic landscape scenery.

Mechanical reproduction enabled the production of high-quality images, which, when framed in glass, had a permanence of their own. The technique of lithography further allowed images to be printed cheaply in large editions, thus making them affordable to a wide audience. In a very short time lithographs were flooding the Indian subcontinent, their rather low production costs keeping prices down. They also made possible the development of a new image culture. Before that, pictorial representations were only accessible to a wider public in temples or as scenery paintings, and the acquisition and possession of artwork such as oil paintings were privileges of the nobility and elite. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the production, circulation and distribution of colour illustrations took place on a new scale, and soon lithographic depictions were to become a mass medium. The colourful visual art was widely used for educational and decorative purposes, as well as for pleasure, for example, in the form of playing

cards and especially in commercial advertising, advertising posters and illustrations on packaging (Jain 2007, Inglis 1995: 69). Calendars had a special importance here, as, in addition to the monthly sheets, they contained a picture that could be framed after the year had ended. Such calendars were distributed to customers as promotional gifts (see Jain 2007), using a form, known as calendar art, that occupies a particular position at the interface between advertising and popular art. This form of calendar art is still current and widespread today (see figure 1).

Through their wide distribution, these visual representations became the model for both profane and religious pictorial aesthetics in India and created a kind of pan-Indian iconography (Neumayer & Schelberger 2003, 2008). From the printing companies the lithographs went to the shops and markets, the devotional prints finding buyers in and in front of temples, especially the large temple complexes that attracted thousands of pilgrims during the pilgrimage season. Visual depictions and representations of deities had previously been reserved for temples, to the inner sanctums of which non-Brahmans had no or restricted access. The latter now had the possibility to own a *cāmi paṭam* of a popular deity, opening up access to deities that were otherwise unseeable. Those devotees who were denied access to see the deity were able to introduce a representation of the same deity into their own houses, huts or tents (Pinney 2004: 23), creating a degree of independence from the temple and the Brahmans. Lithography therefore democratized Indian visual culture (ibid.: 184). Through the *cāmi paṭam*, the householder and his family were empowered to create a connection to the deities on their own without having to leave the house. Without needing the assistance of a *pujari* or temple priest, they were able "to control their own personal pantheon" (ibid.: 183). With the new visual material culture entering the houses, domestic shrines such as *puja* corners or even *puja* rooms became part of the domestic topography, and the veneration of lithographs of divinities at home became part of everyday religious practices (see figures 2a & 2b).

From pictures to religious objects

What made devotional lithographs so important was their quality as a material representation, an icon of a divinity (*mūrti*), to which their devotees could relate by eye contact. This communication between devotee and deity through mutual

eye contact (*darshan*) is an essential component of Hinduism: "this sacred perception […] the ability truly to see the divine image is given to the devotee […] and the deity sees the worshipper as well. The contact between devotee and deity is exchanged through the eyes" (Eck 1998: ix). The highlight of a temple visit is the visual interaction with the temple deity in the temple's sanctum. The depictions of the deities accordingly place the emphasis on showing the eyes glancing towards the viewer: everybody who looks at the picture has his or her gaze returned by the deity. The mutual seeing of devotees and deity, which involves "seeing and being seen by the deity present in the icon" is extremely beneficial because it is "to drink with the eyes the deity's own current of seeing […] and it allows the devotee to acquire something of deity's highest nature" (Babb 1981: 397). Through this visual interaction, seer and seen blend and intermix, and the "inner powers of the deity become available to the devotee" (ibid.: 400). For the consecration of an image as an installation, therefore, the deity's eyes must be open: that is, divine images are not simply hung on a wall after being purchased, as their installation in the house shrine requires consecration; they are "seated" (Pinney 2001: 168) and infused with life. This is a standard Vedic ritual procedure (*prāṇa-pratiṣṭha*) that is performed for every man-made *mūrti* before the worshipping can start, otherwise the icon remains just a material object. In the vernacular form of Hinduism, this ritual has its own shape with local and community-specific practices. In Tamil it is called *uyir ūṭṭam*, meaning "life infuse", and is carried out for each temple *mūrti*. For the *cāmi paṭam* this can be done by a *pujari* or a Brahman, but in the cases I encountered, the owners of the lithographs do it themselves with an elaborate first *puja* and an initial invocation.

There is a kind of a liminal period that starts when the lithograph is bought and ends when it is installed in the *puja* shrine. In transporting the lithograph between the place of its acquisition and the shrine certain rules apply: the *cāmi paṭam* should not come into contact with non-vegetarian food or leather, it should be wrapped in a new or at least a clean piece of cloth, and it should not touch the feet or be placed on the floor, or anywhere impure. Even though it is not yet infused with life, it needs to be handled with respect and caution. When it starts to be venerated it enters a different life-cycle, then acting as an independent and powerful being. Nonetheless it can be taken down from the wall and shown to a visitor or to be cleaned or dusted. Before it can be touched in any way, however, the purificatory rites that are necessary for entering the *puja* have to be followed.

The transformation of the lithograph from a piece of paper into a channel for the divine power is set into motion by the relationship that is created between devotee and deity. Once a devotional lithograph has been infused with life and installed as a deity in the house shrine, its veneration is an ongoing task that involves extensive interaction: reverently addressing the deity, folding the hands in front of the chest, offering it water, incense, food, flowers and betel, breaking open coconuts, speaking mantras, waving a camphor flame, swinging a bell, burning incense, applying turmeric powder, *kunkuma* and vermilion, and garlanding, decorating and, if necessary, washing, cleaning and dressing it. All this is accompanied by physical gestures and respectful conduct when approaching the deity, such as preparatory purification of the devotee's body and mind, sacrifices in the form of fasting or having the head tonsured, and verbal expressions such as calling the deity's name or repeating mantras.

On the occasion of Hindu holidays and festivals, as well as at family events such as birth or death, the *cāmi paṭam* are especially honoured. In times of illness or other crises and life-changing events, such as exams, the members of the household address their deities for support by paying them increased attention, for example, with a more elaborate *puja* and/or a specific request. Through this recurring ritual practice, close and emotional bonds are developed between the devotee and the lithograph, or rather the deity who resides in it. In addition, these practices cause subjective religious and physical experiences in those who address and worship them, which merge with the aesthetic experience.

The interaction between the *cāmi paṭam* and the devotee encompasses exchange relationships and a related physical practice, for which Pinney uses the term "corpothetics" to describe the sensory and embodied aesthetic experience (Pinney 2004: 193) that is produced through the ongoing active mutual relationship between the material representation and the person; the aesthetic experience of the visual representation is accompanied by and deepened through a physical practice. Pinney defines corpothetics as "the sensory embrace of images, the bodily engagement that most people (except Kantians and modernists) have with artworks" (ibid. 2001: 158). This interaction between humans and the *cāmi paṭam* is not aimed at an interpretative act but is a constant performative production of the relationship between humans and deities (ibid.: 166), which has a transformative effect on the devotee. This relationship is that of follower and servant, the latter having the duty to respect and care for the deities just as the temple Brahmans do in relation to the temple deities.

Personal relationships with the deities-cum-lithographs

One aspect that shapes the relationship between devotee and lithographic deity has to do with their first encounter. The lithographs in the antique shops were acquired in the first half of the twentieth century, many of them supposedly in the context of pilgrimages or temple visits. For example, during a pilgrimage, the pilgrim bought a lithograph directly in front of the temple depicting its main deity, or else bought an image of their ancestral or lineage deity. The choice of motif also had to do with the special qualities and attributions of the deities. Sarasvati, who is associated with scholarship and the arts, is supposed to give the devotee the strength to succeed in these areas. Murugan, one of the most popular deities in Tamil Hinduism and associated with the early Tamil Sangam culture of the first to sixth centuries AD, embodies Tamil identity and power and was a popular motif especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Tamil nationalism was gaining in strength. For the owners and their families, the value of the lithographs is thus linked to the history of the acquisition, such as a pilgrimage, journey or ritual event, or even personal relationships between a person and a deity. My interlocutors, when asked about the *cāmi paṭam* in their houses, would often recount the history and circumstances of their acquisition or purchase. If they themselves acquired the lithograph, they would narrate the details of the pilgrimage journey, the group of pilgrims who went on that journey, the heat, the crowded temple, the hardships and joy. They would recall the wishes they took to the temple deity on this pilgrimage (which often revolve around health and reproductive issues) and whether they were granted. If they were, it would add to the story and quality of the *cāmi paṭam* and strengthen the close bond between person and the specific deity. If the lithograph had been acquired by the informants' parents or grandparents, then their personal story would be told as well, and sometimes the close relationship with the grandparent or parent was seen as a quality of the *cāmi paṭam*. Thus, for the members of a household, its lithographs represented the memories, struggles and aspirations of the acquirers and thereby embodied and materialized parts of the family history and kinship connections.

Since the *cāmi paṭam* are a point of reference in everyday life in the way that they are addressed and venerated, for some residents they are experienced like a family member. As one young interlocutor put it when referring to the

lithographic pantheon of his parents' house, "[t]hey have seen me, and I have seen them since I was born". For the inhabitants of a house, corporal practice of the lithographs or rather the *puja* corner develops into a kind of routine that becomes an embodied performative act, so the person and the deity in the lithograph are related by everyday practice. Furthermore, sometimes portraits of deceased family members are hung among the ensemble of *cāmi paṭam* lithographs. Parallel to the lithographic revolution in India, the technique of photography developed, and photo studios opened specializing mainly in portrait photography. Portraits of family members were given a place in their houses, and portraits of the deceased, some of which were taken post-mortem, were given a particular position (personal communication with Zoé Headley 5th November 2014). In some *puja* corners I witnessed, these ancestral portraits were given a similar place and role to the *cāmi paṭam*: at annual commemorations and on New Moon days deceased family members were remembered and venerated in the same way as the portraits of the deceased would be during the *puja*, being placed near or in front of the *cāmi paṭam*. Though the *cāmi paṭam* has an existence of its own, it can also be seen as part of an assemblage of illustrations, photographs and actors, where the different elements enhance each other in the relationship between the ensemble and the devotees (see figures 3a & 3b).

However, the *cāmi paṭam* also affect people, creating feelings. Through repetitive habitual interactions with them they accumulate a positive affective value, becoming what Sara Ahmed calls "objects of happiness" (Ahmed 2010: 21). The *cāmi paṭam*'s auspiciousness is mixed with the promise of transforming the venerator's mood, as well as transforming life events in accordance with the wish for positive outcomes. And to follow Sara Ahmed further, the *cāmi paṭam* are also essential for the idea of the family. As the central objects in the house around which the living (and the deceased) family members assemble together, it is through the daily practice of *puja* that the family, and the positive values and feelings that go along with it, are re-enacted.

However, the intensity of the relationship between a *cāmi paṭam* and a person depends very much on the setting. Many big houses, like the Chettiar mansions or traditional Tamil houses that observed a kind of palace architecture and were inhabited by huge joint families, were equipped with dozens of huge lithographs embellishing the walls of the *thinnai* (veranda), entrance hall or corridors around the inner courtyards. In these houses the *cāmi paṭam* also served decorative purposes, for these big galleries also housed lithographs depicting

mythical, educational, feminine or historical scenes. In such houses the lithographs were not always part of the *puja* room, but also provided decoration, supposedly changing the nature of the relationship between the residents and the lithographs. However, the *cāmi paṭam* in the *puja* shrines in these houses must be seen differently, as they were venerated on a daily basis and would be given a special position in the household, as described above.

When the deities leave the house

So far, I have described the lithographs' incorporation into a household and family. Next, I will examine the process of the lithographs being parted from their households. From being objects of worship that conveyed, represented and hosted the divine, some prints suddenly land on the floors of antique shops between other used items, dusty and cobwebbed, exposed to the curious looks and hands of antique collectors and customers.

In the antique shops, due to a lack of space, not all the lithographs can be hung on the walls. They are therefore stored on the floor one on top of the other, leaning against the wall (see figure 4). In most of these shops there is usually a separate room for this purpose, or at least a specially designated corner. This type of storage is often criticized by Tamil customers because of the sacred power of the *cāmi paṭam*: in particular, they should not be stored on the floor, which, given that it comes into contact with people's feet, is considered unclean. The *cāmi paṭam* in these antique shops often have traces of their daily ritual interactions and accompanying treatment, such as marks of sandalwood paste, flowers or other forms of decoration, as well as the smoke produced by waving the camphor flame in front of the pictures.

Having played such a crucial and personal role for the members of the original household, the question that suggests itself is why and under what circumstances lithographs and the deities residing in them should be discarded from houses and households? How can we understand the biographies and travels of these lithographs? What kinds of transformation take place, and how are they achieved or facilitated?

The lithographic *cāmi paṭam* offered for sale in local markets and antique shops mainly come from house clearances after households are broken up. The trade in antiques has increased over the last fifty years, especially since the 1990s. Antique shops can be found in the big cities like Chennai, as well as in

tourist centers like Puducherry or Karaikudi. They offer an interesting mixture of material and household goods, often dowry gifts, that are of interest to antique dealers and various groups of buyers. They include everything that belonged to the household: lamps, furniture, kitchen items, tools, religious items like statues or idols, personal belongings like letters, photographs, books or toys. But also, the material from which the houses were built, especially the wooden items like doors, window frames and pillars, are dismantled and sometimes placed in the salesrooms even without refurbishment. Lowson (2017), in her study of the antique trade in Tamil Nadu, followed the routes of such objects and identified four main destinations where they end up when they leave the antique shop: private homes, hotels and other tourist facilities, collectors and film sets. Whereas for the film sets and the tourist/heritage industries the patina of the old is what is most desired, private owners, who aim to have these second-hand items in their houses, prefer them to be refurbished. While they appreciate the high quality of old materials such as wood, they want the objects to look new, since used objects are valued negatively (ibid.: 231).

According to the salesmen in the antique shops in Karaikudi, most lithographs come from the large houses of the merchant castes, such as the Chettiar houses from the surrounding region of Chettinad, which have been deserted and broken up in recent decades due to the Chettiar community's financial losses. In recent decades, however, many of these mansions have remained unoccupied, others have been demolished, and some have become tourist heritage sites. The sale and the resulting dissolution of such houses are inevitable when the group of householders is so large that no one has the financial means on his own to purchase the house from his relatives. In addition, many of the house's former residents have not lived in it for a long time but now live in the cities or abroad. Household liquidations are carried out by special contractors, who then deliver the interior fittings in bulk to antique shops or to middlemen (Lowson 2017). However, the interiors of smaller houses also find their way on to the market (see figure 5).

But people also separate from their *cāmi paṭam* for other reasons and in other ways. In principle, a *cāmi paṭam* cannot simply be thrown away because one should ensure that the paintings do not come into contact with feet or impure substances. My interlocutors told me that families part with their *cāmi paṭam* when they are falling apart, when houses become too crowded, or when the *cāmi paṭam* was associated with a household member who has died. The *cāmi paṭam*

that are falling apart or are in other ways damaged are brought to the riverbank and left there for dispersal, or else placed in the flowing water of a river or the sea. This corresponds to the 'correct' dismissal of *mūrti*s (*visarjana*), as described in the Vedic texts (Bühnemann 1988: 133).

Undamaged *cāmi paṭam*, I was told, are ideally given to a temple and kept there in exterior buildings outside the main temple, or else they are left at deserted roadside temples or shrines. This type of "disposal" preserves the sacred character of the images and has a completely different quality than when the *cāmi paṭam* are taken directly from the house to an antique store or market.

How can we make sense of this latter kind of separation between devotee and deity, and what does it tell us about the life stages the *cāmi paṭam* encounter when moving away from the homes and families in which they were residing?

From cult object to artwork or rubbish

An interesting starting point is Benjamin's argument (1936) pointing out that the value and function of art has changed significantly in the age of mechanical production. Replicas of art objects lack uniqueness and authenticity, they are not "imbedded in the fabric of tradition", and in Benjamin's words they have lost their "aura" (Benjamin 1969: 223). Benjamin's distinction between cult objects, that is, art objects that fulfil a function in a particular tradition, and exhibition projects whose purpose is to be exhibited can be applied to the *cāmi paṭam*, which are mass-produced replicas and ritual objects with their own histories. They are not originals in their function as art objects, but because they function as religious objects. Their originality has to do with the specific meaning and role they take on for the residents of the house in which they reside. At the same time, they are just vessels that give a material form to the deities through which they communicate to the humans who invoke them, but their materiality as such has no value in the way an art object has. When the *cāmi paṭam* leave the antique shops to end up in a museum, a collector's home, a film set or a heritage hotel, they will acquire a new meaning for their new lives.

Paine, in his discussion of the transformation of religious objects that move into museums, distinguishes three broad categories of meaning that objects that have been pulled out of their context and reinstalled in a museum assume: "as a beautiful/powerful/meaningful piece of art, as a scientific specimen or as an illustration or an evidence to a story being told" (Paine 2013: 14). This too is

relevant to what is being discussed here: *cāmi paṭam* that are used for film sets and heritage sites have the potential to tell a story, to convey the flair of a bygone era, while as decoration in heritage hotels they might also be considered art objects. In collections and museums all three categories might apply, depending on the narrative the curator pursues in an exhibition. Interestingly, the auspicious and sacred powers that characterize their meaning as long as they are part of the *puja* ensemble and are venerated fade into the background.

The transition the *cāmi paṭam* undergo while temporarily kept on the floor of an antique shop recalls Thompson's (1979) theory of waste, which suggests that objects can be classified into three categories in terms of their value: 1. durable; 2. transient; and 3. rubbish. Objects in the first two categories are publicly visible and differ in terms of their lifespan and attribution of value. Transient objects are manufactured for a certain period of use, have their value in their inherent function and are discarded when their usefulness has expired. Durable objects have undergone a new attribution of value, for example, when an object becomes an antique or a museum exhibit. The third category, rubbish, refers to items that no longer have any place in the order. According to Thompson, objects can be transformed from "transient" to "durable" by passing through the category of "rubbish", which devalues the object, thereby allowing new meaning or value to be assigned to it as an object with the status of a durable (ibid.: 7ff.).

How can this model of Thompson's be applied to the lithographs if we do not regard the categories as delimited fields but rather as a spectrum? Mass-produced, the lithographs represent transient objects that have gone to their new owners at an affordable price, or even as calendar art free of charge. However, the images of deities can hardly be understood as mere objects of utility or illustrations. As representations of the divine, they have a sacred character, are an essential part of religious and ritual practices, and also help to enact the family or kinship group in its unity. This goes along with the difficulties involved in disposing of them: although their material can be dissolved by being immersed in water or placed in a roadside shrine, the essence that is inherent should be treated as something that is there beyond the duration of the material. Although it would not be appropriate to consider the *cāmi paṭam* in the antique stores as rubbish, they have left the previous network that gave them value and purpose and have entered an in-between space where their belonging and purpose has not yet been determined.

Another approach to explaining the process of discarding the lithographic *cāmi paṭam* described above would be to adopt recent theoretical approaches from material culture and the anthropology of art. A special role is played by the "agency" of things, as described by Gell (1998) and Latour (2005). This approach advocates an understanding of the social sphere where material objects should be treated as exercising a kind of agency, similar to human beings. Gell (1998: 7) writes: "[…] in order for an anthropology of art to be specifically anthropological, it has to proceed on the basis that, in relevant theoretical respects, art objects are the equivalent to persons, or more precisely, social agents." Thus, art anthropology should not primarily focus on the aesthetics or the modes of production of artworks but should instead examine "social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency" (ibid.). Latour (2005) describes the objects that influence social human relations as agents and asks what kind of networks are spun around agents and the actors. For the *cāmi paṭam* on the household altars, this means that they are not mere illustrations, but the gods themselves, with whom people enter into close interactions and exchange relationships. The images become actants, as they have an impact on people's lives through their presence, generating new religious practices and permitting a certain independence from the temples. In addition, they redesign the domestic space. The agency of the images is also contained in Pinney's concept of corpothetics, but he emphasizes the different sensual and physical practices and experiences generated by the interaction with the *cāmi paṭam.* Following the theory of the agency of things, their transformation can be explained precisely by the social and sacred functions that the *cāmi paṭam* have for their followers and servants. The prints only become deities, animated objects with an agency, through regular interaction with people in the form of *puja* and worship and through eye contact, *darshan*, which invites the divine into matter. When the people are gone, therefore, the divinity is not present either.

In connection with Gell's thesis, the question arises as to what forms of agency are generated here, or rather how this concept can be made concrete. I see three different levels of agency here. First, the deities have an independent power of action, they react to the gifts and invocations that are offered to them, they can bless but also punish the people, they channel central forces, such as *shakti*, and they protect their followers. Secondly, the deities provide people with a certain power of action through which they can communicate with the sacred

sphere and influence their own fate. Thirdly, the *cāmi paṭam* are part of the family group in whose house they are enthroned, and they connect the individual family members through their ritual indispensability at all family events and religious festivals over a long period of time. As described above, *cāmi paṭam* are strongly linked to the life-history events of individual family members or the family as a whole, thus making them objects of and reference points for the shared history. Their spatial proximity to images of deceased family members reinforces their integration into the family group.

The *cāmi paṭam* are thus to be understood in conjunction with other illustrations or photographs; it is their quality as an ensemble that makes them valuable. They are contemporary witnesses of a family history, and they tell of pilgrimages and family events, of the deceased, the family and lineage deities. Thus, the *cāmi paṭam* have value and meaning for a social group in their very specific ensemble composition and history. This is supported by the affective value they accumulate, the interaction, the bodily practices, and the communication with the deities, which can produce multiple feelings, such as awe, affection, hope and unity with the divine or purity.

For those who interact with the *cāmi paṭam* on a regular basis, these affective values are imminent, but in the antique stores, where the pictures are taken out of the ensemble of their social context and are thrown together, their affective value is void. Although they represent their history in a certain way when they enter hotels or exhibitions as representatives of ancient India, this is not the history they had embodied in their original homes. When they are placed on the floor in the backrooms of antiquarian shops, without any human attention, they are meaningless, and in a state of decay: whether they turn into rubbish or become a "durable" asset on a film set or in a museum, a collection or a heritage site has not yet been decided. In this respect, Thompson's model is entirely applicable: before the *cāmi paṭam* can be fed into a new cycle and given new contexts of meaning, they experience a devaluation as religious and affective objects. Moreover, not all *cāmi paṭam* from antiquarian shops are transformed into antiquities or art: those that are too damaged to be sold do turn into rubbish and are discreetly disposed of to create space in the storage rooms.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered different approaches in order to explain the transformations in meaning and value of the *cāmi paṭam*: Thompson's theory of rubbish, Gell's and Latour's concepts of the agency of objects, and Pinney's concept of corpothetics, together with Ahmed's concept of "happy objects", which both stress the performative aspect of interacting with objects and the transformative effects that these interactions have through proximity and bodily practices. These approaches are useful in that they refer to different aspects that shape the changing meanings and values the *cāmi paṭam* have for their human companions: the materiality of objects, sensual experience, affect and performance, agency and social networks.

The material dimension of the *cāmi paṭam* are important in order to understand their circulation, distribution and life span. As paper-made objects, their production cost is low, making them accessible for everyday ritual practice, but they are less durable compared to bronze or stone *mūrti*. The effectiveness of being not only an image or representative of a deity but of being the deity itself develops only through the recurring performances and rituals that establish the relationship between man and deity and endow matter with divine essence. Direct communication is achieved by the mutual gaze, *darshan*, which evokes the divine and transfers it to the viewer. In this respect, the *cāmi paṭam* become actants in an ensemble together with the living and sometimes the deceased family members, which shapes the topography of the homestead, as well as movement and behaviour within it. The invocation and service the *cāmi paṭam* demand connects them with those who venerate them, in return having hopes and wishes pinned on them. By means of these processes, they become part of a diachronic network that includes the living and deceased family members, and they share and accompany the fates and fortunes of the household's members by being addressed at all significant events the family experiences.

Once in the antiquarian shops, however, the *cāmi paṭam* lose these attachments: the "divine" is no longer invoked due to a lack of ritual performance, and the social network and the memories that surrounded the *cāmi paṭam* in the homes that accommodated them have disappeared. When the lithographs are elevated to the status of antiques, when they take up a new destiny in collections or museums, as props in a film set or as decoration in a heritage hotel, they are woven into new contexts of meaning. They still represent a part of their history,

but above all they represent, or are re-enacted, as the authentic witnesses of a bygone past, becoming representatives of their own histories.

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Figures

Fig. 1. A teashop near Madurai, decorated with calendar art *cāmi paṭam* and a lithograph on the top right corner. (Photo: Gabriele Alex)
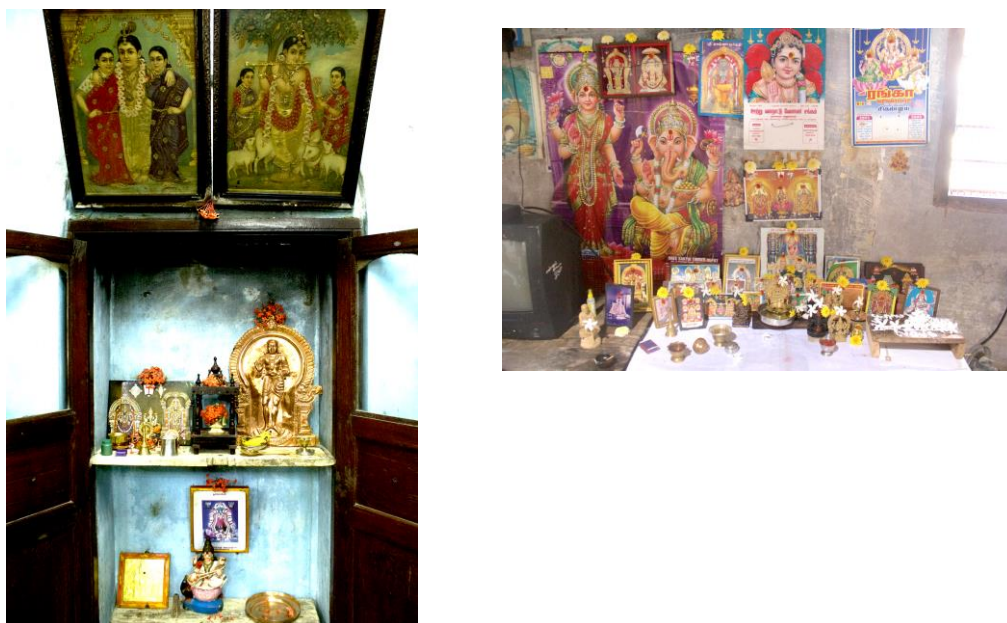

Fig. 2. Two differently styled puja corners. (2a) Left: Two lithographs from the 1920s are placed at the top, both depicting Krishna with Radha and Rukmini. (2b) Right: This puja corner is equipped with calendar art, rollups and small *cāmi paṭam* of different printing techniques, the latter ones were acquired by the house owner and his wife in the context of different pilgrimages. (Photos: Shalu Anel)

Fig. 3. Puja corners with photographs of deceased family members. (3a) Left: A puja corner with *cāmi paṭam* and a photography of the deceased father and husband of the inhabitants. (3b) Right: A puja is conducted, and coconuts and other items are about to be offered to the deities and the ancestors. (Photos: Shalu Anel)

Fig. 4. *Cāmi paṭam* stored in an antique store in Karaikudi. (Photo: Gabriele Alex)

Fig. 5. A construction worker is selling photographs and lithographs coming from a demolition house. (Photo: Gabriele Alex)

Cooperation and Competition among Oaxacan Wood Carvers

Michael Chibnik

> A theory of how people make their economic choices is without interest and probably impossible until we have tacked the prior questions of the factors determining what choices are available to them (White 1976: 36).

Anthropologists, sociologists, and historians have long been interested in relationships among social institutions, cultural norms, and decision making. Some of these scholars have emphasized how norms and institutions constrain decision making at particular times and places (Polanyi 1957, Sahlins 1976); others have focused on how new norms and institutions arise as a result of individual choices in changing circumstances (Firth 1951, Barth 1967). Such studies, while valuable, have only limited explanatory power because individual choices are also affected by regional and global historical, economic, and technological transformations (Gunder Frank 1969, Wallerstein 1974). The general issue of the relative power of individual actions and systemic forces is often called the problem of structure and agency (Ortner 2006, Wilk & Cliggett 2007: 112).

In recent years Helene Basu has been an active participant in the multidisciplinary Collaborative Research Centre 1150 Cultures of Decision Making at the University of Münster. This center approaches the problem of structure and agency by examining the social practices and cultural context of decision-making in a comparative historical perspective. Its underlying assumption is that "decision-making [is] a form of social action, which is neither self-evident nor invariant, but which is based on changing social and cultural conditions."[1] By emphasizing variability, practice, and transformation, the center's guiding principles challenge universalizing theories of individual decision making – in particular, assumptions about rational choice – that are influential in disciplines such as economics and political science. The key idea of the center is that analyses of choices in particular places and times must pay attention to both culture and history.

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[1] This idea is outlined in the conceptual foundations and research goals of the Collaborative Research Centre 1150 programme Cultures of Decision-Making. (https://www.uni-muenster.de/SFB1150/, last checked 15/11/2021)

Choices about cooperation illustrate the merits of the Münster center's approach to decision making. Studies of these decisions by social scientists sometimes pay insufficient attention to cultural variability and historical circumstances. Many economists and political scientists using ideas from rational choice and game theory ordinarily analyse choices in terms of individuals weighing costs and benefits (Kay & King 2020). These scholars assume that two individuals are likely to cooperate with one another when working together is of mutual benefit (Ostrom 1998). Although such cooperation is certainly common, individuals also often work together for the good of their group, even if their actions are not immediately in their self-interest. Some anthropologists even restrict – mistakenly in my view - their definition of cooperation to these kinds of actions. Natalie Henrich and Joseph Henrich (2007: 37), for example, say that "cooperation occurs when an individual incurs a cost to provide a benefit for another person or people." These anthropologists focus on cultural mechanisms that encourage altruistic behaviour. Norms about cooperation may be sufficiently strong that people working for the good of their group do not make conscious decisions about the costs and benefits of their actions.

Some anthropologists regard cooperation as an essential part of human cultural and biological evolution that allowed our species to flourish in the foraging past and continues to be useful in the present (e.g., Boyd 2014: 63-122; Henrich & Henrich 2007). While this may well be the case, general evolutionary explanations cannot account for variability in the extent to which humans are willing to cooperate in different situations. Most anthropologists therefore agree that the evolution of the capacity for culture allows flexibility in the degree to which human beings in particular situations are willing to cooperate with one another. Theories about cooperative decision making often focus on individual choices. Much cooperation, however, takes place within and between organized groups. The formation, persistence, and dissolution of groups engaged in collective action is difficult to analyze using decision-making frameworks based on individual behaviour.

As would be expected by Helene Basu and her colleagues at the Cultures of Decision-Making Center, analyses of decision making with respect to cooperatives require sustained ethnographic work and attention to historical transformations influencing changing practices. In the remainder of this essay, I show the relevance of ethnography and history to such choices by artisans in two communities in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico (see figure 1). Since the 1980s, residents

of Arrazola and San Martín Tilcajete have earned significant amounts of money by selling brightly painted, whimsical wood carvings to tourists, collectors, shop owners, and international folk-art dealers. In the 1980s and 1990s, Oaxacan wood carvers had few incentives to participate extensively in cooperative organizations. Changing economic and political circumstances resulted in artisan organizations becoming more important in the first part of this century. In the past few years, such organizations are again becoming of lesser significance in Arrazola and San Martín.[2] In what follows, I explore the historical, cultural, and economic factors influencing the rise and fall of wood carving cooperatives and discuss the extent to which their formation and persistence can be explained in terms of individual and group decision making about the costs and benefits of alternative actions. Although I briefly discuss the possible implications of the coronavirus of 2020 on cooperative organizations, my focus is on events prior to the pandemic.

The economics of cooperation and competition

Social scientists and historians have often looked at why people choose to cooperate at some times and choose to compete at other times. (Marshall 2010). The best analyses of such choices are complex and nuanced. Cooperation cannot always be easily opposed to competition because individuals and groups can simultaneously cooperate and compete with one another. For example, restaurant owners serving similar types of meals in a particular area of a city may compete with one another for customers while cooperating in creating publicity designed to bring culinary tourists to their neighbourhood. Furthermore, decisions about cooperation and competition are constrained by what choices are possible for individuals and groups. Farmers making decisions about whether to help their neighbours needing labour on agricultural tasks are influenced by time constraints in their households as well as cultural ideas about the morality of mutual aid. If these same farmers would like to work with their neighbours on projects designed to increase the sale of their crops in distant markets, their ability to do so might depend on the existence of an organization providing transportation, storage, and contacts with potential buyers.

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[2] The full names of the communities are San Antonio Arrazola and San Martín Tilcajete. The first is usually shortened to "Arrazola", the latter to either "San Martín" or "Tilcajete".

My focus here is on the creation and maintenance of formal organizations that enable and foster economic cooperation. Although cooperatives of different types have existed for centuries, they became an especially prominent form of economic organization in Latin America, Africa, and Asia starting in the 1940s and 1950s (Vargas-Cetina 2005: 231). These cooperatives formed because such groups can attain goals impossible for individuals or families working alone. Sheldon Annis (1988: 211) describes some common motivations for such organizations:

> [W]hen one goes from country to country, what is most striking is that – despite the dramatic differences in history, politics, environment, economic system, culture, and so forth – the concerns, objectives, and patterns of organizational growth tend to be remarkably predictable from place to place. Everywhere, farmers want credit for production, roads to enable marketing, medical and educational services for their families. Underemployed workers want jobs, recognition, and new skills. Urban squatters want legal title to the land they live on; they want water, roads, buses, and parks for the communities they create.

Cooperative organizations are more likely to form in certain circumstances than in others. The two conditions that seem to most favor the formation of cooperatives are immediate threats to economic livelihoods that might be remedied by collective action and state policies encouraging the creation and survival of such organizations (Annis 1988, Hirschman 1988).

State policies and cooperative organizations in Mexico

Annis (1988: 213) observed three decades ago that in Mexico "it is virtually impossible to draw fast lines that define where grassroots [cooperative] organizations end and the government begins". These comments are most relevant for the period between the end of the Mexican Revolution in the 1920s and the early 1980s. Post-revolutionary government considered cooperative organizations such as *ejidos* (groups that manage land that is held in common by communities, but farmed by households with usufruct rights) as good alternatives to both socialism and capitalism. Although grassroots organizations controlled many decisions, they received funding, marketing aid, and advice from the Mexican government. The legal structure of the state provided cooperative members with rights and benefits.

Since 1982 the Mexican government has increasingly adopted neoliberal policies that have led to less state support for cooperative organizations. Gabriela Vargas-Cetina (2005) remarks:

> For rural and cooperative organizations […] it meant the end of protection of collectively owned property in favour of private capital, the waning or complete disappearance of previous subsidies for farming supplies and basic foodstuffs, and the extinction of guaranteed process for agricultural goods and specialty crafts […]. Cooperatives found that they had to compete in the international markets, with little or no help from the national government. (ibid.: 239)

Although some cooperative organizations have continued to receive support from the Mexican government, most have increasingly turned for aid and advice to nongovernmental organizations, private foundations, and charitable individuals.

The reduction in state support has resulted in significant changes in the nature of cooperative organizations and the amount of commitment from their members. When cooperative organizations were legal entities associated with the state, they lasted for decades. Much of the economic activities of members revolved around these groups and in some cases (e.g., *ejidos*) they had little choice about whether or not to participate in them. Cooperatives nowadays come and go as economic conditions changes and sources of support develop and disappear. Members often feel only weak connections with these groups, which in many places have become what Vargas-Cetina (2005: 46) aptly calls "ephemeral associations".

Vargas-Cetina's examination of cooperatives in Mexico shows why individual decisions about participating in these organizations must be understood in the context of historical actions by the Mexican government. In what follows, I show that decisions about participation in cooperative organizations by Oaxacan artisans are also strongly influenced by both cultural norms about mutual aid (as many anthropologists would argue) and by individual and group calculations of costs and benefits (as almost every economist would argue).

Oaxacan wood carving

Oaxacan wood carvers make brightly colored pieces called *alebrijes* that are sold to tourists, store owners, and wholesalers as part of an international folk art

market.[3] The craft does not fit the stereotypical portrait of Mexican artisanry in two important respects. First, the great majority of carvers are monolingual in Spanish and do not self-identify as Indians. Second, *alebrijes* are novel creations without longstanding cultural significance.

Although wood carvings are made in a number of Oaxacan communities, my focus here is on Arrazola and San Martín Tilcajete, the principal towns where the craft flourishes. The trade originated in the activities of shop owners in the city of Oaxaca and two particular carvers, Manuel Jiménez of Arrazola and Isidoro Cruz of San Martín. Jiménez (1919-2005) began carving wooden figures as boy to pass time while tending animals. In the late 1950s and early 1960s owners of craft shops in Oaxaca began buying his carvings and showing them to folk art collectors such as Nelson Rockefeller. By the late 1960s. Jiménez was giving exhibitions in museums in Mexico City and the United States. His carvings were later featured in books and films about Mexican art. Tourists and collectors started to visit Jiménez's workshop in Arrazola during the 1970s. For a long time, the only carvers in Arrazola were Jiménez, his sons, and a son-in-law. In the early 1980s, other carvers began offering pieces for sale to people visiting Jiménez. Still, there were only about six carving families in town as late as 1985 (see figure 2).

Isidoro Cruz (1934-2015) learned to carve when he was 13 during a long illness. While working as an ox cart maker in the city of Oaxaca in 1968, his carvings were noticed by Tonatiúh Gutíerrez, the director of expositions for a government council concerned with tourism. Gutíerrez, who knew of Jiménez's work, urged Cruz to make masks for sale. Gutíerrez later became the national head of a government agency aimed at increasing craft sales. He appointed Cruz as head of the agency's buying center in Oaxaca. Cruz stayed in the position for four years, during which he was able to get jobs for some of his neighbours in government offices around the country. In this way, a number of men in San Martín were able to learn how to sell crafts.

About ten men in San Martín began making pieces in the early 1970s. Carvers in Arrazola and San Martín in the 1970s and early 1980s sold their pieces mostly to store owners in Oaxaca. Only Jiménez supported his family primarily

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[3] The term *alebrijes* originally referred to fantastic papier-mâche figures made by the Linares family of Mexico City. Oaxacan wood carvers later created similar carvings of imaginary beings which they too called *alebrijes*. The term has come to be used for all Oaxacan wood carvings.

by making wood figures; other carvers spend more time farming and doing wage labor. Wood carving during this period was a part-time occupation for a few adult males; women and children occasionally helped with painting and sanding. Many carvings were of human figures, ox teams, devils, angels, and skeletons.

In the mid-1980s, wholesalers and store owners from the United States began to visit Arrazola and San Martín to buy carvings. A change in the dollar/peso exchange rate made dealing in Mexican folk art more lucrative for these merchants. They could earn significant sums of money by selling carvings in the U.S. at five to ten times their cost in Mexico. As more dealers came, carvers developed new styles in efforts to attract clients. Water-based aniline paints gave way to house paints that did not run as much and were less likely to fade in the sun. Carvings became more complicated and painted decorations more ornate as artisans competed to show their skills. Carving became a family activity in which the typical – though not universal – division of labour by gender had men carving and doing some painting and women painting. The amount of work done on most pieces was evenly split between men and women (see figures 3, 4, 5, 6).

The trade in wood carving had dramatic effects on the economies of Arrazola and San Martín. In Arrazola some families abandoned agriculture and worked full-time as carvers. Although most carving households in San Martín continued to farm, agriculture became a secondary, subsistence-oriented activity.[4] Families sometimes found that they could not fill large orders using only household labour and hired one or two workers to help with carving, sanding, and painting. At first these workers tended to be close relatives living nearby; later family friends or even strangers from nearby communities were employed. These workers, paid by the piece, were mostly teenage boys and girls and young unmarried adults.

In the 1990s about ten carving workshops making inexpensive pieces employing three to twenty workers were set up. These workshops, mostly in Arrazola, provided significant economic opportunities for entrepreneurial women. Two of the three largest workshops in Arrazola were run by women whose husbands were not involved in the business; a third was run by a married couple in which the wife had previously worked in a large craft store in the city of Oaxaca.

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[4] Since the 1980s, many residents of Arrazola and San Martín have migrated temporarily or permanently to the United States. Remittances from migration at times have been significant in local economies as income from the sales of wood carvings.

Two other thriving workshops in Arrazola were established by young single women.

Although sales of wood carvings remained strong throughout the 1990s, the market for cheap pieces dropped significantly at the beginning of this century. Sales of more expensive, finely- crafted carvings remained good. Artisans whose limited technical and artistic skills led them to make carvings selling for low prices sought other types of work. Not long afterwards, a series of developments in Oaxaca led to a drastic decline in visits to the region by tourists and wholesalers. In 2006 massive demonstrations against the state government were violently repressed (Chibnik 2007). A few years later the H1N2 ("swine flu") epidemic was erroneously reported to have started in the state of Oaxaca. Throughout this period, tourism also dropped because of the widespread impression that the drug violence in parts of Mexico was also prevalent in Oaxaca. More artisans stopped carving, often migrating temporarily or permanently to the U.S. Most of the carving workshops making inexpensive pieces went out of business.

By 2019, tourism had recovered in Oaxaca. The area had become a destination for visitors interested in cuisine and mescal; the U.S. Department of State had announced that the city of Oaxaca is a relatively safe part of Mexico for tourists. The dollar-peso exchange rate made visiting the area more affordable than many alternative destinations. Nonetheless, the prospect of future political disruptions continued to be worrisome for artisans. No one, of course, predicted a pandemic which would completely disrupt international travel and the market for wood carvings.

The structure of the wood carving trade in Arrazola has remained more or less the same since the turn of the century. Although the descendants of Manuel Jiménez make expensive, aesthetically-esteemed carvings, the family is somewhat less prominent than when the master was alive. Other wood carving families in Arrazola are almost as successful as the Jiménezes. Nevertheless, the degree of stratification in Arrazola has not changed much in recent years. Both low-end and high-end carvings are usually made in small family workshops with only limited amounts of hired help.

In San Martín, in contrast, the wood carving trade has been transformed by the extraordinary success of one artisan family. When I was carrying out fieldwork in San Martín in the 1990s, Jacobo Ángeles and his wife María Mendoza did not stand out particularly among the many artisans who were having some success. Although the couple is mentioned only briefly in *Crafting Tradition*,

my book about the trade (Chibnik 2003), I did note that Jacobo was one of three carvers who had all the characteristics – artistic talent, outgoing personality, market savvy – needed to be especially successful.[5]

I first became aware that there was something extraordinary about the economic position of Jacobo and Mariá when I visited San Martín in 2003 to give out copies of my book. María asked if she could buy 50 books. After I told her that I could arrange to have the books sent to San Martín. María immediately paid me with $700 U.S. I was astonished, wondering what the family planned to do with the books and marvelling that they could so casually give me that amount of money. María told me that the books would be sold to people who came to see their exhibits in the U.S. While other artisans in San Martín and Arrazola regularly travelled to the U.S. to sell pieces, it was clear that Jacobo and María were operating on an unprecedented scale.

On subsequent trips to Oaxaca, I observed the rapid expansion of the family enterprise now called "Taller Jacobo y María Ángeles".[6] Their workshop is set up so that visitors can see their neatly dressed employees paint and carve. Anyone coming to the workshop is offered a demonstration showing how pieces are made. By early 2019, the workshop had more than 100 employees and was making ceramics, jewellery, and paintings as well as *alebrijes*. The multi-room shop includes both pieces made at the workshop and pieces purchased from independent artisans in San Martín and other wood carving communities. Prices range from 100 pesos (about $5 U.S. in 2019) for simple pieces to as much as 10,000 pesos ($500 U.S.) or more for elaborately carved, intricately decorated *alebrijes* (see figure 7).

Because Jacobo and María recognized early on that they could earn only limited amounts of money from sales in San Martín, they focused on making their work known by taking trips to the United States and creating a nicely designed web site.[7] The family has expanded its business by opening a popular restaurant

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[5] *Crafting Tradition* was later translated into Spanish (Chibnik 2017). This edition of the book includes a new chapter about recent developments which describes in detail the Taller Jacobo and María.

[6] In publicity for the workshop, María's surname is given as Ángeles, the same as that of her husband. This differs from the ordinary practice in Spanish-speaking countries in which women do not change their surnames after marriage. I assume that the couple do this to make their relationship clear to English-speaking customers.

[7] Https://jacoboymariaangeles.com/?lang=en (last checked 15/11/2021).

near the entrance to San Martín on the well-traveled road between the city of Oaxaca and the town of Ocotlán. The most extraordinary creation of the family is Voces de Copal, an impeccably-designed gallery in the city of Oaxaca that sells wood carvings and other crafts. The size and ambition of the gallery are noteworthy even in a city with many other spaces for fine art.

The success and renown of Jacobo and María is unmatched in the history of Oaxacan wood carving. The couple was consulted extensively about the *alebrijes* that are omnipresent in the 2017 Oscar-winning animated movie "Coco". Perhaps Manuel Jiménez's work is still more esteemed by collectors and museum curators. But Jiménez created his pieces in a small family workshop, never expanded his operations, and did not earn nearly as much money as Jacobo and María.

Alanna Cant (2012, 2016, 2019) has written perceptively about the reasons for the couple's prominence. She notes that the family's success is often attributed to their high-quality work, entrepreneurial business practices, and sales ability. I share this view, admiring the energy, creativity, and outgoing personalities of Jacobo and María. Cant adds that the couple used their connections with Jerre Bond, a large-scale wholesaler, to gain access to many potential buyers. While Cant (2016: 157) says that such explanations are "in many senses accurate", she argues that they downplay the family's ability to "stake out a new aesthetic territory".

These innovations involve links that Jacobo and María make between their work and Oaxaca's prehispanic heritage. Cant shows how Jacobo and María create these links – long prominent in advertisements for carvings (Chibnik 2008) – in both their demonstrations and their art. In his demonstrations, Jacobo says little about the craft's origins in the work of Manuel Jiménez in Arrazola. Instead he emphasizes that resin from copal, the wood used in most carvings, was used as incense and rituals in the region thousands of years ago. Jacobo also tells audiences that the original forms of Oaxacan carvings came from the Mesoamerican calendar and that the colours his families use are the same as those found in Zapotec codices (Cant 2016: 166f.).

The stylistic innovations of Jacobo and María have influenced other artisans in San Martín and Arrazola. Carvings painted with designs from the archaeological site at Mitla and other "Indigenous" features can be found in high end workshops in both communities. Former employees of Jacobo and María have

set up their own workshops. Their pieces sometimes resemble those of Jacobo and María, usually selling for lower prices.

The Taller Jacobo y María prospered even during the economic chaos that convulsed Oaxaca in 2006-2007. Most other artisans in San Martín were less fortunate. Even now, few tourists and wholesalers visit most workshops of carvers living away from the town center. Many buyers shop only at the workshop of Jacobo and María, who have a position in the wood carving trade formerly occupied by only a few international dealers. Carvers in San Martín can sell their pieces more easily to Jacobo and María than they can to intermediaries from the United States.

The success of Jacobo and María has not prevented other artisan families in San Martín from prospering. Sons and daughters of noted artisans have opened shops along the town's main road. When I have stopped by the homes of these artisan families, I have usually been told that most of their pieces are for sales in these stores. The second, third, and fourth generation of artisans who run these shops have developed distinctive specializations. Silvia Xuana and her brother Martín make innovative masks. Efraín Fuentes and his wife Silvia Mendoza experiment with woods not ordinarily used in *alebrijes*. Efraín's brother Zeny and his wife Reyna Piña run an especially high-end gallery that has more than 20 employees and includes prize-winning *alebrijes* made by their university-educated daughters. Most of these sons and daughters of successful artisans have more education and computer expertise than their parents. This has enabled them to set up websites, create styles that blend art and craft, and be more sophisticated in their business practices. A few have attempted to attract customers by reviving older styles, using aniline paint and carving Carnaval masks.

Some successful artisan families continue to sell most of their pieces from workshops at their homes. This does not mean that these families are reluctant to innovate. Martín Melchor and Hermelinda Ortega, for example, have done well with carvings of libraries and *zancos*, puppet-like figures on stilts first created for an exhibit at the San Pablo textile museum in Oaxaca.[8]

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[8]   The careers of the two daughters of this couple illustrate the upward mobility of some off-spring of successful artisans in Arrazola and San Martín. Both are university graduates. One is a nurse in Oaxaca; the other a criminologist and journal editor in Mexico City.

Cooperation and artisan organizations in San Martín and Arrazola

The culture and social organization of Arrazola and San Martin encourage cooperation among neighbours. Civil hierarchies involving obligatory community service are a central feature of socio-political organization in the Central Valleys of the state of Oaxaca. Adult men must participate in a system called *usos y costumbres* (Hernández-Díaz 2007). All men must spend at least one year in a community position.[9] Years of community service alternate with years of rest and it is not unusual for older men to have held three or four positions of different ranks. The leaders of the usos y costumbres system coordinate *tequios* in which families are periodically obliged to send a representative to work with neighbours on tasks such as cutting grass, paving roads, and tending to cemeteries.

Both Arrazola and San Martín continue to have ejidos even though national regulations concerning these organizations have loosened in the past two decades to allow the sale of land. In San Martín, however, most land has been communal since the nineteenth century and is regulated through usos y costumbres. While the two communities no longer have a cargo system in which adult men sequentially participate in the sponsorship of religious ceremonies, the ritual celebration of saints' days remains important. The government of both towns support multi-day celebrations of their patron saints. Voluntary sponsorships of other saints' days remain important in Arrazola; in San Martín the celebration of Carnaval has become more elaborate with each passing year. Fiestas for weddings, baptisms, school graduations, birthdays and *quinceañeras* (girls' fifteenth birthdays) occur throughout the year. These costly events often require the hosts to use money given to them by relatives and neighbours, formalized in some Oaxacan communities in a system of reciprocal loans called *guelaguetza* (Stephen 2005: 50ff.).[10]

Despite these extensive forms of cooperation, wood carving families in the 1980s and 1990s varied considerably in the extent to which they were willing to share information about their methods. The complex balance between secrecy and sharing is exemplified by the actions of the founders of the wood carving

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[9] In both Arrazola and San Martín women are allowed to participate in the usos y costumbres system. Their participation, however, is not mandatory, and is most common in households without adult males.

[10] Although *guelaguetza* loans are common in San Martín, they are rare in Arrazola.

trade. Manuel Jiménez was secretive about his artistic methods, showing his techniques to only a few close relatives. Although Jiménez became famous in the 1960s, his methods were unfamiliar to most of his neighbours until the late 1980s. Isidoro Cruz, in contrast, freely shared his methods with his neighbours. A number of carvers in San Martín quickly became well known for their work and earned more money from the craft than Cruz. Their pieces rarely resembled those of Cruz, who employed difficult-to-use paints and made new types of carvings with little regard for their potential saleability.

The founders differed in their approaches to competition and cooperation because of both their personalities and their positions in the wood carving trade. Although Jiménez was much more suspicious of the activities of others than Cruz, this is only part of the story. The costs and benefits of openness and secrecy were different for the two men. Jiménez feared that copying by others would threaten his position as the most famous artisan in Arrazola. For many years, he had been the only well-known wood carver in the entire state of Oaxaca. If others created pieces similar to his and sold them at lower prices, Jiménez might lose both economic clout and prestige.[11] Cruz was the preeminent wood carver in San Martín for only a short time. Furthermore, he quickly learned that other artisans were more interested in Jiménez's methods than his own. Cruz thought that all the wood carvers in San Martín would benefit from the presence of numerous well-known artisans in the community. If the town could establish itself as a wood carving center, more tourists and collectors would visit, and business would be better for everyone.

When I began my research among the wood carvers in the mid-1990s, some of the first questions I had were about cooperative organizations. Such groups are as active in the state of Oaxaca as they are in other parts of the country. The teachers' union is noted – some would say notorious – for its frequent strikes and demonstrations that affect not only schools but also the state's roads and businesses. In Arrazola some older men who sell replicas of archaeological pieces at the nearby famous site Monte Albán have had an active union since the 1980s (Brulotte 2012).

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[11] Jiménez's worries were unfounded. His sales were better than ever after the number of artisans in Arrazola increased.

Nevertheless, organizations of wood carvers were unimportant in Arrazola and San Martín in the twentieth century. In Arrazola, one group ran a small, usually quiet artisans' market at the town's entrance. Both communities had artisans' organizations formed primarily to sell pieces in state-sponsored exhibitions in front of government buildings in the *zócalo* (central square) in the city of Oaxaca during four holiday seasons. The state granted permission for such sales to organizations, but not to individuals or families. Although these organizations engaged in other activities such as sales to government shops, they were a minor part of carvers' livelihoods.

The economics of the making and marketing of *alebrijes* helps explain the lack of significance of artisan organizations. Because the paints, woods, and tools were relatively inexpensive and easy to obtain, there were no advantages to purchasing them as a group. Although outsiders often thought that that most sales were to tourists, the most important buyers were wholesalers and storeowners, mostly from the United States, who purchased carvings directly from artisan families. Wood carvers competing with one another for the patronage of these buyers worried about neighbours copying their ideas. Overall, economic relationships among carvers seemed more competitive than cooperative. Nevertheless, artisans – especially close relatives – were willing to cooperate with one another in some ways. Such cooperation mostly involved teaching others how to carve and paint. Many young men and women improved their abilities by working as paid laborers for relatives; later they often set up their own family workshops and taught others.

In the first decade of this century, artisans' organizations became more important in Arrazola and San Martín. Although this was partly because of particular situations in the two communities, larger political and economic circumstances are also relevant. The causes for the increasing prominence of artisans' organizations include a scarcity of copal in Arrazola, the rise of the Taller Jacobo y María in San Martín, the collapse of the market for inexpensive *alebrijes*, political instability in Oaxaca, and worries by tourists about drug-related violence.

The impetus for the formation of the *Ecoalebrijes* Association in Arrazola was the difficulty artisans were having obtaining reliable source of copal. Since 1990 most carvers had obtained wood from entrepreneurs known as *copaleros* using trucks or mules. The wood in most pieces came from trees in communities 20 to 50 kilometres away. Because of problems obtaining copal, artisans were sometimes unable to complete large orders on time. The unpredictability of wood

deliveries was related to the illegality of most copal cutting. Although community officials may be persuaded to ignore illegal extraction for certain periods of time, they often change their mind and prosecute copaleros. Suppliers may suddenly stop trucking wood after being confronted by angry community members. The distribution of wood is also sometimes halted while suppliers are working out agreements with community leaders. Even when truckers have made informal arrangements to cut copal in particular communities, they may be harassed by police seeking bribes from suppliers without the required papers.

By the beginning of this century, these problems were becoming more frequent. Moreover, copal trees in and near Arrazola were being deforested at an alarming rate. Working with government foresters and the Mexican ecologist Silvia Purata, 17 artisans from Arrazola in 2005 established a formal buying arrangement with wood growers in Jayacatlán, a community about 40 kilometres away. (Chibnik & Purata 2007) This enabled artisans to have access to a secure, reasonably priced source of copal grown in an environmentally sustainable way. The group, headed by Saúl Aragón, decided to market the carvings as *ecoalebrijes* to appeal to customers interested in green products. Although the agreement with Jayacatlán ended after a few years, the group later made similar arrangements with other communities. The association also began reforesting copal in Arrazola and on the slopes of Monte Albán. In early 2019 the association had ten members and was buying wood from a private supplier. Although the group has increased its reforestation activities, it is probably less "eco" overall than formerly.

The *Ecoalebrijes* Association is now primarily a marketing cooperative. The need to sell pieces collectively away from Oaxaca became clear during the political instability in the state in 2006. The association sells members' carvings to wholesalers with internet sites and at exhibits in stores, universities, farmers' markets, and fair trade organizations in the United States. Members' pieces are also sold in expositions in Mexico and to visiting university groups in Arrazola. At times the association has sold pieces through two stores in the city of Oaxaca that display crafts made by members of cooperatives around the state.

The success of the workshop of Jacobo Ángeles and María Mendoza in San Martín has resulted in cooperative organizations in that community developing differently from those in Arrazola. Cant (2012: 213f.) notes that some residents of San Martín think that Jacobo and María have to a certain extent acted outside of community norms regarding the balance between cooperation and

competition. These residents say that the economic power of Jacobo and María is so great that it runs counter to the ideology of shared responsibility characteristic of the usos y costumbres system. In the past, many people in Arrazola had similar views about Manuel Jiménez. The two cases, however, are not comparable. In addition to hiding his methods, Jiménez was aloof and not an active participant in his community. Jacobo and María, in contrast, are transparent about their methods, participate enthusiastically in community organizations, and provide financial support for fiestas such as Carnaval.

In response to the difficult economic conditions associated with political upheaval in Oaxaca in 2006, María established an organization whose members were artisans she regarded as producing high quality work (Cant 2012: 229). Artistas Artesanales, which had at its inception about 15 members, put on local expositions and sold pieces at events in other parts of Mexico. Most of the original members had longstanding relations with Jacobo and María through friendship, compadrazgo (usually the relationship between godparents and parents of godchildren), or kinship. A number of the children and godchildren of members were employed in the workshop.

Another much larger cooperative artisan organization, El Comité Comunitario de Artesano Tilcajete, has existed in San Martín since the 1990s, when it was formed to sell pieces at state-sponsored fairs. This group of about 70 members, headed for many years by Elpidio Fabian, receives some support from the town and might be considered the official artisans' group of the community. El Comité Comunitaria organizes fairs, does some reforestation, and markets pieces in ways similar to those of the *ecoalebrijes* group in Arrazola.

The two groups have had occasional conflicts when they have sponsored exhibitions in San Martín at the same time during holiday seasons. It would be a mistake, however, to describe the artisans of San Martín as being divided into two antagonistic organizations differing primarily in their connections to Jacobo and María. Many well-known artisan families have never been members of either group. For the most part the two organizations coexist peacefully, and some families have close relatives in both groups. Furthermore, some newer, small artisan groups have recently formed in San Martín.

In 2008 an artisan group was formed that for the first time included members from both Arrazola and San Martín. Tonas came into being because of artisans' concerns about competition from the creators of Inspiriters. These carvings,

which resembled *alebrijes*, were made in China and sold online by U.S. companies. The Oaxacan wood carvers, with the support of state artisan agencies, decided to form a group that would attempt to obtain a collective trademark offering some protection from imitations. The group would be part of a worldwide movement to establish "denominations of origin" to protect cultural assets (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2011). The officers of Tonas included well-established artisans and community leaders such as Jacobo Ángeles and Elpidio Fabian from San Martín and Saúl Aragon and Miguel Santiago from Arrazola.

Cant (2016) points out that members of Tonas had little to fear from industrial replicas. The replicas only partly resembled *alebrijes* and were made of different materials. They were sold on an English-language website that made no claims that the pieces were Oaxacan or even Mexican. The limited similarities between the replicas and *alebrijes*, moreover, made any claims of intellectual property right infringement unlikely to be sustained. Cant suggests that the artisans seeking a trademark – which has yet to be obtained – were primarily concerned with competition from other places in general. Only artisans from selected communities were eligible to join Tonas and receive the benefits of the proposed trademark.

The company making Inspiriters went out of business in 2015. Even though copying currently presents no threat to the trade in Oaxacan wood carvings, Tonas continues to exist. The organization sells carvings to state artisan institutions such as government stores and does some reforestation.

The economics of the middle and high ends of the wood carving trade improved markedly since between 2012 and 2019, especially in San Martín. Although much of this improvement can be attributed to a rebound of tourism in Oaxaca and increased sales of *alebrijes* to Mexicans, the greater technological and business sophistication of younger artisans is also relevant. The Taller Jacobo and María continues to be the most extensive and well-known workshop. But every year there are more and more other high-end workshops in San Martín. Some are operated by long-established carving families such as the Sosas and Fuentes; others are run by new artisans. While such changes have been less noticeable in Arrazola, that community also has an increasing number of high-end workshops. The success of these high-end workshops in recent years means that some successful artisan families have less need for cooperative marketing than they did earlier in the century.

Nevertheless, cooperative organizations are likely to continue to play a role in economic life in Arrazola and San Martín. The majority of artisans who cannot easily travel to exhibitions in places such as Santa Fe and Seattle find it useful to have their pieces sold by members of cooperatives who are able to make such trips. Members of artisan organizations working together can organize fairs during holidays and saints' days in their communities. Because obtaining copal is still a sporadic problem, members of artisan organizations benefit from local reforestation and arrangements to buy wood from communities some distance away.

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 completely disrupted the wood carving trade and life in Arrazola and San Martín. Tourists and dealers no longer visit the communities; sales of pieces have ground to a halt. No one knows to what extent the trade will rebound in the years to come. Whatever happens, it is clear that the activities of cooperative organizations – to the extent that there are any – will be very different in the near future. As the social scientists and historians at the Münster center know well, the types of decision making with respect to cooperatives will doubtless change dramatically in these new socioeconomic conditions.

Conclusions

Despite the multiple causes of cooperation and competition among wood carvers, it is possible to make certain generalizations. Artisans are more willing to cooperate in some ways than in others. They will join together in groups to buy wood, send representatives to sell pieces as expositions, organize fairs in their communities, and attempt to obtain trademarks. The wood carving trade, however, fundamentally involves competition among artisans and workshops striving to attract customers; it is not a collective enterprise. The limited market for *alebrijes* accentuates competitiveness and results in an understandable reluctance to share techniques and styles, attempts to monopolize the attention of the biggest buyers, and some envy of the most entrepreneurial artisans.

As Albert Hirschman (1988) noted decades ago, cooperatives often change their foci over time. The ecoalebrije association in Arrazola originated in efforts to obtain sustainable, reasonably priced sources of copal; now it is primarily a marketing cooperative. Tonos originated in order to protect carvers from Chinese competition; the organization currently focuses on publicizing *alebrijes* and selling at state-sponsored stores and expositions.

Cooperation and competition occur at different organizational levels. Individuals may be active participants in family workshops in which members cooperate while working on different kinds of tasks. These enterprises compete for customers with other family workshops. Carvers and painters in the large artisan enterprises in San Martín work together on tasks; their enterprises compete with other high-end workshops. Laborers within large workshops compete with one another for promotions. Independent artisan families compete with the large workshops for customers at the same time they allow these enterprises to buy some of their best pieces. Members of artisan organizations compete with one another to attract collectors and work together to publicize *alebrijes*.

The history of cooperation in artisan organizations in Arrazola and San Martín illustrates the complexities associated with attempts to analyze sociocultural change in terms of decision making. The rise, fall, and mutation of these organizations can be explained in part as the outcomes of individual and group choices. Individual wood carvers make decisions about joining and leaving these groups and the extent and kinds of their participation. The creation and maintenance of these organizations require individuals to choose to work together in ways that allow them less time for other activities. The organizations make decisions about which activities to focus on, how to organize fairs, how to obtain copal, and what will be required of members. Theories of choice emphasizing the conscious weighing of costs and benefits therefore help us understand much of the individual decision making carried out by members of artisan organizations. Such theories could also be helpful in analyzing group decisions by artisan organizations about how to allocate time and other resources.[12]

Examining artisan organizations from the perspective of conscious decision making, however, provides only a limited understanding of their creation and operation. The organizations' activities are also influenced by features of local culture and social organization such as tequio, usos y costumbres, and guelaguetza that encourage cooperation among neighbours. Moreover, the extent to which artisans are willing to cooperate with one another in formal associations

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[12] Although I often talked to wood carvers about their individual choices with respect to artisan organizations, I did not examine the group dynamics of cooperative decision making carefully.

at different times is influenced by possibilities of state support, political convulsions in Oaxaca, general economic conditions in the region, historical circumstances in particular communities, and features of the wood carving trade.

Helene Basu and other members of the Münster center on decision-making warn against the dangers of overgeneralization. They emphasize the importance of looking carefully at the practices of different groups of decision makers and the sociocultural, political, economic and historical reasons for variations in economic activities at different times and place. The ethnographic projects of anthropologists are essential parts of such analyses. The history of artisan organizations in Arrazola and San Martín demonstrates the complications of ethnographic work and the need to challenge elegant, but oversimplified theories about economic behavior.

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Figures

Fig. 1. State of Oaxaca. (Photo: Michael Chibnik)

Fig. 2. Manuel Jiménez in his workshop, Arrazola, 1998. (Photo: Michael Chibnik)

Fig. 3. Margarito Melchor with his carvings and book about *alebrijes*, San Martín, 2001. (Photo: Michael Chibnik)
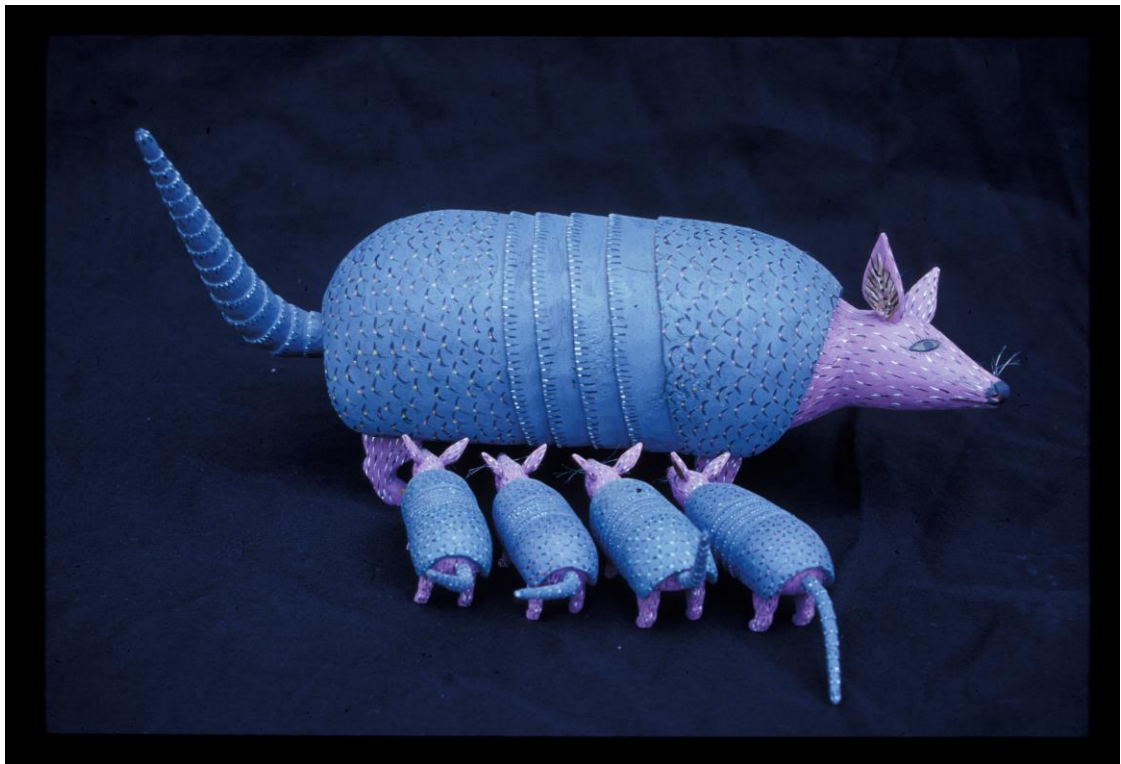

Fig. 4. Armadillos, Moisés Jiménez, Arrazola. (Photo: Michael Chibnik)
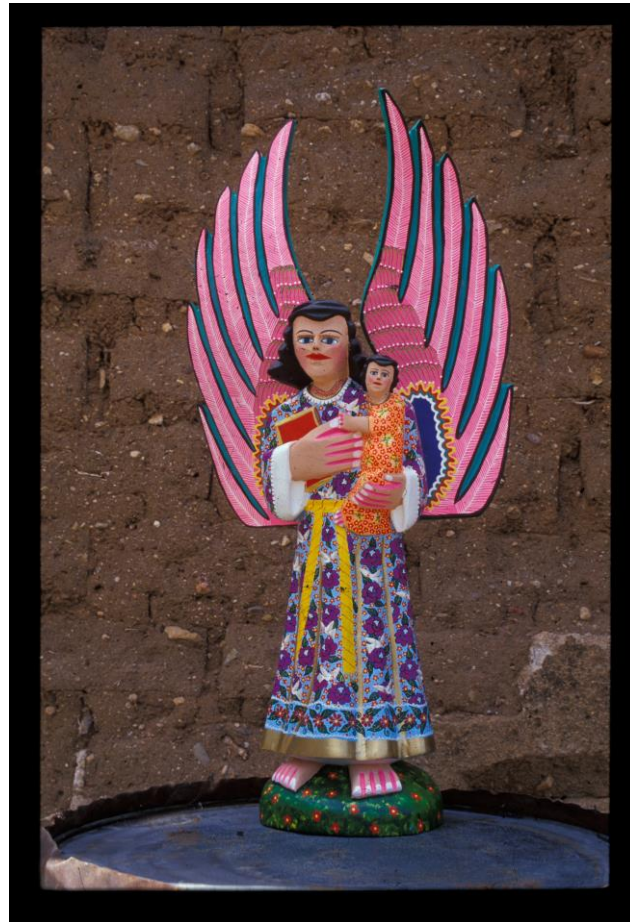
Fig. 5. Angel, María Jiménez and her brothers, San Martín. (Photo: Michael Chibnik)

Fig. 6. Animals on bicycles, Martín Melchor and Hermelinda Ortega, San Martín. (Photo: Michael Chibnik)

Fig. 7. Workshop in Taller Jacobo y María, San Martín 2019. (Photo: Michael Chibnik)

„Damit es in gute Hände kommt."

On the Interface between Gifts and Commodities

Jos D. M. Platenkamp

Introduction

One of the axioms of the market economics paradigm stipulates that the actions of buying and selling performed "on the market" are motivated exclusively by the actors' "rationality" of maximising gains while minimising costs. Gains and costs are economic variables of income and expenditure measured in money – a "neutral" and "universal" means of value assessment ideally indifferent towards culturally specific standards of ethics and morality. Social anthropology labels such types of actions and their underlying precepts "commodity exchange". Many an anthropological analysis of exchange processes bears witness of the relevance of Gregory's (1982) systematic elaborations of the contrast between such "commodity exchanges" and "gift exchanges". They have acquired the status of reference model in most such anthropological analyses. These models stipulate that gift exchanges serve the acquisition or perpetuation of social relationships to which the reciprocal transfer of inalienable goods that are valued as social beings or subjects is subservient (e.g., Malinowski 1922, Mauss 1924, Bohannon 1955). Commodity exchanges, on the contrary, aim at purchasing alienable goods valued as inanimate objects by means of converting these into money, to which aim the transactional relationships are subservient. Commodity exchange relationships therefore are very short-lived, for they need to exist for the duration of the actual transaction only. Hence whenever the two types of exchange co-occur in the same social system they tend to be marked as socially and morally disjoint types of transactions that are conducted in distinct "spheres" or "cycles" of exchange (Boeke 1961, Parry & Bloch 1989, Carsten 1989, Sillitoe 2006, Sprenger 2014, Platenkamp 2016). Here I shall discuss the case of a television programme, which calls into question this paradigmatic disjunction between gift and commodity exchange. In this case the inalienability

of commodities with a certain provenance value plays a key role (see Weiner 1992).[1]

The format of the TV programme

Bares für Rares – "Cash for Curiosities" – is a highly popular auction programme[2] broadcasted on German public television attracting some 1.5 million viewers daily (source: ZDF Neo, 5.10.2018) and with a strong presence in the social media. It provides the stage for individual Germans – occasionally also for Dutch, Swiss, Austrians and Belgians – who wish to offer precious or merely curious objects for sale. Before these are offered to a panel of antique dealers, the objects' authenticity, their provenance, quality, and market value are assessed by an "expert" – an art historian, a jeweller, or an antiquarian, – depending on the nature of the object. Having examined the object, they estimate its market value. When that value is acceptable to the seller, the programme's presenter hands out the so-called "trader's card" (*Händlerkärtchen*) to the seller. This provides access to another room where the antique dealers in their function of potential buyers are seated behind a table. They in turn inspect the object offered, whereupon the bidding starts. When a price level has been reached that is agreeable to the seller, object and money change hands and the transaction is concluded; when not, the seller takes the object home.

At first glance, this programme stages common market transactions. The object offered for sale qualifies as a commodity, for several of the features ascribed to commodity exchange are in evidence. Neither before nor after the transaction do seller and buyer maintain a social relationship with one another. Indeed, the aim of the transaction is not the establishment or perpetuation of a social relationship but the purchase of the object respectively the money received in return. During the actual sales transaction itself, the value of the object is expressed exclusively in the price that it fetches. Moreover, the object changing hands is an alienable commodity, so that along with its transfer the ownership

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[1] A preliminary version of this text was presented at the conference The Material Reception of Antiquity at the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, 18 December 2018. I wish to thank Prof. Pieter ter Keurs and Dr. Julia Koch for their perceptive comments.

[2] The programme attracts some 1.5 million viewers daily (ZDF Neo, 5.10.2018).

rights change hands. And finally, at least in the introductory stage of their performance the social identity of buyer and seller are irrelevant to the conduct of the transaction and to the actual monetary valuation of the commodity.

And yet, a closer scrutiny of the transactions, of their protagonists and mise-en-scène, and above all of the comments delivered by the actors reveals how this distinction between gift-giving and market exchange becomes conspicuously blurred. For while the name of the programme – Cash for Curiosities – proclaims the maximisation of one's profits as the primary aim of the sales transactions, the social setting, the discourses, and the roles and identities enacted by the main protagonists suggest that different aspects play a major role as well as that are not commonly associated with market transactions. Let me scrutinise these aspects of the actions performed.

The seller's social persona

After potential candidates have applied beforehand with the programme's producers, they must submit to a selection procedure to gain access to the programme. About the selection criteria we are kept in the dark. The selection generates two groups of sellers. One group is present in the hall, where they and their objects for sale are briefly caught on camera but their subsequent transactions are not. The other group consists of individual sellers whose movements and actions are caught on camera - from their first appearance to their final exit. The camera introduces them when they approach the building in question with their precious object hidden in their hands or baskets or – when that is too bulky – while unloading it from the boot of their car. These television images are underlined with the personal name, professional identity and the name of the candidate's hometown or village. In other words, the sellers' identity as, introduced to the German audience at large, consists of four variables: their personal and family name, their age, their place of residence, and their profession. Particularly the last attribute appears to constitute an important aspect of someone's social identity, the profession remains to identify the person even if – as is often the case – the latter is already retired. Even though it points towards the high value that German society ascribes to "labour" (*Arbeit*) as a core component of social identity and reputation, it nevertheless is remarkable in view of the fact that the kinship status of the persons in question is not mentioned. Thus, female sellers may

be identified by their current or former profession as "retail saleswoman" (*Einzelhandelskauffrau*), "insurance saleswoman" (*Versicherungskauffrau*) or "foreign language secretary" (*Fremdsprachensekretärin*), but not as mother, wife, or grandmother. Neither are single men identified as such. This is surprising, given the importance attached to kinship relationships when it comes to the valuation of the commodities and transactions, as we shall see presently.

The sellers are also identified by their current place of residence. I suspect that many of the place names mentioned are unfamiliar to most viewers, yet they convey the message that the sellers are German residents – as does the television public watching them. As such the territorial identification conveys the message that the seller is not a "stranger" to the audience but a member of the German people at large.

Negating the seller's strangeness

Another step towards this "de-alienation" of the seller is set in what follows. Having approached the desk where the presenter (a male television personality by the name of Horst Lichter) and the expert in question are waiting, the object for sale is unwrapped and handed over to the latter in order to be examined. Meanwhile the presenter politely asks permission to address the seller by the informal *du* instead of the respectful *Sie*. Having obtained this permission, he grants the seller the same privilege (*dann bin ich natürlich der Horst*, "in that case I am of course Horst to you"). From now on both address each other by their personal name and the informal *du*.

Given the German convention that the second person pronoun singular *du* signifies an informal, friendly and long acquaintance, and that its use should be proposed by the elder to the younger, this practice is remarkable in the present context. For while at this point the presenter and the seller actually are strangers to each other, the former makes a point of ignoring this fact as well as the hierarchy of age distinctions by immediately assigning – and adopting himself – a familiar position and egalitarian status. Thus, once again, the "strangeness" that marks their initial relationship and that is axiomatically assigned to partners in a commodity exchange is explicitly negated.

This form of interaction with a familiar, informal and friendly interlocutor – as if with a member of the family – facilitates that the seller provides the private information, solicited by the presenter, about the object offered for sale.

This information concerns the object's provenance, the mode of acquisition, the meaning and value assigned to it by the seller, and the latter's motivation to part with it. Whereas this information is largely irrelevant to its market value, it *is* relevant to the provenance value that the owner of the object assigns to it.

While some sellers have purchased the object at a flea market or in an Internet sale, in by far most of the cases the object has been received from living or deceased elder relatives – often at the end of a chain of inheritance transfers. Since the provenance value thus often refers to the object's embodying relations with one or more generations of family ascendants, the inheritor's decision to relinquish its possession may be an uneasy and morally dubitable one, hence calls for a precisely formulated justification. Omitting this might suggest that the seller dismisses the value of his own family origins. The carefully enacted empathy, with which the presenter addresses the seller on this sensitive question, induces the latter to offer his justification in front of the camera. It is important to note that this information is provided before the expert gives his verdict on the object's quality and market value, for this allows the seller to express his evaluation in terms that are independent of the object's financial worth.

To part with an object

The reasons given to part with inherited objects are of various kinds. One such reason refers to the sellers' personal appreciation of the heirloom in question. Some argue, for instance, that the painting inherited "no longer harmonizes with the interior decoration of my house", a grandmother's ring "does not fit the size of my fingers", or a granduncle's watch is to be sold because "I do not usually wear golden jewellery". In such cases the seller's personal taste is the measure of value. One denies with the inherited objects' an ancestral provenance value and merely treats it as a commodity that may be alienated. Sometimes it is the seller's own children who refuse to receive the ancestral object, thereby depriving it of its heirloom value as well. In such cases, the conversion of an heirloom into an alienable commodity is virtually complete. And yet they seem to create a moral dilemma that can be gauged from the presenter's attitude. He will express his agreement with the decision to sell such objects but seldom his sympathy; sometimes he appears to signal his disapproval by merely refraining from further comments and questions.

The transfer of provenance value

Other reasons, however, given by many a seller to part with an inherited object do not imply a rejection of its heirloom value. They invoke the destiny of the transactional journey that the object is about to undertake, by focussing on the – as yet anonymous – person who will eventually purchase the object, and/or on those who will receive the money obtained from its sale. This is a most remarkable phenomenon, since it suggests that the transaction that is about to take place will effectuate that the ancestral connection, embodied in the object, will be extended to non-kin related persons. In this perspective the axiomatic alienability of commodities to be marketed is called into question. A standard formula uttered by sellers time and again to explain their reason for putting the heirloom on sale is: "so that it will end up in good hands" (*damit es in gute Hände kommt*), or, in the same vein, "so that it will find a good home" (*damit es ein gutes Zuhause findet*). The question whose "hands" or "home" the seller has in mind is difficult to answer. (S)he may refer to one of antiques dealers who will succeed in acquiring the object, or to an – unknown – customer who eventually will purchase the object from the latter.

One might argue that the very uncertainty about these persons' identity should deprive the statement "so that it will end up in good hands" of any reality value, but that would ignore the subjunctive mode in which it is cast. For the seller does not proclaim an established fact, but a wishful and morally charged intention. To the actual sales transaction we shall return below. At this point it is worth noting that the seller shrouds the imminent market sale of the heirloom in a moral concern about the object's wellbeing. It is as if an heirloom can only be marketed if the seller's own moral relationship with an ancestral object can be transferred to an equally moral relationship of another person with that same object. In other words, the formula "so that it will end up in good hands" expresses the wish that the buyer becomes implicated in the seller's ancestral identity and, mediated by the object, becomes his relative. Note that this capacity of the transfer of objects to generate social relationships is the very attribute of the "gift" as conceived by Mauss and Gregory.

A different type of justification of putting an heirloom up to sale signals a comparable moral concern. In answer to the question, posed by presenter while the expert is examining the object, why the seller wishes to part with the object the latter may refer to the money that is to be earned from its sale. But in most

cases the suggestion that making a private financial profit would be one's primary and ulterior motive of selling the object, appears to be inappropriate. The money earned is not to be spent on individual private pleasures but shall be invested in social relationships. The money may "feed the travel purse" of long-married spouses, but most often it is to be distributed among children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren. Thus, instead of passing on the heirloom *in natura* it is its monetary equivalent that accrues to one's progeny. Again, the object sold mediates the transfer of the seller's ancestral identity to other persons.

Such other persons may even be unknown to the seller. Such is the case when the latter declares that the money from the sale shall be spent on charitable projects. Indeed, "with this money one can bring someone joy" (*mit dem Geld kann man jemandem Freude machen*).

In exceptional cases the money earned from the sale of an heirloom is subsequently converted into another object embodying that ancestral identity again. To give some examples: a twenty years-old girl offers her deceased's father's motorbike for sale, so that with the money earned she can finance the gravestone that is still missing from his grave. By purchasing this gravestone, the money into which an heirloom is to be converted will be re-converted into the remembrance of the very ancestor from which the object originated. In a similar case a young woman brings in a painting of an odalisque – of rather mediocre quality according to the examining art-historical expert – that used to decorate the living room of her grandmother's home. Now that the latter had passed away, she hopes to finance a gravestone with the proceeds of its sale.

All such considerations, as they are gently elicited by the presenter from the sellers, are ill at ease with the fundamental axiom of market economics stipulating that the market behaviour of the *homo oeconomicus* be motivated by the rationality of profit maximisation. What one witnesses instead is the explicit motivation to make the sale of one's possessions subservient to the extension of social relationships or the strengthening of existing ones by investing in these relationships the money into which ancestral provenance value has been converted. Such motivations do not render the market transaction invalid or superfluous; they provide them with a superior moral valorisation.

Assessing the objects' market value

The programme employs a pool of experts – jewellers, art historians, antiquarians – who are qualified to identify the producer, age, condition and rarity of the object offered for sale. They use an expert language to describe these qualities and are able to estimate its current market value. (This estimated value is not communicated to the panel of traders to whom the object will be offered subsequently.) By carefully examining and discussing the objects' art-historical and aesthetic qualities and the – ideally pristine – condition in which they have survived the upheavals of Germany's 20th Century history the experts add "objective" value to the seller's "subjective" valuation of the objects. Naturally, the contrary may occur as well, when according to the experts the objects' worth does not match the one that their owners ascribe to it. In assessing these qualities and market value the experts do not take the object's embodiment of ancestral relationships into account, since these are irrelevant to its market value. But of course, an object's provenance value *is* commercially relevant when that derives from a particularly renowned maker or previous owner. The reputation of famous painters, watchmakers, sculptors, silver smiths, or porcelain designers, toys and puppet makers is taken into account when the experts assign a market value to their products (the traders later will do likewise). So are the name and reputation of renowned previous owners, if this is evident, for instance, from monograms engraved in the objects or historical documents accompanying them.

However, even though such a particular provenance value stems from the object's origin, it still is determined by the market demand for such objects, and not by the seller's own ascription of a unique ancestral value to it. Thus, both types of value qualify as "provenance value". The former is generated and supported by a competitive market demand, whereas the latter needs to be shielded from it. It is a potential conflict that becomes manifest when the market price, assigned by the expert to an object of historical provenance, does not align with the ancestral provenance value that the seller attributes to his/her heirloom. In such situations the presenter intervenes, asking the seller whether (s)he is willing to reduce his/her financial demand or rather prefers to take the heirloom home. This occurs, for instance, when the object is the material testimony of eventful family histories in mid-20th Century Germany, telling stories of persecution and enforced emigration. Once again, whereas these experiences may be a unique component of family histories, the market may be oblivious of or indifferent to

it, so that the value assessed by the experts may appear to the seller as disappointing if not insulting. It is of interest that such discrepancies evoke among sellers a metaphorical notion of actual sense of physical suffering, witness the term "pain threshold" (*Schmerzgrenze*), used in such cases by all concerned to designate the minimum prize the object should fetch.

A remarkable discrepancy between a seller's assessment of an object's provenance value and that made by the expert occurred in a case broadcasted in November 2018. Two men brought in a bronze sculpture made by the renowned French sculptor Charles August Lebourg (1829-1906). Entitled *Le Travail* it represented Hephaistos – the Greek god of blacksmiths. The sellers' father had purchased the sculpture "some fifty years ago", and since he had been a farrier himself, for their sons the object to some degree embodied their deceased father's professional identity. The expert examining the object praised its aesthetic quality and general condition, but then drew attention to a text inscribed in its pedestal. This read: *acquis par la Ville de Paris* ("purchased by the City of Paris"). It was inconceivable, he maintained, that the City of Paris would have put this object on the market. This suggested that the object had been looted by a German soldier during the occupation of Paris in World War II. This of course cast a radically different light on the object's provenance value: it would qualify as looted art (*Beutekunst*). The presenter thereupon halted the proceedings and proposed that pictures of the sculpture be sent to the City of Paris so as to clarify its provenance. Should it prove to have been looted indeed, it would have to be returned – to which proposal the two men agreed without hesitation. In this case its provenance qualified the object as inalienable unconditionally. Some few weeks later, however, the expert presented information obtained from the City of Paris that the object had not been looted but sold on the market, so that nothing stood now in the way of offering it for sale.

When a seller accepts the expert's verdict and declares to be prepared to sell his object for the price assessed, the presenter hands him/her the "small dealer's card" (*Händlerkärtchen*) that grants access to the auction room, but not before having issued a warning that "dealers are not collectors". They buy in order to sell again, so that one should not expect them to pay the price that, according to the expert, collectors would be prepared to pay.

The buyers

Approaching the way to the auction room the seller is invited to briefly express in front of the camera his/her feelings about the imminent event, as if it is not the object but (s)he him/herself who is about to be examined. This impression is further strengthened when upon entering the room (s)he faces the five antiquarians and jewellers, seated behind a table like an examination committee. Fortunately, they all welcome the seller in a most friendly and hospitable manner, visibly concerned to release any tensions that might have arisen. Bulky objects are brought in by assistants to be examined beforehand, smaller ones the sellers personally deposit on the table. Then follows a close inspection by the buyers, reduplicating in fact the one made by the experts earlier. (Since both groups are experts, diverging assessments are in fact rare.) They do ask for the provenance of the object, but not in order to learn the value ascribed by the seller but rather to assess the object's age and historical provenance value.

It stands to reason that many of the objects offered for sale are those German products that nowadays classify as "classical" brands of German manufacturers. These include, for instance, porcelain tableware produced by the Prussian *Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur* or the Saxonian *Meißner Porzellan*, *Steiff* puppets, toys by *Schuco* or other toy factories in the Bavarian city of Nürnberg, model trains from the Swabian firm of *Märklin*, or paintings from the *Düsseldorfer Schule*. The traders are keenly aware of the prices such objects currently fetch at the market. Therefore, the bidding that ensues takes these prospective sale values into account while ignoring the personal provenance value assigned by the seller. In doing so, the buyers perform as anonymous market actors exclusively.

Not so, however, in the estimation of the sellers. They perceive the composition of this board of buyers to reflect the home regions and cities of the individual members. These include Bavaria, Thuringia, Eifel, Austria, and the cities of Münster and Frankfurt am Main. Indeed, the more often one observes these actions the more evident it becomes that the sellers, who obviously have watched this programme many times before as well, are familiar with these buyers seated behind the table, with their region of origin, their professional expertise and their preferences of purchase. They anticipate that "this trader may buy my jewellery", "that one may be interested in my porcelain", the third again "in my beer mug",

et cetera. This familiarity is underlined by the fact that the sellers address the buyers by their personal name immediately upon entering the auction room.

The buyers, however, portray themselves as mediators, whose task is to make it possible that the relation between the seller and the provenance embodied in the object is transferred to another person, that is the customer of the buyers in question. They do so not in the least by emphasising that the price that they are willing to pay for the object to the seller necessarily is lower than the one they eventually will obtain for the object from their customers. "We are not collectors, Madame, we are traders" is a recurring statement. And yet, even though it is perfectly clear that the buyers will put up the object for sale again, most sellers entertain the idea that it is the present buyers into whose "good hands" their possession shall be transferred.

As said, the sellers apparently contemplate beforehand who among the buyers they prefer to purchase their possession. This wish may be expressed as a journey that the object should make into one of the regions of Germany represented by a particular traders' home. Thus, a seller may "hope that my object goes into the Eifel", another one that it "ends up with [the buyer] Mr. L. in Bavaria", or "finds a place in the buyer F.'s castle in Thuringia".

This is a most remarkable aspect of these transactions. The German counties at issue add a particular regional dimension to the "good hands" into which one wishes one's object to come. This movement may even be portrayed as a return journey to its domain of origin. Porcelain produced by Thuringian manufacturers should adorn the above-mentioned castle in Thuringia, beer mugs should return to Bavaria, Austrian furniture to Vienna. In this way, the sales transactions may constitute a last step in a circular movement, conceived to bridge the time span of a hundred years or more between the object' genesis and its penultimate destination.

The price of virtue

Time and again the processes discussed here raise the question of how to assess the monetary worth of the relational values ascribed to commodities. For whatever moral considerations justify the sellers' decisions to part with their precious objects, the fact remains that the traders treat these objects as commodities the value of which is determined by the market. Consider the following case:

An elderly lady offers a ring for sale. During World War II her father was stationed as a German *Wehrmacht* soldier in the Crimea where he had been severely injured. At that time, he had bought the ring for his wife. After the father and his wife both had died, their daughter had inherited it. The expert in question had estimated its value at €500 beforehand and she had agreed to sell it for this price. But now, even as one of the traders offers her €600, she declines to sell saying: "that is not sufficient, the ring means too much to me". The trader in question gently answers: "then, please, take it home again, my dear madam. One cannot pay for emotions with money."

In another case, a man had just successfully sold a rare toy *Porsche* from the 1950s. Afterwards, however, he expressed in front of the camera a melancholy regret of having parted with this possession, saying: that "somehow something of oneself is in it" (*irgend etwas ist von einem drin*).

The programme draws explicit attention to this relationship between social value and financial worth by interviewing the sellers in a separate corridor after the sales transaction has been completed – successfully or not. To the question, posed by an invisible interviewer, how they appreciate the outcome only the answers are broadcasted. Not only in virtually all cases the sellers purport to be satisfied with the sum obtained for their possession, most of them also declare this profit to be a financial means to a social end. "Now I shall invite my family to a good restaurant", "my wife and I will go on holiday", "I shall distribute this money among my grandchildren", and so forth. Evidently the impression shall be avoided that the seller be the sole individual beneficiary of the sales transaction.

Concluding remarks

The title of the programme – *Bares für Rares* – refers to one of the basic axioms of market economics stipulating that the monetary value of an object is determined by its scarcity. The title thus suggests that the programme stage the social dynamics of "the market" pure and simple, enacted in short-lived transactions of buying and selling alienable objects, and performed by anonymous actors who are devoid of any social identifiers except those that are immediately relevant to the price-building process of demand and supply. Yet this title is utterly deceptive. For instead of merely assessing the provenance and market value of rare

commodities[3] *Bares für Rares*, under the watchful eyes of social media and the virtual social control of German society at large, achieves a repetitive transformation of market economic actions into morally valued social statements by means of the conversion of objects into gifts. Whereas some of these objects had been purchased earlier as commodities at markets or Internet platforms, most of them had been inherited from relatives in previous generations. By offering the latter objects for sale, the sellers first treat the heirlooms-as-gifts as commodities before in the course of the transaction converting them into gifts again. The latter process transforms the sales transaction into the transfer of an origin relationship. This transformation is grounded in the expectation that the relationship between the seller as a social *persona* and the provenance embodied in the sales object will be transferred to other persons, so that the latter become the recipient of that relationship. In other words, the economics of the market transaction thus serves the accomplishment of a moral endeavour, expressed in the saying *damit es in gute Hände kommt.*

The programme as a whole communicates the idea that the "market", appearing as a stage for the sale of personal possessions, be subordinated to the moral order of the social community. To achieve that end, the market value of a possession, first established by the experts as the object's estimated current market price, and then by the traders as its purchasing price, must be converted into the object's social value. The latter expresses the object's capacity to embody social relationships – the prime ones those that connect the owner of the object to a particular socio-ancestral origin – and to transfer such social relationships to others by means of the transfer of the object to them. In this perspective, the commodities traded perform as gifts *par excellence*.

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[3] Such is the format of programmes such as The Antiques Roadshow or *Kunst und Krempel* broadcasted by the BBC and the *Bayrischer Rundfunk* respectively.

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Missionaries' Production of Knowledge on Oceania during German Colonialism[1]

Silke Hensel

Christian missionaries played an important role in the process of bringing Europeans into contact with worlds they considered distant from their own. The missionary impetus thus contributed to the connections of European communities and societies with those in other world regions. This process was not neutral but established asymmetrical relationships (Basu 2014) between missionaries, inventing themselves as "civilized Europeans", and the equally invented "uncivilized rest" (Hall 1992). Power structured the relations between missionaries and the local population. Even if missionaries or other Europeans were by no means always in a more powerful position in their relations with non-European actors, this was usually the case when they acted as part of a colonial power. Towards the end of the 19th century, German missionary societies and religious orders took over the activities in the colonies of the German Empire from other European and US-American missionaries. European missionaries had been present in Oceania, a vast region of thousands of islands and a huge seaspace, since the sixteenth century (Mückler 2010). When Germany acquired colonies in the region, the government preferred German missionaries for nationalistic reasons and therefore promoted Protestant missionary societies and Catholic orders, although it had fought the latter during the so-called *Kulturkampf* which had ended recently.

Scholarly interest in global history in general has led to a surge in studies on mission history, seen as part of the globalization under way since the nineteenth century (see Heyden 2012, Habermas 2014, Maxwell 2015). In this context missionaries are conceptualized as actors of globalization. Nevertheless, the

widely used concept of globalization is under scrutiny. Historian Frederick Cooper (2005) criticizes that the term suggests a uniform penetration of the world, e.g., by capital – in our case we could talk of religious beliefs – although such a uniformity does and did not exist. Following his criticism, I prefer to understand the relationship between German missionaries and inhabitants of Micronesian islands as a form of connected history (Subrahmanyam 2019) in which networks were crucial. Missionaries were rather part of specific social networks than actors of globalization in the sense of an ever-growing homogenization on a global scale. As the material turn in anthropology showed, objects also played an important role in such social networks. They were not just passive entities but played an active part in social relations. This importance of objects will be analyzed in the following with special emphasis on photographs taken by missionaries in Oceania and the use of these images/objects in Germany. That is, photographs are analyzed not only as carriers of two-dimensional images, but also as three-dimensional objects that were presented, changed and manipulated in different ways and employed in varying situations and could therefore convey different meanings (Edwards & Hart 2010). The use of cameras as well as of photographs for missionary purposes will come into focus with special reference to the collection of the Rhenish-Westphalian Province of the Capuchins housed at the University Library in Münster. Before I turn my attention to the photographs, I will introduce mission history in German colonies with special reference to Oceania.

German colonialism in Oceania

The historical space in question is formed by those parts of Oceania that came under German rule at the end of the 19th century, e.g., in Micronesia, a region of relative neglect in historiography. So far, studies on German missionary activities in the era of formal colonialism in Africa have been much more abundant and Protestant mission societies have been more frequently looked into than Catholic missionary orders (Habermas 2008). Whereas older publications on missionary activities emphasize the influence of Europeans/Christians on religion and culture of the "other" without considering the changes induced in Christian religion and European culture,[2] newer trends first focus on the transcultural

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[2] This is a perspective also found in studies on German colonialism in Oceania as for example Hiery (1995).

processes of religious change – that is, non-Christians are no longer considered to have adopted the Christian faith as European missionaries understood it, they rather adopted some parts more readily than others, changing these elements in the process because they were integrated into the local cosmologies and systems of meaning.[3] Transculturation not always resulted in the construction of a coherent new cosmology or religion but in the coexistence of the indigenous cosmology and Christian religion. Second, the relationship established by missionaries between European (and US-American) communities on one side and communities in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania on the other, not only changed the latter ones but also Europe and the US. A part of this change might be detected in the way Europeans looked upon themselves and the "other", believing in their self-perceived civilizing influence in the world as a one-way-relationship.[4] Germany was a relative latecomer in formally acquiring colonies, but since the 1880s it participated in the imperial struggle among European powers for prestige and influence in the world and established colonies or dependent territories in Africa, Oceania, and China. In the Pacific region, Germany took over Spanish colonies in Micronesia (Marshall Islands, Mariana Islands, Carolines, Palau) and parts of Samoa and Papua New Guinea, at the end of the nineteenth century (Conrad 2012, Eley 2014). Formal rule followed earlier commercial interests in the region. At the beginning of the First World War, which would end German colonialism, the population in German colonies in Oceania accounted for 640,000 inhabitants. Of these only a tiny minority of 1,334 persons were German (Hiery 1995: 18). The German group can be divided into settlers, administrators and missionaries. The latter had come to the Pacific islands following formal German rule, only in New Guinea had they started to proselytize before the German rule was installed. In the following, I am especially interested in Catholic missionaries in the region because of the relative neglect in historiography of Catholic missions during colonialism and of the Pacific Islands (exceptions are Loosen 2014; Stornig 2013, 2019). German missionaries were not the first Christians trying to spread their religion in the region. In Micronesia, Spanish Capuchins had been active before Spain sold the islands to Germany. Under German colo-

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[3] The concept of transculturation was first formulated by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1940).
[4] The first one emphasizing this aspect was Edward Said (1978).

nial rule the Rhenish-Westphalian Province of the Capuchins took over in Micronesia (Hensel 2018). In Papua New Guinea, the missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the Steyler Society of the Divine Word were the most important German Catholic orders (Mückler 2010, Hezel 1991). The first one was founded in Hiltrup close to Münster in Westphalia in 1899 especially for the purpose of training and sending missionaries to the colonies (Rommé 2018).

The impact missionaries had on the island societies is a question in debate, which of course is mainly concentrated on religion but also other cultural changes such as skills learnt in mission schools. This last topic is part of the trope of colonialism modernizing the colonized societies. For Oceania some scholars, as for example German historian Hermann Hiery (1995), contend that the schooling had an important positive impact in local societies. This interpretation is questionable because of the small number of schools during the German colonial period and the relatively small numbers of children attending classes (Stolz 2011). Resistance to German rule and mission sometimes took on dramatic forms, such as on the island of Pohnpei, where part of the population rose up against the Germans in 1910.[5] The reactions of the German colonial power to such events of open resistance had perhaps the most massive impact on local societies. In Pohnpei, an ad-hoc tribunal consisting of German military, colonial administrators and missionaries sentenced and killed men for their participation in the upheaval and about 400 men, women and children were deported to another island, where they had to live under extremely poor conditions.

Even though the question of the impact German presence had in Oceania remains important, I would like to change perspectives and take a look at the influence German missionaries had on their home society. This seems important to me for two reasons: First, the German society only recently started to recognize its colonial past. Second, the notion that European colonization changed non-European societies but left untouched European societies is still prevalent. Therefore, I will turn my attention to the social network that connected Germans with the people in Oceania, with missionaries forming a special node in this network. I am especially interested in the epistemic power that structured social relations. This power made possible the representation of the perceived hierarchy between

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[5] On the rebellion in Pohnpei (spelled Ponape under German rule), see Morlang (2010), Hempenstall (1978), Sack (1997).

"civilized/Christian" German society and "uncivilized/pagan" societies in Oceania.[6] Missionaries contributed to the knowledge production on Oceania in different ways. Some of them wrote ethnographic texts or engaged in other scientific disciplines (Salesius 1907, Walleser 1913). In addition, they regularly sent letters, photographs and ethnographical objects home.

Since Edward Said published his influential book "Orientalism," the concept of knowledge, its production and transfer from one cultural setting to another gained importance in historiography on colonialism. The knowledge colonizers produced on colonized societies and the representations of the "other" were not neutral but usually rather mirrored their hierarchical thinking and had two intertwined functions: on the one hand it contributed to the colonizers' need for information in order to dominate, on the other it helped to form and consolidate the self-perception of the colonizers as superior. In the eyes of Europeans, it thus also legitimated colonization because they claimed to bring civilization to the colonized.

Epistemic power and representations of the other

An important aspect of the asymmetrical relationship between missionaries and indigenous people is the production of knowledge and the representation of indigenous people in different media which they themselves could not control. In Oceania, three German groups were especially important in the production of knowledge on local societies. Some scientific expeditions were sent to the colonies in the Pacific. The Ethnological Museum of Hamburg, for example, organized a major expedition in the years 1908-1910. The results were published in the course of the following decades until the 1950s.[7] Administrative personnel contributed to the ethnographic descriptions of the people they tried to dominate

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6   The epistemic power also enabled missionaries and other Europeans to disguise the contribution of indigenous peoples to the knowledge on societies, geography, zoology, botany, etc. in the colonized regions. A relatively recent trend takes into account the transfer of knowledge between missionaries and other protagonists in the colonial setting on the one hand and people from the societies or regions on the other. These studies emphasize the often large impact indigenous knowledge had on European understandings of the regions, nature and people they came in touch with. See for example Strasser (2010), Smith (2010).

7   Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung, Georg Thilenius: Ergebnisse der Südseeexpedition, 1908-1910, Hamburg 1913-1954.

(Fritz 1901, Hahl 1902). Furthermore, missionaries also participated in the anthropological discourse on the diversity of men and cultures (Salesius 1907, Walleser 1913). In order to spread the gospel, the knowledge of local beliefs was considered crucial, and languages had to be learnt. Furthermore, living in a different cultural setting made it necessary for missionaries to understand at least some basic things of the local society. Many missionaries perceived themselves not only as religious men but also as ethnographers and corresponded with anthropologists. They authored ethnographic descriptions and spread their perceptions of the "other" in their home societies using many different media: texts and the spoken word as well as images and objects. Missionary societies and orders published their own periodicals (see Jensz & Acke 2013), founded museums and also contributed objects and photographs to the collections of ethnological museums and colonial organizations like the German Colonial Society (Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft).[8]

At the end of the nineteenth century, photography had become an eminent medium of visual representation of the other. Photographs were considered a better scientific medium than drawings because, according to the ideas of the time, they reduced the subjectivity of the images' authors to a minimum (Daston & Galison 2010: 135ff.). Photographs showing individuals or groups of people in their traditional clothing, while performing daily chores or other social activities, as well as pictures of housing and objects such as weapons or tools were considered a more reliable source for understanding foreign cultures than other representations (Fritsch 1875). At the beginning of the twentieth century, photography was still expensive and therefore, photos were not as ubiquitous as they are today, but the equipment and reproduction had already become cheap enough to be used in order to reach a broader audience. The attraction of photographs lay in their perceived advantage of showing "the truth" (Long 2003). Corbey (1990) estimates that the publication of photographs taken by missionaries amounted to tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands during the first decades of the 20th century. According to contemporary perception, photographs could bring the world to Germany and give insights into foreign societies. The images emphasized the alleged authenticity of all missionary accounts on the region and local societies.

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[8] See the digital collection of the German Colonial Society: http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg. uni-frankfurt.de/ (last checked 15/11/2021). On contributions to ethnographic collections see Schindlbeck (2018).

Visualization thus played an important role in the missionary publications (Stornig 2013, Becker 2018). Photography played an important role for the Capuchins in Oceania. In 1907, among the twenty-one priests and brothers two could take photographs and had a bellows camera. In 1913, a third one joined the missionary personnel (Hensel 2018: 89f.).

The cameras brought to Oceania became effective in the missionaries' network that connected their home societies and the islands in the Pacific. The mechanical apparatuses to take images of the unknown world bridged geographical and social distance, albeit in an asymmetric manner. The images displaying the environment and the people as well as missionaries living among them helped to strengthen the community of missionaries who had left Germany in order to spread the gospel and the German audience of their publications. The people depicted had little influence on how the photos were used in Germany. It can be assumed that they often did not even see the result of the procedure. The only situation in which they could influence the way they were represented was the moment of taking the photograph, but this is difficult to assess because of lacking sources. Figure 1 showing father Raymund taking pictures suggests that he had control of the situation, telling his models how to pose. Recent studies on ethnographic photographs, however, suggest that those photographed were by no means merely passive motifs (Edwards 2002). So far, I have found only one hint on photographs used by local people. Father Odoricus, one of the three missionaries with a camera, reported in 1914 that for a long time he had not been successful in proselytizing among the Oleai who had been brought to Saipan after a typhoon. He reported that they always pulled a face when he spoke to them about Christianity. However, when he took a photograph of a man on whom the Oleai were dependent and gave it to him framed, more and more Oleai wanted to be photographed. In the end, Odoricus believed that these photographs finally had opened the door to the Oleai for him (Sammlung Kapuzinermission, ULB Münster, Kapsel 32, 32,073).

Missionaries used photographs for different purposes, one of them being to acquire funds. The images illustrated, for example, postcards, showing the landscape of the Pacific islands and their inhabitants. Some were produced for the special use of the mission and sent to donors in order to thank them for their devotional contributions (see figures 2a & 2b). The front page shows little girls in European dress who, according to the title, lived in Palau. Their dress suggested the civilizing success missionaries already had in Palau. The back side

confirmed that the holder of this receipt had supported the Capuchins in their efforts in Oceania and that 1,500 masses per year would be read for each donor. Thus, the postcard brought home to the supporters a "proof" of the effectiveness of their good deeds and also assured them that they would also benefit from them. Descriptions and photos of the missionaries' daily chores, the people to be missionized, the environment, etc. were destined for a large audience in Germany, not only to represent the foreign locations. A special genre of photographs was intended to show the successes of the missionaries. They depicted couples or families in accordance with the German nuclear family model in European clothing, the women often sitting on a chair, the man standing behind them, and children standing or sitting in front of them. Other images showed persons in front of their house (see figure 3).

Photos like this were frequently published in the Capuchin yearbook. Others depicted the environment of the Pacific Islands, the local population (seldom as individuals but rather as examples or "types" for the population, almost never with personal names) and missionaries in action.[9] The majority of these actions were not connected to proselytism. Only one photo showed a father wading a small river together with some indigenous helpers, one of them carrying a small altar.[10] According to the description, the men were on their way to a village outside the missionary station. Most images of missionaries showed them performing daily chores such as feeding chicken or working in a sawmill. Missionaries with schoolchildren and the school buildings were another important motif. All these images were published to show the German audience the hard work missionaries had to perform during their time in Oceania. Probably, these pictures of hard work reflected the intent to counteract the widespread idea that in the tropics there was no need to work because food grew by itself.[11] In addition, the images could best represent the second part of the Catholic slogan "ora et

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[9] The yearbook *Bericht über die Missionen der rheinisch-westfälischen Kapuziner-Ordensprovinz auf den Karolinen-, Marianen- und Palau-Inseln* was published in the years 1906-1916. The yearbooks reached a considerable audience. It was sent to all members of the Capuchin Messbund, which had about 22.000 members in 1909 and contributed considerable sums for the support of the missionary activities in Oceania. See Sammlung Kapuzinermission, ULB Münster, 7,049.

[10] C 3,082. Sammlung Kapuzinermission, ULB Münster.

[11] This topic of a fertile nature can already be found in Columbus' description of the Caribbean Islands. See Greenblatt (1991), chap. 3.

labora". Furthermore, these images also showed the perceived "civilization" of Oceanic societies, as the missionaries brought machines and European working practices to the islands.

The Capuchins did not only use their photographs for their own purposes, reproducing them in their yearbook, exposing them in albums or showing slides at lectures, they also sold photographs for example to the German Colonial Association, as happened with the image in figure 4 used for a postcard. The association played an important role in the German Empire. In 1914 it had 42,000 members and the leaders were prominent public figures. The association wanted to promote public interest in and knowledge of German colonialism and its colonies. Therefore, it bought photos that were used for postcards and also resold to newspapers and periodicals. The photographic archive of the association contains more than 50,000 photos, approx. 1,300 of them belonging to the collection on the Pacific Islands. Furthermore, the association organized public lectures with slide shows. Missionaries contributed pictures to these shows, and they also acted as lecturers (Jäger 2013). In addition, members of the orders participated in congresses where colonial questions were discussed.[12]

The German missionaries did not come as neutral observers. Instead, they had certain preconceptions of what they would find in the region especially with respect to the "uncivilized status" of the population in Oceania. Therefore, the message they delivered back to Germany fitted quite well into the already existing representations of German/European superior civilization in comparison with the colonized societies and the racist thinking behind it. That is, the knowledge of "the other" helped to stabilize the self-perception of Germans as part of the civilized, empire-building nations. This perception of the civilized, superior Germans compared to a supposedly inferior other seems to have become stronger after the loss of formal colonies, a finding falling in line with studies on colonialist thinking in Germany after the period of formal colonialism (Ames 2005). The German Capuchins did not return to Micronesia after the First World War, but they cultivated the memory of their missionary activities in Oceania. They produced an album of their time in the region in the late 1930s.[13] Of the three

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[12] See Verhandlungen des Deutschen Kolonialkongresses 1902 (1903), Berlin: Kolonialkriegerdank/Reimer.

[13] Most likely, the album was made in the late 1930s, https://sammlungen.ulb.uni-muenster.de/urn/urn:nbn:de:hbz:6:1-141728 (last checked 15/11/2021).

albums of photographs still existing on the mission in Oceania, this last one was the most elaborated. It certainly was not only meant for internal use but also for public display, for example in exhibitions. In this late album the racialized interpretation of cultural differences became very strong. This is exemplified in the photograph (see figure 5) showing two men supposedly from the island of Yap. Two men with different clothes were set apart by the description as representing "primitive times" and civilization. The subtitle thus referred to the common trope of indigenous people living in an earlier stage of human evolution than Europeans (Fabian 1983). The picture as it appears in the album was changed, it only showed a part of the original glass plate of which a reproduction had first appeared in a book on Yap published by father Sixtus Salesius in 1907 (see figure 6). In this earlier publication, the two men were shown with a third one and all of them were described as members of the police forces used by the Germans. The man with European style clothes, meant to represent civilization in the album, was described as a Malaysian in the book on Yap, that is, he was not even from the island.[14] His image could certainly not be a proof of the success of the "civilizing" work the Capuchins had done on Yap as the album suggested.

The album arranged the photos regionally and each section was preceded by a short description of the specific island, its inhabitants and the missionary successes. Here, the difference between "civilization/European" and "primitive other" was not the only differentiation made by missionaries. They also reproduced and spread the categorization of Pacific Islanders according to different regionally and racially defined groups. Each archipelago was perceived as an entity with natural borders, where a special cultural group had developed. These groups were not seen as equal but put into a hierarchy. Depending on the difficulties encountered in proselytizing the population, the album distinguished the perceived closeness or distance of the people to civilization. The images in figure 7 reflected these verdicts.

The general adscription of the population in the introducing texts to each island had an echo in the photos selected. Populations described as not so keen to convert to the Christian faith were represented by photos of persons in "tradi-

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[14] On the frequent practice of using photos for multiple purposes and reinterpretation of what they represent see Hempel 2007, 188-190.

tional" clothes in front of "traditional" houses, whereas those with a higher percentage of Catholics were shown as wearing European clothes, living in European-style houses and reproducing German family ideals (see figures 8 and 9).

The importance of the Catholic faith and European-style appearances notwithstanding, racist thinking usually prevailed over religion. The Chamorro, who had already been Christianized by Spanish Capuchins, were described positively due to their faith, but at the same time they were characterized as racially inferior to the "pure races" of the "primitive peoples", because of a supposed "mixed ancestry".[15] Characterizing Chamorros that way exemplifies the ambivalence of the colonial discourse: the colonized were supposed to change and adopt the religion and culture of the colonizers, but, at the same time, they were relegated to a permanent second place. This was the representation of "almost the same, but not quite" as Homi Bhabha (2004: 13) phrased it.

On photographs of individuals, missionaries and Pacific Islanders were treated differently. While the former were usually mentioned by name, thus strengthening the connection to the German audience, the names of the Pacific Islanders were very rarely mentioned. This reflected and reinforced the perception of Europeans as the only important actors in history. The missionaries were the ones represented as important individuals influencing local societies. Persons from Oceania were only shown as "types" or examples of the uncivilized other or already converted native. The missing names indicated that they were denied the subjectivity and agency of their own history.

Conclusion

The German missionaries formed part of the colonial project. They belonged to social networks through which they connected people in Oceania to German society. However, this connection did not work on a basis of equality. Rather, asymmetric relationships characterized the interaction between the different social actors. Objects, such as photographs, played an important role in these networks, but they did not circulate evenly and had more important functions in

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[15] See Sammlung Kapuzinermission, ULB Münster, Südsee und Chinamission, Photo album No. 2. The same representation of the Chamorro can be found in a printed paper by German geographer Volkens (1904), pp. 7-8, 18. Volkens used at least one image (no. 53 in the paper) being taken by a Capuchin in Oceania, which most likely had been sold to the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft.

Germany than in Oceania. Photographs were central to the production of knowledge and significantly shaped German perceptions of the distant others. As shown, the meaning of the images did not depend solely on what was shown. Their materiality and use in different contexts influenced the transported meaning.

Thus, missionaries produced knowledge on the Pacific Islands with their photographs and texts and contributed to the perception of the inhabitants of Oceania as the colonized other in Germany. With their publications, missionary societies and orders as the Capuchins reached a larger audience than scientific literature did at the time. Furthermore, the photographs circulated even more widely than the written texts addressing a religious audience as they were sold to the German Colonial Association and other periodicals, used for ethnographic publications and in exhibitions. The knowledge spread by the missionaries on the one hand was characterized by contemporary hierarchizing operations not only between Europeans and the non-European other but also between different groups of the colonized other. Thereby, missionaries contributed to the self-image of Europeans and Christians who saw themselves as the spearhead of civilization. On the other hand, in contrast to those racists who saw the human culture as biologically fixed, the missionary attitude had to rely on the changeability of human culture. Otherwise, their self-perceived duty to spread the gospel would have been obsolete. Thus, missionaries also contributed to the self-perception of Europeans and Christians as the leading culture in the world who had not only the right but also the duty to "civilize" others. The world order allegedly depended on the European standard – a standard the nameless "others" could and should follow but would never reach completely. The importance of missionary orders in spreading this type of knowledge lies in the link it established and reiterated between religion and power relations on a global scale. Furthermore, this perception was spread among German social groups not necessarily in contact with colonial organizations.

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Figures

Fig. 1. Father Raymund taking photos. (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, S. Kapuzinermission, Album 2: 37)
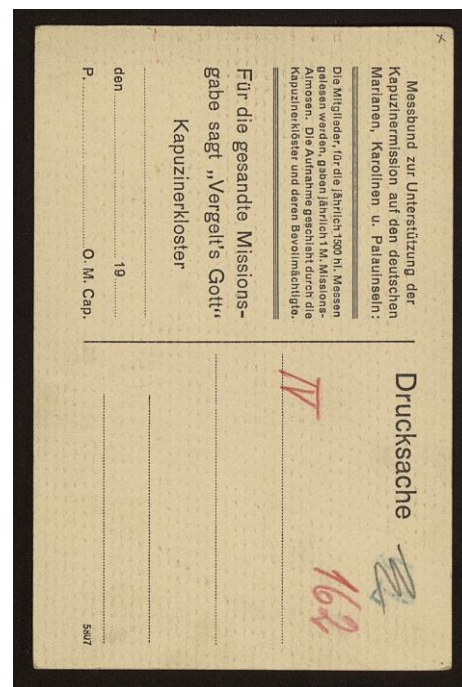

Fig. 2. (a & b). Postcard Donors Receipt. (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, Sammlung Kapuzinermission, C 2,003)

Fig. 3. Couple in front of a house, Saipan. (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, Sammlung Kapuzinermission, C 1,048)

Fig. 4. Children protecting themselves from rain with leaves. (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, Sammlung Kapuzinermission, C 2,038)
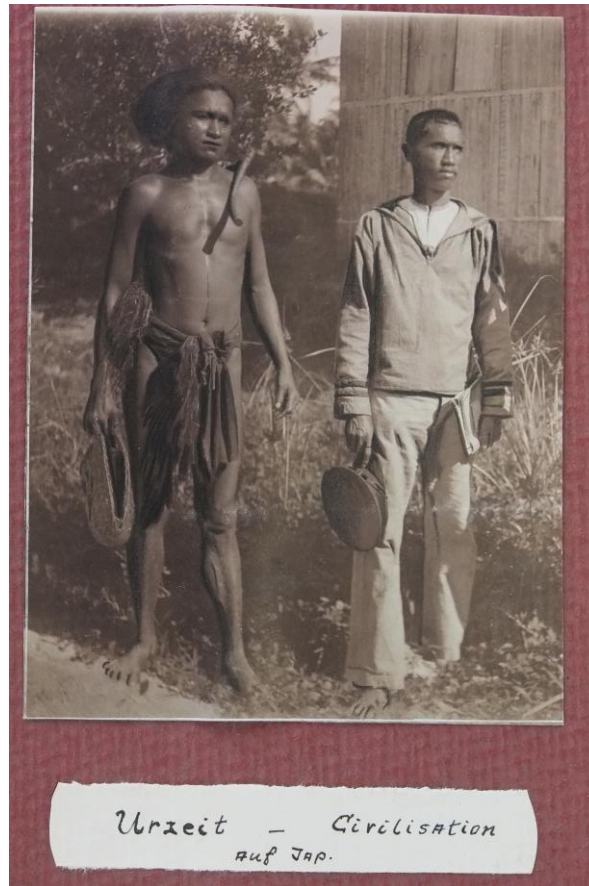
Fig. 5. Subtitle: "Urzeit – Zivilisation" (primitive times – civilization). (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, Sammlung Kapuzinermission, Album 2: 9)
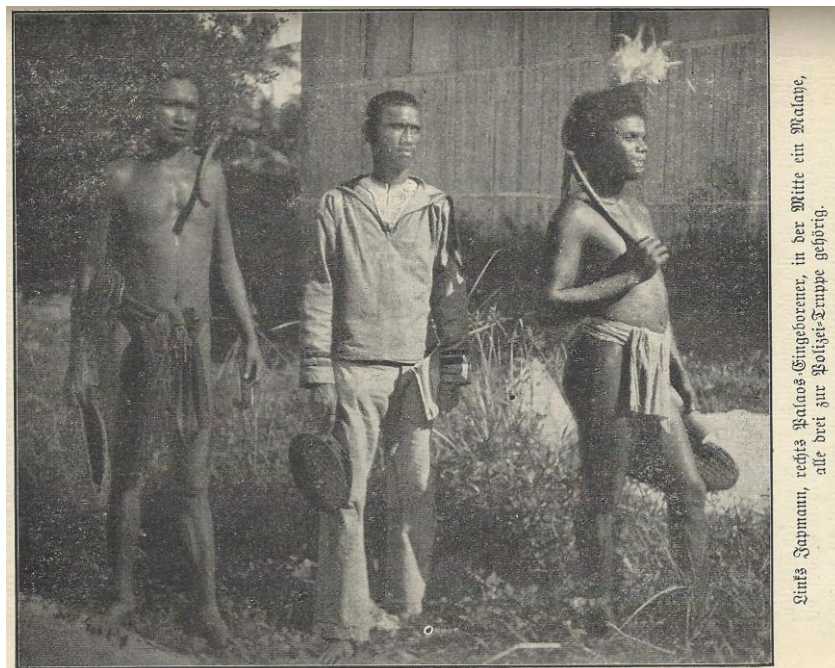

Fig. 6. Three members of the local police forces. (Salesius 1907: 160)

Die Jap - Inseln.

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Die Jap-Inseln liegen nordöstlich von den Philip=
pinen,ein schönes,fruchtbares Eiland. Auf Jap war der Hauptsitz
der deutschen Regierung,es hatte eine Funken=und Kabelverbindung
mit der Heimat.
            Jap war immer das Schmerzenskind der Mission. Die
Insulaner hingen zähe am alten Aberglauben und an den unsittlichen
Bräuchen der Vorzeit. Auf Jap zählte man viele Apostaten aus der
spanischen Missionsperiode. Das Bekehrungswerk forderte heroische
Geduld und Anstrengung seitens der Missionare. Nach der Zählung
von 1912 gab es etwa 350 Katholiken und 50 Katechumenen unter 6350
Eingeborenen. Man versuchte schliesslich die Jugend in den Inter=
naten für ein christliches Leben zu erziehen. Aber bald nach der
Schulentlassung verfiel ein grosser Teil der jungen Leute wieder
der allgemein herrschenden Unsittlichkeit. Beim Verlassen der In=
seln zählte unsre Mission auf Jap 3 Hauptstationen und 9 Schulen.
Auf Jap ruht unser Br.Georg,der dort kurz nach seiner Ankunft aus
der Heimat an einer schleichenden Krankheit starb.

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Die Jap-Inseln vom Dampfer aus gesehen.

Ausblick von der Hauptinsel auf das Meer

Fig. 7. First page on the island of Yap. (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, Sammlung Kapuzinermission, Album 2: 8)
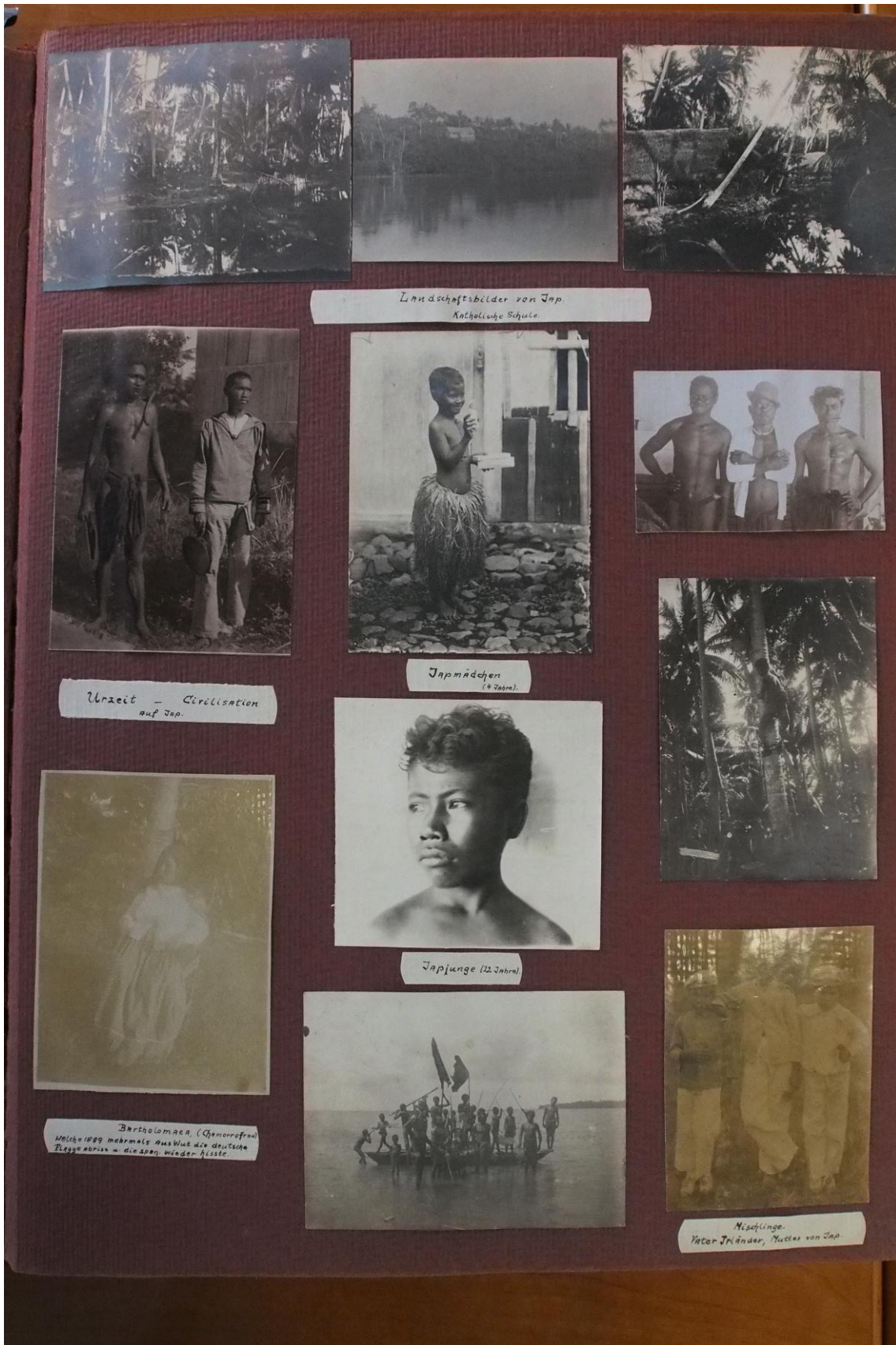
Fig. 8. Page of Yap. (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, S. Kapuzinermission, Album 2: 9)

Fig. 9. Page depicting Chamorro. (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster, Sammlung Kapuzinermission, Album 2: 18; https://sammlungen.ulb.uni-muenster.de/hdh/content/pageview/3541982)

Someone who decides only for themselves
might not get too much from life.
But the one who considers others' wishes,
accepts their decision and goes with them –
they might experience a more fulfilled life
in a bright future.

Gopal in "How We Got Here: Decision Matters"*

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* Basu, Helene & Andreas Samland (2018): *How We Got Here. Decision Matters.* Ethnographic Film. 36 min.

Anthropologist in action: Helene Basu collecting information from one of the priests at the Dattatreya temple in Ganagapur/Gulbarga District in the state of Kanartaka/India. The space is wellknown for its transformative practices that engage people and their families who suffer from 'madness' or 'possession'. Dattatreya is a Hindu deity encompassing the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, known as Trimurti. Photo: Annika Strauss (2013)

Practices of Transformation – Transformation of Practices

Julia Koch, Helmar Kurz, Mrinal Pande, Annika Strauss (Eds.)

This volume is in honour of Helene Basu, whose scholarship has influenced and offered novel perspectives across fields as varied as kinship, religion and health. By integrating anthropological and historiographic approaches in her analyses of post-colonial India, she provided new lenses through which to understand the transformability of practices. Inspired by her insights, the contributors demonstrate the impact of Basu's work on their own, presenting accounts of changes in social relations and the accompanying shifts in the symbolic representations of practices and objects. Each contribution focuses on particular transformations, variously taking into account practices as diverse as drumming, wood-carving, narrating, photography, lithography and televised auctioning. By examining these and other practices, the authors attend to both translocal relationships as well as historical contexts. While new practices effect social change, practices themselves transform.