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Articles

Towards a linguistic analysis of conative animal calls in Babanki and Bum (Grassfields languages of Cameroon)

Alexander Andrason and Pius W. Akumbu

This article offers a systematic analysis of conative animal calls (CACs) in Babanki and Bum—two Central Ring Grassfields Bantu languages of North-West Cameroon. The authors analyze the semantics, phonetics, morphology, ecolinguistics, and cognancy of 39 Babanki and 20 Bum CACs and conclude the following: (a) in both languages CACs largely instantiate the prototype of a CAC with regard to semantics, phonetics, and morphology; (b) several linguistic properties exhibited by CACs have their source in the ecosystems inhabited by the respective communities of speakers; (c) the similarity of the CACs in Babanki and Bum is low and their cognancy minimal despite the two languages being closely related.

Keywords: Grassfields; Babanki; Bum; conative animal calls; human-to-animal communication.

1. Introduction

The present article is dedicated to the study of conative animal calls in two Central Ring languages of the Cameroonian Grassfields, namely, Babanki (ISO 639-3 bbk, Glottocode baba1266) and Bum (ISO 639-3 bmv, Glottocode bumm1238). Both varieties are spoken in the North-West Region of Cameroon, some 113-142 kilometers apart from each other, by relatively small communities of native speakers (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2023; Hammarström et al. 2023).¹ To be exact, Babanki is spoken in two principal settlements, Kejom Ketinguh (Babanki Tungoh) and Kejom Keku (Big Babanki), by less than 40.000 speakers, perhaps even no more than 25.000 (Faytak and Akumbu 2021: 333; see also Akumbu and Chibaka 2012: 3). Bum is spoken north of Fundong by some 15.000 speakers (Lamberty 2002: 4-5; cf. 21.000 reported in Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (2023)). Although Babanki and Bum are vigorous languages, they already exhibit signs of language shift: education and health services are predominantly in English; Cameroun Pidgin is widely used as an alternative communicative tool in

¹ 113 km separate Bum from the Babanki of Kejom Keku, while 142 km separate Bum from the Babanki of Kejom Ketinguh.

trade; and both English and Cameroun Pidgin often feature in church and are increasingly more present in interactions at home (Lamberty 2002: 12; Akumbu and Wuchu 2015; Fatyak and Akumbu 2021; see also Ayafor and Green 2017).

As most Grassfields languages, Babanki and Bum have traditionally been severely under-researched. Recently, due to the work of one of the authors of the present article, this dire situation has greatly improved (see Akumbu 2008; 2009; 2011; 2015; 2016; 2019; 2023; 2024; Akumbu and Chibaka 2012; Akumbu and Wuchu 2015; Akumbu, Hyman, and Kießling 2020; Akumbu and Kießling 2021; 2022; Fatyak and Akumbu 2021). Bum, in contrast, still lacks systematic studies. The only works that we are aware of comprise of brief discussions of the nominal system (Hyman 1980; Akumbu 2009), a preliminary study of the verb phrase (Bangsi 2016; see also Noubi 1981), and a dictionary of some 1,800 entries (Ndokobäi, Hedinger, and Akumbu 2023). Within the various language domains and grammatical and lexical categories, one class of constructions has particularly been overlooked in Babanki, Bum, and the entire Grassfields family. This concerns conative animal calls (CACs) or, according to an operationalized definition, word-like directive constructions that are used by humans in their communication with other animal species (Andrason 2022; Andrason and Phiri 2023).² CACs are briefly mentioned by Akumbu and Lionnet's (forthcoming) study of Babanki interjections and liminal signs, but, to the best of our knowledge, have not featured in any discussion of Bum.

The present study responds to the above-mentioned epistemic lacuna and offers a systematic description of CACs in Babanki and Bum—the first of this type not only in these two languages but also in the Grassfields and Bantoid language groups.³ In doing so, we follow a prototype approach to linguistic categorization and CACs specifically (Andrason and Karani 2021; Andrason 2022; Andrason and Phiri 2023) and couch our grammatical description within non-formal theories of language (see Goldberg 2003; Dryer 2006; Dixon 2010).

The article is structured in the following manner: in Section 2, we expose our conceptual framework and explain data collection methods. In Section 3, we present Babanki and Bum data, which we evaluate in Section 4. In Section 5, we conclude the study and propose future lines of research.

² Properly speaking, CACs are conative calls addressed to *non-human* animals since homo sapience is also an animal species.

³ We understand Bantoid in its narrow sense, i.e., without Bantu languages. CACs have been analysed in some Bantu languages, e.g., Xhosa (Andrason 2022).

2. Theory and methods

As mentioned in the previous section, our analysis of CACs is developed within a prototype approach to linguistic categorization (see Evans and Green 2006). Accordingly, we follow the conceptual framework that has widely been espoused in research on CACs (e.g., in Maasai, Xhosa, Tjwao, and several other (mostly African) languages; see Andrason and Karani (2021), Andrason (2022; 2023), and Andrason and Phiri (2023)) and that also underlies the most relevant study of all interactive word classes to which CACs belong (see Heine 2023).⁴ This means that we understand the CAC category as a cloud of members that radiate from the categorial center to the periphery proportionally to the decrease of their compliance with the prototype, which demarcates the conceptual and topological nucleus of the category. Members that fully comply with the prototype are canonical and occupy a central position in the category('s model). In contrast, members that comply with the prototype only minimally are non-canonical and populate the category's peripheries. As a result, the belonging to the CAC category is not a binary relation of an 'either-or' type but instead a gradient function of degree. Crucially, entities that fail to instantiate the prototype—including those that violate most of its characteristics—are not *a priori* denied their categorial membership and thus a CAC status.

As is evident from the above, the critical element in the CAC category is the prototype. Although the category is much more than its prototype, the prototype structures the category by constituting the reference point against which the canonicity and the extent of belonging of all the members is measured. The prototype itself is defined cumulatively as a collection of properties referred to as prototypical features. Elaborate discussions of the various features proposed as prototypical are available in recent works on CACs and we invite the reader to consult these publications (see Andrason and Karani 2021; Andrason 2022; 2023; Andrason and Phiri 2023). Below we offer a concise summary of those prototypical features that will be relevant for the present study and guide our account of CACs in Babanki and Bum.

⁴ Systematic analyses dedicated specifically to CACs are scarce not only in the Grassfields family but also in other language phyla (see Poyatos 2002: 178; Andrason and Karani 2021: 4). Taking apart the recent articles published by Andrason alone and in collaboration with other linguists, the most important contributions include: Bynon (1976) on Tamazight, Siatkowska (1976) and Daković (2006) on several Slavonic languages, Amha (2013) on Zargulla, and Jääskeläinen (2021) on Finnish. Less comprehensive treatments of CACs have been offered *inter alia* by Grochowski (1988), Ameka (1992), Poyatos (1993; 2002), Fleck (2003), Wierzbicka (2003), Ambrazas et al. (2006), Abdulla and Talib (2009), Aikhenvald (2010), and Denisova and Sergeev (2015). Most of these studies are dedicated to other categories or linguistic phenomena, e.g., interjections, imperatives, and "para-language," or are conceived as general grammatical descriptions of a respective language. For a more detailed account of the history of research on CACs (including the review of much older sources from 19th c. to early 20th c.) consult Andrason and Karani (2021) and Andrason (2023).

- Semantically, a prototypical CAC expresses the idea of motion (summonses call animals, dispersals chase them away, and directionals modify their movement in terms of inception/termination, direction, speed, and manner), is addressed to domestic rather than wild species, and its semantic potential is relatively limited.
- Phonetically, a prototypical CAC is monosyllabic, makes extensive use of consonantal (rather than vocalic) material, tolerates extra-systematic phones and phonotactics, potentially hosting non-IPA sounds (e.g., kisses and whistles), and largely exploits suprasegmental features such as length and various types of marked phonations.
- Morphologically, a prototypical CACs is opaque, being a monomorphemic root with no inflectional and derivational markers and no other elements incorporated through compounding.⁵
- Recently, drawing on Dogon data, it has been proposed that a prototypical CAC and the CAC category in its totality are heavily “depende[nt] on their natural and socio-cultural environment” (Andrason and Sagara forthcoming; see also Amha 2013). This link between the structure of (a) language or its parts on the one hand and the ecosystem (both a physical/natural habitat and a socio-cultural context) on the other hand—and in particular, the dependency of the former on the latter—is referred to as ‘ecolinguistics’ (Steffensen and Fill 2014; Fill 2018; Li, Steffensen and Huang 2020; Penz and Fill 2022).
- Additionally, from a phylogenetic perspective, the evidence provided by three dialects of Akan, i.e., Asante, Bobo, and Fante, suggests that the cognancy level of CACs in closely related languages is (significantly) lower than is the case of general lexicon (Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023; see similar observations concerning Slavonic languages and Macha Oromo offered by Daković 2006 and Andrason, Onsho Mulugeta, and Shimelis Mazengia 2024).⁶

Given the difficulties inherent to collecting data from any language used in rural areas that are remote from urban and administrative centers, our data-collection activities were necessarily heterogenous and consisted of introspection, semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions. First, half of the Babanki CACs described in this study have been provided by the second author, drawing on his

⁵ The different semantic types of CACs, i.e., summonses, dispersals, and directionals, are also correlated with determined phonetic and morphological features. This means that their prototypical formal make-up may differ (see Andrason and Karani 2021).

⁶ Prototypical features also concern syntax (see Andrason and Karani 2021: 26-33, 35-36). Due to the scarcity of corpora demonstrating spontaneous speech, we do not analyze the syntax of CACs in this article. Given the prototype approach which we have espoused, the above features can be and, in some cases, often are violated. Importantly, such violations are motivated and, as the prototype itself, essential for an accurate understanding of the entire category.

native-speaker competence. These lexemes were subsequently contrasted with five other Babanki native speakers (Vivian Ba-ah, Regina Phubong, Cornelius Wuchu, Victor Vishi, and Benjamin Nkwenti) during sessions conducted through WhatsApp between January and March 2023. The remaining half of the CACs were produced spontaneously by the above-mentioned team during a number of WhatsApp group-discussion sessions that lasted approximately 3 hours. CACs in Bum were elicited from a native speaker (Julius Ntang) through semi-structured interviews conducted via WhatsApp in November 2022 and April 2023. These sessions lasted about an hour each. All CACs in Babanki and Bum were recorded with smart phones as .ogg or .acc audio files and stored online on a safe repository platform facilitated by the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages.

The CACs have been collected by means of the operationalized definition introduced at the beginning of the article. While simplified and less precise than the definition of the prototype of CAC (see Andrason and Karani 2021: 33-36), this definition has turned highly useful in our previous fieldwork activities dedicated to collecting CACs in several languages across Africa: Xhosa in South Africa (Andrason 2022), Tjwao in Zimbabwe (Andrason and Phiri 2023), Oromo in Ethiopia (Andrason, Onsho Mulugeta, and Shimelis Mazengia 2024), and Dogon in Mali (Andrason and Sagara forthcoming). Furthermore, in interviews and focus discussions, we made use of written guidelines that had been developed during the same previous fieldwork activities, which we adapted to the reality of Babanki and Bum. These guidelines listed actions typically conveyed by CACs and animals that tend to be their referents, as well as suggested the most common lexico-grammatical forms with which a directive-to-animal function could be encoded in the languages of the world.

3. Data presentation

In course of the heterogenous fieldwork activities described above, we were able to collect 39 CACs in Babanki and 20 in Bum. Table 1 below captures all these constructions and provides their IPA transcriptions as well as the meaning, i.e., the action that a CACs is supposed to trigger and the animal(s) to which it is addressed. The exact realizations of kisses, snaps, spansks, whistles, and CACs produced with objects will be explained in section 3.2.⁷

The data from Babanki may be regarded as roughly comprehensive given that the usual size of CAC categories in a language ascends to around 40 or 50 constructions: 39 in Tjwao (Andrason and Phiri

⁷ We have decided to introduce our data at the beginning of the present section rather than in an appendix at the end of the article. This allows us to avoid translating every Babanki/Bum CAC quoted in the text (or explaining its meaning) as this information is already available to the reader.

2023), 40 in Xhosa (Andrason 2022), 45 in Arusa Maasai (Andrason and Karani 2021), 52 in Macha Oromo (Andrason, Onsho Mulugeta, and Shimelis Mazengia 2024), and 57 in Togo-Teɲu-Kan Dogon of Dourou (Andrason and Sagara forthcoming). In contrast, the data from Bum may be less complete. They do, however, capture the most stabilized and entrenched CACs that are found in this language and, therefore, in our view, warrant their inclusion in the present study and a comparison with Babanki.

Babanki		Bum	
IPA	Meaning	IPA	Meaning
bùús	summon cats	fúù	chase away dogs
bwìnó	make goats, sheep, cattle, dogs, and cats turn back or return	káhí	turn goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry (chickens, ducks), and cattle (cows) to the side
dzìmó	incite dogs and cats to chase prey; make them follow the speaker	kfáfi	stop motion of goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry (chickens, ducks), and cattle (cows)
dzùú	chase away goats, sheep, dogs, cats, cattle	kòkòkòkòkókók	summon poultry (chickens)
fúú	chase away goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry (chickens), pigs	mèéʔ	summon goats and sheep
yáʔ	incite dogs and cats to chase a prey; encourage goats, sheep, dogs, poultry (roosters), cattle, and pigs to mate	mòóʔ	summon cattle (cows)
hárèi	chase away cattle and horses; encourage cattle to eat grass during the day	lòò	chase away dogs
hááíʔ	chase away cattle and horses; encourage cattle to eat grass during the day	lótjáà	chase away dogs
hárèè	chase away cattle and horses; encourage cattle to eat grass during the day	ndán	start and sustain motion of goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry (chickens, ducks), and cattle (cows)
kàtsàf	incite dogs to chase game during hunting	ɲíwū	summon cats

kírí	summon poultry (chickens)	ʃ:	chase away goats, sheep, dogs, poultry (ducks)
kàkàkà...	summon poultry (chickens)	tʃâi	chase away goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry (ducks), and cattle (cows)
kúʔ	make goats, sheep, dogs, cats, and cattle go up and climb; incite them to mate	tʃâlà	chase away dogs
kwéè	incite dogs to chase game during hunting	tʃíná	silence goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry (chickens, ducks), cattle (cows)
kwén	make goats, sheep, dogs, cats, cattle, and pigs enter a space (e.g., bush or stable)	^w	summon goats and sheep
lùú	chase away dogs, poultry (chickens), and pigs; make them move		summon poultry (ducks) and cattle (cows)
mèéʔ	summon goats and sheep	{kiss-1}	summon dogs, cattle (cows), horses
mòní	summon pigs	{object-1}	summon pigs
mòóʔ	summon cattle (cows)	{snap-1}	summon cattle (cows), horses, poultry (ducks)
mùús	summon cats	{spank-1}	chase away horses
myáwúʔ	summon cats		
ɲàm	summon pigs		
ɲíɲ	speed up motion of goats, sheep, dog, cats, cattle		
ɲúʔmó	make dogs and cats sit down		
ʃ: ⁸	chase away goats, sheep, dogs, poultry (chickens); silence all animals		

⁸ We do not use the IPA length symbol : with vowels because each vowel can bear a different tone. In the only example containing a long consonant, we make use of : to avoid spellings such as ʃʃ (which may suggest two syllables) or ʃʃ (which arbitrarily ascribes a nucleic role to one of the ʃ symbols). We thus choose the lack of coherence over the lack of precision.

tímá	stop motion of goats; sheep, dogs, cats, and cattle
tʃáááìʔ	chase away goats, sheep, cattle, horse; encourage cattle to eat grass during the day
tʃééèìʔ	chase away goats, sheep, dogs, cattle, horses, and pigs
tʃóŋ	make goats, sheep, dogs, cats, cattle turn to the side
tʃòó	chase away goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry (chickens), and pigs; make them pass or move across
wàà	chase away birds (hawks, chickens)
yééè	chase away goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry (chickens), cattle when causing destruction on crops or food
ʔʃ	summon goats, sheep, cats, pigs
lʷ	summon goats, sheep, dogs, cats, cattle
l	summon poultry (chickens) and cattle
{kiss-1}	summon goats, sheep, dogs, cats, cattle
{snap-1}	summon poultry (chickens) and cattle
{tune-1}	tend cattle
{whistle-1}	summon dogs

Table 1. Conative animal calls in Babanki and Bum

3.1. Semantics

The typical action expressed by CACs in Babanki and Bum—i.e., the action that any given CAC is expected to trigger on the part of the animal—concerns motion. Indeed, all 39 CACs attested in Babanki (100%) convey some motion nuances. The semantic potential of 32 of these CACs (82%) is in fact limited to the idea of motion. In Bum, 19 out of the 20 CACs (94%) are compatible with motion—for all of them motion constitutes the only semantic component attested. Inversely, CACs that express actions unrelated to motion are rare. In Babanki, there are 7 such constructions (18%). No CAC is restricted to a motion-unrelated meaning. In Bum, there is 1 such CAC (2%), which is exclusively used to silence

animals (*tʃíná*). There are no significant differences between motion and non-motion CACs as far as their origin is concerned (i.e., being primary, secondary, or borrowed).⁹ That is, in Babanki, 3 out of 7 non-motion CACs are primary (*hááíʔ*, *ʃ*, and *tʃáááíʔ*), while the remaining 4 are either secondary (*yáʔ* and *kúʔ*) or borrowed (see *háréi* and *háráà* adopted from Fulfulde). For motion CACs, this ratio is similar: out of 39 motion CACs, 21 are primary, 15 are secondary, and 3 are borrowed.¹⁰

With regard to the main semantic types of motions conveyed by CACs, no coherent hierarchies can be discerned although in both languages the particular frequency of summonses seems evident. In Babanki, summonses are the most common types of CACs: 20 CACs can be used to call animals with 17 exclusively being associated with this function. Directionals are second most common. There are 14 CACs that are employed to modify the motion of animals of which 8 are limited to this usage. Dispersals are the least common being instantiated by 9 CACs. 3 of them function exclusively as dispersals. In Bum, summonses are again the most common (9 CACs), followed by dispersals (6 CACs) and directionals (3 CACs). In Bum, all such CACs are only used in one action-related function. As far as motion-unrelated CACs are concerned, three meanings are attested: encouraging cattle to eat grass during the day (4 CACs), inciting to mate (2 CACs), and silencing (2 CACs). Of these, one silencing CAC is found in Bum while the remaining meanings are limited to Babanki.

With regard to the animal addressees of CACs, domestic species clearly predominate over wild species. All CACs in Bum (20x) and all but one in Babanki (38x) can be directed to domestic animals. In contrast, only 2 CACs are in principle compatible with wild animals (see *wàà* that is used with birds and *ʃ*; that is applicable to all animals). As far as the specific domestic species are concerned, the following picture emerges. In Babanki, dogs, cats, and cattle have the largest number of CACs. 21 CACs are used with dogs, with 3 constructions being exclusively associated with these animals; cats—21 / 3 exclusive; and cattle 21 / 1 exclusive. For the remaining species the frequencies are as follows: goats and sheep 18 / 1 exclusive; poultry—11 / 2 exclusive; pigs 10 / 2 exclusive; horses 6 non-exclusive; and birds 2 / 1 exclusive. In Bum, dogs also have the largest number of CACs, i.e., 11 of which 4 are exclusively used with these animals; goats and sheep—9 / 2 exclusive; cows 9 / 1 exclusive; poultry 9 / 1 exclusive; cats 6 / 1 exclusive; horses 3 / 1 exclusive; and pigs 1 non-exclusive. Many of the CACs that are limited to a

⁹ Primary CACs are forms that have been used as CACs since the beginning of their grammatical life as well as those that, although limited to their use as CACs, have acquired this status due to the profound extent of CAC-ization (i.e., grammaticalization/lexicalization into CACs). Secondary CACs are CACs that draw on other lexical classes (e.g., nouns and verbs) and entire phrases and clauses, and this diachronic relationship remains patent.

¹⁰ The very low number of non-motion CACs makes an equivalent comparison in Bum unreliable.

particular species are summonses exhibiting an onomatopoeic foundation, e.g., *mòó?* and *mèé?* in Babanki and *kàkàkàkàkòkòk* in Bum.

The semantic potential of CACs in Babanki may range from (virtually) monosemous to largely polysemous. The increase in polysemy stems from two main factors: the animal referent may be more general and/or the action expressed by a CAC may be of more than one semantic type. In Babanki, *bùús* and *mùús* are exemplary cases of monosemy—they are directed to a specific species (cats) and convey a specific meaning (summoning). The same may be observed with *màní* and *jàm* used to call pigs, as well as *kàtsàf* and *kwê* used to incite dogs to chase prey. In contrast, *f:* is compatible with all animals and can be employed to both repel and silence them. It should be noted that goats and sheep always share their CACs. This is also, to some extent, the case of household birds (poultry), which have a number of CACs applicable to them all. Nevertheless, such CACs tend to select one specific type of poultry as their preferred (yet not exclusive) referent, i.e., either roosters, hens, chicks, or ducks. Similarly, horses always share their CACs with cattle (although this relation is not reciprocal and there are CACs that are compatible with cattle but not horses). Overall, the vast majority of Babanki CACs are not limited to a single species but may be used with several species whether phylogenetically related or phenotypically similar, as well as those that entertain comparable roles in the local community and economy. In Bum, the semantic potential of CACs is somewhat more limited. This stems from the fact that CACs in Bum invariably express a single specific action. Their referents may, however, range from a single species (e.g., dogs: *fû*, *tjàlà*, *lâ*, *lótjà*; pigs: {object-1}, horses: {spank-1}) to two species, whether related (e.g., *f^w* used with goats and sheep) or unrelated (e.g., *||* used with cows and ducks), or even a more diverse set of animals (e.g., *f:* used with goats, sheep, dogs, and poultry and *káhí* used with goats, sheep, dogs, cats, poultry, and cows). Nevertheless, we suspect that this exclusivity of Bum CACs with regard to their actions may, to some degree, be due to the limitation in our data. It is probable that several of the Bum CACs convey a somewhat broader scope of actions and thus exhibit at least minimally larger polysemy.

3.2. Phonetics

CACs exhibit a series of phonetic tendencies which become particularly manifest if primary and secondary CACs are studied separately. These tendencies concern the robustness (or shortness) of the phonetic form of a CAC, its consonantal (or vocalic) character, and extra-systematicity (or systematicity).

To begin with, CACs tend to be short. This is relatively evident in Babanki where 22 CACs are monosyllabic or consist of monosyllabic segments replicated in a series (see section 3.3), while only 13 CACs are disyllabic. Disyllabicity is somewhat correlated with the secondary status of a CAC (e.g., *bwiná*

and *dzìmá*) or its borrowing (*hárêî* and *háráà*)—in total, there are 8 such CACs. In contrast, five disyllabic CACs are primary (e.g., *hááí?*, *kírí*, and *myāwúí?*). Overall, disyllabic lexemes constitute 24% of the 21 primary CACs. For the 18 secondary and borrowed CACs, disyllabic forms ascend to 44%. In Bum, the prevalence of monosyllabic forms over disyllabic forms is comparable to what we observed in Babanki: 10 CACs contain one syllable or are built of such monosyllabic segments, while 6 consist of two syllables. Similarly, the above-mentioned correlation between mono-syllabicity and primary CACs on the one hand, and disyllabicity and secondary/borrowed CACs on the other hand, is palpable in Bum although perhaps being slightly less evident than in Babanki. Trisyllabic CACs or longer constructions are unattested in both languages. It should however be noted that the phonetic shortness of CACs in Babanki and Bum is not particularly remarkable as monosyllabic roots, including verbal and nominal, are the most common root types in Babanki (Akumbu and Chibaka 2012: 24–26) and, as far as we know, Bum.

While CACs may draw on both consonants and vowels in Babanki and Bum, consonantal material seems more visible and is, in our opinion, more fundamental in CACs. This stems from two reasons. First, while purely vocalic CACs are unattested (the closest equivalent of such forms are CACs that in Babanki consist of an approximant and a vowel, e.g., *wàà* and *yééè*), a number of CACs are exclusively built around consonants. Such consonantal CACs are *ʔʃ* in Babanki and *ʃ*, *lʷ*, and *||* in Babanki and Bum. Second, no CAC begins with a pure vowel and is thus onset-less. Inversely, all CACs have consonantal onsets with only a few exhibiting an approximant (see the above-mentioned *wàà* and *yééè*, as well as *hááí?*).¹¹

Although the majority of CACs make use of systematic sounds, i.e., phones that are found in the standard phonetic repertoire of Babanki and Bum, CACs may also contain extra-systematic phonetic elements or be entirely made up of such extra-systematic material. The first type of extra-systematicity comprises of phones that, although absent in the general word stock in Babanki and Bum, can be found in standard sound systems in the languages of the world and are, therefore, included in the International Phonetic Alphabet. Four such extra-systematic IPA sounds are attested in CACs in Babanki and Bum. All of them are consonants. Contrary to the phonetic repertoire of the prosodic system (or sentence-grammar in Heine's (2023) terminology), CACs make use of clicks. The first click is a dental click often coarticulated with strongly u-shaped lips and thus labialized, i.e., *[lʷ]*. This click may sometimes be produced with the closure made more closely to the palatal zone than dental, thus approximating *[t̪]*. In all such cases, the click is bright and high pitched (cf. Sands 2022). The other click

¹¹ As far as codas are concerned, CACs may exhibit any type of form. They can end in a pure vowel, a diphthong, or a consonant.

is a retracted (alveolar) lateral click [ɓ]. This click is louder and more “intense” than [ɓ] (cf. Sands 2022: 21). The remaining extra-systematic sounds found in CACs in Babanki are the glottal fricative or approximant [h] (e.g., *hááíí?*) and the trill [r] (e.g., *kírí*). However, [h] is not restricted to CACs but also present in onomatopoeias and ideophones (Akumbu 2024). In contrast, [r] is only attested in the CAC *kírí* used to summon chickens. Interestingly, no extra-systematic vowels are found in our data.

The class of extra-systematic sounds that is larger comprises of sounds that extend beyond the International Phonetic Alphabet. These include sounds made orally (i.e., whistles, kisses, and what we refer to as a tune) and non-orally (i.e., snaps and spansks, and sounds made with objects). {whistle-1}, attested in Babanki, is a series of short high-tone high-pitch whistles produced with strongly protruded lips. Following Poyatos (1993; 2002), this type of whistle may be codified with the symbol {SH- SH- SH (...)} or [Sʰ-Sʰ-Sʰ (...)]. {kiss-1}, found in Babanki and Bum, is a cross-linguistically common kissing sound that, in the literature dedicated to CACs, has been noted as [↓Bʰ]. This kiss consists of two closures: one is dorsovelar being made with the tongue while the other is labial and made with (strongly) protruded lips. Decreased air pressure in the air pocket created by this double closure produces air suction into the mouth (ingressive airstream) when the front/bilabial closure is released (Poyatos 1993; 2002; Andrason and Karani 2021; Andrason and Sagara forthcoming). The [↓Bʰ] segment itself is often replicated in a series. The remaining oral non-IPA sound (only present in Babanki) is an uninterrupted melodic vocalization to which we refer as {tune-1}. This tune is a holistic song-like pattern hummed to tend cattle. The class of non-oral sounds is less robust. Babanki and Bum contain {snap-1} or a short finger snap that can be repeated in a series with relatively short intervals. Additionally, Bum speakers make a common use of a spank in their interactions with horses. This sound, referred to as {spank-1}, combines an auditory feature (i.e., a relatively loud but dull bang similar to claps often used in CACs in the languages of the world; see Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023) with a gestural and tactile component. Lastly, one of the CACs employed in Bum to communicate with pigs (see {object-1}) is made by means of a receptacle, usually a dish that is used to give food to pigs. The speaker hits the dish against a wall or the ground and alerts the animals to come to eat.¹²

As far as phonotactics are concerned, CACs may exhibit syllable structures that are unattested in the general word stock of Babanki and Bum. That is, apart from the standard syllable structures such as V, C(G)V, C(G)VC, and N (Akumbu and Chibaka 2012: 24-25), CACs allow for C and CC syllables and

¹² Of course, this is not the only situation when Bum and also Babanki speakers make use of objects to interact with animals. For instance, a Bum person may hit the carved wood where salt is served to goats and cows to invite the animals to consume salt before going to eat grass in the fields. It seems, however, that the CAC used with pigs is the most regularized and entrenched.

thus consonantal nuclei other than nasals. These extra-systematic syllables are found in ʔf in Babanki and in ʃ, /w, and || in Babanki and Bum. The same CACs demonstrate that, contrary to the standard system, CACs tolerate entirely consonantal word structures. It should also be noted that, in the general word stock, the glottal stop ʔ does not appear in an onset position (Akumbu and Chibaka 2012: 19). In CACs, ʔ may appear in syllable onsets as illustrated by ʔf often found in the replicated series ʔf-ʔf-ʔf.¹³

A clearly recognizable feature of CACs is length. In Babanki and, to the best of our knowledge, Bum, vowel length is not contrastive. Importantly, long vowels seem to be absent in the general word stock in both languages, being limited to ideophones where lengthening expresses duration and intensification (Akumbu and Chibaka 2012: 22, 204). In CACs, long vowels are common and need not convey any type of intensity or emphasis: *hááíʔ*, *háráà*, *wàà*. In fact, several CACs regularly exhibit extra-long realizations of their vowels. See, for example, *tʃáááíʔ*, *tʃéééèèèíʔ*, and *yééé* in Babanki. Babanki and Bum also tolerate long consonants in CACs as illustrated by ʃ: which can be lengthened to ʃ:: or exhibit even more exaggerated duration.

Another peculiarity of CACs is the use of contour tones and diphthongs in forms such as *bùús*, *mùús*, and *tʃááíʔ* in Babanki or *tʃáí*, *mèéʔ*, and *mòóʔ* in Bum. While being extremely rare in the prosaic systems of both languages, contour tones and diphthongs are relatively frequent in CACs, whether primary or secondary. At least as far as Babanki is concerned, contour tones and diphthongs have also been reported in ideophones and onomatopoeia (Akumbu 2024).¹⁴ At this stage of our research, we are uncertain of any functional motivation of the presence of contour tones in CACs as well as in ideophones and onomatopoeia.

CACs distinguish themselves from the many other lexical classes in Babanki and Bum by the so-called modulations, i.e., loudness, marked intensity, articulatory speed, intonation, and phonation (cf. Andrason and Karani 2021: 34). Indeed, Babanki/Bum CACs are often shouted, pronounced with particular intensity, speed, and excessive high pitch, sung following a determined melody pattern, or uttered with strongly modified voice, being hummed, murmured, and/or whispered. One CAC, i.e., *tʃéééèèèíʔ*, is regularly pronounced with heavy laryngealization or creaky voice.

Some of the semantic types of CACs are correlated with determined phonetic features. Babanki and Bum summonses tend to be realized with the so-called “friendly intonation” (cf. Andrason and

¹³ Codas in CACs are in conformity with the general word stock. They do not exhibit more codas than what is tolerated in other lexical classes, i.e., /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /f/, /s/, /b/, and /ʔ/ (Akumbu and Chibaka 2012: 19). See, for instance, *kàtsàf*, *nàm*, *kwén*, *tʃáŋ*, *bùús*, and *yáʔ* in Babanki.

¹⁴ The lesser frequency of contour tones and diphthongs in Bum is most likely due to the limited number of CACs collected so far.

Karani 2021: 36; Andrason 2022) and thus uttered with a gentle voice, higher pitch, and melodically (cf. Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023). They also draw more extensively on extra-systematic sounds than any other semantic types. To be exact, in Bum, only 1 summons out of the 6 attested is phonetically systematic (i.e., *ɲníwū*). In Babanki, out of 16 summonses, 6 are phonetically extra-systematic (e.g., *ʔf-ʔf-ʔf*, *lʷ*, and *||*). In contrast, dispersals tend to be realized with hostile pronunciation: loudly, quickly, and harshly (cf. Andrason and Karani 2021; Andrason 2022; Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023). They also exploit sibilants to a larger extent than the other types of CACs (cf. Andrason 2023). Out of 9 dispersals in Babanki and 7 in Bum, 4 draw on a sibilant (see [ʃ] attested in *f*: in Babanki and Bum) or an affricate sibilant (see [tʃ] in *tʃáááì?*, *tʃéèèèì?*, *tʃóó* in Babanki and *tʃáì*, *tʃàlà*, and *lótʃâ* in Bum).¹⁵

3.3. Morphology

CACs tend to be morphologically simple in Babanki and Bum, and this simplicity is recognizable in primary and, albeit less so, secondary CACs.

All primary CACs (21 in Babanki and 13 in Bum) are monomorphemic. They contain neither inflectional nor derivational affixes. They also fail to make use of compounding mechanisms. The only exceptions to morphological simplicity are replications, which are particularly common in summonses.¹⁶ Indeed, several summonses tend to occur in series, as illustrated by *kírí-kírí-kírí*, *mòní-mòní-mòní*, *jàm-jàm-jàm*, *ʔf-ʔf-ʔf*, *lʷ-lʷ-lʷ*, and *||-||-||* in Babanki. For these CACs, the use of singletons is rare, dispreferred, or disallowed. The clearest examples of this are *kàkàkà kàkàkà* in Babanki and *kàkàkàkàkàkàkàkàkà* in Bum. This replicative structure is also patent in {whistle-1}, {kiss-1}, and {snap-1} found in Babanki and Bum, which must be envisioned as holistic replicative patterns. Importantly, the addition of another segment to the above-mentioned CACs does not trigger a change in meaning: the CAC expresses the same action and is addressed to the same animal. Furthermore, the replication found in CACs does not have an intensifying force contrary to the replication present in ideophones (Akumbu and Chibaka 2012: 22, 204). Indeed, the forms *ʔf-ʔf-ʔf*, *lʷ-lʷ-lʷ*, and *||-||-||* are not more ‘emphatic’ than several other summonses that are not replicated. Therefore, as is typical of replications found in CACs across languages, the replication attested in CACs in Babanki and Bum constitutes an expressive phonetic strategy rather than an (exclusively) derivative and thus morphological device. Overall, like

¹⁵ Some of these dispersals are secondary CACs, e.g., Babanki *tʃóó*, and Bum *tʃàlà* and *lótʃâ*.

¹⁶ Following Andrason and Karani (2021), we use the term ‘replication’ to refer to word-like patterns. The term ‘repetition’ is, in turn, employed to refer to words appearing in a series. For the characteristics differentiating replications and repetitions in CACs consult Andrason and Karani (2021).

ideophones, replicated CACs would violate the constraints that regulate the general word structure in Babanki and Bum (see Akumbu and Chibaka 2012: 26) allowing for reduplicated and triplicated structures.

Secondary CACs—which are 15 in Babanki and 4 in Bum—exhibit a slightly greater extent of morphological complexity. When it is present, this complexity is however the property of the sources of CACs rather than CACs themselves.

To begin with, nearly all secondary CACs draw on imperative verbs. In Babanki, 13 secondary CACs derive from imperatives with which they are still fully homophonous: *bwìná* ‘return!’, *dzìímá* ‘chase!’, *dzùù* ‘go!’, *fùù* ‘go out!’, *yá?* ‘grip!’, *kú?* ‘climb!’, *kwén* ‘enter!’, *lùú* ‘leave!’, *jíj* ‘run!’, *jí?má* ‘sit (down)!’, *tímá* ‘stand (up)!’, *tǎj* ‘turn!’, and *tǒó* ‘pass!’. It should be noted that in Babanki, imperative CACs are marked by a final high tone. This final high tone surfaces as an epenthetic schwa when the imperative is formed with low tone roots—a strategy that allows these roots to avoid a contour tone, which is generally dispreferred in the phonetic system of this language (Akumbu, Kießling, and Hyman 2020). This may be observed in CACs such as *bwìná*, *dzìímá*, and *jí?má*. In low-tone roots that end in a vowel, the schwa assimilates to the radical vowel as illustrated by the forms such as *fùù*, *dzùù*, *lùú*, and *tǒó*. Alternatively, lengthening stems from the need to accommodate the contour tone—a phenomenon which is typologically frequent. In contrast, the imperative form of high-tone roots coincides with their respective roots: *yá?*, *kú?*, *kwén*, *jíj*, and *tǎj*. From the onset, this last class of deverbal CAC would morphologically agree with CACs by exhibiting a radical form with no inflectional markers. While de-imperative CACs may host inflections (inherited from the original imperatives), they do not make use of derivational marking and compounding strategies. Additionally, two CACs are derived in Babanki from nouns, i.e., *jàm* ‘animal, cattle’ and *kàtsàf* ‘booty.’ These nouns are monomorphemic with no inflections, derivations, or compounded elements. In Bum, the four secondary CACs attested in our database derive from imperatives: *fùù* ‘exit!’, *lòò* ‘leave!’, *lótǎà* ‘get out!’, and *tǎlà* ‘pass!’

In addition to primary and secondary CACs, 3 lexemes are loanwords. In Babanki, *m̀nì* derives from the English word *money*, while *hárèi* and *háràà* are identical to the Fulfulde CACs used with cows and horses. Similar to primary and some secondary CACs, these forms lack any type of morphological complexity. Lastly, three CACs in Bum, i.e., {object-1}, {snap-1}, and {spank-1}, are excluded from the classification as either primary, secondary, or borrowed.

As is the case of phonetics, the morphological structures of summonses and dispersals are subject to certain (more specific) tendencies. As mentioned above, summonses are correlated with replications. In contrast, dispersals generally have punctual forms, avoiding replicated patterns.¹⁷

When considered holistically, the categories of CACs in Babanki and Bum are opaque. This means that no morphological pattern is exclusively associated with CACs and a directive-to-animal function. Inversely, CACs may exhibit any type of form, ranging from shorter to more robust. This not only holds true of the CAC category envisaged jointly (compare the primary \int : and \parallel with the secondary *kàtsàf* and *màní*, borrowed from English) but is also evident in the subset of primary CACs. Compare $|\text{w}$, \int , *kírí* (both typically found in the replicated series *kírí-kírí-kírí* and \int - \int - \int), *bùús*, and *tʃáá:í?*.

3.4. Ecolinguistics

The members of the Babanki and Bum ethnic group live in very similar environmental conditions and ecosystems. Both communities are located in the Western High Plateau in Cameroon. The Western High Plateau is a high relief of mountains and massifs that is characterized by an equatorial climate of the Cameroon type. This means generally cool temperatures, relatively heavy rainfall, and predominantly Sudan savanna-like vegetation, i.e., short bushes and shrubs as well as trees. Although this plateau used to be densely covered by forest, such forest areas are currently limited to zones adjacent to rivers, being replaced elsewhere by grassland—a process that is mostly due to human activities and agriculture-related deforestation (Gwanfogbe *et al.* 1983).

Given the shared ecosystem, the Babanki and Bum are exposed to and own identical animals. These primarily include goats and sheep, dogs and cats, poultry (mostly chickens and ducks), cattle (typically, cows), and pigs. Expectedly, all these animals are reflected in CACs in both languages. In contrast, Babanki and Bum people do not keep horses. Horses that are found in the areas inhabited by these two communities are rather owned by the cattle-herding Fulani. The Bum seem to have interacted with the Fulani more intensively than the Babanki. As a result, they have developed a horse-specific CAC (a non-oral, semi-auditory and semi-gestural spank; see section 3.2) and a few additional ‘horse CACs’ that can also be employed with other animals. All these CACs are well known among the Bum speakers and stabilized in the community. With regard to the Babanki, only a small group of them lives in areas that are adjacent to Fulani settlements and has had contact with the Fulani and thus

¹⁷ These punctual forms may of course be repeated. In such instances, each CACs is separated by a pause and the sequence constitutes an analytical syntactic pattern.

horses. Therefore, only those Babanki people who interact directly with the Fulani are familiar with expressions directed towards horses, the remaining community members being generally unaware of these CACs. Furthermore, contrary to what can be observed in many languages in Western and Central Africa where donkeys are common referents of CACs (Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023; Andrason and Sagara forthcoming), there are no expressions directed towards donkeys among the CACs collected by us. Although North-West Cameroon lies beyond the area associated with the (common) presence of donkeys in farming systems (Blench 2000; 2004), donkeys used to be found in the Babanki and Bum communities in the past according to the native speakers. Since the 1980s, donkeys have gradually become rare and ultimately ceased to be part of the livestock. Accordingly, the CACs directed to donkeys which must have existed in the 20th century, are now lost without a trace. Lastly, dogs and cats are not pets *sensu stricto* (contrary to their role in Western households) but rather entertain an important function: hunting (still commonly practiced) and defense in the case of dogs and protection from small rodents, reptiles, and arthropods (bugs and insects) in the case of cats. Overall, despite certain language-specific idiosyncrasies and differences, the similar fauna to which Babanki and Bum speakers are exposed manifests itself through highly similar hierarchies of addresses in both languages: dogs > cats > cattle > goats/sheep > poultry > pigs > horses > birds in Babanki and dogs > goats/sheep > cattle > poultry > cats > horses > pigs in Bum (see section 3.1).

The ecosystem shared by the two communities and the resultant common socio-cultural foundation of CACs are also evident through the personal names used for certain animals. According to our data, dogs are virtually the only animals that are given proper names in Babanki and Bum. Their names reflect the knowledge and worldview of the speakers and the stereotypes propagated in the respective communities—which once again coincide to an extent. For example, the perception of Japan’s technological prowess, shared by both Babanki and Bum, is reflected in the dog names *džàpān* (Babanki) and *džàpān* (Bum). According to native speakers, this name manifests the wish that the dog would become as efficient in hunting as the effectiveness associated with Japanese products. Other canine names that draw on nationalities reflect similar folk generalizations associated with certain countries and their citizens. That is, in Bum, *džámān* ‘German’ has its roots in the conviction of Germany’s political and financial hegemony, *tǰáínà* ‘China’ in China’s rising economic power, and *zàýî* ‘Zaire’ in Congo’s musical reputation. Other proper names of dogs draw on English personal names (e.g., *džìmí* < Jimmy and *ràm̄bō* < Rambo), colors (e.g., *blāk* < black), and common names (e.g., *lókì* < lucky and *wískì* < whisky). Given a greater exposure to the Fulani, Bum speakers also give proper names to horses. These names tend to be of Fulfulde origin: *wát* < Fulfulde *wárt* ‘come back.’

2024; Andrason and Sagara forthcoming).¹⁸ Third, the mere fact that the CACs discussed in this paragraph are identical in the two Central Ring Grassfields languages renders their cognancy unlikely. While Babanki and Bum exhibit a high ratio of cognates (see further below), the comparative list of 436 lexemes compiled by Hyman in the 70s (Hyman n.d.) does not include a single word that would be strictly identical in these two languages. On the contrary, changes affecting vowels, consonants, tonal patterns, or word structure are ubiquitous (this is evident in the forms *fúú* and *fû* discussed below).

CACs that exhibit the same form in Babanki and Bum and exploit non-IPA sounds or are non-oral, i.e., {kiss-1} and {snap-1}, also largely coincide in function. That is, although the scope of their animal referents varies slightly, these CACs are summonses in both languages. Although this formal and functional similarity could be analyzed in terms of cognancy, this again need not be the case, and the two pairs of CACs may have emerged independently in Babanki and Bum due to crosslinguistic pressures. This especially holds true of {kiss-1} given that similar kisses are commonly used to summon animals in many languages, e.g., Arusa Maasai (Andrason and Karani 2021), Xhosa (Andrason 2022), Akan (Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023), Oromo (Andrason, Onsho Mulugeta, and Shimeli Mazengia 2024), and Dogon (Andrason and Sagara forthcoming).

Additionally, the CAC *fúú* used to chase away many types of animals in Babanki exhibits formal similarity with *fû* employed to chase away dogs in Bum. Both CACs are secondary and derive from verbal roots inflected in their imperative forms, i.e., *fúú* and *fúú* 'go out! exit!' While the above may suggest that these CACs are cognate—they certainly exploit cognate verbal forms that derive from a shared form that existed in the proto language (cf. Hyman n.d., 94)—the very process of harnessing this root for a directive-to-animal function may have occurred independently in Babanki and Bum and again stemmed from iconic pressures. That is, although [f] is not a common consonant in dispersals (Andrason 2023: 95-96), it may be iconically related to an intense blow of air which is sometimes used to repel insects and smaller animals.

Overall, the cognancy of the CACs attested in Babanki and Bum is remarkably low. As explained above, at the most, it ascends to 23% in Babanki and 45% in Bum. If we discount forms that could have emerged independently due to universal and/or iconic pressures rather than descending from a shared ancestor, Babanki and Bum do not have undeniable cognates, with the exception of *fúú* and *fû*. This low degree of cognancy in CACs in Babanki and Bum is clearly visible in the primary CACs used to summon cats. Babanki and Bum exploit three main strategies attested across languages to form these types of CAC: {miau}-type (found in Akan, Kihunde, and Oromo), {niau}-type (found in Maasai and Xhosa), and

¹⁸ It is also possible that this similarity constitutes an areal feature.

{b/mVs}-type (found in Bono and Arabic). While Babanki makes use of the first and the third of these strategies, Bum opts for the second one.

The low cognancy level of CACs demonstrated above starkly contrasts with the cognancy extent attested in the general lexicon. After reviewing the comparative list of 436 words (Hyman n.d.), we concluded that around 85% of lexemes are cognate in Babanki and Bum and derive from forms that existed in the proto language. This high lexico statistical similarity attested in the general vocabulary is consistent with the general close phylogenetic relatedness of these two languages (Grollemund et al. 2015; see also Hammarström *et al.* 2023).

4. Summary and discussion

The data presented in section 3 reveal the following profile of the CAC categories in Babanki and Bum:

- Semantically, CACs mainly express actions related to motion, have domestic species as their referents, and can be (nearly) monosemous as well as polysemous.
- Phonetically, CACs, especially their primary subclass, tend to be monosyllabic. They exploit consonantal material more extensively than vocalic material, exhibit extra-systematic sounds (both IPA or non-IPA) and sound combinations, and are marked by a series of suprasegmental features such as length and various types of modulations.
- Morphologically, CACs are often roots with no inflections, derivations, and compounding—a property that makes the entire category opaque. (Additionally, summonses and dispersals are correlated with a series of more specific phonetic and morphological properties in agreement with what has been observed in other languages.)
- Ecolinguistically, the organization of the CAC category is considerably conditioned by the fauna and flora found in the territories where the Babanki and Bum live and the economy the two communities practice.
- Phylogenetically, the categories of CACs in Babanki and Bum contain much fewer cognates than is the case of other lexical classes. Most CACs that coincide formally and functionally may owe their similarity not to cognancy, but rather to iconic and universal strategies exploited in the two languages separately.

The above demonstrates that Babanki and Bum CACs tend to match the features associated with the prototype of a CAC and, as a result, the CAC categories in these two languages may be viewed as canonical. The most pervasive violation of the prototypical features is polysemy. That is, although as predicted by the prototype, monosemy is attested, polysemous CACs seem to be equally common.

However, since similar extents of polysemy of CACs have been observed in several other languages (Andrason 2022; Andrason and Phiri 2023; Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023; Andrason, Onsho Mulugeta, and Shimeli Mazengia 2024), “the polysemy of CACs may be [...] greater than assumed thus far” (Andrason 2022: 49). Our results seem to support this revision to the prototype. Overall, the most significant divergences from the prototype with regard to phonetics and morphology are found in secondary CACs—a phenomenon that is also well documented in scholarly literature (Andrason and Karani 2021).

As a result, our study overwhelmingly corroborates the soundness of the prototype of CACs with regard to semantics, phonetics, and morphology as has been posited in scholarly literature and verified in several other language systems. More importantly, however, it provides evidence supporting the ecolinguistic and phylogenetic features which have been included in the prototype model only recently and, contrary to the semantic, phonetic, and morphological properties, have not been substantiated by a large and diversified spectrum of languages. Indeed, our findings strongly confirm the hypothesis that, to a much larger extent than is typical of many other lexical classes, CACs depend on the natural habitat and socio-cultural context (cf. Andrason and Sagara forthcoming) and are resistant to be inherited throughout the history of a language or a language branch (cf. Andrason, Antwi, and Duan 2023; see also Daković 2006 and Andrason, Onsho Mulugeta, and Shimeli Mazengia 2024).

The present research has some additional bearings for the general typology of CACs. First, our data corroborates a semantic and formal relationship between CACs and imperative verbs. Both classes are directive and draw on short or even monomorphemic forms. Given this semantic and morphological similarity, it is unsurprising that most secondary CACs derive from imperative verbs across languages (cf. Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023; see also Aikhenvald 2010). Second, apart from allowing for the manifestation of clicks in non-click languages, CACs may exhibit some tendency to exploit the trill [r] in non-trill languages. This phenomenon is attested not only in Babanki but also Akan (Andrason, Antwi, and Duah 2023) and Dogon (Andrason and Sagara forthcoming). Third, primary summonses tend to have an iconic foundation, imitating the sounds made by the respective animals that are being called, and formally overlap with onomatopoeias.

Lastly, we also hope that with this research we have meaningfully contributed to Babanki and Bum scholarship, especially as far as the phonetics and phonology of these two languages are concerned. CACs demonstrate that radical contour tones and diphthongs (i.e., those found in roots) are not foreign to Babanki and Bum speakers. Secondly, the Babanki and Bum are not unfamiliar with clicks, trills, and glottal fricative/approximants. Similarly, length(ening) and replications do not always carry intensifying functions in Babanki and Bum; While the intensifying function of

length(ening) and replications may indeed apply to onomatopoeias and ideophones, it is not inherent to CACs.

5. Conclusion

In this article we offered a systematic analysis of conative animal calls in Babanki and Bum—two under-researched Central-Ring Grassfields languages of Cameroon. The data presented demonstrates that, in both languages, the categories of CACs instantiate the prototype of a CAC to a large extent with regard to both semantics, phonetics, and morphology; that several linguistic properties of CACs have their source in the ecosystems inhabited by the respective communities of speakers; and that the similarity between the CACs in Babanki and Bum is low and their cognancy minimal.

Of course, our study has not addressed all the questions related to CACs in Babanki and Bum and Grassfields languages more generally. Given the scarcity of corpora capturing spontaneous language use, we did not analyze the syntax of Babanki and Bum CACs. Without doubt, such an analysis is necessary to design a (more) complete picture of the CAC category in these two languages. Furthermore, while reluctance to a phylogenetic transmission is evident in the Central-Ring Grassfields languages studied in the present article, the phylogenetics of CACs in the other members of this family remain unknown. To ensure that the low inheritance ratio of CACs is indeed a characteristic of the entire branch of languages, a study of CACs in Kuk, Kung, Mmen, Oku, and especially, Kom—which separates Babanki in the south from Bum in the north—is needed. Our intention is to conduct all such studies in the near future.

Abbreviations

C—consonant; CAC—conative animal call; G—glide; N—nasal; V—vowel.

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Catholic missionaries and lexicography among the Sidaama, Ethiopia

The Sidamo-English dictionary

Erik Egeland

This article focuses on mission linguistic practices conducted by Catholic missionaries among the Sidaama, Ethiopia. The paper especially addresses mission linguistic practices found in the bilingual *Sidamo-English dictionary* published in 1983 (Gasparini 1983). First, the paper will provide a short introduction to mission linguistics. Next, it will provide information about the historical context of the Catholic mission among the Sidaama. The main content covers the period from 1964 to 1983. In 1964, Catholic missionaries from the Comboni order started mission work among the Sidaama. The article will analyse entries in the dictionary and discuss examples of linguistic practices applied when translating religious concepts from the Sidaama religious worldview such as the reuse of concepts, extension of meaning, and loan words. The paper will discuss how the composition of the dictionary had both practical and ideological concerns. It will discuss examples concerning the interpretation of central concepts such as the concept of God, attributes of God, and spiritual being (s). A closer analysis of the translation of central Sidaama religious concepts shows how the translation of Sidaama beliefs and practices were interpreted and evaluated within a Christian framework.

Keywords: Mission linguistics, Catholic mission, lexicography, translation, Highland East Cushitic, Sidaamu Afoo, Ethiopia

1. Introduction¹

The topic of this article is linguistic practices conducted by Catholic missionaries in the Sidaama National Regional State, Southern Ethiopia. The Sidaama² National Regional State is located

¹ I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for critically reading the draft and for suggesting improvements of the manuscript.

² It was formerly known as the “Sidama zone.” It was part of the multi-ethnic regional state, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ Regional State (SNNPRS). On 18 June 2020, the Sidama zone attained status as a regional state in Ethiopia.

approximately 275 km south of Addis Ababa. The main ethnic group in this region is the Sidaama, speakers of Sidaamu Afoo, meaning ‘the mouth of the Sidaama.’ Sidaamu Afoo is a Highland East Cushitic language, a linguistic subgroup of Cushitic, and part of the Afroasiatic language family. Within the Highland East Cushitic languages, Sidaamu Afoo belongs to the Hadiya-Sidama language cluster, which, in addition to Sidaamu Afoo, consists of closely related languages such as Alaba, Burgi, Gedeo, Hadiya, Kambata, and several minor languages (Leslau 1952: 64-66; Leslau 1959: 1; Hudson 1989: 1-2; Kawachi 2020: 543-545).

This article is primarily concerned with lexicographical practices. Catholic Comboni missionaries started mission work among the Sidaama in 1964, and the article focuses on the content in the *Sidamo*³-*English dictionary* published in 1983 (Gasparini 1983). It will use the dictionary as a primary source and analyse entries in the dictionary. The paper will discuss these examples, showing how the mission linguistic practice applied existing religious concepts from the Sidaamu Afoo language to transform religious meaning. Furthermore, the paper will discuss practical and ideological motives for creating the dictionary. It will show how ideological motives were related to the proselytising of the Christian faith and the attempt to convert the Sidaama religious belief system. The practical reasons for producing a dictionary were related to recording the language to facilitate religious translations for proselytism.

The recording of the language and the compiling of a dictionary were based on mission linguistic practices. Linguist Even Hovdhaugen explains missionary linguistics as the writing of grammars and books in which a specific language is described by non-native missionaries and based on an oral corpus. These grammars and books are written as pedagogical tools for language learning (Hovdhaugen 1996: 15). As such, mission linguistics seeks to describe and formalise languages to create literacy practices as an instrument for religious proselytisation. As a result of such activities, missionaries have made significant contributions to the description of languages and the creation of language boundaries in the course of the history of missions (Irvine 2008: 324-325; Errington 2008: 15-17; Zwartjes 2012: 1-2).

Further, the article will address how ideological concerns influenced the mission linguistic practices. In this regard, mission linguistic practices reflect the relationship between language, ideology and power relations. Linguist Paul Kroskrity defines language ideologies as the perception of language constructed in the interest of a particular social or cultural group (Kroskrity 2000: 8). As

³ The name “Sidamo” is a former nomenclature used in the research literature. However, this term is not precise for describing Sidaamu Afoo, since “Sidamo” refers to the name of a former administrative region. There are several other languages spoken in this region.

translation theorist André Lefevere points out, translation is a rewriting practice that changes reality into terms created by the translator and translation context. Therefore, rewriting involves innovation by introducing new ideas but it also reduces and omits (Lefevere 2004: vii).

Translation activities as part of missionary linguistic practice are closely connected to proselytizing and a rhetoric of persuasion. In this sense, Christian theological ideas are terms of art with specialised meanings that refer to empirical and supernatural realities (Burke 1961: 1-7, 104). In this sense, mission linguistic practice uses codes from different semiotic systems intending to change language experience and practices. A notion of semiotic ideology is relevant in this context. Anthropologist Webb Keane explains semiotic ideology as underlying assumptions about signs, how signs function and what consequences may be produced. Semiotic ideology is part of a representational economy, which refers to the totality of institutions, technologies, media and practices in a social and historical context and their mutual effects on each other (Keane 2007: 17-21).

Furthermore, mission linguistic practice contains an inherent relationship between translation and power and may lead to asymmetrical relations between the parties involved. There are examples of such asymmetrical relations observed in several African contexts. As pointed out by anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff, the linguistic activities of missionaries were closely related to colonising projects and resulted in the imposing of hegemony on cultural exchanges (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 229). On the other hand, such an approach may imply a somewhat determined analysis. As Landau (1995) and Peel (2000) have pointed out, mission practices and Christian discourse may also be perceived as part of an intercultural dialogue with indigenous religions. Therefore, the encounter between mission activities and local belief systems creates new transformations. Similar observations are made in broader African contexts, e.g., Walls (1996) and Meyer (1999), where mission linguistics practice has resulted in compromises between the beliefs of the missionaries and the local belief systems that the missionaries intended to change (Walls 1996: 7-9; Peterson 1997: 257-258; Meyer 1999: 58-59, 80-82).

The next sections of the article are organised in the following manner. First, the paper will provide a background on the Catholic mission among the Sidaama, focusing on mission linguistic practices that resulted in the compilation of the *Sidamo-English dictionary*. The central part of the article analyses entries in the dictionary. The analysis will investigate linguistic strategies to translate Christian concepts into Sidaamu Afoo, and discuss how the translation reused Sidaama religious concepts.

2. A short history of the Catholic mission among the Sidaama

During the 20th century, there was an influx of global missions into Southern Ethiopia. In 1928, a Protestant mission organisation, the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), established mission stations among the Sidaama. The SIM missionaries became the pioneers of religious literature in the Sidaamu Afoo language and made translations with the assistance of local Sidaama assistants. This mission encounter produced the earliest written sources in Sidaamu Afoo, eventually translating the Gospel of St. Mark into Sidaamu Afoo (Fargher 1996: 133; Balisky 2009: 231). The text was written in Ethiopic script and was published in 1933 as *St. Mark's Gospel in Sidamo* by the British and Foreign Bible Society (Hudson 1976: 235).

In 1931, a Catholic mission station was established at Bera, south of Yrga Alem, Sidaama. The mission was an outreach from the Catholic mission in the adjacent regions of Kambata and Wolayta (Alberto 1998: 333; Alberto 2013: 178-179, 185-187). In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia, and in October 1936, the region encompassing the Sidaama was conquered (Del Boca 1969: 116-118). Due to the hostilities, the mission station at Bera was destroyed and the station was abandoned. Catholic mission among the Sidaama was reestablished in the 1960s. In 1961, the Catholic Comboni missionaries of the Heart of Jesus entered the mission field, and in 1979, the area became the Apostolic Vicariate of Hawassa (Alberto 2013: 234-236, 239-240, 502-504).

After the reestablishment of Catholic mission in the 1960s, one of the initial tasks of the Comboni mission was to start a school in the city of Hawassa and rural locations (Alberto 2013: 503-505). In the educational context, the Comboni schools were obliged to follow the Ethiopian national curriculum. The national curriculum was supposed to be taught in Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia. Amharic was the language used in national literacy campaigns, and it was also the primary language used by other foreign missions at their mission schools and practice (Sjöström and Sjöström 1983: 34-37).

3. Comboni missionaries and mission linguistics

In practice, Amharic was not widely understood among the rural population. Therefore, one practical concern for the Comboni missionaries was to learn Sidaamu Afoo to proselytise. In this regard, the Catholic missionaries continued an established practice of learning local languages in the Ethiopian mission context. During the first decades of the 20th century, Catholic missionaries engaged in mission linguistic practice in Southern Ethiopia (Alberto 2013: 178-180). The Catholic missionaries Gaetano de

Thiene and Andrea Jarousseau compiled a dictionary of the Galla (Oromo) language (de Thiene 1939), and Pascal de Luchon compiled a grammar of the Wolayta language (de Luchon 1938).

After re-establishing the Catholic mission among the Sidaama, the Comboni mission employed a catechist from the Catholic Church in Kambata to proselytise in Sidaamu Afoo (Alberto 2013: 503). In this learning context, the missionaries became involved in learning and practising the language. As a part of language learning, the missionaries documented Sidaamu Afoo by taking notes and making wordlists when encountering new words. These wordlists became accumulated into vocabulary and grammar. Gradually, the accumulation of linguistic knowledge resulted in the production of texts. These texts were intended for other missionaries, so these texts were copied and remained unpublished as booklets at mission stations or the library of the Vicariate in Hawassa.⁴ The local Catholic Bishop Armido Gasparini wrote a booklet titled *Phrases, Proverbs and Idioms in the Sidaamu Afoo language* (Gasparini 1977). He also wrote a Sidaamu Afoo grammar in Italian *Grammatica Pratica della Lingua Sidamo* (1978). Later, the missionary Bruno Maccani wrote *A small grammar of the Sidamo language* (1990).

References in these booklets indicate that the Comboni missionaries used previous linguistic studies on Sidaamu Afoo to develop their language skills. Examples are the studies focusing specifically on the Sidaama by the historian Enrico Cerulli (1936) and the linguist Mario Martino Moreno (1940). Enrico Cerulli's study *La Lingua e la Storia dei Sidamo* (1936) contains a basic description of the linguistic features of Sidaamu Afoo, with sections on phonetics, pronouns, and verb conjugations. This study applies Latin script to codify Sidaamu Afoo and contains a comparative lexicon and an Italian-Sidaamu Afoo vocabulary (Cerulli 1936). Mario Martino Moreno offers a more detailed description of linguistic features in *Manuale di Sidamo*. His study presents exercises, texts written in Latin script, and a bi-lingual glossary (Moreno 1940).

During the 1970s, the Bible Society of Ethiopia started translating the Bible into Sidaamu Afoo.⁵ Furthermore, this initiative raised interest in additional linguistic studies of Sidaamu Afoo. The Bible Society cooperated with the United Bible Society and various Christian missions, and there was a need for language learning material to support this work.

However, another factor that influenced the study of Sidaamu Afoo was the linguistic situation after the 1974 Revolution. In 1979, the Ethiopian government initiated a National Literacy Campaign

4 These sources can be found in libraries at these locations.

5 In 1984, the New Testament translation, *Haaro Gondooro* (Good News), was published. In 2015, the complete Bible Translation, including the Old Testament, was published.

that included local vernaculars in education to encompass ethnic plurality (Bahru Zewde 2004: 313-314). In 1992, after the transition of the Ethiopian government, the new policy of ethnic federalism supported ethnic groups to use their languages in primary education. Currently, Sidaamu Afoo uses Latin script. Nevertheless, linguists still discuss problems regarding the relationship between orthography and phonology in Sidaamu Afoo (Yri 2004: 11-12; Yri 2011: 159-160).

Furthermore, since the 1970s, there has been increased scientific interest in linguistic studies of Cushitic languages. A publication in 1976 about a subgroup of Cushitic languages in Southern Ethiopia written by linguist Grover Hudson (Hudson 1976) inspired additional linguistic work.

In this context, the linguistic practices conducted by the mission linguists during this period produced a text corpus. These texts were used as source material by other linguistic researchers. For example, the linguist Klaus Wedekind later reused a story by Gasparini (1978) *Bokkilli, and Arfu* as the data material basis for linguistic analysis (Wedekind 1990). In addition to Gasparini, research was conducted by the linguist Kjell Magne Yri who worked for the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, and who was working on the Bible translation in Sidaamu Afoo (Yri 1998). The linguistic studies initiated by the Comboni missionaries also became a reference for later linguists who wrote a more comprehensive grammar of Sidaamu Afoo, such as Anbessa Teferra (Anbessa Teferra 2012) and Kazuhiro Kawachi (Kawachi 2007). Finally, the dictionary produced by Gasparini (1984) also impacted the later Sidaama-Amharic-English Dictionary (Latamo *et al.* 2007).

4. Description of the *Sidamo-English dictionary* (Gasparini 1983)

In 1983, the mission linguistic practice conducted by the Comboni missionaries resulted in the publication of a bi-lingual dictionary. It was compiled under Bishop Armido Gasparini, the Apostolic Administrator of Hawassa, and edited through the publisher Editrice Missionaria Italiana (E.M.I.) in Bologna. The 1983 dictionary is an extended dictionary of Sidaamu Afoo in English (Gasparini 1983). The aim was pedagogical and intended to create a bi-lingual dictionary for a target audience of non-native learners, both missionaries and translators. In the introduction, Gasparini describes the contents in the following manner:

The dictionary contains more than 9.000 root-words, to which all the derived forms of the verb should be added. All the words and derived forms have been collected from a context of the spoken language, either directly from the mouth of the people or from stories, traditions, poems, proverbs and other written material. It can be said that all the words collected in the dictionary are used by the Sidamo people, although some of them are more commonly used in some districts and only rarely used in other parts of the country. As far as possible, all the derived forms of the verb have

been quoted under its radical simple form; here too, only those derived forms have been quoted that have been collected from the people's spoken language. The commonly used Plural forms of Nouns and Adjectives are also given, as well as the feminine forms of the Adjective (Gasparini 1983: VI).

The dictionary presents a quick-reference system based on alphabetical order and provides headwords with incremented forms. The structure of entries has variations depending on the headword. The headword is derived from the single root base of a verb as the primary citation form. New headwords indicate aspects such as causative, abstract nouns, and derivational formation. The dictionary uses Latin script orthography with English glosses for Sidaamu Afoo lexis and is based on its own system for transliteration of sounds from Sidaamu Afoo. In the foreword of the dictionary, Gasparini (1983) explains this system:

Alphabetical order. The words have been entered in the dictionary in the following order: A - ' - " - B - C - Ć - D - Đ - E - F - G - H - I - J - K - L
M - N - Ñ - O - P - Q - R - S - SH - T - T̄ - U - W - Y.

Notes

1. As it appears, the simple and strong form of the hiatus (' - ") , which is a real consonant, follows the letter A.
2. The letters with an explosive or other peculiar sound are marked with a dash (Ć , Đ , T̄) and follow the corresponding simple letter (C - D - T). Also the letter P has always an explosive sound (P̄). The letter Q is used for the explosive sound, whereas K stands for the simple sound. The letter C corresponds to the English ch, as in child; SSH represents the reduplication of SH.
3. The letter R, beside its normal sound, can have another special sound, between R and D. The R bearing this second special sound is marked with a dash (r̄) and follows the simple R. In the course of the Dictionary the dash under R is often omitted, when the conjugation of the Verb does not require it.

Short and long vowels.

Many words in Sidamo have different meanings according to whether they have a short or long vowel [. . .] In the Dictionary the words with the short vowel precede the words with the long vowel. The sign of a long vowel ^ has been omitted in some verbal forms [. . .]

Verbs with special endings.

Verbs ending in r̄. These verbs deserve a special attention, because of the phonetic changes in their conjugation (r̄ + t = 'd; r̄ + n = 'n). To help distinguish these special verbs from those with the simple R, a grammatical form with the phonetic changes is usually quoted after each verb [. . .] This rule applies to all Reflexive verbs [. . .]

Also for other special classes of verbs, a grammatical form indicating the phonetical changes is given [. . .] Take also note of Verbs ending in double SS or SSH (Causative forms and forms influenced by Oromo) [. . .] (Gasparini 1983: VII-VIII).

In the dictionary, language examples are provided with phrases, sometimes based on phrases with Christian content, such as references to biblical narratives and teachings. The following example shows how the verb *dâma* is explained:

dâma = to send an oral, not written message, to entrust, commit, exhort. Yesusi Hawariôtisira maçarrashu dânsa dâminonsa.= Jesus made His last exhortions to his Apostles. Dâme harino= after having trusted (his belongings) he went away. Yesusi Pētrosira sasè higè: gerèwo'ya allâli, ye dâmino. = Jesus entrusted to Peter his task saying three times: take care of my sheep. da'ma, Refl. dâmisisa, dâ'misisa, Caus. (Gasparini 1983: 86).

Furthermore, the dictionary contains more than lexical information. As pointed out by linguist Klaus Wedekind, Gasparini's dictionary contains a large amount of information about Sidaama culture on various topics (Wedekind 1990: 25). One example is how the dictionary provides information in entries about religious practices such as ancestor veneration or specific names of venerated ancestors:

woyoo, f. = What deserves honour; a holy place, as the places where the Sidamo ancestors are buried. This name is used to signify the special tree (different for every clan) under which the gada man, during the period of luwa, lives by himself for a period of time. The meaning in this case is: honoured tree (Gasparini 1983: 353).

Malga, m. indecl. = an ancestor of the Sidamo; name of a clan. Malga manni (Gasparini 1983: 361).

Further examples of cultural information in the dictionary are entries describing aspects of the Sidaama lunar calendar:

agana tunicco = 30 days. The Sidamo divide the month in two parts: 15 days of light (agana) and 15 days of darkness (tunicco). Tonà ontu barri tuniccohò, tonà ontu barri aganahò. Mittu tuniccinna mittu agani mittowà higè mitto aganâti. (Aganà tunicco yâ sajjô barrâti; kaenni tonà onte barrâti; tuniccuna qolê tonà onte barrâti). Aganu wo'mino ikkiha iltino = She has brought forth the child before the ninth month. Aganù bûda lêllino. = It is a new moon. Aganù qâqqohò. = It is a crescent, waxing moon. Aganù dukkâdurino. = It is a full moon. (Gasparini 1983: 6).

This entry included information about the author's observations on the Sidaama calendar system. In this system, the moon's phases start when the new moon becomes visible, followed by waxing and thereafter full moon. Furthermore, the Sidaama calendar divides the days of the month into 'days of light' and 'days of darkness.' Moreover, this calendar is the basis for an astrological system with divinatory practices related to observing and interpreting celestial cycles as divine communication

concerning human affairs. In this regard, the dictionary contains several entries describing how the Sidaama interpreted this astrological system:

algâjjimma, m. [. . .] According to the Sidamo astrologers, this is the first day following the conjunction of the moon with the constellation called Bûsa. The conjunction consists in the moon being seen on a straight line with the constellation. The algâjjimma is followed by 26 days, that are either auspicious or inauspicious (Gasparini 1983: 11-12).

basà, f. = Sidamo astrology; two days with the same name follow each other; they are called “mother and daughter.” The child born in such a day will often weep; in such a day it will rain. An auspicious day for sowing seeds and planting plants. These two days are the 4th and 5th beginning from algâjjima (Gasparini 1983: 33).

In addition, the dictionary provides detailed information about aspects of Sidaama astrology related to divinatory practices evaluating calendar days. This belief evaluated how positive and negative qualities for human affairs permeated time and days, resulting in auspicious or inauspicious days for specific actions.

So, why was such information included in the dictionary? Gasparini's introduction provides one explanation. Since the dictionary was intended for pedagogical relevance, it provided cultural knowledge for new missionaries and translators. However, another reason for the choices of cultural content in the dictionary was probably influenced by the contemporary developments of Catholic mission theology. The sessions of the Second Vatican Council were held from 1962 to 1965. One topic that emerged from the Second Vatican Council was rethinking the church's mission activities in the context of global Christianity. One concern was that mission activities promoted increased cultural sensitivity for local cultures in mission encounters. The Second Vatican Council resulted in an official teaching on inculturation. In this perspective, the aspect of culture is given the right to an independent existence within Christianity. Therefore, introducing Christianity into cultures involves adopting cultural values, customs and institutions that preserve the integrity of a culture (Lutzebak 1988: 109-111; Shorter 1988: 11-12; Bevans 2013: 108-109).

The new strategy for Catholic mission work likely influenced the interest in cultural aspects that are found in Gasparini's dictionary. On the other hand, one may question how the official church teachings on inculturation became expressed in practical mission contexts. Nevertheless, a further question is how the mission linguistic practices appropriated Sidaama religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, a further approach in this article is to analyse the interpretations of Sidaama beliefs and practices in the dictionary and analyse how the translation choices were made according to a Christian theological framework.

5. Translation practices: reuse of religious concepts, extensions of meaning, and use of loanwords

The translation of Sidaamu Afoo words into English in the dictionary may be analysed to discover certain translation practices. In this paragraph, the article will discuss some examples of these practices, such as the reuse of concepts, extension of meaning, and loan words. A closer analysis of the translation of central Sidaama religious concepts will show how the interpretation of Sidaama beliefs and practices evaluated certain religious concepts within a Christian framework.

One example of such practice in the dictionary is the concept from Sidaama religious and moral practice related to rules of conduct and forgiveness:

gata = to be left, remain, to be safe. *Godowù ganto* = she is with child. *gatona yâ* (Imper. *gato* and *a*) = to forgive. *gatisa*. Caus. = to cause to remain, hold back (tr.), to save. *gatisira*. Refl. of Caus. *Gatisiri* = he kept for himself. *Mannu gobba wo'manta gatisirè...* = If people win the whole world...*Hanni umokki gatisiri!* = Come, save yourself! (Gasparini 1983: 117).

Following this entry, the dictionary extended the concept of *gata* and ascribed it with meanings within a Christian framework and providing additional entries:

gatisânco, m. = Saviour.
gatò, f. = salvation, forgiveness, pardon [...] (Gasparini 1983: 117).

One meaning of the concept of *gata* denoted public moral acts of forgiveness in judicial contexts where people who had committed transgression towards the community had to beg for forgiveness in public from the Sidaama elder's clan council (Hamer 1987: 114-116). As linguist Kjell Magne Yri (1998) has pointed out, the concept is related to a wide range of meanings of being saved from bad, illness, destruction and pain. It existed as a term in Sidaamu Afoo before the introduction of Christianity, and was re-interpreted for a new context since it covered similar meaning (Yri 1998: 94-99, 130-133, 144-145).

The reinterpretation of concepts and extension of meaning went beyond merely pre-Christian moral practices. In the dictionary, there are also examples of translation of concepts from technical/practical activities extended with Christian meaning:

qullâwa = to be pure, clean (coffee), to be cleansed, purified, holy. *Insa qullâbbanno*. *Ki'ne qullâbbinnirêti* = You are all pure. *qullêssa*, Caus. = to clean (coffee), purify.
qullâwa, Adj. m. f. = pure, holy, purified. Pl. *qullawôta*. = the Saints. (The word is used especially in Wondo district. Its first meaning refers to coffee, that is peeled and cleaned). *Bunà qullâwa assinai*. = Coffee is purified (Gasparini 1983: 270-271).

This example shows how the mission linguistic practice attempted to extend the meaning of *qullâwa* to convey Christian concepts such as ‘purified’ and ‘holy.’ Furthermore, the translation also contains an extension of meaning that personalised the concept by introducing a plural meaning, *qullawôta*, to suggest a term for ‘the Saints.’

Furthermore, the translation practice introduced religious loanwords from Amharic and Latin into the *Sidamo-English dictionary*. The dictionary shows examples of Christian loanwords from Latin:

ferisawicca, m., Pl. ferisawiyâne, f = Pharisee (Gasparini 1983: 98).

Katolike, f. Coll. = Catholic (Gasparini 1983: 191).

Kristiânco [...]

kristianimma, f. = the condition of being a Christian (Gasparini 1983: 199).

During the 20th century, the Sidaama area became incorporated into the Ethiopian state, and the Amharic language had increasingly influenced Sidaamu Afoo. Therefore, the dictionary contains several Christian loanwords from Amharic:

masqala, m. = cross. Masqàlu malate assira = to cross oneself.

mazmurè, f. = Psalm (Gasparini 1983: 226-227).

Other examples of loanwords from Amharic are:

qaddase (Amh.) = to sanctify, celebrate the Mass. Qiddasete hûççatto qaddansemmo = we celebrate the Mass (Gasparini 1983: 253).

Amharic terms were applied to indicate Christian feast days. In addition, loanwords from Amharic were applied to convey Christian rituals and activities:

Fâsika, m. = Easter-feast (Gasparini 1983: 97).

ṭammaqa = to baptise. ṭammaqama, Pass. ṭammaqisisa, Caus. = to christen (said of the godparents) (Gasparini 1983: 322).

Furthermore, the dictionary translated combinations of Amharic and Latin loanwords. For example, the Amharic word *liq* (meaning scholar, expert, learned person) was combined with the Latinized term *pappa*:

Liqâne Pappasicca, m., Pl. Liqâne Papâsete, or: Liqâne Pappasôtu = the pope (Gasparini 1983: 210, se also 252).

Finally, the dictionary used loanwords from Amharic combined with concepts from Sidaamu Afoo related to religious practices:

adwâre, f. (Arabic, Ghe'ez) = a sacred place where sacrifices are offered. In the Sidamo Pr. (Primal Religion) such a place is under big trees.

adwârete haqqicco, f. (see: sadaqa) = the big tree under which sacrifices are made (Gasparini 1983: 5).

6. Translating a singular God

The Sidaama belief system had no generic term for religion but several concepts related to religious practices embedded in domestic and economic relations. One practice was related to ancestor veneration. In addition, there was the belief in spirits and spirit possession practices related to health and disease. Ritual specialists mediated these practices. Furthermore, there was also a conception of the existence of sky gods and creator beings (Vecchiato 1985: 235-238; Brøgger 1986: 71-73; Hamer and Hamer 1966: 393; Hamer 1987: 81-85). In a comparative Southern Ethiopian context, the concepts related to ancestor veneration, sky gods and spiritual beings among Sidaama have similarities with Oromo cosmology (Bartels 1983: 89-92, 120-121).

As the article has pointed out, the mission linguistic practice implied the reuse and extension of religious concepts from Sidaama religious practices. However, extensions became interpreted in terms of Christian theological concepts. This practice implied that some concepts became extended while others became omitted. The following examples show how the mission linguistic practice interpreted the concept of God, the attributes of God, and divine being (s).

One central religious concept reused was the Sidaamu Afoo concept for a divine being, *Magano*. In Sidaama religious practices, *Magano* was perceived as a male sky-god dwelling in heaven (Vecchiato 1985: 235-236; Brøgger 1986: 133; Hamer 1987: 81-82).

In the *Sidamo-English dictionary*, *Magano* was applied to translate God in a Christian context with the following entry:

Magano, m. (cfr. Mangu of Kenya and other countries = God. Pl. Magàanna, f. = the false divinities [...]) (Gasparini 1983: 219).

First of all, the dictionary shows a comparison with deities in other African contexts. However, on the other hand, the translation established a contrast towards a pluralistic concept of divinity ascribed as unfavourable and translated as ‘false divinities.’ A further aspect is that the translation of God was rendered as masculine. The Sidaamu Afoo concept of God was masculine and was easily translated and interpreted according to the Christian ideology of a singular, male, and monotheistic God.

However, this translation practice focused on the idea of an exclusive and transcendent God and thereby opposed the belief of other deities or spiritual beings. As such, the doctrine of monotheism contrasted the Sidaama belief in a plurality of divine beings. For example, the translation practice deemphasised the idea of a female deity inherent in Sidaama belief. *Magano* was believed to have a wife and feminine counterpart named *Bâtto*, goddess of earth, who had religious significance for the fertility of the soil (Vecchiato 1985: 237-238; Jensen et al. 2022: 113). In the *Sidamo-English dictionary*, the concept was retained and translated:

[...] According to Sidamo traditions, Maganu, masculine is the Father, Annu; Bâtto, fem. is the Mother-Earth, Ama (Gasparini 1983: 219).

bâtto, F. = earth, mother earth. Bâttote godowî giddo. = this word is used in sacrificial rites, while blood is sprinkled upwards and downwards. Magano îllitohe; bâtto agi! Bâtto ikkitohe (used instead of: Maganu ôhe) = thank you (Gasparini 1983: 35).

Although the concept was interpreted as ‘earth, mother earth,’ the translation underplays the divine significance of *Bâtto*, and the mutual role together with *Magano*. Instead, the interpretation of this concept was restricted to pre-Christian sacrificial contexts and connected to natural phenomena.

On the other hand, the dictionary retained other concepts in Sidaamu Afoo that emphasised the male God in the sense of creator:

Kalîqa, m. (ancient Sidamo word) = Creator. Isi kalîqâti. = He is the creator. Maganu su’mi Kalîqâti. = God’s name is “the creator.” Kalaqi Kalîqî (subj.) = The Creator. Who created. Kalîqira sagadde. = Adore the creator. (Gasparini 1983: 188).

In this entry, the translation interpreted the role of a male creator as an attribute of *Magano* and emphasised the singular male God as an active creator.

In addition, the *Sidamo-English dictionary* omitted other celestial deities present in Sidaama religious practice. One of these was related to sky-deities. For example, according to the anthropologist John H. Hamer, the concept of *Banko* referred to a sky-deity of thunder and lightning (Hamer 1987: 81-82). However, in the dictionary, the concept was retained but merely translated as a natural phenomenon:

banqò, f. = thunder (that can kill) [...] (Gasparini 1983: 30).

As such, examples in the dictionary show that the translation practice reused religious concepts but translated these according to a Christian ideology, emphasising one exclusive God among an ambivalence of deities. The result in the dictionary produced a religious homogenisation of pluralistic concepts prevalent in Sidaama belief and religious practices. The result focused on the exclusiveness of a universal God while denouncing a plurality of Sidaama deities.

7. Interpreting a singular Devil

The Sidaamu Afoo language contained different categories to describe spirit beings. One example was the concept of *shêtâne*, a loanword itself, which represented possession spirits, and *ekera*, that designated spirits of dead ancestors (Brøgger 1986: 60, 86-88; Vecchiato 1985: 244). Spiritual beings were believed to be ambivalent with both benevolent and malevolent qualities. *Shêtâne* was closely related to explanations about disease causation, i.e., being possessed by spirit beings due to an imbalance in the relationship between humans and spiritual beings. Therefore, Sidaama religious practices focused on rituals in order to maintain an equilibrium between human and spiritual beings (Vecchiato 1985: 247-250; Vecchiato 1993: 179-180; Brøgger 1986: 59-63; Hamer 1987: 84-85; Jensen et al. 2022: 124-126).

The mission linguistic translation practice reduced and transformed the meaning of these concepts and their relationship to humans. In the dictionary, the concepts for spirit beings were translated as:

shêtâne, m., Pl. *shêtàanna*, f. = the devil. *shêtànâmo*, m., *shêtânâme*, f. = devilish (Gasparini 1983: 302).

ekerà, f. = ghost, something that frightens, as the image of a dead person that one thinks to see at night. *Ekerâte!* = He is a ghost! It also means that somebody has only a breach of life left. (Gasparini 1983: 90).

In the case of *ekerà*, the concept was translated as a ‘ghost’ of a dead person in general and not related to belief and practices connected to ancestor veneration. Although the concept *shêtâne* had a plural meaning, the dictionary only provided the singular translation as ‘devil’ and ‘devilish’ to refer to the personification of evil according to a Christian ideology. Although the dictionary downplayed the plural understanding of spirits, it retained such understandings by indicating names of demons in Sidaama religious practices and the relation to disease:

âbbò, f. (âbbôti) = name of a demon (Gasparini 1983: 2).

âyyo, f. = name of a demon. âyyukko, F. = disease. (this is an old word that was used by the ancients for a disease that could not be defined). Cfr. Fayya (Gasparini 1983: 22).

The Sidaama belief in *shêtâne* was part of a wider Ethiopian mythology about the origin of spiritual beings. The translation choice of *shêtâne* as God's adversary is probably influenced by a similar meaning in Amharic. The existence of this concept in Sidaamu Afoo is likely a loanword and a result of the historical interaction between Islam and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Southern Ethiopia. This intersection resulted in syncretic religious practices moulding together elements of Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religions (Haberland 1964: 237-238; Reminick 1974: 286; Braukämper 1992: 195-197; Jensen et al. 2022: 107-108.).

On the one hand, the entry in the *Sidamo-English dictionary* used singular concept for God's adversary. On the other hand, entries retained the connection between the spiritual belief system and medical explanations, but also by relating this to the singular 'devil':

shêtânâwa = to be bedevilled. The Sidamo blame on the devil many diseases (Gasparini 1983: 302).

In the Sidaama belief system, these spirits were perceived to materialise in individual persons as possessions and exorcism, and the dictionary described these practices:

hayyâta (cfr. hayyô'ma) = to exorcise a person possessed by the devil. Isi hayyâtanno. = he begins to sing the songs to exorcise. The verb properly means: to consult the devil, who is believed to inhibit certain persons (shêtânâmo), who act as medium. The acolytes of the medium intone songs that provoke a state of excitement in the medium, who gives the responses; at the end he will impose an offering (Gasparini 1983: 152).

However, the dictionary entry focused on possession and the relationship to spiritual beings as 'the devil.' The translation did not encompass the plurality of spirit beings nor the broader Sidaama spiritual and medical understanding of the relationship to spirit beings.

According to anthropological observations made during the same period, the spiritual possession cults were an integrated part of a system of reciprocity and exchange between members of households and spirit beings (Brøgger 1986: 72-75). On the other hand, possession ceremonies were claimed to be in decline in the decades after the Ethiopian occupation of Sidaama in the early 20th century. Later, this process continued due to socio-religious changes such as the conversion to Christianity and the 1974 Ethiopian socialist revolution (Hamer 1987: 84-86). But on the other hand, similar religious

practices became an integrated part of healing rituals performed among Muslims and in Protestant and Orthodox Christianity (Vecchiato 1993: 180-181).

8. Explaining moral relations of good and evil

Other concepts describe spirit beings in the Sidaamu Afoo language. *Shêtâne* is related to possessing spirits, while *ayyâna* is related to an (animistic) conception of life forces believed to permeate material and immaterial forms. It could be transferred between people (from father or mother) or attached to specific physical places (e.g., ancestor graves, mountains, rocks, trees, and rivers) (Hamer 1987: 84).

In the dictionary, the translation of this concept was:

ayyâna, m. Pl. ayyâna, f. = a spirit, good or bad; grace, spirit, feast. ayyânunnire (Acc.) = the things that regard the spirit. Ayyânu jirò = treasure. Shêtânu mulla ayyânahollà; Maganuno hatto ayyâna callahò. = The devil is a simple spirit, and God is a spirit. According to Sidamo astrology, ayyâna is the name given to the auspicious or inauspicious days, that are counted beginning from algâjjima (Gasparini 1983: 22).

The translation shows how the plural understanding was translated into a singular meaning as 'a spirit' with the oppositions of 'good or 'bad.' On the other hand, further translation suggestions also contain ambivalence regarding this concept. One suggested translation is the theological meaning of 'grace' as a blessing or favour. Moreover, the translation included a contrast between good and evil spirits. On the other hand, also suggests 'God is a spirit' and relates the concept to Sidaama astrology. As pointed out, the Sidaama belief was based on the idea that spiritual beings could be both benevolent and malevolent. In this regard, the translation of concepts related to spiritual beings and forces shows how mission linguistic practice attempted to evaluate these entities according to a moral language and the dualism between good and evil.

Furthermore, the mission linguistic practice also imposed moral evaluation of other Sidaama religious activities and several entries in the dictionary attempted to show how good and evil qualities materialised in practitioners and activities:

[...] kîlânco, m. f. = sorcerer. Pl. kîlâno, f. kîlo, m. = witchcraft, magic, guess, estimate (Gasparini 1983: 194).

qâllicca, m., qâllicte, f., Pl. qâllôle, f. = wizard, sorcerer, chief of the clan [...] (Gasparini 1983: 255).

bita = a) to do the work of a wizard, sorcerer, Bitâmu bitanno = the sorcerer does his work. B) to be malicious, to do bad deeds...sometime he exercises medicine [...] (Gasparini 1983: 41).

budakko, m. f., Pl. buda, f. (budate) = a man who, in the people's opinion, brings misfortune by his bad influence. Buda (budate), f. = evil eye, misfortune (Gasparini 1983: 47).

By relating such activities to good and bad qualities, the dictionary attempted to expose moral ideas and ascribe these to evil and sinful activities. However, on the other hand, other concepts related to indigenous Sidaama medical activities were translated and transformed with a positive and modernised role:

ṭaginâte, m.= medicine, what can be used as medicine; medical treatment. Kuni (tini) ṭaginâteho ikkanno (ikkitano). This is good as medicine, can be used as a medicine. ṭaginâtira ikkanno haqqicci. = A plant that is used as medicine. Qarârco ṭaginâte afi'dino. = The plant called q. has medical properties.

ṭagisâncho, m., Pl. ṭagisâsine, f. = doctor (Gasparini 1983: 322).

In this context, the mission activities developed parallel to the introduction of modern medical services. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Catholic mission in Sidaama established several mission stations and clinics in rural localities, such as Tullo, Fullasa, Shafina, Teticcha and Dongora (Alberto 2013: 504-505).

The modern medical facilities introduced medical methods that challenged Sidaama therapeutical practices. Therefore, translating concepts connected to good and bad qualities also downplayed traditional practices. As such, the mission linguistic practice was not merely about theological concepts but also related to an understanding of the healing of the physical and spiritual body. As the article has pointed out earlier, Sidaama practices understood illness as disequilibrium with spiritual beings, which could be secured through negotiation and offerings to spirit beings. On the other hand, modern medical clinics introduced effective medical services as an alternative. In his study of health practices in Sidaama, anthropologist Norbert Vecchiato found that converts to Christianity selected modern medicine more frequently than adherents to Sidaama religious practices (Vecchiato 1985: 506-507). But on the other hand, possession rituals also became an integrated part of Protestant, Moslem and Orthodox religious practices, sustaining continuity (Vecchiato 1993: 180-181).

9. Transforming religious concepts: concluding discussion

The examples discussed in the previous sections raise questions regarding mission linguistic practices. The development of the dictionary took place in the intersections between Sidaama converts, Catholic missionaries, other global missions, linguistic scholars and the language policies of the Ethiopian state. In this regard, the mission linguistic practices were part of a representational economy in a historical

and social context (Keane 2007). First of all, the dictionary was primarily intended for other missionaries and translators as an attempt to constitute a Christian discourse in the Sidaamu Afoo language. Therefore, the dictionary shows how the mission linguistic practice attempted to produce knowledge for the missionaries' requirements. However, consequently, these practices also entailed framing ways of perceiving aspects of Sidaama religious worldviews. By doing this, the construction of the dictionary created a standardised and static arrangement of words. As such, the dictionary is a reification of meaning, but still it provides interesting insight into how missionaries rationalised language and attempted to transform religious concepts.

Furthermore, as discussions in comparative African contexts suggest, mission linguistic activities (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Landau 1995; Walls 1996; Peterson 1997; Meyer 1999, Peel 2000) contains asymmetrical power relations between the involved parties. Following this, it may be questioned how similar issues surfaced in the production of the *Sidamo-English dictionary*. This asymmetry relates to the imbalance due to social, economic and institutional capabilities and how these factors influenced the understanding and knowledge about religious beliefs and practices. From the outset, members of the Catholic mission as an institution initiated the collection of material for the dictionary. There were Sidaama converts who worked as language assistants, but their role in forming the content was outside the scope of this enquiry.

The mission linguistic practice occurred at the intersection between different languages, resulting in the dictionary as a hybrid language construction. The dictionary attempted to introduce a religious vocabulary to bridge the knowledge and linguistic gap between the Sidaama religious practices and Christian discourse. As such, the dictionary promoted linguistic innovations, introducing new word lexemes and meanings for practical reasons related to proselytisation. In addition, the focus on cultural knowledge in the entries indicates that the mission linguists were observant and sensitive to aspects of Sidaama religious practices. In this regard, the development of the dictionary took place in the decades after the Second Vatican Council. This influenced sensitivity to cultural contexts as part of global Catholic mission practices.

Although such working principles may have been prevalent in the interreligious encounter, the article has indicated that the construction of the dictionary indicates asymmetrical relations. As pointed out, the work on the dictionary was initiated by an institutional agent with intellectual resources and financial capabilities to produce literary materials. Moreover, although the idea of inculturation in mission practice attempts to adopt Sidaama religious knowledge and explanations, the idea of inculturation ultimately seeks to transform the religious and philosophical system of a target culture and language.

The analysis of entries reveals that the translation of religious concepts was theologically situated. As such, meanings were rationalised and interpreted according to Christian theology. In this practice, religious, non-religious, and philosophical concepts were applied from the Sidaamu Afoo language and reworked to accommodate Christian concepts. Such translation practice points to the power of definition in a dictionary. Structural differences between Christian and the Sidaama cosmology had to be compensated. In this process, concepts were translated according to the Christian understanding, while others were disregarded. The article has pointed out how central concepts, e.g., the Godhead, *Magano*, was appropriated in the Christian context and translated into the idea of a celestial, monotheistic God. Another translation practice constructed a contrasting cosmology, and the Christian understanding evaluated spiritual forces as good and evil. The evil forces were merged into the idea of Satan, God's adversary, and attributed with evil. On the other hand, spiritual entities were related to blessings emanating from God, rendered with positive qualities, and transformed into a moral economy of good and evil.

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“Of madness and sagacity”

An intercultural dialogue between masks in Luigi Pirandello’s and Penina Muhando’s plays (Part Two)

Cristina Nicolini

This paper stems from the challenge of translating Pirandello’s plays into Swahili and is aimed to open up a polylogue between Italian and Swahili literature. Therefore, in searching for connections between Luigi Pirandello’s and Penina Muhando’s plays, this paper will explore multiple masks engaged in a reciprocal dialogue among the following six selected plays: *Enrico IV* (‘Henry IV,’ Pirandello 1921); *Così è, Se vi pare* (‘It is so, if you think so!’ Pirandello 1917); *Il Berretto a Sonagli* (‘Cap and bells,’ Pirandello 1916); *Pambo* (‘Decoration,’ Muhando 1975); *Nguzo mama* (‘The Mother Pillar,’ Muhando 1982); and *Lina ubani* (‘An Antidote to Rot,’ Muhando 1984). In conclusion, this study will illustrate how different forms of sociohistorical alienation, which encircle the twentieth century, are stylistically represented in these plays through the characters who wear the masks of madness, or ‘sage-madness.’ To allow an in-depth analysis of the plays this study will be divided into two parts. Part one will examine *Enrico IV* (‘Henry IV,’ Pirandello 1921) and *Pambo* (‘Decoration,’ Muhando 1975). Part Two will examine *Così è, Se vi pare* (‘It is so, if you think so!’ Pirandello 1917); *Nguzo mama* (‘The Mother Pillar,’ Muhando 1982); *Il Berretto a Sonagli* (‘Cap and bells,’ Pirandello 1916); and *Lina ubani* (‘An Antidote to Rot,’ Muhando 1984).

Keywords: Swahili literature; theatre; comparative literature; comparative philosophy; translation Studies; Luigi Pirandello; Penina Muhando; alienation; masks; madness; sage-madness.

6. Madness as plural epistemologies¹

6.1. *Così è (Se vi pare)* (‘It Is So, (If You Think So),’ 1917)

Così è, Se vi pare, which I translated into Swahili as *Hivyo ndivyo mambo yalivyo, ukipenda hivyo*, is a comedy in three acts, which deals with the nonexistence of absolute truth or objective reality. Each person has their own truth that changes according to the observation point. The identity of a person is simply

¹ Part One of this article has been published in *Kervan* 27 (2023).

whatever they believe it to be, and there is no objective truth, as demonstrated by the character of Lamberto Laudisi, who represents the authorial voice and the philosopher of gnoseological relativism.

The plot of the play revolves around the investigations conducted by the inhabitants of a small Italian province, who are curious to discover the hidden secrets of the new residents, Mr and Mrs Ponza and her mother, Mrs Frola. Indeed, Mrs Frola is living separately from her relatives and seems to interact only with Mr Ponza, while she never meets with her own daughter, Mrs Ponza, whom no one could see either. Hence, Mrs Ponza’s real identity remains shrouded in mystery, and the explanations provided are multiple and relative: firstly, according to Mr Ponza, she is Giulia, his second wife, who is just pretending to be Mrs Frola’s daughter. In fact, Mrs Frola became mad after the death of her daughter Lina (Mr Ponza’s first wife). Secondly, according to Mrs Frola, Mr Ponza, who was extremely jealous of his wife Lina (Mrs Frola’s daughter): a “frenzy of love” (Pirandello 1995: 166), became mad after a period of separation from his spouse. In fact, Lina needed to be cured in a sanatorium and once she came back home, Mr Ponza refused to recognise his own wife; thus, Lina started pretending to be another woman, Giulia. Finally, according to Mrs Ponza, the truth is whatever you desire it to be.

The philosopher Laudisi leads the play by giving alienating laughs throughout the performance:

Original

Laudisi: [...] tutt’al più, farò tra me e me qualche risata; e se me ne scapperà qualcuna forte, mi scuserete. (Pirandello 1986: 446)

Translations²

Laudisi: [...] Pengine, nitacheka moyoni mwangu na nikitoo kicheko fulani kikubwa mtanisamehe.

Laudisi: [...] At the very most, I’ll have a laugh or two to myself, and if once in a while a loud laugh slips out, you will just have to forgive me! (Pirandello 1995: 149)

The other characters are chasing after a non-existent truth to unveil Mrs Ponza’s identity. However, no documents can help the citizens’ inquisitory research, for there exist no absolute truth.

² All the translations of Pirandello’s plays from Italian to Swahili in this paper are mine if not otherwise indicated. I acknowledge William Mkufya, a Swahili and English bilingual writer and translator, for proofreading my translations from Swahili to English of Muhando’s plays.

Ponza: *La signora Frola è pazza.*

Ponza: *Non pare, ma è pazza. E la sua pazzia consiste appunto nel credere che io non voglia farle vedere la figliola. [...]S'ostina a credere che non è vero che sua figlia sia morta, ma che io voglia tenermela tutta per me, senza fargliela più vedere.*

(Pirandello 1986: 458-459)

Ponza: *Bi. Frola ni mwendawazimu.*

Ponza: *Haonekani, lakini ni mwendawazimu kwa sababu anaamini kwamba mimi ninamzuia amwone mwanae. [...] Anaendelea kumfikiria mwanae bado yu hai [hajafa kweli], bali [anadhani] kwamba ndio mimi ninayetaka kumchukua mtoto wake kwa ajili yangu tu na nifanye asimwone tena*

Ponza: *Mrs Frola is insane, mad.*

Ponza: *She doesn't seem to be, but she is mad! And her madness consists precisely in believing that I do not want to let her see her daughter. [...] She insists on believing that it is not true her daughter is dead, but instead that I want to keep her daughter all to myself and never allow her to see her again. (Pirandello 1995: 159-160)*

Signora Frola: Non è, non è un pazzo! [...] Credette davvero che la moglie fosse morta [...]... E per fargliela riprendere, con l'aiuto degli amici, si dovette simulare un secondo matrimonio. (Pirandello 1986: 465)

Bi Frola: Hapana, sio kichaa! [...] Kwa kweli, alifikiri mke wake amefariki [...] ili amkaribishe tena, tumeigiza harusi nyingine, pamoja na rafiki waliotusaidia.

Mrs Frola: [...] He is not mad; he is not crazy. [...] He believed that his wife was truly dead. [...] And to get him to accept her again, with the help of friends we had to pretend to have a second wedding. (Pirandello 1995: 166)

Laudisi: Vi guardate tutti negli occhi? Eh! La verità? Scoppietà a ridere forte: Ah! Ah! Ah! (Pirandello 1986: 466)

Laudisi: Je, mnatazamana nyote machoni? Enhe! Ukweli uko wapi?

*Ataangua kicheko kikubwa: Ha! Ha!
Haa!*

Laudisi: So, there you are taking a good look at each other. Ah, ha! And the truth? [Bursts out laughing.] ha, ha , ha, ha!
(Pirandello 1995: 167)

There is no way to distinguish between true and false, because both are relative and contingent concepts.

Laudisi: [...] Ed eccovi dannati al meraviglioso supplizio d'aver davanti, accanto, qua il fantasma e qua la realtà, e di non poter distinguere l'uno dall'altra! (Pirandello 1986: 469)

Laudisi: [...] Na hapa mmelaaniwa kwa mateso ya ajabu ya kuwa mbele ya, kati ya mzimu (wigo) na ukweli, bila kuweza kutofautisha mmoja na mwingine!

Laudisi: [...] and so you are here, damned to the marvellous torment of finding here before your eyes on the one hand a world of fantasy and on the other a world of reality, and you are unable to distinguish one from the other. (Pirandello 1995: 170)

The identity of a person is fragmented, split among one, no one and one hundred thousand, leading to self-alienation or madness:

Laudisi: [...] (mentre parla con la sua immagine nello specchio) Eh caro! Chi è il pazzo di noi due? [...] -Il guajo è che, come ti vedo io, non ti vedono gli altri! E allora, caro mio, che diventi tu? [...] Un fantasma, caro, un fantasma! - Eppure, vedi questi pazzi? Senza badare al fantasma che portano con sé, in se stessi, vanno correndo, pieni di

Laudisi: : [...] (huku akiongea na sura yake kiooni) Mpenzi wangu! Mwendawazimu ni nani, mimi au wewe? [...] - Taabu ni kwamba, mi nakuona kwa jinsi ambavyo wengine hawakuoni! Kwa hiyo, rafiki'angu, wewe u nani? [...] Mzimu, rafiki, mzimu! - Lakini, unaona vichaa hawa? Bila kujali na mzimu ambaye wanambeba nao, ndani mwao,

curiosità, dietro il fantasma altrui!
(Pirandello 1986: 472-473)

*wenye udadisi wanafuatafuata
mzimu wa mtu mwingine!*

Laudisi: [...] (he looks at his image and start speaking to it)
[...] Tell me, old friend, which one of the two of us is crazy? [...] The trouble is that other people just do not see you the way I do! And so then, dear friend, what becomes of you? [...] A ghost, my friend, a ghostly image! And yet, you see all these crazy people? Paying no attention to that image they carry around with them, inside themselves, they run around full of curiosity, chasing after the ghostly image of others. (Pirandello 1995: 170)

Madness represents the union of body and soul; language and image re-joining the disjointed image in the mirror with the image seen by the naked eye. The language of madness speaks out loud the “truth of madness” (Foucault 2001: 95).

*Laudisi: (riderà al suo solito): Ah! Ah!
Ah!* (Pirandello 1986: 480)

*Laudisi: (atacheka kama kawaida
yake): Ha, ha, ha ...*

Laudisi: (with his usual laugh): Ha, ha, ha ... (Pirandello 1995: 180)

*Ponza: [...] che io le gridi così la verità,
come fosse una mia pazzia?*
(Pirandello 1986: 486)

*Ponza: [...] Hebu, nimwambie ukweli
kwa sauti kama ukiwa ni kichaa
changu?*

Ponza: [...] I have to shout out the truth that way, as if it were part of my madness? (Pirandello 1995: 184)

The actual truth is finally stated by Mrs Ponza: *mimi ni mtu yule ambaye wengine wananiamini niwe!* – “*Per me, io sono colei che mi si crede*” (‘I am the one you believe me to be’):

*Signora Ponza: - si; e per me
nessuna! Nessuna!*

*Signora Ponza: Nossignori. Per me,
io sono colei che mi si crede.
(Pirandello 1986: 509)*

*Bi Ponza: ndiyo; kwangu mimi
hakuna! Hakuna!*

*Bi Ponza: Hapana, mabwana. Kwa
maoni yangu, mimi ndimi mtu yule
wengine wananiamini niwe.*

Mrs Ponza: Yes. And for myself
no one! I am no one!

Mrs Ponza: No, ladies and
gentlemen, I am the one you
believe me to be. (Pirandello
1995: 206)

*Laudisi: Ed ecco, o signori, come
parla la verità! (scoppierà a ridere):
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! (Pirandello 1986:
509)*

*Laudisi: Hivyo ndivyo, jamani,
unavyoongea ukweli! (ataangua
kicheko): Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!*

Laudisi: There you have it, my
friends, that’s the voice of truth!
(Bursts out laughing) Ha! Ha! Ha!
Ha! (Pirandello 1995: 206)

6.2. *Nguzo Mama* (‘The Mother-Pillar,’ 1982)

Nguzo Mama is a play in four acts that deals with women’s liberation against patriarchy, and which expresses all Muhando’s creative genius, bridging traditional performative arts in a modern context. In fact, she decorates the play with storytelling, several types of *ngoma* ethnic dances and songs, as well as the dialogic style poetry of *majibizano* typical of the *ngonjera*, a poetic style which consists in a “dramatized poem-play” (Askew 2015), and which was created by Mathias Mnyampala³ (Mnyampala 1970; Roy 2013; Rettovà 2016).

³ Mnyampala invented the *ngonjera* in 1964, by merging a dramatized dialogical poetic style typical of his Gogo culture and other Tanzanian ethnicity with the *shairi* metre of Swahili poetry, but without music (Bertoncini 2002). During the Tanzanian socialist era, the *ngonjera* was a popular didactic instrument used to “teach the masses,” particularly in schools, on the principles of *ujamaa* contained in the Arusha Declaration through this ‘dispute’ like style (Blommaert 1997).

The play expresses “Tanzanian’s social sickness” (Sanga 2021): gender inequality and economic imbalances after the “economic disillusionment” produced by the failure of *ujamaa* politics and the implementation of neoliberal policies (1980s), which became a common motif in post-independence Swahili fiction. In particular, this disillusioned condition is connected to periods of great crisis, such as drought, famine, and the Tanzania-Uganda war from 1978 to 1984 (Wakota 2014). Especially women, who participated side by side with men in the labour of *ujamaa*, were not equally recompensated afterwards (Wakota 2014). Even though women’s liberation is the first step for the freedom of a nation, which cannot otherwise develop (Kruger 1998), women were enslaved by care of men, baby-sitting, and housekeeping duties.

The core symbol of this play is “the mother-pillar,” which is a wooden simulacrum⁴ representing woman’s power and potentialities as “Mother Earth” (Acquaviva p.c.). It symbolises unity, solidarity, and recognition of women’s roles as the foundation of the society, but it cannot stand because of the actual lack of unity and solidarity, as well as women discrimination. Indeed, the wooden simulacrum cannot be raised because of women’s fragmentation, and it will not stand until the female gender finds the strength of their unity. The characters in this play are eight unnamed women, who cover all women’s traditional roles in society: mothers, wives and prostitutes, whose oppressed and marginalized conditions are narrated.

The play open with a parodos song and it closes with the very same exodus song producing a choral structure (Mutembei 2012) that revolves around the metaphor of the “mother-pillar” of society that cannot be raised as well as the issue of how women’s liberation can finally be achieved:

Mkarara: Nguzo Mama, Nguzo Mama

*Tukupambaje maua*⁵

Tukupambaje maua

(Muhando 2010: 1; 75)

Refrain: Mother-pillar, Mother-pillar

Shall we decorate you with flowers

Shall we decorate you with flowers

[‘how can women’s liberation finally be?’]

⁴ Cf. the tradition of the Zaramo people carving *Mwanahiti*. *Mwanahiti* is a wood carved doll, which represents the female body and symbolises fertility. These statuettes are highly symbolic ritual objects used during female rites of passage to adulthood (Swantz 1986; Nicolini 2021).

⁵ The flowers as children of the Mother Earth are female symbols in Swahili classical poetry; for instance, the poetry *Ua* (‘Flower’) by Shaaban Robert quoted in Acquaviva (2016: 198) and in Khamis and Topan (2006).

*Ritornello: Pilastro-madre, pilastro-
madre*

Dovremmo forse decorarti con dei fiori

Dovremmo forse decorarti con dei fiori

*[‘Come può avvenire la liberazione
femminile?']⁶*

The play is built around two narrative authorities: Bi Msimulizi, the female external narrator, alongside her alter ego Chizi (‘crazy’ in colloquial Swahili), the crazy woman. Bi Msimulizi is also a choral character, who links the acts of the play inside the frame of a traditional tale, explains the events as performed by the actors, and triggers spectators’ thoughts (Mutembei 2012). Chizi is a “superior narrative authority” (Kruger 1998: 63), a rational external observer, and a “choral-sage” (Nicolini 2022). The two narrative voices are playing the game of opposites between madness and rationality, as well as between the historical past of the fictional village of Patata and its present, where there is no more space for women, who are abused. Therefore, ‘women’s liberation’ continues to be like a pillar stuck in the mud that cannot be raised:

Bibi Msimulizi:

pesa zikapatikana

hizo hizo pombe zikanunua

na ile NGUZO MAMA

Udongoni ikabakia

(Muhando 2010: 20)

The female narrator:

the money was collected

And all types of alcoholic
beverages were purchased

while the mother-pillar

remained stuck into the mud

La Narratrice:

Il denaro fu raccolto

*È varie bevande alcoliche furono
comprate*

Mentre il pilastro-madre

Rimase nel fango

⁶The Italian version has been added to create a parallel between the two works of translation, i.e. in Pirandello’s case from Italian to Swahili and in Muhando’s case from Swahili into Italian.

Chizi is the artist who embodies rationality camouflaged behind the veiling mask of madness and who truly describes what is currently happening in the village of Patata. Chizi is a clever character not to be misjudged or undervalued.

Bi Msimulizi:

*[...] lakini alikuwepo mmoja hodari
msanii*

*Walizoea wapatata kumwita eti
Chizi*

*Si kama kweli chizi walimwengu
huwawezi*

*Walimpa hilo jina kwa vile bila
kujali*

*Mkubwa au kabwela, uwanjani au
ufichoni*

Ukweli alijisemea

Kwa kupiga lake rimba

*Maneno kuyapamba na ngoma
kujichezea*

Ukweli alitoboa

(Muhando 2010: 36)

The female narrator:

[...] however, there was a talented
artist

Whom the people of *Patata* usually
called the crazy woman

Not because she was really crazy

Yet, she obtained that funny name
because she was so courageous that
she would not be intimidated by
whomever was present

the powerful or powerless people, in
the open ground or hiding
somewhere

She would always state the truth

By playing her *rimba*

By adorning her words and by
performing with drums

She would always pierce the truth

La Narratrice:

[...] tuttavia c'era un artista talentuoso

*Che gli abitanti di Patata solevan
chiamare la pazza*

Non perchè fosse realmente pazza

*Quel nome le fu attribuito perchè non si
curava*

*Dei potenti o dei miserabili, apertamente
o in segreto*

Lei non poteva non dire la verità

Danzando la sua rimba

*Decorando le parole e danzando la
ngoma*

Perforava sempre la verità

Chizi is wearing the mask of ‘sage-madness:’

<i>CHIZI: chizi mie chizi mie</i>	The crazy: I am the crazy one; I am the crazy one
<i>[...]nimeishi siku nyingi</i>	I have lived for long
<i>Na mengi nimeyaona</i>	And I have seen many unsaid things
<i>[...] lakini haya ya Patata</i>	However, what is affecting <i>Patata</i>
<i>Sijui niite vita au niite ugonjwa</i>	I don’t know if it can be called a war or an epidemic
<i>Labda tuite njaa</i>	Maybe let’s call it famine
<i>[...] njaa ya kukosa umoja</i>	Famine for we have been deprived of our communal unity
<i>Kukosa ushirikiano</i>	and cooperation
(Muhando 2010: 37-39)	

La pazza: Sono pazza, sono pazza
[...] ho vissuto a lungo
E ne tante ne ho viste
[..] ma questa di Patata
Non so se chiamarla guerra o epidemia
Forse si potrebbe chiamare fame
[...] fame per esser stati privati dell’unità
E cooperazione sociale

Chizi uncovers and denounces all socio-political issues of the country as “the wise men or women capable of criticizing the current society, imposing their opinion, expressing the truth and teaching people, leading their society towards development” (Oruka 1990: 59):

<i>CHIZI: [...]Waoneni watu hawa</i>	The crazy: look at these people
<i>Hawapendi demokrasia</i>	They don’t like democracy
<i>Nikisema yote mie</i>	If I explain everything,
<i>Wananiita mie chizi</i>	they will call me crazy
<i>Chizi mie au nyie</i>	But who is the crazy one, am I or you?
<i>Ambao macho mwakodoa</i>	You who have your eyes fixedly stare?

[...] *nawaambia kuna woga*

[...] *ukweli wanaojua*

Kimya wajinyamazia

Au kama chizi hapa

Vicheko wajicheka

(Muhando 2010: 39-40)

I'm telling you that you are meek
and timid

Because you know the truth

Yet you remain silent

Or like the crazy fool I am

Laugh away [the untold truth]!

*La Pazza: [...] Ma guardate queste
persone*

Che non apprezzano la democrazia

Se dico tutto quel che so

Mi chiamano pazza

Ma la pazza sono io o voi

Che ve ne state a guardare

[...] *io vi dico che avete paura*

[...] *conoscete la verità*

Ma tacete

O come la folle pazza che sono io

Ridete fragorosamente la verità

CHIZI: Kazi yote anafanya Bi Pili

Matunda ale Bwana Sudi

Jasho lake Bi Pili

Laishia kilabuni

(Muhando 2010: 60)

The crazy: all the work is done by
Bi Pili

But the fruits of her hard work are
eaten by Mr Sudi

All earnings from Bi Pili's sweat

End at the beer club

*La Pazza: Tutto il lavoro lo fa la
signora Pili*

*Affinchè i frutti se li goda il signor
Sudi*

Il sudore della signora Pili

Finisce al bar

CHIZI: Jamani wacheni nicheke.

(Muhando 2010:61)

CHIZI: Binadamu wote sawa

The crazy: Please let me laugh.

All human beings are equal

*Lakini wengine ni sawa zaidi*⁷

CHIZI: [...] *mie chizi kila mtu anajua*

CHIZI: [...] *Wala simjui, wala sielewi kitu. Amueni wenyewe.*

(Muhando 2010: 66)

But some of them are more equal

I am crazy, everybody knows

Neither do I know, nor do I understand a thing. Please judge as you wish

La Pazza: Sissignori, Lasciate che io rida

La Pazza: Gli esseri umani sono tutti uguali

Ma alcuni di loro lo sono di più

La Pazza: [...] io sono pazza, tutti quanti lo sanno [...] né so, né capisco nulla.

Giudicate voi a vostro piacimento.

Particularly, Chizi is a partisan for women’s liberation against patriarchal legacies. Indeed, the performativity of songs shapes individual’s gendered behaviour according to historical and socio-cultural constructions (Sanga 2011: 351-352; Butler 1993) by both reproducing and challenging the accumulated gender norms of the society. Sometimes, by establishing gender norms and behaviour for a society, performative acts can produce an effect of “cultural tyranny” (Anzaldúa 1987; Sanga 2011: 353) to be contested:

Chizi: [...] *ingawa mwaniona mie chizi*

Machози yangu aghali

Kamwe sitayatoa kwa sababu ya hilo dume

(Muhando 2010: 67)

CHIZI: “*Sijui lolote mie, Najua kuzaa tu!*” [...] *ni wimbo wa unyagoni*

(Muhando 2010: 69)

Even though I appear crazy to you

My tears are precious

And I will never shed them because of a lousy man

“I know nothing, all I know is to bear children!” This is what the *unyago*⁸ song says.

⁷ Cf. George Orwell’s *The Animal Farm* (1945): “all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others,” which was translated in Swahili by Fortunatus F. Kawagere as *Shamba la Wanyama* in 1967.

⁸ Female initiation rites. Cf. Kezilahabi’s *Wimbo wa Unyago* (‘The *Unyago* Song’) in his collection of poetry called *Dhifa* (‘the Banquet’ 2008). Kezilahabi composed a modern ‘maturity rites’ song that supports women’s emancipation: *Olewa msichana olewa. Olewa chaguo lako. Hiari ni haki asilia* (Kezilahabi 2008: 17-8) (‘Marry young maiden, marry. Marry your choice. The will is a natural right’).

*La Pazza: [...] sebbene mi
vediate come una pazza
Le mie lacrime sono preziose
Non le versero mai a causa di
questo maschio inutile
La Pazza: “Io non so nulla, so
solo partorire figli!” [...] questa
è quanto insegna la canzone
dell'unyago.*

Comparing the two plays, both Laudisi and Chizi are leaders of the plays and external observers, as well as philosophers, who represent the voice of rationality masked behind the crazy laugh of madness. Furthermore, both plays let the female voice be heard. Chizi is a character aimed to mobilise women to shake off the yoke. Chizi denounces the “epistemic marginalization of women” (Chimakonam 2018a) and challenges traditions such as unyago, the female initiation ritual, through her satirical sentence: ‘I know nothing, all I know is to bear children! This is what the unyago song says’ (Muhando 2010: 69). In fact, Muhando claims that women have authority as the keepers of knowledge. This will be illustrated through the character of the old lady Bibi in *Lina ubani* (Muhando 1984). Similarly, Mrs Ponza appears submissive to Mr Ponza, yet she ends up being the keeper of the mystery of truth: an objective reality universally shared doesn’t exist. Additionally, both plays are opposing traditional authorities either patriarchy or social conventions of the time. However, in Pirandello’s play, an objective reality does not exist, whereas, in Muhando’s play women’s oppression is objective, even though the majority of people refuse to witness this reality.

7. Madness as self-protection

7.1. *Il Berretto a Sonagli* (‘Caps and Bells,’ 1916)

Il Berretto a Sonagli, which I translated into Swahili as *Kofia yenye kengele*, is a comedy in two acts originally written in Sicilian dialect: ‘*A Birritta cu’I Ciancianeddi*, which anticipated the appearance of Pirandello’s key character: *Fantasia*, the inventive force, who was introduced later on in the preface of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), wearing a red cap with bells (Pirandello 2006).

This play is set in a small inland town in Sicily and narrates the story of Mrs Beatrice Fiorica, who, when she discovered the unfaithfulness of her husband, wanted a bombshell to explode by letting the extra-marital relationship of her husband become public. Subsequently, the adulterous couple, Mr

Fiorica and Mrs Nina Ciampa, were imprisoned, while the betrayed husband, Mr Ciampa, had the obligation to perform the murder of honour. However, Mr Ciampa had no intention of committing the crime, so he devised a successful escamotage, which involved letting Beatrice appear as a crazy woman who could not be trusted, as if she had just dreamt about the extramarital relationship of her husband. By acting as a madman, who wildly shouts out his own reality, Ciampa sacrificed Beatrice’s credibility so as to avoid committing a crime but saving his own honour as well.

Ciampa is also a philosophising character, who introduces interesting theories. Firstly, *le tre corde*, the theory of “the three watch springs” or *nadharia ya kamani (kamba za saa) tatu*:

Original

Ciampa: [...] Deve sapere che abbiamo tutti come tre corde d’orologio in testa. [...] la seria, la civile, la pazza. Soprattutto, dovendo vivere in società, ci serve la civile [...] la corda seria, per chiarire, rimettere le cose a posto [...] la corda pazza, perdo la vista degli occhi e non so più quello che faccio! (Pirandello 1986: 646).

Translations

Ciampa: [...] Ujue kwamba sisi sote tuna kamani tatu kichwani. [...] kamani nzito, kamani ya kistaarabu na kamani ya kichaa. Juu ya yote, kwa sababu inatubidi kuishi na wengine, tunahitaji ile kamani ya kistaarabu [...] ile nzito kwa kueleza na kurekebisha mambo [...] ile ya kichaa, napofuka na sijui ninachofanya!

Ciampa: [...] I must point out that we all possess three watch springs, as it were, in our heads. [...] one serious, one social, one insane. We need the social spring above all, as we are social animals – [...] the serious spring, then set about clearing matters up, give my reasons [...] then I give the insane spring a good turn...but then I lose my head... and God help us all! (Pirandello 2019: no page number)

Secondly, *i pupi*, the “theory of puppets” or *nadharia ya karagosi*:

Ciampa: [...] Perché ogni pupo, signora mia, vuole portato il suo

Ciampa: [...] kwa sababu kila kikaragosi, Bibi yangu we, anataka

rispetto, non tanto per quello che dentro di sé si crede, quanto per la parte che deve rappresentar fuori. A quatt'occhi, non è contento nessuno della sua parte: ognuno, ponendosi davanti il proprio pupo, gli tirerebbe magari uno sputo in faccia. Ma dagli altri, no; dagli altri lo vuole rispettato. (Pirandello 1986: 649)

kuheshimiwa sio kwa kile ambacho moyoni mwake anaamini; lakini kwa nafasi yake ambayo inabidi aonyeshe mbele ya wengine. Hakuna mtu ambaye, moyoni mwake, anayependa nafasi yake: kila mtu akiweka mbele yake kikaragosi chake angetema mate usoni mwake. Lakini kutoka wengine, hapana; anataka kuheshimiwa nao.

Ciampa: [...] Because you see, dear lady, every puppet demands respect, not so much for what he really believes himself to be, but for the part he plays in public. Let's be honest with ourselves: no one is happy with the role he plays. if each of us were faced with the image of the puppet he really is, he'd spit in its face. But from others...ah, from others he asks for, nay demands respect. (Pirandello 2019: no page number)

In the end, he teaches how madness is a self-protective mask and the key to solving all issues.

Ciampa: [...] sissignori ...si può aggiustare tutto... pacificamente! [...] le mie mani possono restar pulite...

Ciampa: [...] lo riconosciamo tutti: e dunque lei è pazza! Pazza, e se ne va al manicomio! [...] Sua sorella ha svergognato anche il signor cavaliere (Pirandello 1986: 680-681)

Ciampa: [...] Si dice: - è pazza! [...] Pazza, pazza da chiudere e da legare! -E solo così io non ho più niente da vendicare! (Pirandello 1986: 682)

Ciampa: [...] Ndio, mabwana ... kila kitu kinaweza kurekebishwa kwa amani! [...] mikono yangu itabaki safi

Ciampa: [...] sote tunatambua kwamba yeye ni mwenda wazimu! Kichaa ambao atafungwafungwa! [...] dadake ameabisha hata mheshimiwa 'Cavaliere'

Ciampa: wanasema: yeye ni mwenda wazimu! [...] mwenda wazimu wa kufunga na kufunga! na ndo hivyo mie sina chochote cha kulipia kisasi!

Ciampa: [...] Yes, ladies and gentlemen! All can be solved peacefully! [...] I needn't soil my hands with crime...they can stay clean...

Ciampa: [...] we all agreed that you are mad. If we all say so it must be true. You're mad and you're off to the madhouse. [...] Can't see you sister has made her husband ridiculous.

Ciampa: [...] if we say: "She's insane!" - [...] "She's insane, let's lock her up and that's that." In this case I shall be fully vindicated. (Pirandello 2019: no page numbers)

Ciampa: Ma davanti a tutto il paese, lei, signora, non ha bollato con un marchio d'infamia tre persone? Uno, d'adultero; un'altra, di squaldrina; e me, di becco? (Pirandello 1986: 682)

Ciampa: Si ulikuwa wewe, Bibie, uliyewadhililisha watu watatu mbele ya kijiji kizima? Mtu wa kwanza, mzinzi; wa pili, malaya; na mimi, mume aliyechezewa na mkewe.

Ciampa: [...] it was you who branded three people with the mark of infamy before the whole town. The first as an adulterer, the second as a whore, the third as a cuckold. (Pirandello 2019: no page number)

Indeed, Ciampa also teaches Beatrice the proper way to wear the costume and mask of madness:

Ciampa: [...] Gliel'insegno io come si fa. Basta che lei si metta a gridare in faccia a tutti la verità. Nessuno ci crede e tutti la prendono per pazza! (Pirandello 1986: 682)

Ciampa: [...] Potessi farlo io, come piacerebbe a me! [...] cacciarmi fino

Ciampa: [...] Nitakufundisha mimi jinsi ya kufanya. Inatosha uanze kufoka ukweli mbele ya watu wote. Hakuna mtu anayeamini na wote watafikiri wewe ni mwenda wazimu!

agli orecchi il berretto a sonagli della pazzia e scendere in piazza a sputare in faccia alla gente la verità.

(Pirandello 1986: 683)

[...] si butta a sedere su una seggiola in mezzo alla scena, scoppiando in un'orribile risata, di rabbia, di selvaggio piacere e di disperazione a un tempo. (Pirandello 1986: 683)

Ciampa: [...] Laiti ningaliweza kufanya mimi, kama ninavyopenda mimi! [...] kuvaa kofia yenye kengele za kichaa na kujititia mpaka masikio yangu na kuingia uwanjani na kufoka ukweli mbele ya wote.

[...] anajitupa juu ya kiti kilicho katikati ya jukwaani, akiangua kicheko cha kutisha, cha hasira, cha raha na sononeko kwa wakati mmoja.

Ciampa: [...] I'll tell you how you set about it: tell everyone the truth. Nobody'll believe you. They'll all think you're insane. (Pirandello 2019: no page number)

Ciampa: [...] If only I could allow myself that luxury! [...] pull down over my ears the cap and bells of madness and parade myself in the town square, spitting out the truth at them all! (Pirandello 2019: no page number)

[...] Ciampa collapses on a chair, centre stage, and bursts into a heart-rending laugh, full of rancour, savage relish and despair, as ... (Pirandello 2019: no page number)

7.2. *Lina Ubani* ('An Antidote to Rot,' 1984)⁹

The title of this play, *Lina Ubani*,¹⁰ is a counter-proverb created from the traditional one: *La kuvunda halina ubani* ('the rot has no incense [to cover the smell]'), which has been transformed into *La kuvunda lina ubani* ('the rot does have incense'), or *Lina Ubani* ('there is a Panacea,' Omari 2016: 24).

Lina Ubani is a play in six acts, whose protagonist is Bibi, an old lady who goes insane after the death of Daudi, one of her two sons, killed on the battlefield during the Kagera war (conflict between Uganda and Tanzania) in 1978-1979. After Daudi's death Bibi, filled with woe, is sent away from the village and welcomed at the home of Huila, her second son, together with her daughter-in-law Sara and her granddaughter Mota. Mota is the only person with whom the old lady seems to communicate through her stories and her songs (Msokile 1991).

Bibi is inhabited by her sorrow and psychologically devastated by her grief, so she escapes from reality in her own allegorical tale. Bibi's insanity is a self-protective device (Vierke 2012: 279) which allows her to denounce loudly the fear and instability marking that time. The character of Bibi is the representation of both "a mother" devastated by the loss of her son, and the "motherland" devastated by war, famine, and drought (Acquaviva 2019). Since Bibi is also approaching death, she is free of inhibition, and accuses the powerful by shouting against *Dyamini*, 'Idi Amin.'¹¹ Lastly, Bibi is the internal narrator, who acts as the alter ego of the external narrative voice of Mtambaji. Both are choral-sages. The figure of Bibi involves both madness and rationality; she represents the historical memory that explains the current issues of the country with which the narrator deals (Acquaviva 2019). Indeed, African drama draws attention to the socio-historical roots of present cultural dilemmas and socio-political struggles (Jeyifo 1985: 85).

The play opens with a parodos song, Bibi's mourning lamentation full of woe, and closes with the same structure as exodus song; this parallel structure shapes a kind of chorus.

⁹ *Lina Ubani* literally means 'it has incense,' which has commonly been translated in English as "There is an Antidote for Rot," as shown in the *World Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Theatre: Africa* (Diakhate, Eyoh and Rubin 2001: 309).

¹⁰ This play was entirely translated into Italian with the title 'Eppur si ha Purificazione' by Graziella Acquaviva (unpublished). Moreover, sections from *Lina Ubani* were selected for the glottodrama applied to Swahili language "*Nirudi Kwangu - Ritorno a Me Stessa*" directed by Prof. G. Acquaviva at the University of Turin and performed by her students at Teatro Araldo in Turin in June 2013.

¹¹ Idi Amin Dada was the third president of Uganda, who ruled the country with brutality as a dictator between 1971 and 1979. In 1978 Idi Amin invaded Tanzania, starting the war known as the Kagera war, because the Kagera region, on the border with Uganda, was the location that suffered the most.

Bibi challenges the sky; she wants the sky to fall by means of her narration, while the external narrator/Mtambaji, who is a choral character (Mutembe 2012), completes Bibi's role by telling an allegorical story about animals who were hunted by a predator known as "Dyamini."

(Anazungumza na mtu asiyeonekana lakini anayemwona yeye. Mtu huyo yuko juu hewani.)

Bibi: Ndiyo... eeh... teremka basi unijibu... Si unasema eti wewe ndiye unayejua kila kitu. Eee.. eti... mkubwa kabisa, mwenye akili kupita wote... Basi njoo kama wewe mkubwa kweli... (Muhando 2011: 13)

(She speaks with an invisible person, whom she only can see. The person is hidden somewhere in the sky.)

Bibi: Yees. So...come down and answer my questions...haven't you said that you are the one who knows everything. You claim to be the almighty, the cleverest of all...so come down if you are really that almighty...

(Conversa con qualcuno che non si vede ma che soltanto lei può vedere. Questa persona è su nel cielo)

Bibi: Sì, bè, allora scendi e rispondimi...non sei tu che dici di conoscere ogni cosa? Eee, l'onnipotente, con una mente superiore, allora vieni se sei veramente così grande...

Bibi: Mwongo wee, ni mchana. Mawingu yataanguka. Lakini enhee! Wacha tupige hadithi mchana mawingu yaanguke yamteremsha yule pale. Kweli nitakuteremsha kwa hadithi zitakazotungua mawingu. Utaona. (Muhando 2011: 17)

Bibi: Liar, it's noon. The sky will fall. But still! Let's tell the story during the daylight, and make the sky fall down here together with that one who is over there. Truly, I will make you fall down by my stories that will knock down the sky. You will see.

Bibi: Bugiarda è giorno, le nuvole cadranno. Maaaa! Narriamo la storia di giorno e lasciamo che le nuvole cadano qui per terra e facciamo scendere quello là. In verità ti farò

*scendere io con il racconto che abbatte
le nuvole. Vedrai.*

Bibi, who is a choral-sage, denounces the powerful and criticises the situation of political instability and social insecurity which people are suffering.

Bibi: Wanasema eti wenye vyeo wote hawana kisomo (Muhando 2011: 41)

Bibi: Gossip claims that all those who hold important posts are not well educated.

[Bibi: Dicono che tutti coloro i quali posseggono alte cariche non sono istruiti]

*Bibi: Enhee! Sikiza! Mawingu hayo
yanaanguka! Ona! (kwa yule mtu
hewani.) Utaona cha mtema kuni!
Mota unaona? Mawingu yanaanguka!
(Muhando 2011: 49)*

Bibi: Eh hear! The sky is falling
down! See! (Speaking to the
person up in the sky). You will
suffer the hardest experience (as
the woodcutter did)! Mota don't
you see? The sky is falling!

*Bibi: Enhee! Senti! Le nuvole stanno
cadendo! Vedi! (rivolgendosi alla
persona in cielo). Ne pagherai le
conseguenze così come fece il
taglialegna! Mota lo vedi! Le nuvole
cadono!*

*Bibi: aliyeya Daudi
kaua sabuni yangu
kaua mchele wangu
kaua sukari yangu
kaua sabuni yangu
Dyamini! Dyamini!
(Muhando 2011: 39-40)*

Bibi: Whoever killed Daudi
killed my soap
killed my rice
killed my sugar
killed my soap
Dyamini! Dyamini!

*Bibi: Chi uccise Daudi
Ha ucciso il mio sapone
Ha ucciso il mio riso
Ha ucciso il mio zucchero
Ha ucciso il mio sapone
Dyamini! Dyamini! (Idd Amin)*

Bibi is dying, so she shouts out loud without inhibition whatever she means:

*Bibi: Sitaki! Daudi! Dyamini
linanichukua! Daudi njoo! Nakufa!
Sitaki! Mawingu yananguka! Motaaa!
Hadithiii! Mawingu! Daudi! Motaa!
(Muhando 2011: 66)*

Bibi: I don't want! Daudi help!
Dyamini is capturing me! Daudi
please, come! I am dying! I don't
want! The sky is falling! Motaaa!
The stories! The sky! Daudi!
Motaa!

*Bibi: Non voglio! Daudi! Dyamini mi
prende! Daudi vieni! Sto morendo! Non
voglio! Le nuvole cadono! Motaaa! Il
racconto! Le nuvole! Daudi! Motaa!*

Another interesting choral character in this play is Mwanahego, who appears to be a foolish drunkard; instead, he denounces the rotten part of the society: the corrupt politicians who enrich themselves while people are starving. In this play, insanity is a fundamental self-protective device.

*Mwanahego: [...] hela za kigeni
...unazitaka wewe unayekula vya
kigeni. Mie nataka hela za hapa hapa
(Muhando 2011: 58)*

*Mwanahego: eti punguani mimi?
Punguani wewe mwenyewe. Unalala
na njaa unanyamaza (Muhando
2011: 59)*

Mwanahego: [...] you need foreign
money...you who eat the
strangers' food. I only want the
local currency.

Mwanahego: Is that really me the
imbecile? You are the imbecile,
who goes to sleep starving and
with your timid mouth shut.

*Mwanahego: [...] I soldi stranieri...sono
quello che vuoi tu che mangi cibo
straniero. Io voglio denaro che
provenga da qui*

*Mwanahego: L'imbecille sarei io?
Sarete voi gli imbecilli che vanno a
dormire con la fame restando in
silenzio*

As the Narrator comments:

Mtambaji: "Mlevi" "Siyo" "Mlevi!"

"Mlevi si mlevi

maneno yake ya kweli."

"Labda punguani?"

"Hata! Ana akili timamu kabisa."

(Muhando 2011: 60-61)

The Narrator: "Drunk" "he is not"
"Drunk"

"The drunk is not that drunk

His words are true"

"Perhaps, is he an imbecile?"

"Not at all! he has a rational mind"

Il Narratore: "Ubriaco" "No"

"Ubriaco!"

"L'ubriaco non è così ubriaco

Le sue parole sono veritiere"

"È forse un deficiente?"

"Non direi! Ha una mente ingegnosa"

In the end, Bibi dies without ending her story, but Mota performs her *ngonjera* at school, which unfolds Bibi's teachings:

Mota: madyamini kila mahali

Hakika kuna uvundo

Tena kuna ubani...

Mtambaji: [...] ngoma tutaicheza

Itakuwa

Uvundu katuondolea

la uvundo! lina ubani!

la uvundo! lina ubani!

(Muhando 2011: 71)

Mota: Different kinds of
Dyamini/predators are
everywhere

Certainly, there is something
rotten

But there is some incense as well...

Narrator: [...] let the dance begin

It will be the way

To get rid of the rotten stink

Wherever there is rot, there is
incense!

Wherever there is rot, there is
incense!

*Mota: I predatori come Idi Amin sono
ovunque*

Certamente c'è del marcio

Ma anche dell'incenso...

*Il Narratore: [...] lasciamo che le danze
abbiano inizio
Così che il marciame sia purificato
Dove c'è il marcio, c'è l'incenso
Dove c'è il marcio, c'è l'incenso*

Comparing the two plays, Ciampa makes Beatrice appear to be a fool so as to avoid the duel of honour or *mwuaji wa heshima*; in similar ways, Bibi and Mwanahago act without inhibition: she because she is approaching death devastated by grief and woe; and he because he is sunk in drunkenness. Thus, madness in both the plays is a self-protective device (*mbinu ya usalama*) to set oneself free by reducing socio-political repercussions. Indeed, “the fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool”—as Shakespeare describes the character of the Fool in his comedy *As You Like It* (Act 5 scene 1).

8. Comparing the six plays

In the end, this paper has illustrated how a multiplicity of self-alienation experiences are both disguised and debunked behind the mask of madness. In fact, on the one hand, the character of Pambo represents the delusion of the young intellectual in post-independence Tanzania; Chizi denounces discrimination against women; Bibi criticises the political and economic insecurity of a period characterised by historical crisis; and Mwanahago condemns political corruption. On the other hand, Enrico IV finds his subjective knowledge as an outcast pretending to be mad and avenges himself; Ciampa, however, avoids seeing the truth and hides himself behind the curtain of madness in order not to commit the murder of honour. Finally, Mrs Ponza, who is seen by the majority of people as a mad woman, embraces the nonexistence of a unique reality nor an objective truth.

Pirandello, who lived between two world wars, postulated a philosophy of gnoseological relativism, wherein there is no absolute truth or sole reality but multiple realities. Each individual can choose among one hundred thousand masks the one which fits him better, but, in the end, individuals are no one, and so madness appears to be the only social device to set oneself free from injustice, social conventions and rules. Conversely, Penina Muhando describes a period of great crisis after Tanzanian independence and the failure of the great dream of *ujamaa*: a period characterised by the delusion of educated people; women's oppression and marginalisation; and the corruption and misgovernance of politicians, who, after the imposition of a neoliberal economy, start taking personal advantage of foreign aid while people are suffering.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, in this study, I aimed firstly to build up a cross-cultural analysis of diverse literary and philosophical traditions, moving between cultural universals and particulars, by enacting a dialogue between Swahili and Italian dramatic works. These outstanding plays, which apparently have nothing to say to one another, in reality share using masks to stage splits in the human unconscious, in multiple personalities, though in completely different alienating sociohistorical situations.

The playwrights confront the lack of certitude and the nonexistence of a sole reality or truth. On the one hand, Pirandello claims the existence of multiple realities and supports a worldview capable of embracing cognitive relativism. On the other hand, Muhando encourages cultural pluralism and inclusion with the objective to give space to silenced, oppressed and marginalised voices. Different sociocultural environments but similar symbols appear through the narratives, such as characters who wear the mask that I call 'sage-madness' that disguises rationality and wisdom with madness. They aim not only to unveil alienating situations, but also to criticise the ruling classes and the narrowminded bourgeoisie. Thus, I joined the two authors' plays in a dialogue, contextualising, decontextualising, recontextualising and developing an analysis of their similar and dissimilar uses of diverse masks e.g. the mask of foolishness and madness on the face of reason and rationality. The authors of these plays let their characters wear masks that have been chosen with awareness rather than imposed ones.

Furthermore, it can be noticed that a shared element among the two authors is an existential epistemology underlying the plays. Existentialism is the philosophical stream par excellence that provides people with support to cope with tragic life challenges and profound psychophysical suffering such as the devastation of war, the damage of colonialism, and severe/chronic illnesses. Existentialist epistemology struggles to find a meaning in meaningless life and in the nothing of existence that human persons are obliged to confront whenever they are steamrolled by tragic events. As an example, the two Tanzanian philosophers Euphrase Kezilahabi and William Mkufya (Rettovà 2007; Nicolini 2022). Mkufya, for instance, maintains that truth is a relative and contingent concept beyond human cognitive capacities and postulates an "epistemology of cognitive relativism, agnosticism and radical scepticism" (Rettovà 2021: 336) to criticise the positivist reduction of reality to a material and objectified form (Mkufya 1999; Rettovà 2007; 2021; Rodgers-John 2015). Indeed, Mkufya's pen draws a demon manifesting itself in the form of a black bird who recites: "*kweli si kweli, kwelikweli; kweli hubadilika ukweli*" ("Truth is not truth, truly; the truth is that the truth changes the truth/the reality' Mkufya 1999: 110).

Theatre is a hetero-inclusive paideia, and reading theatre is a universal artistic experience, pregnant with pedagogical and anthropological value as a means to teach and learn shared and embodied knowledge.

Furthermore, in search of cultural relativism as well as pluralist inclusion, not only both Italian and Swahili literature have their rightful and equal places in world literatures, but they are also engaged in the productive commingling of global philosophy (Connolly 2010). Particularly, I insist on the creation of a polyphonic polylogue through cross-cultural literary and philosophical topics. According to Jean-Godefroy Bidima (1997), *la palabre* is a model of active dialogue to open up spaces for living together (Masolo 2019); this is also a trend in development in contemporary African philosophical discourses. For instance, Chimakonam's "conversational thinking" is a method and theory of intercultural philosophy to engage in polylogue among different literary and philosophical traditions, which he describes as an "arumaristic process:" "reshuffling of thesis and antithesis by skipping synthesis" to create a "relationship between opposed variables" and to produce new meanings by alternative epistemologies (Chimakonam 2018b: 144-145). "Conversationalism" is a complementary reflection on the global community between universalism and particularism among different philosophical traditions (Chimakonam 2017a, b, c; 2018b; 2019; Chimakonam and Ofana 2022; Chimakonam and Egbai 2019), and which seems to be is an intercultural methodology particularly promising for facing contemporary challenges. Lastly, alienation as an epistemology demonstrates the possibility of an engaged dialogue aimed at inclusion of cultural relativism and coalescence of plural knowledge, as explained through the mouths of peculiar masks: crazies, *vichaa*, mad persons, *waendawazimu*, fools, *wachizi*, imbeciles, *punguani*...

In conclusion, I argue that a fundamental process and instrument to open up an inclusive polylogue in my study was the challenging work of translation. During my translation process, in which I did my best not to "betray"¹² the original content but to share its meaning, I made a mixture of foreignization of the source text to be faithful to Pirandello's concepts, but I also domesticated the content to the target language to render it understandable in Swahili (Venuti 2000; Kobus and Feinauer 2017; Mazrui 2016; Aiello 2018). A further aim of this paper is to make an introductory discussion to my work of translation, before completing the publication of the three Pirandello's plays translated into Swahili so as to make at least a small part of Pirandello's theatre available for the very first time in an East African language.

¹² As per the well-known Italian adage: *traduttore, traditore* 'translator, traitor;' see Umberto Eco's (2003) *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*.

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Gender politics and politics in gender in Iringa District (Tanzania)

Cecilia Mignanti

The paper deals with gender politics in Tanzania through a social, historical and literary perspective. This analysis is the result of a two months fieldwork based in the rural area of the Iringa region, where I collected data related to gender-based issues expressed by women and girls of several ages and generations thanks to the collaboration with two NGO's that operate in the area, namely the Tanzanian PSBF and the Italian CEFA. Through a historical analysis, this paper sheds the light on the women's active participation in the liberation movements since pre-colonial time in Tanganyika and then Tanzania, presenting the path of several women's struggles that contributed to the ideation of the gender politics of today.

Nowadays, patriarchal oppression is strictly bounded to globalization and cash-based economy. These topics are analysed in the Swahili literal repertoire and discussed by the contemporary African feminist movements that will be presented above.

Keywords: gender studies; gender politics; Swahili history; Swahili literature; Tanzania: decolonial feminist movements.

1. Introduction

Women's participation in the nationalist movements has been often neglected because the majority of the sources were male-centred. Despite that, the theoretical feminist approach that involves oral sources and the life history research highlights new gender point of view. The feminist approach denies the male-centred "ungendered point-of-viewlessness" which recognize that history can be objectively recorded, and adopts an analysis methodology that entails the knowledge of the women's social experience from their own point of view (Geiger 1987: 3-6). In the study of the history of Tanzania and social politics of the country, it is necessary to focus on the decolonial feminist movements which are part of a long movement of scientific and philosophical reappropriation that is revising the Western narrative of the world, contesting the Western-patriarchal economic ideology that turned women,

Black people, Indigenous people, and people from Asia and Africa into inferior beings (Vergès 2019: 24-25):

L'histoire des luttes féministes est pleine de trous, d'approximations, de généralités. Les féminismes de politique décoloniale et des universitaires féministes racisées ont compris la nécessité de développer leurs propres outils de transmission et de savoir: à travers des blogs, des films, des expositions, des festivals, des rencontres, des ouvrages, des pièces de théâtre, de la danse, des chants, de la musique, elles font circuler des récits, des textes, traduisent, publient, filment, font connaître des figures historiques, des mouvements (Vergès 2019: 25-26).¹

Moreover, it is important to deepen the knowledge of nowadays women's struggles and movements, in order to recognize the new identities of African women. As stated by the activists of the AFF (African Feminist Forum):

As we craft new African States in this new millennium, we also craft new identities for African women, identities as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources and our own bodies and utilizing positive aspects of our cultures in liberating and nurturing ways. We also recognize that our pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and herstories require special measures to be taken in favour of particular African women in different contexts. We acknowledge the historical and significant gains that have been made by the African Women's Movement over the past forty years, and we make bold to lay claim to these gains as African feminists they happened because African Feminists led the way, from the grassroots level and up.²

The purpose of the paper is to present the path which led to the gender politics in nowadays Tanzania, analysing the experience of women and girls who live in the rural area of the Iringa region through a life history research approach. The paper will be divided in three sections: an introduction to the fieldwork, an analysis of women's participation in the politics of Tanganyika and Tanzania since the colonial imposition, and a presentation of the issues related to the experience of women and girls who live nowadays in the rural area of the Iringa region.

¹ "The history of feminist struggle is full of holes, approximations, and generalities. Decolonial feminist activists and academics have understood the need to develop their own models of transmission and knowledge; through blogs, films, exhibitions, festivals, meetings, artworks, pieces of theater and dance, song, and music, through circulating stories and texts, through translating, publishing, and filming, they have made their movements and the historic figures of those movements known". (Vergès 2021: 14)

² <http://www.africanfeministforum.com/feminist-charter-preamble/>

2. Fieldwork research, purposes and methodology

This paper is the result of a fieldwork research based in Iringa town, Tanzania during October and November 2021. The study derives from an analysis of interviews and activities proposed by two different NGO's located in Iringa town: the Tanzanian PSBF (Promotion of Social Balances Foundation); and the Italian CEFA³ (*Comitato Europeo per la Formazione Agraria* – European Committee for the Agrarian Education).

During the two months of fieldwork, I directly collaborated with PSBF, participating to all the activities proposed by the team in the Mgera and Tagamenda Primary Schools, and Tanangozi and Luhota Secondary Schools⁴. PSBF was founded in 2018 and registered in 2019 by a group of teachers, with the purpose—as stated by the NGO's president:

To help some people in the society because our society has many needs and people in need are a lot. For that reason, [these people] need someone that has the purpose to help them, to reach some of their goals in the society.⁵

Precisely, the NGO strives for equal benefit in social services provisions for girls, youth, and women to ensure equal treatment and participation in the community and equitable access to control the benefits of resources to all.⁶ *Nikomboe* (“Save me”) is the NGO active project, which aims to avoid female school dropouts acting in different areas:

- Girls' education: bridging the large gap between genders in education by pushing girls' enrolment and increasing their academic performance.
- Hygiene: improving girls' physical, oral, and overall health by providing hygiene supplies and education on how to use these items for the girls in our program to promote proper daily and menstrual hygiene.
- Community education: aiming to lower health disparities to achieve optimal health in rural villages by providing education to multiple communities.

³Cefa is an Italian NGO born in 1972 in Bologna, that aims to help the poorest communities in the world to reach food self-sufficiency and basic human rights (education, job, gender equality, child protection). Cefa has the purpose to create sustainable development models (<https://www.cefaonlus.it/cosa-facciamo/chi-e-cefa/>).

⁴<https://psbf.or.tz/index>

⁵ *Lengo kubwa ni kutaka kusaidia watu kwenye jamii kwa sababu jamii yetu ina mahitaji mengi sana na wahitaji ni wengi sana, kwa hiyo wanahitajika watu kwa ajili ya kuwasaidia watu waweze kufikia malengo yao mengine katika jamii* (Interview PSBF: Iringa, 25th November 2021). All translations are from the author of this article, except those for which the author is cited in brackets.

⁶<https://psbf.or.tz/about>

- Food: securing at least one additional meal, which is often their only meal, for the girls in the program.
- Housing: helping the girls in the program to have a safe, warm, and comfortable place to sleep.
- Clothing: providing girls with a clean school uniform so they can attend.⁷

As the topics debated were sensitive subjects for girls, I decided not to record during the activities, but to take notes and interview the president of the NGO at the end of the period of collaboration.

During the fieldwork, I also took part to some activities organized by CEFA in collaboration with JIDI⁸ (*Jamii Integrated Development Initiatives*). These activities were proposed to discuss gender inequalities in tea farming cooperatives based in the rural area of the Iringa region, as part of the CEFA's "Agricon Boresha Chai (ABC) Project"⁹ that involves thirtyfour tea cooperatives in Tanzania. According to CEFA's research, 72% of farmers who receive agrarian consultation and inputs are men. Women are often hindered in agrarian education, sharing incomes and leading, even if they are the main actors in farming activities. To deal with this topic, CEFA, JIDI and IDH (*Initiatief Duurzame Handel*)¹⁰ edited two handbooks: "Agri-Connect Integrating Gender in Cooperative Management. Handouts and Tools" (2021) and "Agri-Connect Integrating Gender in Cooperative Management. Leaders and Members' Training Guide" (2021) that were deeply analysed during the activities I attended to. The trainer used a participatory learning approach to facilitate the discussion that covered the following topics: gender definition, gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender issues, the status of women and youth in the cooperatives, and possible solutions to the main problems pointed out. I took part in the meetings as a participant observer on the 19th, 27th October, and on the 3rd of November 2021 at the MUCU (Moshi University) offices in Iringa town, where I recorded a total of 375:42 minutes of audio in agreement with the participants.

The data recorded are analysed through an interdisciplinary approach that focuses on social sciences, history and literature, as there is a large amount of Swahili literary works – poems, drama,

⁷<https://psbf.or.tz/about>

⁸ JIDI (Jamii Integrated Development Initiatives) is a Tanzania-based registered firm committed to building holistic sustainable development. JIDI has a multisectoral approach, its projects deal with health, nourishment, agriculture, education, and means of support (<https://jidi.or.tz/who-we-are/>).

⁹ <https://www.cefaonlus.it/progetto/miglioramento-del-reddito-e-della-nutrizione-dei-piccoli-coltivatori-di-te-nel-sud-della-tanzania-agriconnect/>

¹⁰ IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative (<https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/about-idh/>) is a foundation that works with businesses, financiers, governments, and civil society to realize sustainable trade in global value chains.

fiction—that point out several gender social and political issues and that deepen the herstories of Tanzanian activists who became icons for the collective memory. Thanks to the study of literary works it is possible to shed the light on social movements and women’s struggles from a decolonial perspective.

3. Women’s participation in the politics of Tanganyika and Tanzania

The case of Tanzanian non-elite women in the anti-colonial struggles is particularly generative, because of the centrality of women in Tanzanian politics and in the post-independence state (Peeples 2019: 21). Women were at the heart of the struggles in the anti-colonial resistance movements (Tenga *et al.* 1996: 146) since the conflicts that occurred between 1885 and 1900 against the German colonisers (Saavedra Casco 2007: 99; Mulokozi 2014: iv). Among the Swahili literary works that narrate this period, there are two female characters presented by Mulokozi¹¹ who embody the values of the anti-colonial resistance heroines, namely: Mtage in the play of 1979 *Mkwawa wa Uhehe* (“Mkwawa in the Heheland”) and Nyawelu in the novel of 1991 *Ngome ya Mianzi* (“The Bamboo Fortress”). In *Mkwawa wa Uhehe*, Mulozi represents the anti-colonial Hehe resistance since the first battles until the death of the chief Mkwawa. Historically, it is known that the anti-colonial armies were composed of both women and men, and through his productions, Mulokozi wants to celebrate the female contribution in the anti-colonial struggles. In the play, Mtage is the icon of the female resistance, and she leads the army in several victories (Bertoncini Zúbková 2009: 212-213; Acquaviva 2019: 61-63):

Mkwawa: Commander Mtage, beloved friend. All the Hehe land welcomes and receives you with open arms, you and all the heroes, men and women who joined the war. We joyfully received the news of the victory [...] Thank you [...] (Acquaviva 2019: 61-62).¹²

Her value is recognized by the whole community and sang by the bard Mwakiyombwe:

¹¹ Mugyabuso Mulokozi was born in Bukoba in 1950. He graduated in 1975 at the University of Dar es Salaam. He collaborated for some years with the Tanzania Publishing House and then he became a member of the Institute of Kiswahili Research (Bertoncini Zúbková *et al.* 2009: 212).

¹² *Mkwawa: Jemadari Mtage, dada mpendwa. Uhehe yote inakukaribisha na kukupokea kwa mikono miwili, wewe pamoja na mashujaa wote, wanaume kwa wanawake, mliofuatana vitani. Habari za ushindi wetu tumezipokea kwa shauku na furaha kubwa [...] Ahsanteni [...]* (Mulokozi 1988: 229).

You are the woman of the future, / An example for the next generations. / You are the pride for all women, / The black mother pride. (Acquaviva 2019: 62-63)¹³

Another Mulokozi's character who is the icon of the female resistance during the German colonial imposition is Nyawelu. She is one of the main characters of the historical novel *Ngome ya Mianzi*, a young girl who is deeply described for her wisdom, bravery, determination and physical abilities, namely the heroine who will save her people.

Nyawelu is brave [...] She has the ability of a person who is able to face unexpected events.¹⁴

Mugoha: She was in front of me and I followed her. She was holding a sling. I was surprised by the way she could penetrate rapidly and silently in the acacia shrub and leaves, as a long time expert hunter.¹⁵

During the colonial period¹⁶ women were directly dominated by the colonized men (fathers, husbands, brothers) observing legal parameters decided by colonial officers and followed by local authorities. More precisely, women suffered the control of the sexual and reproductive sphere (Geiger 1987: 7-8). As direct consequence, in the years of the foundation of the TANU (Tanganyika African National Union)¹⁷ women became activists for claiming their independence. In March 1955, TANU had 2000 card-carrying members, an increase of 5000 between June and September 1955, with a female majority in TANU membership by the end of 1955. The first constitution of TANU provided for a Women's Section led by the well-known Bibi Titi, with the following objectives:

- To mobilise women as well as men to join the party.
- To try and bring them together in the liberation struggle.
- To ensure the security of the leaders of TANU.

¹³ *Wewe ndiwe mwanamke wa kesho, / Kifani cha vizazi vijavyo. / Wewe ndiwe fahari ya wanawake wote, / Fahari ya mama mweusi* (Mulozoki 1988: 22).

¹⁴ My translation of Mulokozi (2014: 26): *Nyawelu ni jasiri [...] Tabia ya kweli ya mtu utajua wakati wa dharura.*

¹⁵ My translation of Mulokozi (2014: 29): *Mugoha: Nyawelu alitangulia, mimi nikafuata. Alikuwa ameshika kombeo. Nilishangaa kuona jinsi alivyoweza kupenya katika majani na vichaka vya migunga haraka haraka bila kelele, kama mwindaji mashuhuri wa siku nyingi.*

¹⁶ After the German defeat in the First World War, Tanganyika became a Mandated Territory administrated by Britain (Århem: 1985: 19). Tanganyika got independence in 1961, and in 1964, the United Republic of Tanzania was formed adding the Zanzibar archipelago (Nyerere 1974: 3-5).

¹⁷ The first president of Tanganyika Julius Kambarage Nyerere elaborated the new political model during the colonial domination for the formation of the TAA (Tanganyika African Association) in 1954, that was at the basis of the party of the TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) that ruled Tanganyika since independence (Ruhumbika ed. 1974: 275 – 277).

- To raise funds through various activities such as dances or fashion shows (Geiger 1987: 2, Tenga *et al* 1996: 147).

Undoubtedly, for the Tanzanian collective memory, the icon of women's activism against British Colonialism is Bibi Titi Mohamed, a Muslim woman of Dar es Salaam who became one of the main TANU leaders. Thanks to Bibi Titi, women were involved in the membership of the party, and more broadly in the participation in Eastern African women's liberation movements (Geiger 1987: 2; Mbogo 2018: iii, 18-21). Her figure is deeply narrated in the Mbogo's play of 2018 "*Malkia Bibi Titi Mohammed*" ("The Queen Bibi Titi Mohammed"), which presents the essential moments of Bibi Titi's and women's liberation struggles in Tanganyika. In the play, the speech she addresses to the Dodoma's women is relevant:

Bibititi: Yes, we women, we are the pillar of the country / We gave birth to all these men / Yes, we women, we are the pillar of the world / Who are we in this world? / Yes, we are the pillar of this world. / Women, we must roll up our sleeves / Until we will kick out the British / God gave us the authority / God gave us wombs to generate life, breasts to nurse / And backs to carry children / For these reasons, do not let us be tormented / Because of our gender / Because of the habits that are passed during the time. / Let's refuse and scold all the habits / That humiliate the womanhood / God planted a seed inside us / And see: the seed have germinated / God gave us this power, / Without our collaboration we won't get independence / It is important that all of us will be united in the TANU / There is no other medicine against the strength of / The British Colonialism. / Our independence, oyee!¹⁸

The first women who joined the party were involved in small business activities, such as selling *mandazi* (a kind of salty fritters) fish, and beer. They were Muslim, illiterate, and were part of female *ngoma* groups, namely groups that performed dances and music. These were trans-tribal groups that recognised the main authority and the potentiality of the Swahili language to unify people (Geiger 1987: 13-21; Tenga 1996: 147). In the first years of the TANU mobilisation, women became aware of their political role and were involved in several activities such as selling party cards, organising activities

¹⁸ My translation of Mbogo (2018: 25-26): *Bibititi: Sisi wanawake ndiyo nguzo ya nchi / Tumewazaa wanaume wote hawa / Sisi wanawake ndiyo nguvu ya dunia / Sisi ni nani katika dunyahii? / Sisi ndiyo nguzo ya dunia hii / Wanawake sharti tujifunge vibwebwe / Hadi tumfurushe Mwingereza / Mungu ametupa wanawake mamlaka / Mungu ametupa matumbo ya kutunzauhai, vifua vya kuwanyonyesha / Na migongo ya kuwabeba wana / Hivyo tusijisikie wanyonge / Kwa sababu ya jinsia yetu / Kwa sababu ya mila zilizopitwa na wakati; / Tuzikatae, tuzikemee mila zote / Zinazomdhalilisha mwanamke / Mungu amepanda mbegu ndani mwetu / Na tazama: Mbegu imeota / Mungu ametupa uwezo huu, / Bila ushirikiano wetu, hatutaupata Uhuru / Sisi sote lazima tuwe wamoja / Ni muhimu sisi sote kujiungana TANU / Hakuna tiba mbadala dhidi ya sulubu za / Ukoloni wa Mwingereza. / Uhuruwetu, oyee!*

for fundraising, cooking for the men of the party, hosting, and performing nationalist *ngoma* (Brennan 2002: 368). After independence, in 1962 the UWT (*Umoja wa Wanawake wa Tanganyika* – Women’s Union of Tanganyika) was formed in order to unify women in one organisation that could work jointly with the ruling party as well as other women organisations in the world (Tenga *et al.* 1996: 148). The UWT organised literacy classes, projects for agrarian cooperation, training courses on public health, and nursery schools for women, to enable them to get an active role in building the country through new politics, economies, and cultural actions (Ladner 1971: 22-25). In these years the UWT started to achieve some victories as the Law Marriage Act (1971),¹⁹ the Employment Ordinance Act (1975)²⁰ and the Early University Entry (1974)²¹.

When in 1977 the ASP (Afro-Shirazi Party) merged with TANU to form the CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi* – Revolution Party), the female union of the ASP joined the UWT maintaining the same main objectives. However, in these years, the UWT was a wing of the party dependent on the CCM in which the national executive was dominated by men who continued to discriminate, oppress, and exploit women (Tenga *et al.* 1996: 149-159). As pointed out by Britwin (2022: 127), the post-colonial governments often enforced female stereotypes and the Tanzanian development plans were inspired by patriarchal models that derived from the Christian colonial notions of femininity. Just a minority of women – namely literate and elitist women who received Western education during the colonial period – got government positions, and the proletarian women who directly participated in the independence struggles were excluded from the new government (Geiger 1987: 25; Britwin 2022: 125-126). Since independence, Swahili literature has been involved in representing gender issues and women’s

¹⁹Two types of marriage were introduced in the country: monogamous or necessarily monogamous, and polygamous or potentially polygamous. The minimum age stipulated was 18 years for men and 15 for women (Tenga *et al.* 1996: 151-152). As pointed out by the United Nations Population Fund (2014: 1-4) when the study was presented, Tanzania had one of the highest percentages of early marriages. Indeed, according to these data 37% of girls between 20 and 24 years old were married. However, this tendency is improving because of state policies. In October 2019, the Appeals Court approved a provision to high the minimum age for marriage for girls to 18 years old, influencing the Law Marriage Act of 1971 that in the Article 13.1 states:

“No person shall marry who, being male, has not attained the apparent age of eighteen years or, being female, has not attained the apparent age of fifteen years” (<https://www.tanzanialaws.com/principal-legislation/law-of-marriage-act>).

The law of 1971 also provided grounds for divorce, recognising behaviour, conduct, and events that could constitute a total breakdown of marriage, and one of these had to be proved to the satisfaction of the court. Moreover, the Marriage Act allows women to hold and dispose of property (Tenga *et al.* 1996: 152-153).

²⁰It granted the right to paid maternity leave of 84 days every three years for all working women regardless of their marital status. (Tenga *et al.* 1996: 157).

²¹It allowed women to proceed with their further education immediately after completing the national service (Tenga *et al.* 1996: 158-159).

struggles in the country, among this production there are some literary works that denounce the oppressive politics and the status of women in the new Tanzanian state as: the Angelina Chogo Wakapabulo's play *Kortini Mtu Huyu* ("Let's Condemn this Man;" 1975), in which the author stresses female forced labour, prostitution and women's oppression under the *Operation Vijana*²²; the Penina Muhando's *Hatia* ("The Guilt;" 1972) where the weak status of women in the urbanisation process is deeply analysed, and the play *Nguzo Mama* ("The Mother Pillar;" 1982) through which Muhando stresses the women's disillusion for the *Ujamaa* policies (Acquaviva 2019: 68; 75-76; 81-88). In 1994 the University of Dar es Salaam organized a national conference to discuss the woman's position in the multiparty democracy adopted in 1992. As consequence, in May 1995 the NGO named BaWaTa (*Baraza la Wanawake Tanzania – Tanzania Women's Assembly*) was formed.²³ In 1995, BaWaTa produced a comprehensive document to educate women for the general elections, highlighting the main issues affecting women in the country as the ownership of land, the inheritance, and the lack of social services – health, water, and education (Tenga 1996: 160-162). In the same year, the Beijing Conference²⁴ signed

²² This campaign started in 1968, being part of a vaster cultural plan directed to the urban populations between 1960 and 1970. The "Operation *Vijana*" was announced by the general council of the TANU Youth League (TYL), forbidding the use of a range of items: miniskirts, wigs, skin lightening creams, tight pants or dresses, and short shorts—as indecent and antithetical to Tanzanian national culture. The ambiguity if the operation's code-name "*vijana*" ('boys'), lent it a striking economy: a male affair primarily addressed against the female offenders. This campaign acted against a specific gender and generation that was starting to dominate in the Tanzanian economy (Ivaska 2004: 104-118).

²³ BaWaTa's constitution points:

- To liberate the woman from all forms of gender exploitation, oppression, discrimination, and degradation, and to condemn the same.
- To work as an institution or a forum on behalf of all women, and through which they will be able to initiate and further their targets and interests in all aspects of social life.
- To unite all women without regard to their religion, colour, age, creed, status, level of education or authority, political parties, ideologies, or any other thing, so as to strengthen their efforts in the struggle for protecting their rights and equality.
- To mobilise all women for purposes of giving them leadership, whereby they will effectively be participating in bringing about economic and social development.
- To educate women on their basic rights and duties in the society.
- To maintain women's respect.
- To make a follow-up on law reforms, particularly in areas affecting women activities (Tenga et al. 1996: 161).

²⁴ Abzug (1996: 117-119), Larson (1996: 697, 720-722), and Roberts (1996: 237-239) state that the United Nations' World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, was the last of several meetings of the United Nations started in 1975 about the improvement of women status to reach gender equality, development, and peace. The Beijing Conference had the objective to find a comprehensive plan of action to promote social, economic, and political women's emancipation through the improvement of global politics and institutions. During the conference, the participants discussed twelve topics: poverty, education, health, gender-based violence, the effects on women of armed or other conflicts, economic structures and policies,

a turning point for gender politics in Tanzania, identifying four goals to achieve in the country: enhancement of women’s legal capacity; women’s economic empowerment and poverty eradication; women’s political empowerment and decision-making; and women’s access to education, training, and employment.²⁵ After this year, the United Republic of Tanzania’s Constitution has been amended to increase women’s representation—at least 21%—based on proportional representation.²⁶ As consequence of the Beijing’s Conference new important laws were issued as the Sexual Offences (Special Provisions) Act 1998²⁷; the Village Land Act No 4 and the Village Land Act No 5 of 1999.²⁸

In the first years of the new millennium a cross-continent feminist net, the AFF (African Feminist Forum) was formed in response to the apparent decline of women’s movements in the continent. AFF is conceptualised to be an autonomous space for African activists, with the aim to develop an independent analysis of African realities through an effort of self-determination from externally defined agendas and Western significance, reclaiming the long tradition of African women’s resistance to patriarchy in Africa (Imam 2009: 167-169). In its methodology, AFF wants to encourage creative expression as a source for change, affirming the need to document and share oral and written herstories – overall that of kinswomen and feminist “ancestors” to retain African collective memory (Horn 2008: 124). Demere Kitunga, an AFF activist from Tanzania, is promoting readership to

power and decisional process, mechanisms to promote women’s progress, human rights, media stereotypes, safeguard of the environment and the natural resources, and children rights.

²⁵ https://www.tanzania.go.tz/egov/uploads/documents/country_report_beijing_19_2_sw.pdf

²⁶ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1248349/proportion-of-seats-held-by-women-in-tanzania-national-parliament/>

²⁷This law was issued to protect the dignity and integrity of women and children. As stated by SIGI (*Social Institutions and Gender Index*) (<https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/TZ.pdf>), the Article 5 (2) Act no 8 refers to rape, which is so defined if a man commits a sexual abuse with a girl younger than 18 years old, or with a woman not consenting. Moreover, in the 16th Chapter of the Penal Code, marital rape is criminalized just if the couple is divorced. Recently, Tanzania adopted a law against sexual harassment included in the Employment Act No. 11 (2005) and in the 12th Chapter of the Sexual Offences (Special Provisions) Act No. 8 (1998), where is pointed out that the harasser must be jailed for a maximum of five years or must pay to the victim the maximum amount of 200’000 Tanzanian schillings. However, as highlighted by Jakobsen (2014: 541) Tanzania does not present law to criminalize gender-based violence which is often legitimized by the consuetudinary laws. Gender-based violence is widely spread in the country, and as reported by SIGI (<https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/TZ.pdf>) in 2019, 42% of women suffered physical or sexual abuse, and in the Iringa region, as stated by McCleary-Sills et al. (2013: 10): 42.3% of women and girls between 15 and 49 years old suffered physical violence, and 26.5% sexual abuses.

²⁸This law was issued to provide for the right of land ownership for both women and men. In 2002, Act No. 2 established Land Tribunals whose composition must include not less than 43% of women. In 2004 the Land Act No.4 of 1999 has been amended to make land economically valuable and mortgaged and to protect matrimonial property (https://www.tanzania.go.tz/egov/uploads/documents/country_report_beijing_19_2_sw.pdf).

interrogate conventional knowledge through her E&D Readership and Development Agency – *Soma*, that edits feminist books in the country and creates spaces for debate.²⁹

Women’s participation in Tanzanian politics reached its peak in 2020, when Samia Suluhu Hassan, popularly known as Mama Samia, became the first woman to be the President of Tanzania³⁰. Her efforts for women’s participation in the building of Tanzanian society is presented through the picture book *Samia Suluhu Hassan – Mwanamke wa Kwanza kuwa Rais wa Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania* (“Samia Suluhu Hassan – The First Woman to be the President of the United Republic of Tanzania”) written by Nancy Sumari and designed by Tito Fungo in 2021. Narrating her story life, the book celebrates the importance of education for girls and presents the structural lacks that avoid girls to reach their dreams, as presented in the first pages:

When Samia was a child, she was astonished because many times, several women did not have big dreams. Many of them did not go to school, and if they went there, they did not finish their studies. This condition derived from the society of the time that believed that girls could not receive the same education as boys. Samia was lucky, because of her parents who believed in education and who wanted to be sure that Samia and her sister went to school.³¹

Her story wants to be an example and an incentive to next generations:

To all girls in the world. You can be whoever you want. The choice is yours.³²

4. First results from the fieldwork research

As pointed out by USAID³³, nowadays in Tanzania women and youth are among the most marginalised citizens. TAWEA³⁴ (Tanzania Women Empowerment in Action) highlights that the main gender issues spread in the country are issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender-based violence (GBV), gender inequality and prevalence of extreme poverty among the community

²⁹ <http://www.africanfeministforum.com/demere-kitunga/>

³⁰ <https://www.vpo.go.tz/vpos/vice-president-3>

³¹ My translation of Sumari et al. (2021: 6-7): *Samia alipokuwa mdogo aligundua kwamba, mara nyingi, wanawake wengi hawakuwa na ndoto kubwa. Wengi hawakwenda shuleni, na kama walikwenda, hawakumaliza masomo yao. Hali hii ilichangiwa na jamii kwa wakati huo kuamini kuwa, watoto wakike hawapaswi kupata elimu kama wale wa kiume. Samia alipata bahati, kwa kuwa wazazi wake, waliamini katika elimu na walihakikisha kwamba Samia na ndugu zake, wanakwenda shuleni.*

³² My translation of Sumari et al. (2021: 4): *Kwa wasichana wote, duniani. Unaweza kuwa kile unachotaka. Uamuzi ni wako.*

³³ <https://www.usaid.gov/tanzania/our-work/gender-equality-and-women%E2%80%99s-empowerment>

³⁴ <https://www.end-violence.org/members/tanzania-women-empowerment-action-tawea>

members. Moreover, according to the International Republican Institute (IRI) (2016: 3-8) women are affected by many challenges for participation in the “fabric of the community” and for obtaining leadership positions. For this reason, the Tanzanian government is turning its attention to a constitutional reform process. From 2012 to 2013, a government-led Constitutional Review Committee travelled through Tanzania to collect citizens’ views. The coalition came together to request gender equality in the draft constitution, safe motherhood, land ownership, equal employment rights, equal representation in decision-making bodies, and the increase of the gender quota in parliament from 30 to 50%. Moreover, in 2021³⁵ the government revised its position related to the Education Act (2002) which provided school expulsion for girls who got pregnant, conceiving pregnancies as moral offences. During the Magufuli’s mandate this tendency became harsher as the president firmly sustained the Expulsion Policy:

As long as I’m president, no pregnant students will be allowed to return to school... the warranty to go to school be it secondary or primary is forbidden.³⁶

However, in June 2021 Leonard Akwilapo, the Minister of Education, affirmed that girls who dropped out school because of pregnancies should resume their studies in alternative colleges:

We are offering an alternative path to education to all children who missed their education for any reason, including those girls who got pregnant while in school, through our Folk Development Colleges (FDCs).³⁷

In this panorama, several local and international NGOs are spreading projects to face gender inequalities, through different actions. Starting from the assumption that Western based ideologies which rule the statement of the majority of NGO’s assume gender equality and women’s empowerment as a way to support the functioning of free market and facilitate the economic growth (Hickel 2014: 1361), the following paragraphs will focus on the gender related issues stressed by women and girls during the fieldwork to highlight the structural and political problems that are being claimed by the latter, instead of focusing on the NGO’s aims and projects.

³⁵<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/01/tanzania-allows-teenage-mothers-be-back-school>

³⁶<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/06/tanzania-pregnant-student-ban-harms-thousands>

³⁷<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tanzania-offer-alternative-education-school-dropouts-including-pregnant-girls-2021-06-22/>

4.1 PSBF – School dropouts: facing period poverty

As stated by the World Bank,³⁸ in Tanzania every year more than 120'000 girls abandon school. For that reason the PSBF's *Nikomboe* ("Save me") project has the main purpose to tackle female school dropouts, which are more spread in the rural areas than in the urban ones.³⁹ According to the PSBF's president:

In the rural areas it's not so easy for girls. This is because, first, in the rural areas the poverty is bigger, and another problem is the distance from school: going at home from school is really far. Moreover, in villages girls have more work to do than in the cities. For this reason, they are asked to do a lot of work before going to school and even when they go back. For this reason, it is really hard for girls.⁴⁰

The questionnaires filled by the 60 girls involved in the project point out that every child carries out care work and farming activities at home every day. As reported by TYVA (2017: 4-5), in the country the main issues related to female school dropouts are related to financial barriers as most families cannot afford school uniforms, transports to get to school and school supplies. As a direct consequence of this precarious economic condition, the issues of period poverty, teen pregnancies, and early marriages are well spread in the country.

When I joined PSBF, the NGO team focused mostly on activities to prevent period poverty⁴¹ and to improve girls' hygiene. According to Cavill *et al.* (2013: 258) period poverty has a great impact on girls' education in the world. From a study led by Tamiru *et al.* in 2015 (2015: 97-99), it emerged that 48% of the Tanzanian girls interviewed do not go to school during period. This is due to structural problems as in the country 99% of school toilets are not appropriate to maintain a proper MHM (Menstrual Hygiene Management), and girls have difficulties in getting sanitary pads. Most girls use reusable pads made from old clothes, cotton rags, and sponges that are not efficient. Disposable pads, when around, are too expensive and most of the girls cannot afford them (Tamiru *et al.* 2015b: 15-16). As stated by the president of the PSBF:

³⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/statement/2021/11/24/world-bank-statement-on-the-announcement-by-government-of-tanzania-on-equal-access-to-education-for-pregnant-girls-and-y>

³⁹ As reported by the Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey, in 2010, in urban areas 86.7 % of girls went to primary schools, and 4.7% of girls went to secondary schools, while in rural areas, 84.5% of girls went to primary school and just 0.9% of girls went to secondary schools (TYVA 2017: 1-3).

⁴⁰ *Ila maeneo ya vijijini sio rahisi sana kwa wasichana. Kwa sababu maeneo ya vijijini kwanza umaskini ni mkubwa lakini pia hata umbali kutoka shuleni, kwenda nyumbani kutoka shuleni ni mrefu sana. Lakini pia kwa vijijini msichana ana kazi nyingi sana kuliko mjini. Kwa hiyo atatakiwa kufanya kazi nyingi sana kabla hajaenda shule na hata akifika nyumbani atakuwa kwa kazi nyingi za kufanya* (Interview PSBF: 25th November 2021).

⁴¹ As stated by Michel *et al.* (2022: 1) period poverty is the lack of access to menstrual products, hygiene facilities, waste management, and education. It affects many women globally causing physical, mental and emotional challenges.

There is a lack of sanitary pads that [a girl] can wear at school to be comfortable and to study well without the fear of being in that period of the month – during menstruations, but if it cannot be like this, she won't be comfortable, she will start feeling ashamed, or going to school will become for her an obstacle. For that reason, problems of school dropout are related to the lack of sanitary pads.⁴²

Moreover, in the country, there is a lack of activities for menstrual education, and taboos and stereotypes are widely spread, causing a lack of support from the society, community and family (Tamiru *et al.* 2015: 92). In the rural area of Iringa, usually notions about femininity and period management were taught during *unyago* rituals, where maternal and paternal grandmothers had the responsibility to educate and initiate girls to the adulthood using songs–*misimu*, dances and practicing genital female modifications (GFM)⁴³ which concerned the excision of the hymene (Cavill *et al.* 2013: 11; Fisher-Brown 1935: 92-93). Because of GFMs, nowadays government and education system discourage these practices. During the fieldwork I did not get a clear idea about the real spread of these practices in the rural area of Iringa, even if some informants declared that *unyago* is still practised in a limited manner with no GFM. Despite that, the topic has to be examined in depth. When I asked to the PSBF president if the knowledge about menstruations is still transmitted through *unyago*, he asserted:

Yes, [girls] get these teachings during *unyago*, but today government does not permit the teachings of *unyago* and *jando*⁴⁴ because there are some communities that mix these teachings with genital modification practices. For this reason, for the moment, government goes against and hinders these teachings. Because of this, many girls do not have the chance to get an education from their parents and their community about the growth of their bodies.⁴⁵

In response to these menstrual issues, PSBF proposes some training activities for MHM. During these activities, the NGO trainers present some quizzes to promote group discussion about stereotypes and taboos around menstruation. These activities are useful because through group discussions, girls

⁴² Kuna kukosa taalo za kike ambazo ataweza kuvaa shuleni na akawa comfortable akasoma vizuri bila matatizo mengine bila kuhofia kwamba atakuwa kwenye muda wa mwezi, kwenye menstruation, kama hatakuwa anaweza kujisikia vizuri basi anaweza kujikuta anaingia kupata aibu au kuzulia shuleni kwa hiyo matatizo yanahusiana pia na kukosa taalo za kike kwa kuzulia shule (Interview: Iringa 25th November 2021).

⁴³ I decided to use the less-used term “modification” to replace the more common “mutilations” referring to the Fusaschi’s study (2003: 33), which analyses these operations collocating them in the wide trans-cultural category of the modifications or alterations of the body for non-therapeutic aims.

⁴⁴ Initiation rite related to male puberty (Tumbo-Masabo *et al.* 1994: 99).

⁴⁵ Ndio wanapata haya mafunzo ya unyago lakini kwa sasa serikali hairuhusu sana haya mafunzo unyago na jando kwa sababu kuna jamii zinahusianisha haya mafunzo na ukeketaji, kwa hiyo serikali inasimamia inazuia sana haya mafunzo kwa sasa. Kwa hiyo wasichana wengi hawapati nafasi ya kwenda kufundishwa na wazazi hawa na jamii kuhusu maendeleo ya mili yao (Interview 25th novembre 2021).

become aware about MHM. Moreover, to support girls to go to school during period, the NGO started to distribute reusable and washable sanitary pads made with proper materials reachable in the country (towels, *kanga*,⁴⁶ and plastic tarp), made by a local tailor. Girls enjoy the pads because they are easy to wash and usable for several hours. During the activity named “Menstrual Olympics”—a game that directly involves girls in a challenge of speed for washing the pads properly - girls learn important tips on personal menstrual hygiene. As reported by the president of the PSBF:

These training activities were really important because a girl who lives in a village has no opportunity to follow training about girls’ puberty. She will have the possibility to follow just school training activities that however are not about female personal hygiene, and do not teach her to recognise herself as a girl in the moment of her body’s changes—to see these changes as normal when they happen—and [they do not teach] how to live these changes step by step. Many girls in villages do not receive this kind of education because parents sometimes are afraid to talk about these topics with their daughters. Because they are afraid, it is fundamental that we as PSBF, give this kind of education to help the girl to reach her aims⁴⁷.

The problem of MHM is well known in the country. According to Vaughn (2013: 33-34), in Tanzania, the Ministry of Education approved the use of booklets⁴⁸ in primary schools to add MHM to the curriculum. Moreover, UNICEF and local ministry officials embraced this book in the new “Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools” national strategy throughout Tanzania in 2011. This program was realised with the collaboration of four ministries: health, education, water, and sanitation to integrate MHM interventions such as sufficient latrines, water, and disposal mechanism in addition to the book. Despite that, period poverty remains a big issue in the country that must be faced overall starting from the structural conditions that avoid school’s participation.

⁴⁶*Kanga* consists of a rectangular piece of fabric (150 cm x 110 cm), and it is very famous all over East Africa. It is brightly colorful and on it you can find different sentences that refer to important periods of life of the person, mostly a woman, who wear it (Acquaviva et al. 2019: 58).

⁴⁷ “*Training* hizo zilikuwa muhimu sana kwa sababu msichana aliyeko kijijini kwanza hana fursa ya kupata *training* zinazomuhusu yeye kama msichana. Atapata tu *training* za shule za kawaida. Lakini zile ambazo zitamuhusu msichana kuwa msafi, msichana kujitambua kwamba sasa unaingia kwenye kipindi ambacho kutakuwa kwenye mabadiliko kwenye mwili wako kwa hiyo unapoonaa mabadiliko haya ndio ni badiliko ya kawaida lakini pia namna ya kuishi na haya ya mabadiliko huishi nayo katika hatua moja, mbili, tatu. Wasichana wengi hawapati elimu vijijini. Kwa sababu wazazi mara nyingi wanaogopa kuongea mambo kama haya na watoto. Kwa sababu wanaogopa ni muhimu sana, sisi kama PSBF ni muhimu sana kuenda kutoa elimu kama hizi zinaweza kusaidia msichana na anaweza kufikia malengo yake” (Interview 25th November 2021).

⁴⁸ “Growth and Changes – *Vipindi vya maisha*” (2009), written by Marnie Sommers, presents the following topics: puberty, physical changes, pregnancies, menstrual pain, and premenstrual syndrome. It is a double language text, written in English and Swahili, and presents stories and quizzes to foster learning.

4.2 ABC project: women's participation in tea cooperatives

The training activities proposed by the ABC project in Iringa town had the main purpose to discuss gender inequalities in tea cooperatives. During the meetings several topics were pointed out, and among these, I will focus on the definition of gender, gender roles, the women's workload, and the definition of a *mwanamke aliyewezesha*,⁴⁹ that will be discussed below.

During the first meeting⁵⁰ a group formed by women and men with a total of sixty participants discussed as first topic the definition of gender. In Tanzania, at Primary and Secondary schools gender definition is usually studied during Civics lessons. In "Civics for Secondary Schools. Book Two" (Zombwe 2018) gender is defined as follows:

Gender refers to the constructed social and cultural characteristics and norms which are then attributed to the different biological sexes. So, the social-cultural relationship and interactions between males and females in the society focus on the roles and responsibilities of two different sexes. Gender changes according to the environment and the culture of the society (Zombwe 2018: 76).

The ABC project's definition discussed is similar to Zombwe's and amplifies some concepts:

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men, in a given culture or location. These roles are influenced by perceptions and expectations arising from cultural, political, environmental, economic, social, and religious factors, as well as custom, law, class, ethnicity, and individual or institutional bias. Gender attitudes and behaviours are learned and can be changed (CEFA, JIDI, IDH 2021a: 3).

The term "gender" (Sw. *jinsia*) has been presented as opposed to the term "sex" (Sw. *jinsi*). As reported in the CEFA's handbook (CEFA, JIDI, IDH 2021a):

Sex refers to the biological differences between women and men. They are generally permanent and universal (CEFA, JIDI, IDH 2021a: 3).

Moreover, according to the trainer and the participant view, "sex" cannot be changed because decided by God:

⁴⁹ "The woman who is enabled to do."

⁵⁰ ABC project, 19th of October 2021.

T⁵¹: Here we noticed that sex is an application that God assigned to you, isn't true? [...] now, gender is these actions that have been associated to you from society or from culture [...] right? [gender] is these actions that you acquire from your society. When you are told that a woman has been beaten by a man, right? When you are told that women do not climb trees. When you are told that a woman [must] cook and that man can go to the bush to play football. When you are told that the mum goes to carry her child to the clinic and the father stays at home. These are issues of what kind? Gender issues. We were not born with them, but we met them in our society, and they made us as we are. So, who wears trousers?

Everybody: men.⁵²

Concerning gender roles, Zombwe (2018: 77) defines them as follows:

Gender roles have been mostly based on the division of labour according to sex. To many societies, these divisions have been made in a biased form. In different societies, the roles of women for instance, can be seen in domestic activities such as cooking as men play their roles in political and other useful economic activities where women are treated as cooks, and men are assigned other important economic activities (Zombwe 2018: 77).

As reported in the CEFA's handout (CEFA, JIDI, IDH 2021a: 4) women who live in the rural area are associated with "Women's Triple Roles," namely:

- Productive, relating to the production of goods for consumption or income through work in or outside their home.
- Reproductive, relating to domestic or household tasks associated with creating and sustaining children and family.
- Community management, relating to tasks and responsibilities carried out for the benefit of the community.

Socially, these roles were consolidated during the post-independence politics. In fact, even if Nyerere wanted to stress for gender equality in the independent Tanzania, Ujamaa politics enforced gender role division. Referring to women in "Socialism and Rural Development" (1967):

⁵¹Abbreviation for trainer.

⁵²T: *Hapa tumeona jinsi ni maombile ambao mungu amekumbanana, si ndio? [...] Sasa jinsia ni yale matendo ambayo unafundishwa na jamii au tamaduni [...], sawa? Ni yale matendo ambayo unabeba kutoka kwenye jamii yako. Unapoambiwa mwanamke abishani na mwanamume, sawa? Unapoambiwa wanawake hawapandi miti, unapoambiwa mwanamke apike, mwanamume aende porini kucheza mpira. Unapoambiwa mama andoa mbebe mtoto kupeleke kliniki na mwanamume abaki nyumbani. Yale ndio mambo ya nini? Mambo ya kijinsia. Hautujazaliwa nayo lakini tumeyakuta kwenye jamii zetu yakatufanya jinsi tulivyo. Kwamba suruali ni ya nani?*

Wote: wanamume (ABC project, 19th October 2021).

By the virtue of sex they suffered from inequalities which had nothing to do with their contribution to the family welfare. Although it is wrong to suggest that they have always been an oppressed group, it is true that within traditional society ill-treatment and enforced subservience could be their lot. This is certainly inconsistent with our socialist conception of the equality of all human beings” (Nyerere 1967: 3).

As stated by Tenga et al. (1996: 143), in the Ujamaa villages women covered a central role overall in the farming activities working at times “for twelve or fourteen hours”. The Ujamaa agriculture project was highly gendered and women performed the ideal mothers and wives, occupying a subordinate position in the authority structure of the society. This tendency was accompanied by the ideal Ujamaa family configuration that projected the monogamous nuclear family based on the European and Christian model, which abhorred the traditional kinship structure (Britwun 2022: 126-127). Indeed, the nuclear family is the place for the reproduction and production of the workforce and the instrument that maintains the capitalist mode of production, based on the paradox which associates the domestic relationship of reproduction with the capitalist relationship of production. Nowadays, women are mostly defined in terms of their reproductive role, and because they usually do not earn an income for their activities, they are not recognised and valued as economically productive. In fact, even if women occupy a fundamental position in the farming activities and in the care works, they do not acquire the recognition of a productive status. Submitted to the conjugal relationships which dominate the parent-child relationships, the product of women’s workload does not enter the household if not intermediated by the man (Meillasoux 1978: 93; 173). As referred by Mascarenhas *et al.* (1983) in a case study that focuses on women’s oppression in Tanzania:

For women, the task of being wife and mother are defined as “duties,” as moral obligations, by the patriarchal ideologies which govern the sexual division of labour in domestic labour” (Mascarenhas *et al.* 1983: 20).

To focus on gender roles, during the first training with CEFA53, participants were divided into eight small groups to answer four questions:

- *Kwenye jamii yangu kwa kuwa mimi ni mwanamke ni lazima...* (“In my society as a woman it’s necessary to...”)
- *Ningekuwa mwanamume ningeweza...* (“If I were a man I could...”)

⁵³ABC project, 19th October 2021.

- *Kwenye jamii yangu kwa kuwa mimi ni mwanamume ni lazima...* (“In my society as a man it’s necessary to...”)
- *Ningekuwa mwanamke ningeweza...* (“If I were a woman I could...”)

According to the collected data, women are associated with reproductive roles (give birth and take care for the family in absence of husband’s help); productive roles (handle small business activities, farming activities and hard works; breed small livestock as chicken or pigs); and administrative roles as women are perceived as fundamental mentors for society for which they are an example and an educational figure. Below, I present a speech from a participant that highlights gender roles issues:

W⁵⁴: Life [that of women] has some difficulties now. Because, in the house where you live, even if the father is a worker the woman is a farmer, and both contribute to the income for the house. For example, [...] mum gets up at 5, and the father gets up at 7. From 5 am, mum gets up, eats, washes the dishes, and clothes the children to go to school. Father does not even wash his clothes. Father washes, gets dressed and goes out to work. Despite that, for the income, the father will be back, and I will be back, and we will put them together, responsibilities must be shared. For these reasons, good practices can start at home. If mum gets up, gets dressed, and cleans up, the father should clothe the children to go to school. For this reason, these would be the rules that permit gender balance between men and women⁵⁵.

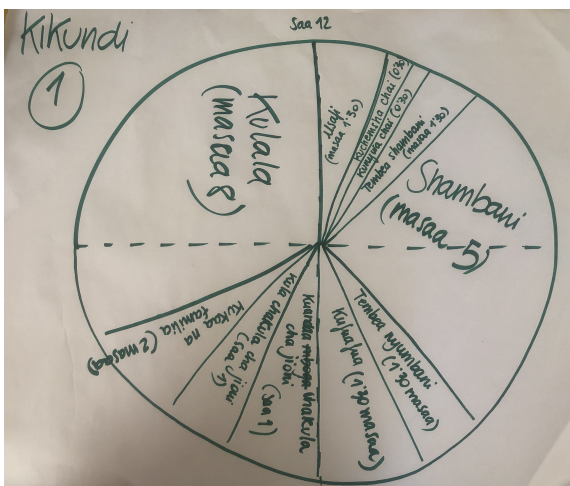
As stated by Jakobsen (2014: 540) in rural areas in Tanzania, the agricultural workforce is predominantly female, and most women work their husband’s land. A woman usually works 12-16 hours a day, and the husband the half of this amount. Moreover, the man decides for and takes the income from her agricultural work. An ABC project activity that sheds the light on this topic is *Mduara wangu wa maisha* (“My circle of life”). This activity was proposed to the women’s groups⁵⁶ to highlight the huge women’s workload. Women were divided into small groups, and they had to draw a pie chart of a daily routine of a participant. The circle represents the 24 hours of the day that women had to divide according to their daily activities. The pie charts reported are the result of the work of 60

⁵⁴ Abbreviation for “woman.”

⁵⁵ *Maisha sasa yana magumu. Kwaani ndani ya nyumbani unapoishi hata kama baba atakuwa ni mfanya kazi, mama ni mkulima lakini wote wanachangia pato la nyumbani. Kwa mfano, [...] mama anaamka saa kumi na moja, baba akaamka saa moja. Lakini ndani saa kumi na moja mama ameamka, amekula, ameosha viombo, ameandaa watoto wamenda shule. Baba hata pengine anaosha nguo za baba. Baba yeye ataoga, atavaa nguo, ataenda kazini. Lakini kwenye kipato, baba atarudi, mimi nitarudi na tunachanganya, majikumumu yanaenda pamoja. Kwa hiyo sheria ndogo ndogo zingesainia ndani ya nyumba. Kama mama ameamka anaandaa, anafanya usafi, basi baba anaandaa watoto waende shule. Kwa hiyo hizi zingekuwa sheria ambazo zina usawa kati ya mwanaume na mwanamke* (ABC project, 19th October 2021).

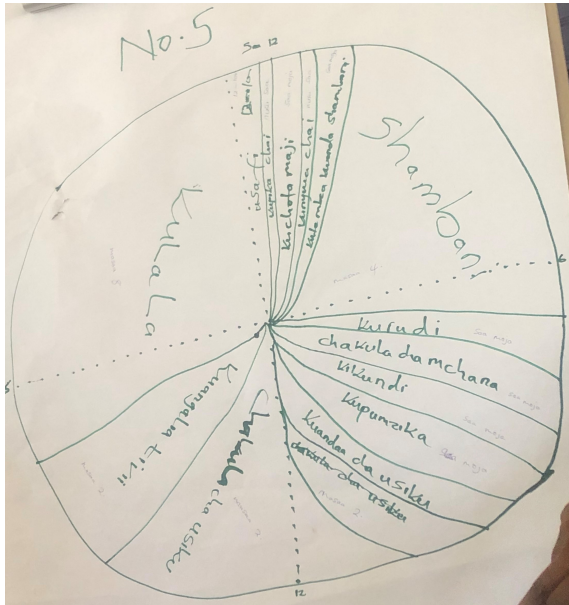
⁵⁶ ABC project, training activities of 27th October 2021 and 3rd November 2021.

participants, and even if the routines are different, they report many similarities. Indeed, everybody gets up at 6 am and sleeps 8 hours per night. On average, women spend 5.30 hours for care work, from a minimum of 4 hours to a maximum of 8. The care work is executed by the woman alone and consists in cleaning up, cooking 2 or 3 meals a day, taking care of children, and tapping water. Then women carry out the productive work, which consists of farming activities, and on average women spend 5 hours a day in the field, from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 7 hours. Just one graphic adds another productive work, that is tailoring, in which the woman is involved for 4 hours a day; and just two graphics add the administrative activities in the tea cooperatives for 1 hour a day. What emerges from these graphics is that a woman usually works on average 10.30 hours a day, and the majority of these hours are unpaid.



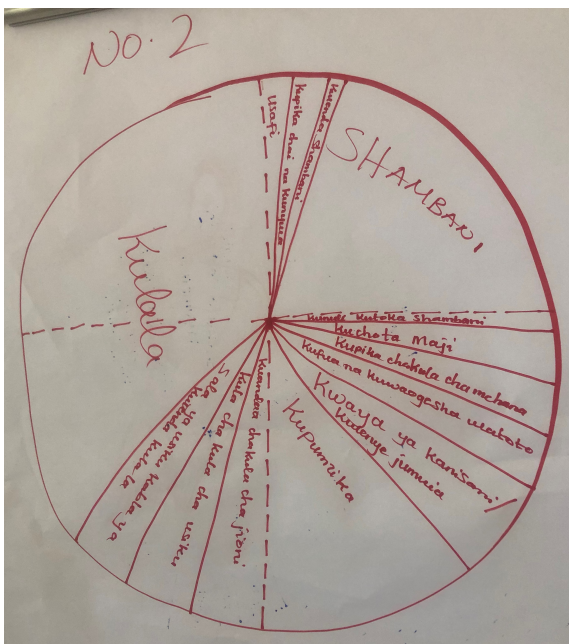
The participant gets up at 6 am. She spends 1 hour and 30 minutes to clean up, 30 minutes to prepare breakfast, 1 hour and 30 minutes to walk to go to the field, 5 hours to work in the field, 1 hour and 30 minutes to go back home, 1 hour and 30 minutes to wash, 1 hour to make dinner, 1 hour to eat, two hours to stay with the family and 8 to sleep.

Picture #1 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).



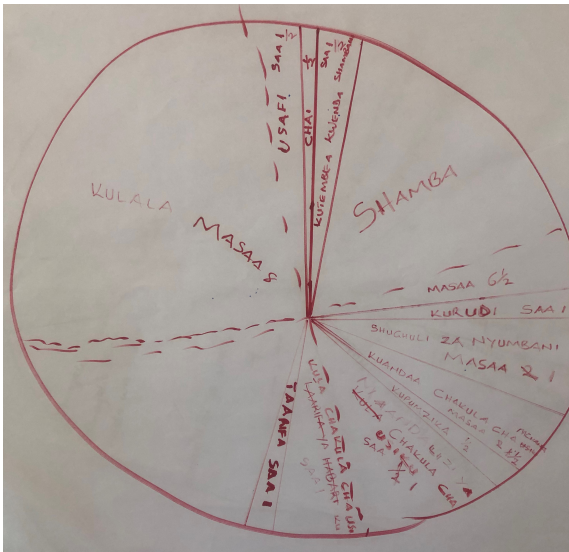
Picture #2 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).

The participant gets up at 6 am. She spends 1 hour to clean up, 1 hour to go to tap water, 30 minutes to have breakfast, 1 hour to go to the field, 4 hours to work in the field, 1 hour to go back home, 1 hour to stay in the tea company, 2 hours to make dinner, 2 hours and 30 minutes to watch tv, and 8 hours to sleep.



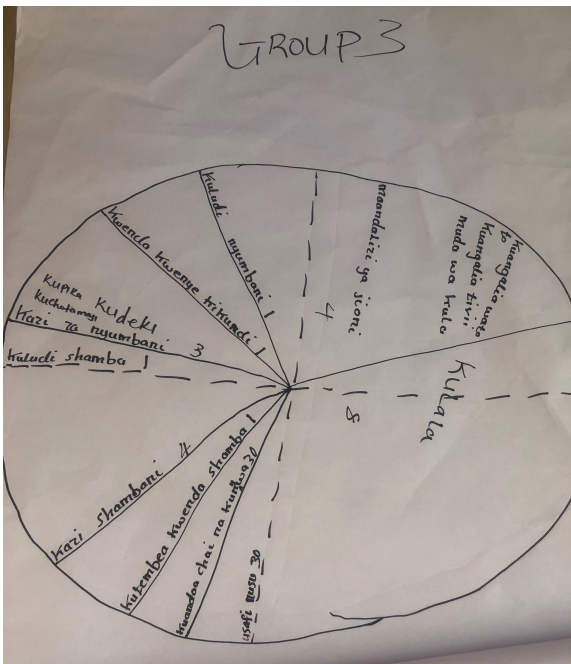
Picture #3 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).

The participant gets up at 6 am. She spends 30 minutes to clean up, 1 hour to make breakfast, 30 minutes to go to the field, 4 hours to work in the field, 30 minutes to come back from the field, 1 hour and 30 minutes to tap water, 1 hour to cook, 1 hour to clean and wash the children, 1 hour for the church choir, 1 hour to rest, 1 hour to finish to prepare dinner, 1 hour and 30 minutes to eat, 1 hour and 30 minutes to pray, and 8 hours to sleep.



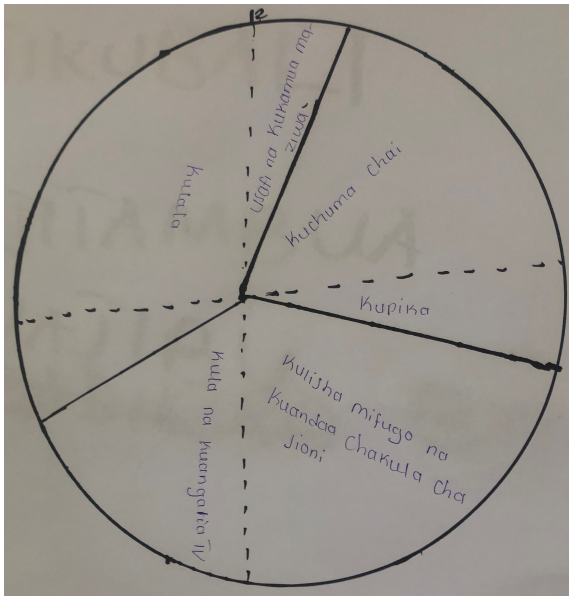
The participant gets up at 6 am. She spends 30 minutes to clean up, 30 minutes to have tea, 30 minutes to go to the field, 6 hours and 30 minutes to work in the field, 1 hour to go back home, 1 hour to do the housework, 2 hours and 30 minutes to prepare lunch, 30 minutes to rest, 1 hour to make dinner, 1 hour to have dinner, 1 hour to listen to the news, 8 hours to sleep.

Picture #4 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).



The participant gets up at 6 am. She spends 30 minutes to clean up, 30 minutes to prepare tea, one hour to walk to the field, 4 hours to work in the field, 1 hour to go back from the field, 3 hours to cook wash and do the housework, 1 hour to go to the tea company, 4 hours for the evening preparations (taking care of children, watching tv, eating), 8 hours to sleep.

Picture #5 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).



The participant gets up at 6 am. She spends 1 hour to milk, 5 hours to harvest the tea, 1 hour to cook, 5 hours to feed the animals and prepare dinner, 4 hours to eat and watch television, 8 hours to sleep.

Picture #6 (ABC project, 3rd November 2021).



The participant gets up at 6 am. She spends 1 hour to clean up, 7 hours to gather the tea leaves, 1 hour to have lunch, 4 hours to sew, two hours to have dinner, 1 hour to watch the television, 8 hours to sleep.

Picture #7 (ABC project, 3rd November 2021).

As stated by Meillassoux (1978: 100), to reach an egalitarian work redistribution, it is necessary to dissociate the productive and reproductive cycles that often are merged in the domestic way of production. This work distribution, as pointed out by Mascarenhas et al. (1983: 16-17), generates women's oppression which is necessary to maintain the dominant capitalist relations of production and reproduction and in rural areas, women's oppression is fundamental to the exploitation of peasants as well. In the peasant production system, female labour is vital in the domestic labour

process, and it is the major component of food production and export crop production. This oppression is often justified by gender stereotypes attributed to women.

According to this, women in the Iringa region suffer low social esteem. Often associated with their reproductive role, they are described as caregivers, passive beings, and sexual objects who must satisfy the male pleasure (Sanga 2020: 112). During the first ABC project's training,⁵⁷ the group was divided according to gender to identify the differences between women and men. Through this activity and the ABC's project handout (CEFA, JIDI, IDH 2021: 8), it is possible to identify the stereotypes attributed to women. Socially, women are perceived as dependent, weak, incompetent, less important, emotional, implementers, and housekeepers. As reported by a woman during the training:

Women are always hearth people, [woman] is a person who cooks [...] this is the woman's responsibility.⁵⁸

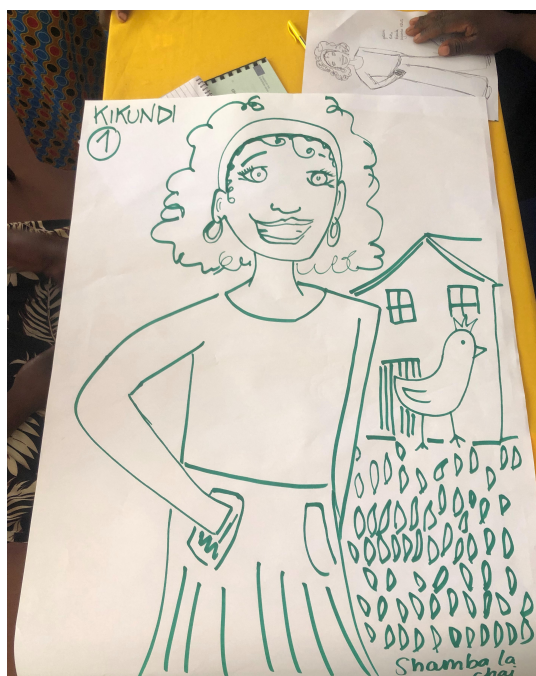
Moreover, women are seen as supporters, fragile, fickle, fearful, peacemakers, cautious, flexible, warm, passive, followers, spectators, modest, subjective, soft-spoken, secretaries, nurturing, gentle, excitable, patient, cheerful, caretakers and cooperative. These characteristics are opposed to those of men, who are identified as powerful, independent, competent, more important, logical, decision-makers, leaders, brave, active, aggressive, adventurous, competitive, objective, and as reported by Sanga (2020: 112) dynamic and creative thinkers. Despite that, what emerged from the ABC project's training activities—overall these addressed to women groups⁵⁹—is that the participants are aware of the oppression they suffer, and they have a clear idea about the ideal of an empowered woman that can be reached. In this domain, I want to refer to the term “empowerment,” trying to detach from the neoliberal Western idea of the gender mainstream feminism which focuses on achieving individual condition and self-mastery (Hickel 2014: 1356). Namely, I refer to the term according to the Italian presented by Nadotti *impoteramento* (hooks 1998) derived from Spanish *empoderamento* which are related to the capability of action and the awareness of oneself and the society, contrary to the individual power and the straight (Borghi 2020: 13; Specia *et al.* 2015: 196). In analysing this term, I will present the activity named *Sifa za mwanamke aliyewezesha* (“The characteristics of a woman who make it possible”). During the activities of the 27th September and 3rd November, the female participants divided into small groups had to draw the picture of the ideal of an empowered woman, and then to present it in front of the group. In general,

⁵⁷ABC project, 19th October 2021.

⁵⁸ *Wanawake siku zote ni mtu wa jikoni, ni mtu wa kupika. [...] ni majikumu ya mwanamke* (ABC project. 19th October 2021).

⁵⁹ABC project, 27th September 2021, 3rd November 2021.

similar features were pointed out: the *mwanamke aliyewezesha* is beautiful and happy, she has tidy hair braided or dreadlocks, and has beautiful dresses and accessories such as earrings and necklaces. She is economically independent with good revenues, she lives in a beautiful house with a bathroom, and she owns her tea field (to which some participants add a cornfield). Most of them say that this empowered woman is a farmer or a chicken breeder with just two exceptions: one group says that she is a teacher, and the other one says that she owns her business activity. Regarding her family, she has children but as reported by most of the groups, she is not married. Here below I present the pictures and some extracts of the debate that every group reported. During the meeting on the 3rd of November, we had less time for the discussion, so I report the features that I wrote directly during the meeting. These pictures are the result of the work of 60 participants.



Picture #8 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).

W: She has a beautiful house, she breeds, and she is also a farmer. [...]

T: What is she holding in her hand?

W: A purse.

T: And has she got money in the purse?

W: Yes, she has.

T: She is beautiful, she is wearing earrings.

W: Yes.

T: My friends, she has got a house, livestock, tea fields, happiness, beauty, money, she wears a beautiful dress. Is she walking?

W: Eheh [asserting].

T: Where is she going?

W: She is going to the cooperative.

T: Ah! So, does she own a cooperative?

W: Yes.

T: Fine.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ W: ana nyumba nzuri, anafuga, na pia ni mkulima. [...]

T: Ameshika nini?

W: Ameshika pochi.

T: Na ana hela kwenye pochi?



W: This is an empowered woman. It is not necessary that every empowered woman builds a home or owns a field. This is a woman who is going to her business activity. She is going by herself to do her business.

T: What about her look?

W: Her look is beautiful.

T: Is she married?

W: She is married with a husband, and she has children. She is wearing a shirt and a skirt.⁶¹

Picture #9 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).

W: Ndio.

T: Amekaa mzuri, anavaa hereni.

W: Ndio.

T: Jamani, ana nyumba, ana mifugo, ana shamba la chai, anapendenda, ana furaha, ana uzuri, ana pesa, amevaa nguo nzuri. Anatembea?

W: Eheh.

T: Anaenda wapi?

W: Anaenda kwenye kikundi.

T: Aaah kwa hiyo ana vikundi.

W: Ndio.

T: Sawa.

⁶¹W: Huyu ni mwanamke aliyewezesha. Sio lazima kila mwanamke aliyewezesha anajenga nyumba au ana shamba. Huyu ni mwanamke ambaye anaenda kufanya biashara zake. Anaenda zake kufanya biashara zake.

T: Maonekano yake?

W: Ni maonekano mazuri.

T: ameolewa?

W: ameolewa na mume na ana watoto. Anavaa shati na sketi.



W: An empowered woman. This woman has her house, here she is wearing a dress, she owns tea, and also a cornfield.

[...]

T: What about hair, how is it?

W: It is tied, she has dreadlocks.

T: Is it a purse?

W: Yes.

T: What has she got inside?

W: Money.

T: Has she got money?

W: Eheh [asserting].

T: What is she wearing here?

W: A necklace.

T: And here?

W: Earrings.

T: For this reason, an empowered woman is beautiful, she adorns herself.

Everybody: Yes.⁶²

Picture #10 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).

⁶² W: Mwanamke aliyewezesha. Huyu mwanamke ana nyumba yake, hapa akavaa suti ana chai, bado ana milimo ya mahindi.

[...]

T: Nywele zi vipi?

W: Amechama, ana dredi.

T: Hii ni pochi?

W: Ndio.

T: Ana nini ndani?

W: Hela.

T: Ana hela?

W: eheh.

T: Anavaa nini hapa?

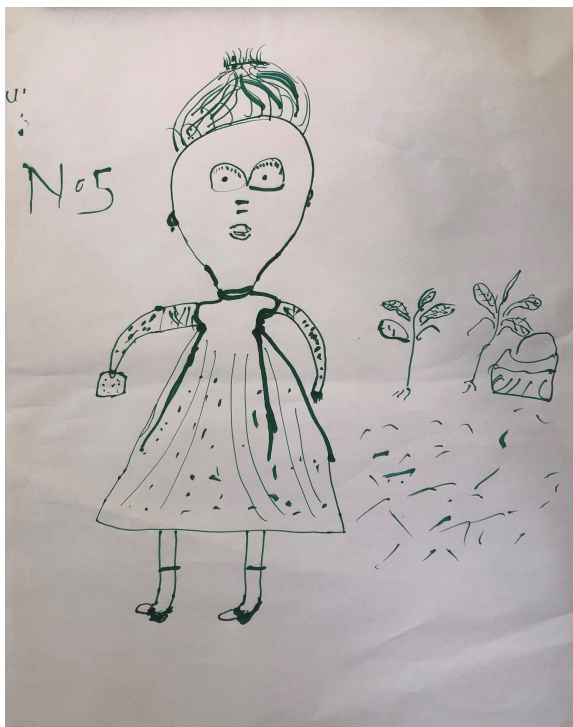
W: Vikanda.

T: Na hapa?

W: Ni hereni.

T: Kwa hiyo mwanamke aliyewezesha ana mrembo, amejiremba?

Wote: Ndio.



W: An empowered women is a tea farmer.
T: What is she carrying?
W: She is carrying food.
T: So, she went to the field and now she is carrying food.
W: Eheh, yes.
T: And why is she wearing socks?
W: She went gathering
T: Is she going to gather coffee?
W: Tea.
T: Eheh [asserting].
W: For this reason, she is wearing shoes, to go to the field.
[...]
T: Eehh. So, an empowered woman has got tea, a house, money, she can have food, then is the field hers or of her husband? Or is not married yet?
W: Eheh, she lives alone.
T: And here? Is her hair braided?
W: Eheh [asserting].⁶³

Picture #11 (ABC project. 27th October 2021).

⁶³ W: Mwanamke aliyewezesha ni mkulima wa chai.

T: Amebeba nini?

W: Anabeba chakula.

T: Kwa hiyo alienda shambani na anabeba chakula.

W: eheh ndio.

T: na kwa nini anavaa socks?

W: anaenda kuchuma (raccogliere).

T: anaenda kuchuma kahawa?

W: Chai.

T: Eheh.

W: Kwa hiyo anavaa viatu, kwa kuenda shambani.

[...]

T: Eeeh. Kwa hiyo mwanamke anayewezesha ana chai, ana nyumba, ana hela, anaweza kupata chakula, halafu shamba ni yake au ya mume wake? Au hajaolewa?

W: Eheh anaishi mwenyewe.

T: Halafu hapa amesuka?

W: Eheh.



Picture #12 (ABC project, 27th October 2021).

W: An empowered woman is going to get her bag; she is coming from her house.

T: So, she has several livestock: chicken, ducks.

W: Yes, and her tea field, that over there.

T: So, there is corn but also tea. So, an empowered woman has a field, and other products.

Everybody: Yes.

T: Does she own her house?

W: Yes.

T: Has she got a cooperative? Is she a leader of a cooperative?

W: Yes.

T: Eheh, she must be beautiful. Her hair is braided. Is she married or not yet?

W: Not yet.

T: For that reason, many empowered women do not want to be married.

W: Yes.

T: So, we saw the features of empowered women [...] which features did we see if we return [watching] all the pictures?

W: The feature that I notice is that the empowered woman has her own tea field, moreover she breeds.

T: Eheh [asserting]. What does she breed often?

W: She owns chicken.

T: Eheh [asserting]. Something else?

W: She has got a house.

W: She has got a cooperative.

T: Eheh [asserting]. Something else?

W: She always has money.

T: Something else?

W: It is necessary that an empowered woman is

beautiful.

T: Eheh [asserting], an empowered woman, we noticed that she is not yet married.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ W: Mwanamke aliyewezesha anaenda kwenye kikoba, ametoka kwenye nyumba yake.

T: Kwa hiyo mwanamke mifugo mengi ni kuku, bata.

W: Ndio na shamba lake la chai lile hapa.

T: Kwa hiyo kuna mahindi lakini chai pia. Kwa hiyo mwanamke aliyewezesha ana shamba na mazao mengine.

Wote: Ndio.

T: Ana nyumba yake?

W: Ndio.

T: Ana kikundi? Ni mwanachama wa kikundi?

W: Ndio.

T: Eheh lazima apendeze. Akasuka

suka. Huyo ameolewa au hajaolewa?

W: Hajaolewa.

T: kwa hiyo wanawake wengi waliowezesha hawapendi kuolewa olewa.

W: Ndio.

T: Kwa hiyo tuliona sifa za wanawake waliowezesha. [...] tumeona sifa gani zinarudisha picha zote?

W: Sifa ambayo nimeiona, mwanamke aliyewezesha ana shamba la chai. Pia anafuga.

T: Eheh. Anafuga mara nyingi nini?

W: Ana kuku.

T: Eheh kingine?

W: Amekuwa na nyumba.

W: Amekuwa na vikundi.

T: Eheh kingine?

W: Ana hela wakati wote.

T: Eheh nyingine?

W: Mwanamke aliyewezesha ni lazima apendeze.

T: Eheh kingine? [...] mwanamke aliyewezesha, tuliona ambayo hajaolewa [...].



Anatengeneza nywele

She puts in order her hair.

Ana mtoto.

She has a child.

Ana choo “nyumba bila choo sio nyumba”.

She has a bathroom “a house without a bathroom is not a house.

Hajaolewa.

She is not married yet.

Ana shamba lake.

She owns her field.

Anaenda sokoni.

She is going to the market.

Picture #13 (ABC project, 3rd November 2021).



Anapendeza.

She is beautiful.

Ana hela.

She has got money.

Ameolewa.

She is married.

Picture #14 (ABC project, 3rd November 2021).



Anaenda kazini.

She is going to work.

Ana kazi ya kufanya, ni mwalimu.

She has work to do, she is a teacher.

Sio mkulima.

She is not a farmer.

Picture #15 (ABC project, 3rd November 2021).

In recognizing their productive role, the women represented in these pictures are economically independent. In this domain, most of them decide to detach from the husband who is often a symbol of oppression and coercion. Despite that, the “ideal” woman here presented is not strictly related to the individualist values of Western ideology, as she is deeply bounded to the reproductive role and to her community from which she wants to be recognized for her daily efforts. According to my analysis, the willingness of the participants is not to break the social norms to be the “empowered woman who looses the constraints of kinship and cultures” (Hickel 2014: 1360), rather to create a united group able to be the pillar on which the society can stand on. This concept is well presented in a popular song of the Swahili orality repertoire that was sang several times during the activities proposed to the women groups:

<i>Wewe ni nani jamaa?</i>	You, who are you?
<i>Mimi ni mama</i>	I am a mother.
<i>Watoto?</i>	Children?
<i>Watoto wananjitegemea</i>	Children find protection in me.
<i>Mwanaume?</i>	Man?
<i>Mwanaume ananjitegemea</i>	Man trusts me.
<i>Jamii?</i>	Community?
<i>Jamii inanjitegemea</i>	Community stands on me.
<i>Mimi ni mama</i>	I am a mother
<i>Wewe ni nani jamaa?</i>	Who are you?
<i>Mimi ni mama</i>	I am a mother.
<i>Wewe ni nani jamaa?</i>	You, who are you?
<i>Mimi ni mama</i>	I am a mother.
<i>Watoto?</i>	Children?
<i>Watoto wananjitegemea</i>	Children find protection in me.
<i>Jamii?</i>	Community?
<i>Jamii inanjitegemea</i>	Community stands on me.
<i>Shirika?</i>	Society?
<i>Shirika inanjitegemea</i>	Society stands on me.
<i>Mimi ni mama</i>	I am a mother

(ABC project. 27th October and 3rd November 2021)

5. Final remarks

As pointed out from the topics presented, gender-based issues in Tanzania nowadays are related to structural conditions well rooted in the country, as patriarchal oppression is deeply related to cash based economy that directly affects social living conditions. As the case of the rural area of Iringa shows, women are desired for their reproductive force for which they also suffer big menaces by men who want to protect, control and dominate them. In these terms, it is possible to assess according to Meillassoux's theory (1978: 3-4; 90-91), that the present-day Tanzanian economy is related to the capitalist mode of production, imposed in the country since imperialism. This mode of production is based on the nuclear family which reproduces the necessary workforce of the so-called "free man" without whom this mode of production would not exist. Indeed, to assure the capitalist reproduction and development it is necessary that the workforce grows proportionally in a qualitative and a quantitative way, and in this domain, the capitalism reinforce women's subordination and oppression as this status is fundamental to the imperialist exploitation in Tanzania (Mascarenhas *et al.* 1983: 10).

For that reason, the contemporary feminist movements which converge in the AFF (African Feminist Forum), claim for gender liberation recognizing the inter-connected dependence of patriarchy and capitalism. This intersectional aspect is well presented in the following AFF statement:

Deepening existential insecurity arises from intensified capitalist relations of extraction and exploitation that have left devastation in their wake. Facing the challenges ahead requires renewed determination to craft the theoretical frameworks for deepening our understanding of our varied contexts in order to dismantle existing relations of oppression and domination. As the contributors to this special issue show, creating more liberatory possibilities for African women and societies will necessarily be work-in-progress, drawing on and amplifying the possibilities for inspiration and strength through the building of feminist solidarity and collective action (Pereira 2017: 28).

From a decolonial feminist point of view, the Tanzanian experience shows, mentioning Vergès (2019: 19-20), that is possible to “de-patriarchalize” revolutionary struggles for the “right to exist” of a part of the humanity that was often silenced, namely that of women. In fact, the historical analysis of the feminist movements and the daily life experience of peasants who live in the rural area of Iringa, shows the incessant women participation in the building of the Tanzanian society. This analysis is enriched with the brief presentation of some literary works of the Swahili repertoire because they give the possibility to compare the reality with the artistic perception which supported and still supports the narrative around gender politics in the country.

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Legal systems of the people of Dagbon Continuities and discontinuities

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This article uses a qualitative approach to examine the pre-colonial legal systems of the people of Dagbon and how they have evolved in contemporary practices. The laws in the early societies were to regulate the behavior and conduct of people. The pre-colonial legal systems in Africa, the Gold Coast, and specifically the Dagbon went through several transformations due to the arrival of the Europeans. During the pre-colonial period, the settlement of disputes among the indigenous people of Africa was done through the use of the traditional court of arbitration. The local chiefs were the custodians of the customary laws and administered justice using traditional institutions. The core customary laws of pre-colonial Dagbon were based on marriage, criminal justice, inheritance, and land laws among others. The embedding of the British and German legal systems and institutions in the Northern territories marked a change in the customary legal systems of the people of Dagbon. The postcolonial era saw another modification in the legal systems: legal pluralism (concurrent use of customary and British laws). The central finding of the article is that the pre-colonial legal systems in Dagbon were built on the customs and norms of the land. Besides the already mentioned, it was also found that customary laws remain crucial in the adjudication of cases while playing an important role in the hybrid partnerships with contemporary liberal court systems. This has brought many interesting dynamics regarding the place of customary law in hybrid governance which has further implications for the legal space in Sub-Saharan Africa and the global south context even in contemporary times.

Keywords: legal systems; pre-colonial customary law; criminal law; punishment; Dagbon; Dagomba.

1. Introduction

Laws existed in Dagbon prior to the colonization of the territory by Europeans. These laws were based on traditional customs and practices and regulated all aspects of Dagbon society which included governance, land ownership, marriage and inheritance (Dagbon and Dagomba refer to the same people. They have been used interchangeably in this research). Similarly, most African societies developed a set of rules and regulations (laws) based on customary principles that were intended to govern communities and establish societies that were well-ordered for all walks of life (Takyiwaa 1988: 50-66). Laws are enforced by traditional authorities such as chiefs and elders, who act as mediators and judges

in disputes. Marfo and Musah highlighted that the chiefs' roles in the pre-colonial era in Africa were primarily executive, judicial and legislative (Samuel and Musah 2018: 1). These roles explain the power of chiefs as central figures in executing the day-to-day activities of their various communities. The traditional laws of Dagomba are deeply embedded in the cultural and social fabric of the people. These laws played a vital role in maintaining order and harmony in the community and ensuring fairness and justice for all members. Also, the laws are passed down from generation to generation and reflect the collective wisdom and values of the people of Dagbon.

Historically, the Dagomba state traces its roots to the 15th and 16th centuries under the leadership of Sitobo (Wilks 1965). Through strategic alliances and military conquests, Sitobo expanded the territory and established a centralized political system that brought stability and prosperity to the people. The Dagomba people have a hierarchical social structure with a paramount chief known as the *Ya-Naa* at the top, who is highly respected and plays a significant role in decision-making processes within the community. According to Busia (1951: 248), the traditional administration in the Gold Coast was built around the chieftaincy institution, and conflicts were settled through customary arbitration, with the chief supported by his elders serving as arbitrators from the village to the state level. The chieftaincy system has been a fundamental part of the Gold Coast governance for centuries. This system served as the basis for traditional administration, with chiefs and their elders serving as arbitrators to settle conflicts. This system was deeply rooted in customary law and was seen as a way to maintain social order and stability.

The 15th century was marked by the advent of Europeans in Africa as well as in Ghana and later in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. This advent saw the embedding of European culture and practices in the Dagbon kingdom. The European legal systems during the colonial period in Africa led to the emergence of legal pluralism on the African continent. The dominance of the British legal system on the Gold Coast marked the period where some specific laws were passed, including, the Bond of 1844 under Captain Hill, and this eventually led to the annexation of several territories in the colony of the Gold Coast (Victor 2005). Also, before the colonization of the Gold Coast, several acts and ordinances were enacted, notable among them were the 1883 Native Jurisdiction Ordinance, the 1904 Chief's Act and several others (Inez 1984: 41-62). These laws allowed the British to exert control over the local population and their resources. Additionally, it introduced a hierarchical system of justice that favored European settlers and marginalized the indigenous people, leading to social and economic disparities within Dagbon. According to Brukum (1999), the British laws only gave them limited space to enforce their traditional legal practices in the Northern Territories. These included the laws on marriage, land, and farm disputes.

The questions surrounding the ownership of lands in the Gold Coast were first answered by family heads and the chiefs. However, the growth of the British legal system transferred the ownership of lands in the Gold Coast into state-owned lands or European concessions (Inez 1984: 41). Also, the state laws on ownership of lands have since independence raised major challenges leading to land disputes and causing several injuries and deaths in recent times. The longstanding inter-ethnic dispute between the Mamprusi and Kusasi in North-East Ghana has been related to chieftaincy, land, and other matters (Lund 2003: 587-610). There has been a case of disregarding or giving less attention to the local legal system on land rights and related legal practices.

Although a new legal system has been introduced in Dagbon, the people still have a strong appreciation and respect for traditional laws. Also, there have been sparse scholarly works on the indigenous Dagomba legal system. The interplay between the British legal systems and the laws of the Dagomba people in recent times needs much academic attention. This interplay is particularly significant due to the increasing globalization and cultural exchange, which has led to a greater need for understanding and reconciling different legal frameworks. Additionally, exploring this topic can shed light on the complexities of legal pluralism and the challenges it poses to maintaining justice and harmony in multicultural societies. The introduction of British colonial laws in the Northern Territory diverted much attention from the Dagomba legal system.

The main objective of the current research was to explore the customary laws of Dagbon. The secondary objectives were to explore the pre-colonial legal systems in Dagomba, the nexus between the colonial systems and the customary laws in Dagbon, and finally the post-colonial customary laws of Dagbon. In pursuit of these objectives, the study deployed a qualitative research approach. The snowball sampling technique was used in selecting respondents. Respondents were interviewed using unstructured interview guides. Follow-up questions were asked to substantiate the initial ones. Key informants who were vested in the customary legal systems/laws of the Dagbon area were duly interviewed. Targeted interviewees were limited to members of the traditional council of the Dagomba societies. The interviews concentrated on the sub-chiefs and some known persons who were abreast of the Dagomba legal system. Some of the personalities that were engaged during the interviews were N'yab Kug' Naa Abdullai II (The chief of Dagbon, who is entrusted with the important duty of ceremonially installing the paramount chief), *Nan-Ton* Naa Bawa V (chief of Nan-Ton), Abukari Osman 'Kpanalana' (spear owner), Ibrahim Mahama (retired lawyer) and some other community members. The data were analyzed thematically, based on the objectives of the research. Archival materials from the Tamale Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) were analyzed. Some of the records obtained from the archives were; court records from 1922 to 1938. NRG2/6/1, Land Tenure in

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The empirical analysis of the research were based on the objectives and were grouped into three segments and sub-sections. This focuses on the pre-colonial legal systems of Dagomba, the nexus between the colonial systems and the customary laws in Dagbon, and finally the post-colonial customary laws of Dagbon.

2. The legal systems of the Dagomba—continuity and change

The section discusses pre-colonial legal systems of Dagbon, the nexus between colonial systems and customary legal systems in Dagbon.

The term “pre-colonial” is related to the period before colonialism. This period dictated millennia of ages before the advent of Europeans in Africa in the 15th century. A legal system is regarded as a set of rules and regulations governing a country or a community (Joseph 1971: 823). For thousands of years, African traditions, legal institutions, and strategies for conflict resolution existed before European exploration in the region. As far back as antiquity, the early established kingdoms like Ancient Ghana (c. 8th-11th century AD), the Mali Empire (c. 13th-15th century AD), Kanem-Bornu (c. 11th century AD), and Songhai (c. 15th – 16th century AD) had built their traditional systems including the judicial system and later metamorphosed to include the Islamic judicial system after Islam had penetrated the region. In the Gold Coast, legal institutions can be traced back to the culture of the people prior to colonization.

Among the Dagomba people, their customs defined their customary laws and practices. Historically, it relates to the early forms of social and political organization, which describe the customary laws in Dagbon. As their custom demanded, customary laws were needed to adjudicate issues of marriage, criminal acts, inheritance, and land tenure. These customary laws played a crucial role in maintaining social order and resolving disputes within the Dagomba community. They provided a framework for resolving conflicts, ensuring the fair distribution of resources, and upholding traditional values and norms. Additionally, these laws were passed down through generations, serving as a means of preserving the cultural heritage and identity of the Dagomba people.

The people of Dagbon, like many communities in the earliest times, considered the institution of marriage as an integral feature of their societal norms and practices. This study unearthed some unique early marital practices that were customarily upheld among the people of Dagbon. In a personal interview with N’yab Kug Naa Abdullai II, he recounted that, among the earliest common practices in

Dagbon, a woman was given into marriage to a man if he had severed the woman's umbilical cord at birth with a token given to the woman's parents. Likewise, when a man had acted honorably toward a friend, he was a favorable candidate to marry the daughter of the friend (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022). This practice, while prevalent in many cultures, often resulted in women being treated as property rather than individuals with their agency and rights.

However, with the changes in societal norms, this practice has been largely abolished in many parts of the world. According to Haruna, another means by which one could get the hand of a woman in marriage during the earliest times was a man showcasing his prowess at the funeral ceremony of a great person in the community (Haruna, personal interview; 05 July 2022). This display of strength and skill was believed to impress the woman's family, as it demonstrated the man's ability to protect and provide for his future wife. Additionally, it served as a way for the man to establish himself as a respected member of the community, further increasing his chances of being chosen as a suitable husband.

Customarily, the practice of polygamous marriages was prevalent among the people of Dagbon and particularly highly practiced among the chiefs and respected elders in the communities. The custom demanded that a "chief" marry as many wives as he wished, and it was commonly accepted for a chief to select the type of women he wanted to marry especially after his enskinment as a chief. Abdullai II recalled that

A newly enskinned chief in Dagbon, particularly the *Ya Naa* (paramount chief), was entitled to have many wives. The process mostly involves newly enskinned chiefs being granted the privilege to select the women of their choice. In the case of *Ya Naa*, he chose the lady he wanted, and his subjects brought the woman for him to marry. The woman had a limited choice to reject his request (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

This practice is known as "bride-giving" and is a traditional custom in some African cultures (Dorothea 2003: 132-64). However, it has been criticized for perpetuating gender inequality and violating the rights of women.

The practice of polygamous marriages among the chiefs in Dagbon was a way of testing their patience (Samuel 2020: 258). A man could marry as many wives as he pleased because the practice was legally accepted in the Dagomba communities. Among the chiefs, it was a preparation ground to showcase a chief's ability to control and provide for the members of his community. It was also a way of ensuring that chiefs had a large number of children who could inherit their positions and continue their legacies.

The above notwithstanding, some of these marriage practices during the pre-colonial period among the Dagomba breached one's right of choice, for instance, the cutting of the umbilical cord and the subsequent forced marriages. This has created an impression in the minds of contemporary thinkers that the mode of contracting some marriages among the people of Dagbon was outrageous. However, it was customarily recognized and legally accepted in the earlier period.

Also, the customs and traditions of the people of Dagbon instituted a distinctive system of inheritance, which formed part of their customary legal practices based on the patrilineal system of inheritance. The patrilineal system of inheritance means that property and power are passed down through the male line. The patrilineal norms "will" the properties of a man to his children, who are considered his blood kin (Edward and Randall 2014: 215-252). Legally, according to Abdul Karim (2015), the succession of titles or the chieftaincy hierarchy was open to only the sons of the ruling chiefs as the customs and traditions demanded.

The system of inheriting titles among the people of Dagbon has been different compared to other traditional communities. However, in the cases of inheriting the properties of a deceased person in the community, the children were entitled to the properties based on customs and norms (Abdul Karim 2015: 28-44). The properties of a deceased person in the community are 'willed' to his immediate family, particularly his children. Abdullai II (personal interview, 2022) related that; "Those that had the legal means of inheriting the properties were the children of the deceased, children of the elder brothers, and the younger brothers of the deceased." Usually, there were no written documents in support of making a 'will' but the Dagomba people passed down their possessions and property to their descendants, orally.

The eldest son typically inherited the bulk of the property, while the other sons received smaller portions or were expected to make their way up climbing the ladder of life. *Naa Bawa V* recounted in an interview that:

In Dagbon, "Will" was not written down or observed. When a Dagomba Man dies, the children inherit his property. It is the family head and other elders in the family who will administer that. The family head keeps the property for the children and if one day the children face some problem or need money, they go to him for some parts of the property. In some cases, the first son inherits all the property for the sake of his other siblings. He becomes the head of the family. In the case of land, the children continue to use the deceased's land, and they could decide to share it among themselves or farm together (*Nan-Ton Naa Bawa V*, personal interview: 05 July 2022).

The above is a common practice in many traditional societies where land ownership or other inherited properties are passed down through generations. However, in modern times, legal procedures and

documentation are necessary to ensure a smooth transfer of property ownership after the death of the owner.

The customary laws on chieftaincy succession underscores the patrilineal system among the people of Dagbon (Awedoba 2006). In the case of the succession of the paramount seat or the next to ascend on the highest throne of Dagbon particularly to be the next *Ya-Naa* (paramount chief), the eldest son of the previous paramount chief is selected (Mac Gaffey 2013: read more chapter 4). Likewise, as the interviewees hinted, the writing of a “Will” was not codified in the legal practices of the Dagomba. This suggests that the inheritance of property and assets was solely based on the male lineage and that there was no formal legal framework for individuals to dictate the distribution of their possessions after death. Concerning pre-colonial inheritance customary practices, the family heads played a crucial role. The family heads were in charge of distributing the properties of the deceased. At this point, chiefs or community leaders played less role in distributing the deceased's properties. Essentially, family heads are the leaders of the extended families that form the lineage of generations in every society where every member has a common ancestor.

Additionally, land ownership was vested in the hands of the chiefs, and it was held in trust or on behalf of the ethnic groups. The land was seen as an ancestral gift, and the custodians of it were the *Tendanas* who held it under the authority of the chiefs (Abdullai 1986: 72-103). During the earliest times, communities in Dagbon that had no chiefs, the *Tendanas* were the custodians of the lands until the enskinment of a chief in the community (Mac Gaffey 2013: read more chapter one). The *Ya-Naa* owned all the lands within the territories of Dagbon in the trust of the people (Abdullai 2013: 84). Land as property was not owned by individuals in the community but was held as family property and mostly transferred from generation to generation. The lands in Dagbon were believed to be ancestral lands and chiefs as spiritual leaders held the lands as ‘usufruct’ (Abdallah Imam 2015: 126).

As a farming community, lands were much needed for farming activities, and chiefs, as custodians of the lands, gave out the lands to individuals for farming and, in return, took some tokens as appreciation. These tokens could be in the form of crops, livestock, or other valuable resources. This mutually beneficial arrangement allowed the community to thrive and ensured a steady food supply for everyone. During a personal interview with Abdullai II, he hinted that:

Lands were owned by chiefs, and they were given out for free without any charge. Strangers could get land for free either for farming, or any activities that were beneficial to society. Concerning the release of land for a settlement or building, the person had to give a token to the chief. But in case someone is farming on the land then it is required for the person to give some of the farm produce to the chief. Once the person is leaving, the land will be taken by the chief (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

It was a common practice for the lands used by individuals, especially strangers, to be returned to the chiefs when they were no longer in use. This practice ensured that the land remained available for others in need and prevented it from being unused. It also fostered a sense of communal responsibility and stewardship over the land, reinforcing the social fabric of the community.

In another narration, *Naa Bawa V* recounted that:

If one wants to farm on the land, he or she goes to the chief and seeks permission or seeks land from the chief with kola nuts and some small amount of money. After cultivating the land, the person will then bring some portion of the farm produce to the chief's palace as a gift to indicate that he is grateful for the land the chief granted. Sums of Money were not paid for acquiring land in Dagbon, because the land belonged to the people and the chief held it in trust for them. Once the chief grants one the land to farm, it becomes the person's property until death (*Nan-Ton Naa Bawa V*, personal interview: 05 July 2022).

The first British commissioners in the northern territories particularly in Dagbon, witnessed the ongoing customary land tenure, and ownership practices. The chief commissioner to the Northern territories highlighted a guide to the amendment of the land Ordinance in the territories:

It will be polite and expedient to amend the ordinance in the following respect: to recognize that, as in the colony all the lands in the protectorate belong to the native communities, to recognize the *Tendanas* as the land authorities, to permit *Tendanas* to make grants of land to natives in accordance with native customs, and clearly to recognize the right of the *Tendana* to distribute land for and on behalf of the community (Land Tenure in the Protectorate and its Development under the Land and Native Rights Ordinance. NRG8/1/57; Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD), Tamale).

In another report, the commissioner of lands in the Northern territories described land ownership as, “The property of land in the Northern territories’ rests in the community which under the present native law acquiesces in all land being under the control and disposition of the *Tendana* who is the representative of the people in this respect (Land Tenure in the Protectorate and its Development under the Land and Native Rights Ordinance 1948. NRG8/1/57; Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD), Tamale).” This indicated the traditional forms of land ownership in Dagbon that existed prior to the European influence in the northern territories.

There were legal codes on land acquisition and disposition during the pre-colonial era in Dagbon. The reports from the courts in the Northern Territory confirmed the functionality of the chiefs and the *Tendanas* on land ownership. Therefore, it can be inferred that land was not private property but public property that was taken care of by the chiefs or the *Tendanas*. A further report on land ownership

by the land commissioner in the Northern Territory indicates that; “It is of the utmost importance not to destroy the existing system of land tenure... (Land Tenure in the Protectorate... NRG8/1/57; PRAAD, Tamale).” This report confirmed the existence of native laws on land tenure in the Northern Territory as well as among the people of Dagbon before the advent of the British in the Northern Territories.

Also, many societies during the pre-colonial times had their own set of punishments for culprits who committed crimes. In Dagbon, pre-colonial criminal laws were based on adultery, stealing, witchcraft and defamation. The paramount chief’s palace (Ya Naa) served as the highest court of arbitration. The customary practices of the people of Dagbon defined the type of punishment meted out against criminal culprits. These practices were deeply rooted in their cultural beliefs and traditions, which emphasized restoration and reconciliation rather than retribution. The punishment aimed to not only deter future wrongdoing but also restore harmony within the community. During the pre-colonial era, chiefs were the custodians in settling crime cases in the traditional courts. Abdullahi II recounted:

Some time ago, in the early societies of the Dagomba, chiefs led the charge in solving crime issues. All cases were brought to the chief’s palace for further investigation and judgment. Chiefs made the final judgment (Abdullahi II, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

The customary laws in the community were set by the chiefs and their elders under the guidance of the customs and norms of the community. These laws were based on the values and traditions that had been passed down through generations. They served as a means of maintaining order and resolving disputes within the community. *Naa Bawa V* pointed out that:

If one goes against the norms or laws set by the chiefs and his elders, thus the norms of the society, he/she is sent to the chief’s palace for a hearing, when found culpable, the chief gives appropriate judgement and punishment. For example, when a man seduces the chief’s wife, particularly the *Ya Naa*, he is executed. There was a Baobab tree which is called *Naadataa Tuwa* in the Dagomba language which means the Chief’s rival tree. It was under this tree that the accused was beheaded for seducing the chief’s wife (*Nan-Ton Naa Bawa V*, personal interview: 05 July 2022).¹

¹ According to the interviewees, it was under the chief’s rivalry tree, known in the local dialect as *Naadata Tuwa* that a culprit who slept with the chief’s wife was beheaded. This ancient tradition was believed to bring justice and restore the honor of the chief’s family. The *Naadata Tuwa* became a symbol of fear and warning, reminding everyone about the severe consequences of betraying the chief’s trust. This tree was found in the traditional capital, Yendi, where the *Ya Naa*’s (Paramount Chief’s) seat reside. The *Naadata Tuwa* is not only a symbol of fear and warning but also a reminder of the deep-rooted cultural values and traditions in Yendi. It serves as a physical representation of the chief’s authority and the importance of loyalty within the community.

Moreover, punishment meted out against criminal offenders differed based on the level of crime committed. Also, the system of cross-examination before final judgment was highly valued among the people of Dagbon. It allowed for a fair and thorough evaluation of evidence and testimonies. This ensured that the accused had the opportunity to present their side of the case and defend themselves against any possible false accusations. Additionally, this practice promoted transparency and accountability within the indigenous judicial system, instilling trust among community members. For instance, *Naa Bawa V* recounted:

The culprit was sent to the chief's palace for cross-examination. The elders and the chief listened to the complainant and the accused to confirm whether he or she was guilty before the judgment was passed, if the accused was found guilty, the item was confiscated from him or her, and punishment was meted out to the person (*Nan-Ton Naa Bawa V*, personal interview: 05 July 2022).

The Dagomba people believed in a proportional system of justice, where the severity of the crime determined the severity of the punishment. This approach ensured that individuals were held accountable for their actions and deterred others from engaging in criminal behavior. The use of a leather whip for punishment was highly practiced in the chief's palace during that time. The leather whip was not only used for punishment but also as a means of maintaining discipline and order within the palace. Its presence served as a deterrent, ensuring that individuals adhered to the rules and regulations set by the chief. In an interview with *Naa Bawa V*, he recounted that:

A leather whip (*Barazim* in Dagbani) was used to lash or cane culprits. Some were lashed with 12 strokes or 100 strokes depending on the level of the crime.² A certain amount of money was also charged at the local court. The amount was equivalent to 100 shillings or 100 cowries which was a huge amount. People were forced to pay, and they went ahead by using their family members as pawns to secure a loan from a rich person and the pawn would work and pay before he could be released from his pawnship (*Abdullai II*, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

From the above, it can be deduced that crimes were part of early societies. However, there were efforts made to help maintain law and order. In an attempt to enforce peace and order, laws were created during the pre-colonial era among the Dagomba. The punishment that was meted out against culprits

² *Barazim* is made up of a stick as a handle and leather made from animal skin. This was found in most of the chiefs' palaces. The leather is carefully crafted and intricately woven to provide a comfortable grip. It is a symbol of prestige and power, often adorned with decorative elements that showcase the chief's status within the community. During the earliest times, it was used to deter crime culprits.

was on different levels. On the other hand, the colonial era changed the system of how punishments were meted out to culprits. The system of fines and imprisonment replaced the existing traditional or customary punishment meted out to offenders or culprits.

3. The nexus between colonial systems and customary legal systems in Dagbon

The dawn of colonization in Africa saw the rise and establishment of colonial systems on the shores of Africa. The systems put in place by the first European settlers in Africa suppressed some pre-existing traditional systems. However, some of the traditional systems have been transformed following the imposition of colonial systems on traditional socio-economic and political systems.

The coming of the Europeans, particularly, the Germans and the British in the Northern territories marked a period of changes in the Dagomba Legal systems and institutions. The early relationship between the Asante and the Dagomba gave easy access to the establishment of the British institutions in the Northern territories after the defeat of the Asante in 1874 (Court records from 1922 to 1938. NRG2/6/1; PRAAD, Tamale). On one hand, the German interest in the territory during the latter part of the 19th century led to a battle called Adibo (or *Adibo Dal'la* in Dagbani). Later, the Germans took control of Yendi, the traditional capital (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022, Interview). The Dagbon kingdom was later divided into Eastern Dagomba (Tamale), a British-controlled territory, and Western Dagomba (Yendi), a German-controlled territory.

The British institutions in the northern territory created limitations to the traditional institutions. In an interview with Abdullai II, he recounted that:

The British legal system was a hindrance to the local legal systems in Dagomba. The case of destroying the witch camps and allowing the culprits to come back to their homes alone was a challenge to traditional practices. At first, we refused to accept the annexation of the British of the Northern territories, which resulted in war between the British and us. However, we later accepted it because we realized it was for our good. The region was divided into German Dagomba (Yendi) and British Dagomba (Tamale) (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

However, Ibrahim Mahama recounted in an interview on the British legal systems and institutions in the Northern territories that:

All the British laws that were introduced in the Northern territories were already in existence and practiced by the indigenes. For instance, criminal laws on adultery, stealing, divorce, and many others were already in existence. Also, the case of someone swearing an oath as it is done in the magistrate courts was applied in the traditional courts. The common oath in the traditional court was to swear on the skin the chiefs sat on (Mahama, Personal Interview; 2022).

The above confirms the existence of indigenous customary laws before the advent of Europeans in the Northern territories. However, some of these laws and practices changed as a result of European influence in the territories. Both the British and the Germans played key roles in the new dynamics of the customary laws in Dagbon.

The inception of the British institutions in the Northern territories brought about the first enactment of the administrative ordinance in 1902. This and several other Acts passed in the protectorate laid down the procedure for a British takeover. The restructuring of power relations between the British and the Northern territories led to the establishment of the tribunal courts (Brukum 1999: 101-22). The British courts and the traditional courts were both used to settle criminal cases in the territories.

The court systems established in the Northern territories were the first attempt to introduce the British legal systems in the region. Abdullai II hinted that:

The first system put in place was the tribunal courts and chiefs were allowed to sit or preside on the native cases. Two courts were first established; the Western Dagomba court (Tamale) and the Eastern Dagomba court (Yendi). Traditional cases were also resolved in British courts and not only at the local courts. The British courts did not limit the power of the chiefs as judges because the chiefs still presided over the cases in the British Courts (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

Some of these institutions were set up by the Europeans to deal with some indigenous practices that were considered as barbaric and against human dignity. The colonial legal systems were used by the Europeans to handle disputes among states in the continent of Africa (Sandra 2001: 571-596). Sandra (2001) has indicated that the pre-existing traditional conflict resolutions were viewed as cruel and primitive. Before the Northern territories came under British rule, numerous indigenous practices were accustomed to the indigenous people of Dagbon. However, the practices were misconstrued by the British (Brukum 1999). The British misunderstood and misinterpreted these indigenous practices, often viewing them through their own cultural lens. As a result, they imposed their customs and beliefs, disregarding the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous people of Dagbon. For instance, Abdullai II indicated that:

The British and German administration initiated the hoisting of a flag on a pole in front of the police station. It was used as a means to reduce instant punishment or justice. For instance, when one committed a crime and ran to hold the flag on the pole in front of the police station, no one could arrest the person or do any harmful thing against him or her. He or she will be asked to speak in defense of himself or herself. That system was called *Santilli* (a corrupted version of Standstill) an

explanation derived in the course of the interview. A culprit of a crime will only have to “stand still” to indicate he or she has committed a crime. Even if a lady was forcefully given out to a man in marriage and she ran to hold that flag, it meant she was not interested in the marriage and no one could force her (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

From the above, this pole could be referred to as the “pole of refuge.” Likewise, it can also be deduced that the British institutions and legal codes imposed in the Northern territories, particularly in Dagbon affected indigenous or customary laws. On the other hand, the institutions like the police and the court systems established by the British helped to defer some punishment and sometimes led to a more measured punishment meted out to offenders or persons who engaged in criminal acts. For instance, the punishment meted out to a person who seduced the wife of the paramount chief was death through decapitation. The British tribunal court improvised the use of fines and imprisonment as a punishment for such a crime. However, these newly introduced laws did not limit the traditional functions of chiefs as the custodians of customary laws. According to Brukum (1999), the Administrative Ordinance of 1902 led to the initiation of the native tribunal courts and the adoption of some customary laws.

Some customary legal practices could not be scrapped completely in Dagbon but were replaced with a different set of British legal codes and institutions. While some traditional practices remained, such as the role of local chiefs in dispute resolution, it is believed that the British legal framework aimed to bring about modernization and greater consistency in the administration of justice in Dagbon. Abdullai II indicated during an interview that:

The British found a different way of handling some cases because they could not let our predecessors stop the practices completely. For instance, when one seduces a chief's wife or has a sexual relationship with the chief's wife, the head will be cut off under a tree called *Naadataa Tuwa* (the chief's rival tree). However, the court was used in settling such a case instead of cutting the head of the culprits (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

For the offence of seducing someone's wife in Dagbon, fines were inflicted upon the culprit especially during the colonial era. These fines were imposed as a means of maintaining social order and upholding traditional values in the community. The severity of the fines varied depending on the specific circumstances and the status of the individuals involved. The level of fines differed, for instance, the highest fine was when one seduces the paramount chief's wife, and the lowest was attributed to a private individual's wife. The seduction fees were £12 for the paramount chief's wife, £6 for the sub-chief's wife, £3 for the headman's wife, and £2 for the private individual's wife (Court records from 1922 to 1938. NRG2/6/1; PRAAD, Tamale).

Moreover, Abdullai II further recounted that:

The British/German also recruited some police forces or security personnel who worked with chiefs. These policemen were called Naa na'kana (The chief is calling you) with a short wooden stick called “talk true.”³ The British/German policemen were to prevent the brutalization of offenders or those who had committed a crime before they were sent to the chief's palace. This dealt with the question of mob justice. Our earliest security services under the chiefs, were very harsh in terms of dealing with culprits or accused persons especially when the culprit refused to duly respond to the invitation of a chief. The culprit could be decapitated and the head could be sent to the palace (Abdullai II, personal interview; 04 July 2022).

The German recruitment of policemen in Dagbon mirrored the British-established systems, as both aimed to enhance crime-solving efforts within the communities. This collaborative approach between the Germans and local chiefs showcased a shared goal of maintaining law and order in Dagbon under different colonial administrations.

To strengthen the native authority, the British authorities trained and recruited a native police force who served in respective palaces of chiefs (Brukum 1997: PhD diss.). These native police forces were responsible for maintaining law and order within their communities, ensuring the compliance of the local populations to British rule. They acted as intermediaries between the British authorities and the chiefs, helping to enforce colonial policies and maintain control over the indigenous population. This served as a gateway for the transformation of customary legal practices in Dagomba. The laws introduced by the Europeans limited the application of most of the laws made by the chiefs and the elders (Naa Bawa, Interview, 05 July 2022).

4. The post-colonial customary laws of Dagbon

Throughout Africa, traditional justice systems have survived in many forms, serving large populations primarily in rural communities. This and many systems have survived the European influence during the period of colonization. Traditional systems are well known to have existed before colonization, however, the advent of the Europeans in the 15th century marked the age of foreign dominance in the region of Africa. The dominance of the Europeans in Africa created a dual system in most of the states

³ The recruited policemen had a short wooden stick called “Talk-true.” This “talk-true” stick was used by the recruited policemen as a symbol of authority and a means of enforcing discipline within the communities. It served as a visible reminder of their role in maintaining law and order and was recognized by the local residents as a symbol of their power. This wooden stick was used as a means by the police to force offenders to the chief's palace or police station in instances when they wanted to resist the invitation. In recent times, the wooden stick is referred to as a baton. Today, the baton continues to be used by police forces around the world, serving as a visible reminder of the role of law enforcement in maintaining public order.

in Africa. The traditional systems were parallel to the systems that emerged as a result of European influence. These dual systems persist in post-colonial Africa which highlights the traditional authority on one side and the state created by the Europeans on the other side (Ray 1996: 181-202). The judicial space in Africa or Ghana recognizes a dual system or mostly refers to the existence of legal pluralism, that is, the traditional legal system and the foreign-adopted legal system.

The constitution of the Republic of Ghana recognized the functions of chiefs and the customary laws. The customary laws serve as the pivot for resolving individual, lineage, family, and ethnic conflicts (Abdulai 1986: 72-103). Customary laws still have a great impact on respective communities. They laid the foundation for the norms or oral laws that governed and dictated the required actions anticipated by the community and the punitive measures that were directed against those who breached them. These laws are deeply rooted in the traditions and beliefs of the community and have been passed down from generation to generation. They continue to shape the social, economic, and political dynamics of these communities, even in modern times.

Even though the Europeans introduced new laws, up till now, some of the laws made by the chiefs and their elders before the coming of Europeans still exist and are in use (Naa Bawa V, Interview, 5th July, 2022). For instance, the first point of contact to resolve cases on marital issues, theft and related crime cases are the traditional courts. The people still regard the traditional courts and the chiefs. In a case where one seduces another man's wife, the case is solved at the chief's palace. The issue of ascertaining the paternity of a child and pregnancy for instance and many other cases are still solved at the chief's palace. Moreover, according to Naa Bawa V, "some cases on land disputes are still solved at the traditional courts. Some cases of crime like murder are mostly resolved at the magistrate courts (Naa Bawa V, Interview, 05 July 2022)."

Furthermore, Ibrahim Mahama hinted in an interview that; "Juxtaposing the idea of making a 'Will' and the traditional system of inheritance; the people of Dagbon still regard and use the traditional system of inheritance rather than making a 'Will.'" This is because these systems promote both matrilineal and patrilineal systems of inheritance and permit the children to inherit their mother's property in Dagbon (Mahama, Interview, 06 July 2022). Similarly, Awedoba (2006) has argued that the children in a family asserted titles through maternal ties due to the flexibility of the inheritance system of the people of Dagbon. The children are entitled to inherit the property of the deceased whether it was the father or the mother who died.

Some cases are moved from the magistrate courts to the traditional courts due to ancestral connections or linkages. In communities without magistrate courts, the traditional courts serve as the gateway to resolving their cases. On the other hand, some cases are also sent to the magistrate courts

from the traditional courts when this local alternative dispute resolution fails. Murder and other criminal cases are better handled at the magistrate courts. Again, contemporary constitutional requirements and legislations further emphasize this.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that the pre-colonial legal systems in Dagbon were built on the customs and norms of the land. The principles that guided the communities were connected to the ancestral beliefs and norms that were passed on from one generation to another. Some customary laws that were discussed are marital laws, land laws, criminal laws, and laws on inheritance.

It is established that the customary laws on marriage, crime, land, and inheritance existed during the pre-colonial era. However, the British legal system only changed some of the customary or native laws to suit the British legal system. Thomas has indicated that to achieve their colonial ambitions, the British introduced their legal systems and institutions in the Gold Coast (Thomas 1944: 30-35). Similarly, the attempt made by the British to regulate the lives of the people they conquered was always to impose their legal systems in that region (Modibo 2006: 94). According to Brukum (1999), the introduction of the tribunal courts was to restructure the power relations between the chiefs and their subjects. The tribunal courts in Dagbon also made it possible for one to appeal whenever the person was not convinced by the judgment of the chiefs in the traditional courts (Brukum 1999: 105).

Similarly, the Ya Naa's court was the highest in Dagbon and served as the court of appeal whenever a person was not pleased with the judgment of the sub-chief in his community. Some foreign laws introduced to Dagbon were already in existence and practiced during the pre-colonial era. Likewise, it can be concluded that the pre-colonial legal systems in Dagomba societies were well-established and functioning. They were very effective in ensuring, promoting, and maintaining peace and justice as well as stability within the state.

It is worth concluding that the pre-colonial Dagomba observed that, human beings were not perfect, hence, laws were needed to regulate some behaviors that were contrary to societal norms and customs. Punishment was also pronounced on offenders to serve as a deterrent to other members of society from indulging in the same act. Even though some of these punishments were regarded as harsh, the purpose was to regulate human behavior to create a peaceful environment.

The customary legal systems existed alone until the pronouncement and declaration of the Northern territories as a protectorate by the British in 1902 which led to the changes of some of the customary legal practices, which were regarded as archaic. The British who did not understand the indigenous practices of the people described the people of the Northern territories as rather

picturesque "Bushmen" dressed up in peculiar garb (Annual Report of Northern Territories for April 1926 to March 1927. ADM.5/1/70; PRAAD, Accra). To this, a foreign legal system and institutions (judicial system, police, and prison) were introduced to the people, which saw the changes in the customary legal practices in Dagbon. In contemporary Dagomba, the customary laws and the British laws, which are largely seen as a colonial superimposition, still function as the final arbiters of local matters and have created a legally pluralistic space. This further emphasizes the point that the current legal framework and the constitution of Ghana were inspired by such colonial superimposition with our own changes and amendments over time.

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Of Sufis, fascists and bananas

Hagiography and the perception of Italian occupants in Ethiopia

Michele Petrone

Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-41) has been described mainly from the point of view of Italian documentary sources and of the Amharic local sources. The point of view of local Muslim Oromo communities has remained largely ignored. This paper proposed a close reading of the hagiography of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar (d. 1953), especially of the passages narrating the latter’s interactions with Fascist occupants. The aim of this study is first to present a fresh perspective on the years of Italian presence in Ethiopia, namely the one of Muslims. It also aims at proposing the use of Ethiopian hagiographies in Arabic as a source for local history.

Keywords: Ethiopia; fascism; Italian occupation; Arabic; Sufism; hagiography.

1. Introduction

Italian occupation of Ethiopia and the local resistance movements is an episode that has attracted the attention of historians in the last decades.¹ This phenomenon has been particularly relevant, as it has limited the portion of territories occupied, leading to the claim that Ethiopia is the only African country that has never been subject to colonization. These studies have in common two traits that on one side make them of extreme importance for the reconstruction of events, but on the other side provide a partial picture of the modalities of occupation and, most important, of the resistance to it.

The first trait is that almost all these sources are focused on the Amhara opposition and the role played by Ethiopian central state nobility.² From a strictly historical point of view this choice is largely understandable: Italians’ main enemy was Haile Selassie (d. 1975), who fought to repel the invaders

¹ The seminal work for this thread of studies is certainly the one of Angelo Del Boca (1979, 1981). Sbacchi (1985) is an unavoidable update of Del Boca Studies; for the perspective of an Ethiopian scholar see Zewde (2002: 150–78). More recent developments, focused on local resistance in Ethiopia can be found in (Aregawi Berhe (2003), Seyoum (2003), Gnamo (2014), Srivastava 2018); Gnamo significantly skips the period of Italian occupation but provides the context for its advent.

² A partial exception is represented by Omer (1995, 2000).

with all the means he could grasp from his exile in Britain. A large portion of the occupied territories, however, was in Oromo areas, one of the largest ethnic groups of Ethiopia, historically opposed to the Amhara. Also, a large part of them were Muslim, while the Ethiopian Empire identified itself as Christian.

The second trait is more nuanced. Most of the works about Italian occupation of Ethiopia are made by professional historians, who focused mainly on archival sources, both local and European (Italy and Britain). This allowed them to base their studies on objective data, providing the reader with a reconstruction of social and political events. What remains out of the picture are Ethiopian non-archival texts, such as biographical accounts, political pamphlets, and even hagiographies produced by Ethiopians, that provide information about local perception of the occupants and about the strategies of resistance to the Italian presence in their territories.

This article aims at moving a first step in the direction of exploring these non-archival Ethiopian sources, namely a Sufi hagiography written in Arabic shortly after the end of the occupation by an Oromo author. This can hopefully offer a new perspective on Italian occupation, seen from within a specific ethnic and religious group who experienced the events.

Using hagiographic texts as a source for historiography demands some preliminary clarification. As Neale puts it: “The stories of God’s friends are hagiographical and literary narratives that at times accord with the historical record but are not themselves historical accounts. Nevertheless, hagiography can shed light on historical circumstances, especially when combined with careful analysis of other historical evidence that corroborates or suggests the historicity of an anecdote or story” (Neale 2022: 8).³

The attempt made here cannot be considered historiographical in the proper sense of the term, even if we limit the scope to Muslim historiography (Rosenthal 1968: 8–11). The devotional dimension of the biography of a saint, dead or alive, offers partial data, mediated by a specific perspective: describing and praising the deeds of a venerated figure in specific social, political and historical contexts. It is this very perspective that is deemed interesting here, as it presents an internal point of view on the events of Italian occupation of Ethiopia. Such a point of view is not objective, as it is the one of a Muslim, a Sufi, and of a close disciple of the subject of the hagiography, who presents the events to his peers. In this sense this study is not looking for the “authentic” facts.⁴ In a perspective

³ This work is also a fundamental reference for the study of the biographies of medieval and modern Muslim saints who engaged in forms of war or resistance.

⁴ For a discussion of this perspective see Eric Brook (2010: 1–27). See also the considerations in Bang (2003: 8–9).

contiguous to the one established by Steven Kaplan in his study of Ethiopia Christian hagiography (Kaplan 1981), what this study aims at reconstructing is the conceptualization of the Italian occupation and of the resistance to it by an Oromo Sufi who lived during the same period. Unlike Kaplan (who worked extensively on Ethiopian Christian hagiography), we do not have at our disposal several hagiographic sources for Muslim Ethiopia.⁵ So a large scale comparison is, for the time being, impossible. The one presented here is a first case study on the historiographic entanglements of Muslim hagiography in 20th century Ethiopia.

2. The context

Gianpaolo Calchi Novati, in one of his essays on the history of Ethiopia, reflecting on the complex relation of denial that affects both Italy and Ethiopia regarding the colonial past says:

The peoples of the Horn fight one another for survival and regional hegemony first and outsiders only second (Calchi Novati 2008: 42).

This somewhat apodictic statement describes in extreme synthesis the political situation of Ethiopia before Italians decided, in 1935, to expand their colonial domains westward. The main actor of this play was Haile Selassie, who, at the time, was attempting at taking control of the country, primarily by dismissing all the agreements that his predecessors had established with local rulers (Gebissa 2002: 75). Italian occupation of Ethiopia, though limited in time (1936-1942), is still object of historiographical discussion, as new documents emerge from the archives suggesting new perspectives of research.⁶ This is especially true for regions that were not at the center of political and colonial activities, like the former governorate of Galla and Sidama, that included areas of South-Western Ethiopia.

This area, starting from the last quarter of 19th century, became a center of Muslim renaissance, under the patronage of Abba Jifar II (d. 1932).⁷ The latter skillfully obtained from Menelik II (d. 1913) the possibility of keeping the reign and its capital, Jimma, as a semi-autonomous government, in

⁵ For a first recognition see Petrone (2016, 2018).

⁶ Bibliography is enormous and still expanding. It is noteworthy that studies in Italian are now sided by works in English. Paolo Borruso's recent books complete the picture for the military a political side. Calchi Novati's reflections on Italian (lack of) elaboration of its colonialist past in Ethiopia is still fundamental to set the framework for future inquiries on the field. See in addition to the bibliography provided in fn. 1: Borruso and Borruso (1997), Borruso and Pankhurst (2002), Bottoni (2008), Haile Larebo (2005) and Dominioni and Del Boca (2019).

⁷ For a complete account of this phenomenon see Lewis (2001). For the history of South Western Ethiopia see Hassen (1994) and Abir (1965).

exchange of annual taxes. This event represented a milestone in the ethnic and political relations in Ethiopia. Jimma was the center of a vast complex of Oromo state entities that were established starting from the early 19th century, after a period of evolution of traditional institutions (Mohammed Hassen 2015: 138 f.).⁸ Before this process—and even after it—Oromo population have been marginalized from political and social life of Ethiopia.

The reasons behind this situation cannot be analyzed here, as they are not relevant for the topic of this study. What is important here is that, even before the jihād declared by Aḥmad Grañ (d. 1543),⁹ pastoralist Oromo expanded the areas under their control to Eastern and South Western Ethiopia and they have been, since then, considered a threat by the Christian kingdom.¹⁰ Separation, diversity and even hostility have been deepened by the progressive adhesion to Islam of the Oromo populations, that was often only formal and knew a revival in late 18th century (Mohammed Hassen 1990; Trimmingham 1952: 187–208). State building and re-islamization went hand in hand,¹¹ creating an environment that attracted clerics from other regions, like Wällo where Muslim Oromo settled.¹²

Italian occupation of this area arrived in a moment when the tension between local power in Jimma and central authorities in Addis Ababa had resurfaced and reached a new peak, as Haile Selassie seized the power from Abba Jifar II's grand-son, Abba Jobir Abba Dula (d. 1988, in Mecca), who was crowned around 1930 (Henze 2000, 208). The conflict was not, or not essentially, religious. Haile Selassie's politics were aimed at reconstituting the unity of reign, regardless of the Oromo of Jimma being Muslim or Christian.¹³ Loss of independence was deeply felt in Jimma (Gebissa 2002: 75–76)¹⁴ and Italians easily took advantage of this situation. The area was barely involved in the battles leading to the occupation and was soon established as capital governorate of Galla-Sidama. The marginality of this area in the conflict is reflected in the scarcity of studies on Jimma during the occupation, as, apparently, no patriotic movement or active resistance was based there. On the other hand, the city (at the time revolving around the palace of Abba Jifar II in the Jiren suburb) was object of an attentive

⁸ The traditional Oromo political and social organization (called *gadaa*) is based on ages classes. See Tesema Ta'a (2016) and Gnamo (2014: 34–51).

⁹ On this figure and his *jihād* see Muth (2003, 2014).

¹⁰ For a re-conceptualization of this opposition see Zahorik (2014).

¹¹ Abir (1968) reconstructed the emergence of the principalities of South-Western Ethiopia. See also Lewis (2001).

¹² The most complete account of the diffusion of Islam in Wällo, including the network building activities of local *shaykhs*, can be found in Ahmed (2001). See also Abbink (2007).

¹³ For a detailed discussion of Haile Selassie's ascent to power see Zewde (2002: 133–41).

¹⁴ This article also expresses contemporary concern of the Oromo for their own independence.

urban planning, creating what is still called the “Piccola Roma,” a series of buildings (town hall, cinema, café) that were aimed at making Jimma an example of Italian efforts in developing its colonies (Rifkind 2015: 155-156; Trimingham 1952: 205; González-Ruibal 2010).

From the point of view of institutions, Jimma was a laboratory for the implementation of new solutions for a modern and integrated Islam. In October 1937 Italians established an Islamic school to train local *qādis*. The course lasted three years and employed local teachers, which made it very welcomed by Jimma population (*Annali dell’Africa italiana* 1938-1943, III: 689). The most sensitive point was the administration of justice. For minor cases the parts could refer to traditional authorities, following established customs. For mixed cases (Muslim vs non-Muslim) Italians applied the model used in Somalia, where the court was involved only under request of one of the parts. This model worked for civil justice, but not for the criminal one, as local judges had no knowledge of Italian law. All those cases were referred to the “Residente,” the supreme Italian authority of the area (*Annali dell’Africa italiana* 1938-1943, III: 750-753).

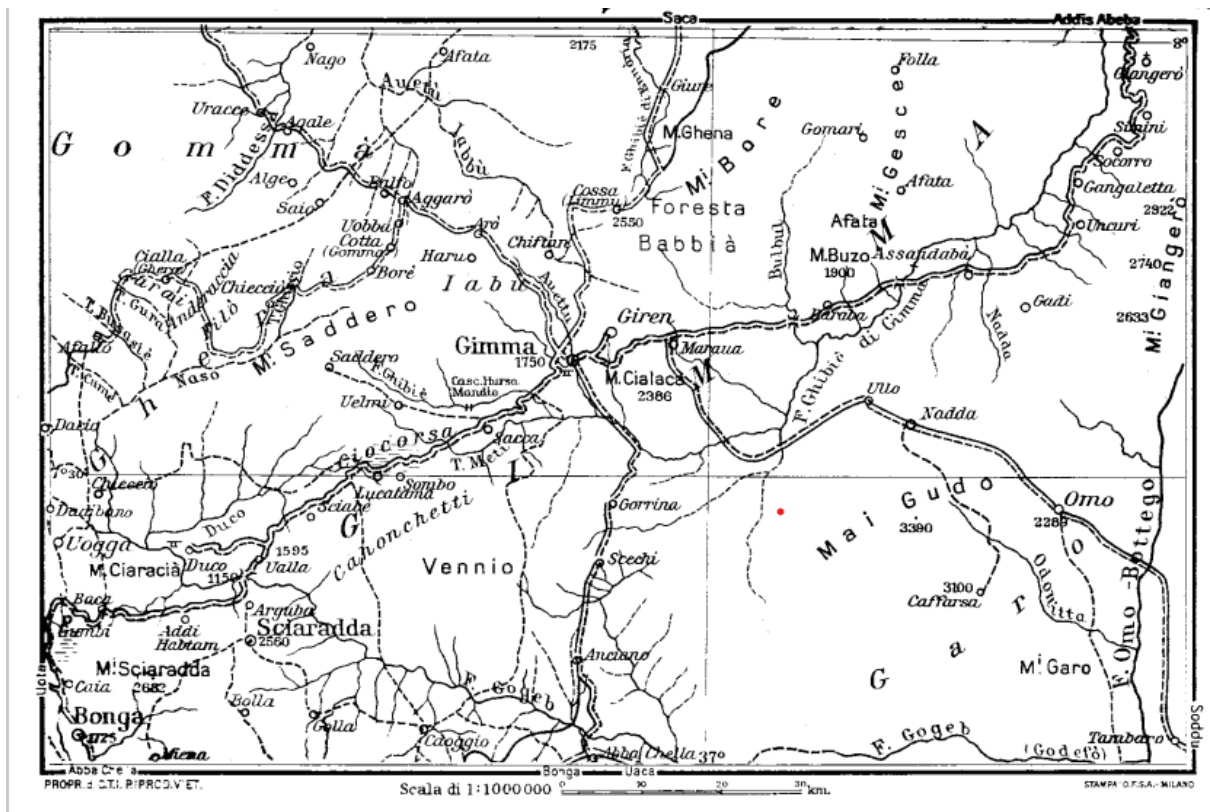


Figure 1. Map of Jimma area (C.T.I. 1938: 529).

This generosity was not bestowed for free. Abba Jobir was first imprisoned in Addis Ababa. Only later he submitted to Graziani and contributed to the conquest of Jimma (Sbacchi 1985: 133). His loyalty gained him a certain credit among fascists, and he was brought to Italy in 1938 as an official representative of Ethiopia and, most important, as a Muslim subject of the empire.¹⁵ The aim of this trip was not only to show the progress of Fascist society as a perspective for the Ethiopian one. Abba Jobir was invited to actively participate to the propaganda, being portrayed with Mussolini and delivering a speech at Radio Bari.¹⁶ The discourse in Arabic was broadcast to most Muslim countries of the Mediterranean and dealt with a presentation of the history of Islam in Ethiopia,¹⁷ mentioning the first *Hiġra* to Abyssinia and the wars of Aḥmad Grañ (d. 1543).

More interesting is the status quo of Islam in the Horn of Africa he draws in his discourse. He estimates 3,5 to 4 million Muslims in the area, and he lists the regions they are living in, from Somalia to Beni-Shangul. Abba Jobir also gives account of the doctrinal tendencies of local communities (affiliation to *Šāfi'i* juridical school and to *Aš'arī* theology), also acknowledging the presence of diverse Sufi orders: Qādiriyya, Tiġāniyya, Sammāniyya and Šādiliyya (Abbā Ġūbir 1938: 6). One can't help but consider this passage as at least inspired by, if not directly translated from, Italian sources, maybe colonial reports.

The same can be said for the rest of the text, where Abba Jobir describes how Italian administration (defined as *ḥukūmatunā*, “our government”) contributed to Muslim life in Ethiopia with the construction of mosques and schools:

After Italian conquest—praise be to God—Muslims began to breathe the fresh air of freedom in every aspect of their lives. The number of mosques is increasing astonishingly every day, built according to innovative and modern architecture style, while few others are constructed as huts. Islamic schools roar as students repeat altogether the essential notions of sciences, arts

¹⁵ Abba Jobir was not the only Muslim leader employed by Fascists in the conquest of Ethiopia. See Sbacchi (1985: 163) and Henze (2000: 225).

¹⁶ For the history of this broadcasting service prior to its development as a basis for the resistance forces, see Marzano (2015, 2020).

¹⁷ I would take the occasion to thank Prof. Arturo Marzano for sharing with me the transcriptions published in Abbā Ġūbir (1938: 5-7). The whole episode is discussed in Marzano (2015: 97-106). Some mistakes in the transcription of names (e.g. *Ḍayla'* instead of *Zayla'*) may imply that the publication was based on a handwritten source or on the recording, where some mispronunciations could have occurred. For the influence of this speech on Muslim intellectuals see Lauzière (2016: 16f.).

and crafts, receiving water, food and clothes (Abbā Ğūbir 1938: 7).

Abba Jobir underlined the fact that Italians were promoting the teaching of Arabic, that, in his view, could encompass the divisions among Muslims of Ethiopia, who speak “more than 200 languages.”¹⁸ This even excessively positive evaluation is certainly dictated by the personal situation of Abba Jobir, whose life was subject to the will of the fascist occupants. It is curious to note that he listed what Italians did for the area of Harar, not for his own territory (Abbā Ğūbir 1938: 7). He was probably referring to the most famous Muslim city of Ethiopia for propagandistic reasons, despite the fact that he could claim no power outside Jimma (and even there his role of Sultan was nothing more than nominal). This attitude responds to the call for unity Italians were issuing to all Muslims, in and outside Ethiopia, under the patronage of Mussolini (Abbā Ğūbir 1938: 7; see also Wright 2005 and Salvatore 1991).

This, at least in Ethiopia, was challenged by linguistic and ethnic divisions, that Italians tried to use at their own advantage. Such an enthusiastic adhesion of Jimma Oromo (or at least of some of their leaders) to Fascist occupation was only partially due to the politics in favor of Islam. The simple fact of restoring a (formally) autonomous government, independent from the monarchy of Haile Selassie, was enough to be thankful. Italians also recognized the role of local customs and tribunals, which gave local the impression of a newfound freedom.¹⁹ Collaboration, however, was not without hindrances.

3. The Tiġāniyya of Jimma and al-Faqīh Aḥmad b. ‘Umar (d. 1953)

Sufism represented an essential factor for the diffusion of Islam among Oromo populations in the 19th and 20th centuries. This was combined with the constant, often under the radar, opposition to the rising political power of Menelik II and, successively, of Haile Selassie.

Jimma was home for the Sammāniyya, but the Tiġāniyya gained a prominent role in the city since the formal recognition received by Abba Jifar II.²⁰ The reconstruction of the process of affirmation of the Tiġāniyya in South Western Ethiopia is still debated, as it was present already in late 19th century, but knew a wide diffusion after the advent of al-Faqīh Aḥmad b. ‘Umar al-Burnawī (b. 1892/d. 1953),

¹⁸ The number is clearly overestimated and hinders the hypothesis of a colonial source for the data presented by Abba Jobir.

¹⁹ For the specific politics of Italians towards Oromo see Alvisini (2000).

²⁰ For a presentation of Tiġāniyya in Ethiopia see Ishihara (2017) and Petrone (2016). For the relation between Abba Jifar II and Tiġāniyya see Trimmingham (1952: 246). Trimmingham affirms that it was Abba Dula, father of Abba Jobir, the first member of the reigning family, whilst Cerulli (1928-1933, I: 129) stated that lands for the *ḥaḍras* of the Tiġāniyya were bestowed by Abba Jifar II himself, only in the area of the city of Jimma.

known simply as Alfaki.²¹ As his *nisba* tells, this figure was from Bornu, an area falling mainly in Northern Nigeria, but including also Southern regions of Chad and Niger. The accounts of his life²² narrate his education in Central Africa and then his moving to Mecca (early 20th century). It is not clear whether he was already initiated to the Tiḡāniyya in Ḥiḡāz or, as Ishihara (1997) reports, when he later entered Ethiopia, after a stay in Khartoum. His coming to Ethiopia, according to hagiographic sources, was due to a series of dreams in which the Prophet himself urged him to go to Abyssinia to enter the function of Supreme Pole for the country (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 22v).²³ Despite this investiture, his position went not unchallenged, as local figures like Shekota Tijje had already established their spiritual authority on the territory (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 25r).

Despite this opposition, the presence of the Tiḡāniyya in the region became predominant, with the foundations of diverse centers, and the establishing of a significant local scholarly tradition (Petrone 2016). The *ḥaḍras*²⁴ of Jimma, Aggaro, and Dedo were part of a network that included also other brotherhoods, beyond the boundaries of spiritual affiliation to a specific master. The strict Tiḡānī norms on this latter point, compelling disciples to adhere only to their *ṭariqa*, favored a certain exclusivity that, however, involved only those formally attached to it. As for the rest of the population, both Muslim and non-Muslim, saintly figures were venerated and sought after for help (medical, magical and material) and guidance (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 27v).²⁵

Information about this process of diffusion and establishing of the Tiḡāniyya in Western Ethiopia has been collected by Minako Ishihara in a series of ethnographic studies. In her 2010 study on the topic (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, 83) she mentions the *Bāb al-wuṣūl*, an unpublished biography of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar that, in the manuscript she photocopied from Šayḥ Aḥmad Zayn, was dated 1943. It is not clear how much the Japanese scholar made use of this text in her later works on the Ethiopian Tiḡāniyya, as she, coherently with her anthropological approach, favors oral sources over written ones, whose

²¹ For previous studies about his biography see Ishihara (1997: 2017). It is noteworthy that Ishihara highlights a presence of the Tiḡāniyya before the coming of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar, presumably in the early 1930’s.

²² The following data are taken from the *Bāb al-wuṣūl*, on which see below and from the *Nuzhat al-absār* and the *Ġilā’ al-fikr*, both by Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān Abba Mecha (d. 1975). On him see O’Fahey and Ahmed (2003: 48–53), Muḥammad Walī b. al-Ḥāḡḡ Aḥmad b. ‘Umar (2004: 102).

²³ Here dated 1934.

²⁴ A term often used instead of the more common *ḡawiya* to indicate places where Ethiopia Sufis gather for their ceremonies and for teaching.

²⁵ Šayḥ Adam of Gomma, a prominent Qādirī Sufi, is reported to have asked Aḥmad b. ‘Umar’s help for some political matters. Tiḡānī texts have been found also outside collections of manuscripts preserved by Tiḡānī Sufis, for instance in the *ḥaḍra* of Warukko, few kilometers from the one of Abba Gulli, where they follow the Sammānī path.

information often differs from that reported in the texts. This is not the only biography of Alfaki. At least two other texts, the *Ġilā' al-fikr*²⁶ and the *Nuzhat al-abṣār*,²⁷ both by Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān Abba Mecha (d. 1975) offer details on the spiritual qualities of the Ethiopian Tiġḡānī master. The *Bāb al-wuṣūl*, however, is the only one presenting some exquisitely biographical data, that go beyond the exaltation of piety and spiritual knowledge.

The complete title of this work, as reported in the manuscript AGL00001²⁸ is *Bāb al-wuṣūl ilā nāyl ḡamī' al-maqāṣid wa al-ma'mūl fī tarġamat al-ġawṭ Abī Luġāb 'ayn al-manā wa al-su'l* (The door bringing to the obtainment of all goals and the contemplation of the life of the Succor Abū Luġāb, source of desire and hope), authored by Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abba Ganda (d. 1974?; Petrone 2017). He was a close disciple of Aḥmad b. 'Umar, as it is clear from the text itself, that was written when the master was still alive.²⁹

The text is preserved, as far as we know, in a couple of manuscripts and it is still unpublished. The present study is based on a single manuscript³⁰ of the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* digitized during the fieldwork for the Islam in the Horn of Africa project in February 2015, in the *zāwiya* of Abba Gulli, a Tiġḡānī master whose grave is located few kilometers outside Aggaro, in the Jimma district.³¹ The text is preceded by a short commentary of *al-Wasā'il al-mutaqabbala*, a poem in praise of the Prophet by al-Fazāzī (d. 1230) quite widespread in West Africa, and followed by a magic square about Islamic calendar and pious invocations (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, ff. 3r-7v).³² The date reported at the end of the main text is 1383/1962-3 (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 67v),³³ only ten years after the death of Aḥmad b. 'Umar and when

²⁶ Published in Cairo by Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.

²⁷ I obtained a copy of the manuscript of this text from the disciples of Shaykh Abdusalam in Addis Abba, whom I thank for their kind help.

²⁸ This manuscript was digitized in the framework of the Islam in the Horn of Africa ERC project. For more information see www.islhornfr.eu (last checked 20/11/2021).

²⁹ Ishihara proposes 1943 as the date of composition (Ishihara 2010: 83). A marginal note in AGL00001, f. 8r, reports 1362/1943 as the date for the beginning of the composition, and 1363/1944 as the date for its end. The note also informs that, after the completion of the work, Abba Ganda submitted it to Aḥmad b. 'Umar, who, after nine months, gave his permission to circulate it. This information, although part of a marginal note, reassures the reader (and the scholar) that the image presented in the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* corresponds to the one Aḥmad b. 'Umar wanted to give of himself.

³⁰ The other manuscript, JTMK00073, ff. 37v-62r is a later copy, written in blue ink with a ballpoint pen, of the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* dependant on the Abba Gulli one. In this article I will refer only to the Abba Gulli copy.

³¹ The other manuscript is mentioned by Ishihara (2010: 83) as being in the hands of the late Shaykh Aḥmad Zayn in the 1990's. I have met several times between 2014 and 2017 the direct successor of Aḥmad Zayn, who seems not to possess a copy of this text.

³² The square is in fact a way to calculate the first day of the month according to Islamic way of computing the calendar. This kind of text is quite diffused in Ethiopia.

³³ The manuscript reports the correspondent date according to the Julian calendar used in Ethiopia, 1955.

Abba Ganda was still alive. This can be considered the date of the copy of this specific witness of the text.



Figure 2. Frontispiece of the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* (AGL0001, f. 8r). The dates are reported in the lower part of the title-triangle and in the bottom left corner, in ballpoint ink (photo by Michele Petrone and Sara Fani, *Islam in the Horn of Africa Project*).

The *Bāb al-wuṣūl*, written in good Arabic,³⁴ is organized according to the scheme of Islamic hagiographies: a biographical sketch (including the ones of his kin), his acts of piety and miracles.³⁵ Thomas Heffernan, in his work on sacred biography in Medieval Christian literature, considers biography “exquisitely sensitive to the demands of verisimilitude” (Heffernan 1992: 43). The *Bāb al-wuṣūl* is not an exception, as it presents a series of events that were witnessed by Abba Ganda or reported directly by Aḥmad b. ‘Umar himself. The demand for adherence to facts, in this specific context, however, should be weighed against the necessity for collecting memorable tracts and acts of a saintly figure. Only the first section about his life follows a roughly chronological succession, interrupted by facts about the lives of Aḥmad’s parents and brothers. As for the rest, the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* is a series of episodes that span from pure hagiography to what we can consider biography: in some narrations the miraculous aspect of Alfaki’s deeds is predominant, while in others is just a lens through which we can see how he acted in specific circumstances. Abba Ganda invites the reader to consider the wondrous nature of some episodes, explaining how they are a miracle or the result of Alfaki’s piety. If in most cases this is just a rhetoric device, in those involving Italian occupants the intervention of supernatural forces or exceptional moral qualities.

Seen from this point of view, the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* is but a typical form of Islamic hagiography and biographical literature,³⁶ following the models of medieval texts. Dates and names are seldom provided, and the context is often omitted, possibly because most of the readers were also witnesses of the events. Abba Ganda reports that Aḥmad b. ‘Umar himself read and approved the work in 1943 (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 27v).³⁷

Abba Ganda does not provide details about his sources, which should have been mostly, if not totally, oral. The title page reports the expression *ḡama‘ahu* “have been collected,” alluding to the

³⁴ This paper is not the right place to discuss in detail the readership of texts in Arabic in a context like South Western Ethiopia where, despite the efforts of Fascist occupants, Arabic was never a vehicular language. John Hunwick (Hunwick and Davidson 2006: 53–62) discussed the comparison between the functions of Arabic and Latin respectively in West Africa and Medieval Christendom. In Ethiopia Arabic was certainly the language of Muslim learned men and was also used for private written communication between them. Devotional poetry is still recited also in Arabic, but the understanding of the texts is very limited, if any. It is possible that the work of Abba Ganda, as others of the same genre (Petroni 2018) were written for a public limited to a few members of the intellectual and spiritual Muslim elite. The fact that only two copies of the *Bāb* survive seems to confirm this hypothesis.

³⁵ The organization of the text is made clear at f. 12v, where Abba Ganda confirms the date of composition (1362) and the date in which he met Aḥmad b. ‘Umar and had his approval (1363).

³⁶ For a general introduction to Islamic hagiography see Renard (2009).

³⁷ Here Abba Ganda also reports that Alfaki prevented him from reporting certain episodes of his life that involved his relations with (Ethiopian?) politicians.

process of composition of the text (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 8r). The informants, at the moment of the publication of the text, were from the same environment of the author and of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar and could (at least partially) coincide with the readers of the *Bāb al-wuṣūl*.

In this perspective the process of verification of the text by Alfaki can imply the author’s will to exclude from his work anything that was not true. This, however, does not imply full historical reliability of the text, as Aḥmad b. ‘Umar’s approval sanctions the adherence of the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* to the image the Sufi master wanted to give of himself to his disciples and the plausibility of what is narrated from a hagiographical point of view. Nonetheless, the combination of these two forms of control on the text (by readers/informants and by the biographed subject) provides us with a representation of the events that is fully internal to the social group of the biographed figure, although mediated by the literary filter of sacred biography. Aḥmad b. ‘Umar, Abba Ganda and the readers belonged to the same community who experienced Italian occupation. Abba Ganda is narrating the episodes of Alfaki’s life to a public that already knows them, as he frequently tells that he’s omitting some details because the story is already well-known, and he does not want to spend too many words for it.

This mechanism of self-representation should be taken into account when analyzing historical events like Italian occupation. Abba Ganda presents them in a way that is acceptable (or accepted) by the community of the Tiḡānīs of Western Ethiopia. The centrality of the figure of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar is not incidental. Filtered through the lens of Abba Ganda’s devotion towards his master, the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* offers an unusual point of view on colonial power: that of the subject that reacts to the occupation in the attempt to preserve the social and religious integrity of his community.

4. Fascists, Sufis and bananas

The *Bāb al-wuṣūl* presents most of the events involving Alfaki and the occupants as examples of the former’s piety and attitude towards the latter. It is interesting that the first section of the text describes how Aḥmad b. ‘Umar dealt with occupants is not about Italians, but about an unnamed Ethiopian Christian ruler (possibly identifiable with Haile Selassie). This is probably a passage censored by Aḥmad b. ‘Umar during his review of the text with Alfaki (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 27v). The text reads *...al-ḥākīm al-naṣrānī wa sammāhu lī ya’ nī al-ḥabašī*, “...the Christian ruler, [Alfaki] told me his name, indicating that he was the Abyssinian [ruler]” (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 29v). It is noteworthy that Abba Ganda is not calling him king, but simply ruler, an indirect and discreet way to say that he was not recognizing

his power. The *ḥākim* mentioned in the text, considering the dates,³⁸ could be identified with Haile Selassie himself, who asked for Alfaki's help for some issues³⁹ and had him brought to Addis Ababa. Alfaki reluctantly went to the capital and, as a reward for his success the emperor gave him a fief in Western Ethiopia (where he built his house) and a ring (*ḥatm*; Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 21v).⁴⁰

This cautious availability is typical of Sufis, who often refuse to comply to the requests of secular power and even to accept their money, as it could be not completely licit.⁴¹ It seems that this preoccupation was at the core of Alfaki's attitude towards the Italians.

We are informed by Abba Ganda that the *ṣayḥ* prevented his followers from being involved in any way with Fascists' activities, putting himself as the main mediator between the population and the rulers. He built, next to his household, a hut reserved to the Italians where he fed them and let them relax (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 29v). His mediation worked in diverse directions. He paid directly those (Muslim or not) whom were trying to get money from the Italians. He also paid a bribe of 80.000 *riyāl* to the Italians, possibly to prevent violence on the population.⁴² Abba Ganda says that "he put himself at the service of the Italian rulers (*mulūk*), both personally and with his wealth (*māl*) for the whole period of their permanence in Abyssinia" (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 29v) and that he considered his possession as a booty in the hands of Italians, so he was unwilling to ask something in exchange for his prodigality. His aim, Alfaki declared, was to help the government (*'awn al-ḥukūma*) (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 30r). Abba Ganda invited the reader to interpret this as a sign Aḥmad b. 'Umar's generosity, according to the custom (*sunna*) of the Prophet.⁴³ He did not allow any Ethiopian, Muslim or not, to take a single *fals* (coin) from the rulers to protect them from their influence and to prevent them from participating in any way to their rule. He even went so far as to banish all those among his servants who had had anything to do with the Italians or took money from them (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 30v).

³⁸ The episode is dated 1367/1948 (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 21v).

³⁹ It is not clear which kind of issues. *Ṣayḥ* Abdusalam, present *ḥalīfa* of the Tiḡāniyya in Ethiopia, told me in a meeting in April 2017 that Aḥmad b. 'Umar solved some health problems of a member of the royal family, possibly a consequence of a *ḡinn* possession. The text reads *yūqirruhu 'alā mulkihi alladī fi yadihi fi zaman Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 21v).*

⁴⁰ It is not clear if this ring was a seal that he used for his letters and documents. The episode has been confirmed to me in a conversation with *ṣayḥ* Abusalam in Addis Ababa, April 2017.

⁴¹ See the exemplar case of al-Suyūṭī in Mauder (2017).

⁴² He did the same with the Abyssinian ruler, paying "only" 7000 *riyāl* (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 29v).

⁴³ The section to which these passages belong is called *fi siratihi al-sunniyya*, "about his life according to the *sunna* [of the Prophet Muḥammad]" (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 27v). It is not clear, however, to which episode of Muḥammad's life he is referring to.

The text, a few lines before, discusses the accusation, moved to Alfaki by unnamed enemies, of having accepted illicit money from an unbelieving ruler on his first stay in Abyssinia. Of course, Abba Ganda rejects these accusations and emphasizes his master's absolute adherence to Islamic Law. Presenting the two episodes one after another, however, can be read as an indication that they should be read together and, thus, that the preoccupation of Aḥmad b. 'Umar was more religious than political, also towards Italians.

The hagiographic filter here is probably at work, as it is clear that Abba Ganda is suggesting a reading of these episodes that is not immediate also for the devotee. Seclusion and separation from secular world and power are part of Sufi manners. Proposing the parallel between misbelievers and Italians is then more than a suggestion of how Abba Ganda and his master considered the Fascists.

Pleasing the Italians (in order to protect the population, Muslim and non-Muslim) and, at the same time, not taking advantage of their presence in any way, are attitudes of a Sufi master who wants to keep himself pure by isolating himself from the world. On the other hand, Alfaki is fulfilling his duty to guide the community, first of all protecting it from sin and from breaking the Law. This is the case regardless of whether the occupant is foreign or local, unbeliever, Christian or Muslim.

Avoidance of the enemy was integrated with some activities that involved some forms of interaction between Alfaki, his disciples and the occupants. The Sufi master dedicated one of his fields to the cultivation of bananas for the Italians, employing his servants and others. This activity was so successful that he was able to gift an entire bunch of bananas to all the Italians leaving his house and even to send a cargo by air to Italy (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 30v), creating an economy alternative to the one of the occupants, and using them to expand the market for his bananas.⁴⁴ Abba Ganda goes so far as to venture towards an interpretation of Alfaki's strategy. "He behaved with the (*mulūk*) Italian kings hoping to exhaust them of their own rule" by preventing any kind of relationship between the population and the occupants. He did not accept "even an iron coin (*fals ḥadīd*)" from them, with the only exception of the cases when Italians were acting officially and compelled him to take their money (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 44v). Aḥmad b. 'Umar, however, did not accept to "wear the clothes" gifted by the colonial employees and to formally submit himself to the Fascists.

This case shares some similarities with the one of Amadu Bamba (d. 1927) who aimed at creating a safe space for Muslims by involving French occupants in the cultivation of cash crop peanuts

⁴⁴ Analysis of available archival sources has not shown any explicit presence of bananas from Alfaki's fields. Nonetheless, banana was a lucrative crop, to the point that in 1935 it was founded the *Regia Azienda Monopolio Banane (RAMB)* ("Royal Monopoly of Bananas"). For a complete reconstruction of this story see Salvi (2017).

(Robinson 1994). The main difference stands in the extension of the cultivated fields, that in Ethiopia seems not to have surpassed the land owned by Alfaki, while in Senegal involved several owners. As a consequence, the initiative of Amadu Bamba was more structured and endured since the end to 20th century. In Ethiopia, however, the production of bananas always remained limited to local markets. Despite this quantitative difference, both Alfaki and Bamba aimed at overcoming the dichotomy occupation/resistance by involving the colonizers in the cash crop business.⁴⁵

Italian occupants used Alfaki's influence in diverse occasions. They requested him to affix his seal on some documents, *de facto* attributing him a political function that he tried to dodge (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, ff. 44v-45r).⁴⁶ The Italians also took Alfaki with them on their travels to the most unfamiliar and dangerous areas, perhaps those on the border with Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which were not far from his home area and which he had crossed when he came to Ethiopia a few years earlier. Having him with them meant they had not only a guide, but an authority that would protect them from bandits and possible rebellions by local leaders. This function of local chief, never made official, is flanked by another much more complex one, that is the mediation between Italian and English forces in border disputes (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 45r). The region of Asosa was precisely the one from which British attacks could come and reach Addis Ababa through Gembi (Rovighi 2021, I: 359). It is not strange to imagine Alfaki as an authoritative mediator between the two sides in his homeland, assuming the role of local leader, although without any formal recognition. This continued also after the end of the Italian occupation, as Aḥmad b. 'Umar is said to have acted as an escort for the British, continuing to exercise his informal authority (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 52v).⁴⁷

His favorable attitude towards the Italians, and possibly his successful mediations, gained him some friends among the occupants. Abba Ganda names the local *kūmīsāryā* (transliteration of the Italian "commissario") of Asosa⁴⁸, in the Bela Shanghul region, as a person deeply attached to Alfaki, to the point that the latter gifted him his own *sibḥa* (prayer beads), possibly a compensation for a favor or, more probably, a material recognition of a spiritual bond. Abba Ganda does not mention the

⁴⁵ I would like thank Andrea Brigaglia (University of Naples "L'Orientale") for suggesting this parallel.

⁴⁶ It is curious to note that Italians asked him to affix two seals, one of gold and one of silver. Possibly they asked to affix his own seal and the one donated by Haile Selassie. The dating of the donation of the seal by Haile Selassie is still uncertain. There is also the possibility that the seal was donated by Haile Selassie after the end of Italian occupation, possibly recognizing Alfaki's resistance.

⁴⁷ The passage is not clear and, with no chronological indications, it could be referred also to Italians.

⁴⁸ This person could be identified with Colonel Iacobuzzi, who was commander of military units in the Bela Shanghul region (Sbacchi 1985: 196).

circumstances of this gift. If it partially contradicts the practice of avoiding contacts with the Italians (as does the Alfaki's joining the Italians in their encounters with the British), it falls into the boundaries of not accepting anything from the occupants. Abba Ganda underlines the generosity of his master and his ability to establish good relations with the Fascists without compromising his independence. In another passage (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 56r) the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* informs us that even mentioning Alfaki's name at a military checkpoint could guarantee an immediate and safe passage.

What above would lead one to think that the Italians held the figure of Aḥmad b. 'Umar in high esteem and that they respected his role and functions. Or, at least, that they used him to their advantage in the operations of extension and consolidation of colonial rule. Abba Ganda, however, reports a series of episodes, seen by him as miraculous, that show how the master of Asosa was more feared than appreciated.

The *Bāb al-wuṣūl* reports at least three episodes in which Alfaki's life was put in danger and was prodigiously saved. The most curious episode concerns what seems to be a death sentence.⁴⁹ Aḥmad b. 'Umar was conducted in the presence of an Italian officer to have his life sentence carried out. But the latter, declaring himself not competent, sent him to one of his colleagues, who in a Kafkaesque way, directed him to another officer. The scene repeated itself once more, until Aḥmad b. 'Umar was set free (Ḥāḡḡ 'Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 30r.; f. 52v). Abba Ganda presents this episode as a prodigious protection granted by Allah to the saint. Only a divine intervention could have made a man condemned to death slip away from the clutches of his jailers. But the way in which the facts are narrated in the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* are too sketchy to be considered completely reliable, as the cancellation of a death sentence should have involved the "Residente" in Jimma. A mischievous eye might see here at work only the inefficiency of Italian bureaucracy. Perhaps, a more historically accurate interpretation could see here Italian resistance to take responsibility for Alfaki's death sentence as a reflection of his importance in the Jimma region. No one would have ascribed to himself an act that, in all likelihood, would have led to an impoverishment of relations with the local population, if not outright revolt. Unfortunately, the text provides no further details about this episode, either regarding the reasons for the sentence or its date. Considering the generally positive relations between Alfaki and the Italians, it is difficult to place this event at the beginning of the Fascist occupation, when the relation between the *shaykh* and the Italian had to be still established.

⁴⁹ Amadu Bamba's hagiographies represent him as surviving bullets and domesticating a man-eating lion in his cell (Robinson 1994: 161).

The harassment of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar was not limited, according to the *Bāb al-wuṣūl*, to this single, grotesque episode. Alfaki’s house was frequently searched. Abba Ganda suggests that these searches were instigated by the enemies of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar, who spread false rumors about him. His reaction was always one of prodigality and hospitality, so much so that the Italians could only leave his house without having concluded anything. And, often, even humiliated by such generosity (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 30r).

Aḥmad b. ‘Umar was certainly aware that his life was threatened from many sides and did not disdain the possession of a gun (*raṣṣāṣ*) (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 47r). At the same time, the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* informs us, he had received from Aḥmad Tiḡānī (in a dream) an amulet (*ḥirz*) of protection from bullets. The Italians called him and, somehow informed of this object, took it from him. This episode is curious in two respects. The possession of a weapon is certainly not strange in conflict zones. Likewise, the presence of forms of spiritual protection is not unusual. A *ḥirz* is technically an amulet with a written text, usually reporting an invocation and some formulas, sometimes accompanied by a magic square. The term is used in this sense especially in the Maghreb, while in other contexts talismans are called *tillāsm* or *ḥamlā* (Burak 2019: 344–346). The most interesting aspect is that the Italians were aware of the existence of this object and tried to take possession of it. To do so, they must have been very well informed about Alfaki and, above all, they had to have an interest in the more occult aspects of his personality and the culture of the place (or at least they would simply mark their predominance by stealing something precious from him). Possibly, they simply wanted to deprive a subject of something precious to humiliate him.

Abba Ganda informs us that, when the Italian occupation was coming to an end, the Italians attempted to set fire to the house of Alfaki (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 30v) with bombs (*qanābīl*)⁵⁰ and heavy weapons (*qilā’*). Soldiers had announced themselves from afar and, before setting fire to his house, they had burnt two fortifications in the British-controlled area bordering the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. “They came so close to my dwelling that we could see each other” (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 30v), apparently said Aḥmad b. ‘Umar while reciting the *Ṣalāt tunaḡḡīnā*, a prayer for protection (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 52v).⁵¹

Not only the Italians were threatening his home and his life, but also the British. Abba Ganda describes how, as well as with the Italians, Alfaki accompanied them on some expeditions (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 52v), without making any distinction between the various foreign forces that, at that

⁵⁰ The term may also indicate mortars or, even, cavalry troops.

⁵¹ The prayer is not exclusively Tiḡānī, as it is part of most common booklets of invocations.

time, loomed over western Ethiopia. The account of the British attempts to control Alfaki follows in many points that made about the Italians. However, it has the merit of offering some more details, in a more articulated passage.

The British soldiers (*‘asākir al-inġlīz*) issued an arrest warrant throughout the territory under their control (*balad wilāyatihim*). They reached the house where he was, entered it and walked through it while he was sitting by the door, but they did not find him. Finally they went out (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 52v).

On another occasion they sought him out for a search of his property (*matā’*). He refused to present himself and this caused a rather violent reaction. But, miraculously, the parties were reversed: trying to move towards him, the soldiers began to walk backwards, in fact moving away from him (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 52v).

After these unsuccessful attempts, the British then managed to capture him. His imprisonment was, however, quite pleasant: they offered him a respectable treatment, leaving him free to “sit [comfortably] and drink coffee, without any hindrance” (Ḥāḡḡ ‘Alī Abbā Ganda, f. 52v). Even this last episode, with its far from prodigious features, is read by Abba Ganda as the result of Alfaki's particular spiritual charisma, although it is clear that the purpose of the British was to keep him under surveillance.

Del Boca reports that British presence in Wollega (Western Ethiopia) was more menacing than what Mussolini imagined. An embryonic form of local government was present in Gore since 1936. Haile Selassie, through von Rosen and Wolde Tzadek, was in contact with local authorities. What preoccupied Mussolini was the presence of Erskine, the British consul who attempted to annex the Ethiopian West to the territories of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (Del Boca 1981: 26–31). Resistance guerrilla warfare, supported by the British, developed in the western Ethiopian areas bordering Sudan after 1940 (Dominioni and Del Boca 2019: 276). Considering that Abba Ganda reports the episodes between Alfaki and the British after those involving Italians, it is possible that they occurred in the ending phases of occupation. In the same period some soldiers of the rulers of Danbi Dollo tried to capture him, possibly instigated by the British or the Belgians, who were active in the area in 1940 (Del Boca 1979: 584).

British attempts on Alfaki's life can be read, if the hypothesis on their chronological placement is correct, as the result of his refusal to take part in or support these actions of opposition to the Italian occupation. On the other front, the Italians may have had interest in killing him, in the same period, as a possible spy of the British.

5. Double crossing and the miracles of politics

The picture of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar emerging from the accounts mentioned above does not match the image of a Sufi *ṣayḥ* actively opposing colonial power. Instead of direct confrontation, he chose, as far as circumstances allowed it, isolation and avoidance. The community of Tiḡānīs and, more generally of Ethiopians, gravitating around the Bornuan saint did not secede itself from the rest of the population, as did Umar Tall in West Africa, preparing his *jihad* (Robinson 1987).⁵² Such a position of non-cooperation carries with it an inherent duplicity which, in a period of crisis such as that following the outbreak of the Second World War, could not fail to attract the attention of Italian and British secret services. Alfaki’s equanimity towards the English, Italians and Ethiopians was possibly seen as a form of double game or an attempt to take an advantageous position on more than one front, perhaps working as a spy.

Alfaki was extremely active as the sole mediator between the population and the Italian occupiers, spending his wealth and even putting his life at risk. Such a role was made possible by the de facto absence of recognized political power in the areas of western Ethiopia (Beni Shangul and Dambi Dollo). While Abba Jobir’s formal authority was recognized in Jimma, the border regions with Anglo-Egyptian Sudan escaped the capital’s direct control. In this vacuum of political power, never really filled by the occupying authorities, the figure of a Sufi master, whose spiritual charisma was recognized even by non-Muslims, had a rather large room for maneuver.

Sufis have always practiced a certain form of abstention from relations with political power. However, this is true only in principle. The cases of Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir in Algeria or ‘Umar al-Muḥtār in Libya are just two of the most famous examples of resistance to colonialism with prominent Sufi figures at the head of the movements. Ethiopian Muslims, in Jimma, but also in Harar and Awsa, participated actively to the building of the new colonial state, even moving war to other Ethiopians.⁵³ Collaboration was not uniform. In Western Ethiopia, where Muslims constituted the majority of the

⁵² ‘Umar al-Fūti Tall was a Tiḡānī master from Futa Tooro, in Senegambia region. He promoted a *ḡihād* against non-Muslim populations of the area. Preparing for war, he and his followers isolated themselves in a desert area, symbolically imitating the Hiḡra of the Prophet. It should be noted that the descendants of ‘Umar Tall participated in a practice of accommodation not so different from the one enacted by Alfaki (Robinson 2000: 194-207).

⁵³ Sbacchi reports that “As a result, Ethiopian Muslims like chiefs Abba Jobir of Jimma, Sheik Isa ben Hamzah el-Qatbari of Gurage, the Sultan of Aussa, Iman Saik Hussein, Mohammed Seid of Bale, and Iman Rahitu Nuh Dadi of Arussi co-operated closely with the colonial government” (Sbacchi 1985: 163). He also claims that the Oromo fought alongside the Italians for the conquest of some territories (Sbacchi 1985: 160). Del Boca (1979: 53) reports that Abba Jobir contributed with some 2.000 soldiers to the expansion of Italian domains.

population, mostly Oromo in language and culture, there were pockets of resistance that opposed both Italian domination and the return of feudalism to central power in Addis Ababa (Del Boca 1981: 34).

The *Bāb al-wuṣūl* bears witness of an intermediate way of approaching colonialism. Aḥmad b. ‘Umar, while not openly opposing the Italians, managed to guarantee a certain independence to his followers. The cultivation of bananas was a means of beguiling the occupiers with gifts. It worked also as a means of creating employment among the locals, increasing economic independence from foreigners. Acting in this way Aḥmad b. ‘Umar credited himself as the main interlocutor for the occupant forces. This position was extremely delicate. He was never formally recognized as a political leader by the Italians, despite him being their only referent in the area of Asosa. Alfaki also never pledged alliance to the Italians, standing in the gray area between collaboration and resistance. His name does not appear in the lists of those who organized resistance movements in Gojjam and Illubabor (Dominioni and Del Boca 2019: 272-276) nor in those who received emoluments from the Italians (Sbacchi 1985: 137).⁵⁴ Even other Ethiopians, like the soldier of Danbi Dollo considered him part of the Italian front or, more simplistically, considered his position unbearable in the phase of active opposition to the occupants.

Such a position, that can be hardly defined absolutely quietist, stands, from a strictly Sufi point of view, in between the one of other masters of the same Tiḡāniyya order, who had found themselves involved with colonial powers. In Algeria the Tiḡāniyya was perceived as loyal to the French government, even clashing with the troupes of Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir in the siege of ‘Ayn Maḏī (Depont and Coppola 1897: 271; Benaissa 1999). In Senegambia, the *ḡihād* of Umar Tall was clearly oriented to the formation of a state independent from colonial power (Robinson 1987). Alfaki did not attempt to build a new state, nor a political entity based on Tiḡāniyya or Islam. Abba Ganda repeats that his generosity was directed to all Ethiopians, disregarding their religion and ethnicity. Apparently, this indiscriminate form of protection made him even more dangerous for Italian colonial policies. It was difficult, if not impossible, to embed him in a defined set of relations aimed at establishing his submission to colonial power: Aḥmad b. ‘Umar was not a local chief, he did not show any overt opposition, and he was even open to certain forms of collaboration. This condition, and his attitude of proactive resistance allowed him a certain freedom in his relations with other forces acting in the area. It is this freedom that, more than overt political or military opposition, scared Italian occupants and British forces.

⁵⁴ Although the table reports also those who received their legitimate pay for their work as interpreters or as a compensation for the land Italians had confiscated, it gives an idea of the extension of the phenomenon.

6. Conclusions

The *Bāb al-wuṣūl* is a hagiography presenting the events of the life of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar to his disciples and fellows. The information it provides about the period of Italian occupation can be hardly considered historiographical, as it is a series of wonders that Abba Ganda lists to show the spiritual prowess of his master. Nonetheless, the text offers some details that allow the reconstruction of the personality of the *shaykh* and of his attitude towards the occupation.

The religious filter of piety and devotion, that presents acts of piety (or simple smartness) as miracles does not diminish the historical value of some of these events, although demands to the historian using these sources, the ability to go beyond this filter. From the point of view of the history of resistance to European colonialism, the attitude of Alfaki was focused on the protection of his community, which included all the Ethiopians who, for any reason, sought for his help and protection. Or at least it is how the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* presents the deeds of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar. There are at least three different layers of the textual production process that influence the representation of the events by Abba Ganda. The first is the intention of the author, who aims at writing the *tarjama* of his master. Despite the term meaning “biography,” we have seen how the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* is a sequence of prodigies, that in a secular view would fall outside the boundaries of a life account. But his public (and this is the second layer) is not secularized. The readers that Abba Ganda had in mind were Sufis who expected to read of the miracles of Alfaki. The frequent remarks in which the author addresses the reader, compelling him to interpret an episode as a sign of the exceptional character and power of their master is a precise narrative strategy. They respond to the readers’ expectation of reading about extraordinary deeds,⁵⁵ that for them are real and confirm the sanctity of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar. The latter constitutes the third layer of this text, as he is not only the subject of the *tarjama*, but he also revised it and gave his approval. This closes the circle of the biography, as the protagonist participates to the narration as reviser. But what is he exactly revising and approving? If Abba Ganda is the *ḡāmi’*, the collector, of stories circulating among Alfaki’s disciples, the latter is not simply controlling his image in a textual form but confirming (or not) his own representation by his community. Read in this way, the *Bāb al-wuṣūl* offers the “objective” point of view of the Muslim community of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar on the latter’s relation with Italian occupation. This relation is mediated by the self-identification of the whole community as religiously informed by the presence of a saint. What we have called a devotional literary

⁵⁵ The notion of open text, as further elaborated in *Lector in fabula* by Umberto Eco (1979: 50-52), is the background of these observations.

filter enables Abba Ganda to present the events (not only those related to the fascists) in a way that is intelligible for the intended readership of the text.

A last point regards the date of composition, 1944,⁵⁶ just three years after the formal end of Italian occupation. The limited amount of time between the events and their registration guarantees the reliability of the information, as Alfaki and most of the people involved in the events were still alive. But the fact that the master was still there gives to the text a diverse nuance. Abba Ganda was not celebrating a dead saint, nor he is writing his apology, as the text does not present such traits or any reference to polemics with other Sufi orders, religious leaders, or groups. For the time being (waiting for further evidence about the context and the events of the period) the only agency for this urgency to write a *tarğama* of Aḥmad b. ‘Umar is the re-elaboration and representation of the events of the occupation to the community which participated to them. This study has been focused on Alfaki’s attitude towards the occupants, but the text reports other miraculous deeds pertaining to the relations between Aḥmad b. ‘Umar and local leaders.⁵⁷ The *šāḥh* was not a political leader, but Abba Ganda presents him to his community as their main political referent, whose actions are religiously and spiritually motivated. The *Bāb al-wuṣūl* is not a historiographical work, but it is a document that offers a clear and reliable overview of the Western Ethiopian society before and under Italian occupation. A society of Muslims that was looking for political guidance and leadership in a saintly figure in a period of uncertainty and turmoil.

Another possible angle to analyze this text is reading it as an attempt by Abbā Ganda at redefining Alfaki’s action for the new political climate. Muslims were generally perceived by the new (Christian) state as collaborators of the Italians. A hagiography presenting Alfaki as a partisan of his own people, acting to protect them from the occupant, could have rightfully presented him as a supporter of the new order. Or, at least, a minor threat to Haile Selassie.⁵⁸ This hypothesis needs to be verified against the circulation of the text outside Tiğānī circles, possibly among State officials in Asosa or Jimma.

⁵⁶ AGL0002, f. 12v reports the first visit of Abba Ganda to Alfaki on 1367 H. On this date he was granted the permission to make the *Bāb al-wuṣūl*, that was probably written in the years before, when the master did not allow the author to visit him.

⁵⁷ See for instance the episode with an unidentified queen Zaynab, who tried to have him killed by a group of bandits, AGL0001, f. 52v.

⁵⁸ I thank Alessandro Gori for suggesting this hypothesis.

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A variationist approach to NP genitive alternatives in Arabic

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This study aims to investigate the sociolinguistic variation of Noun Phrase (NP) genitive alternatives in Jordanian Arabic (JA) as spoken in Amman. It attempts to examine the role of certain linguistic factors i.e., animacy, definiteness, alienability, complexity, and grammatical function as well as social factors, i.e., age, gender, education, and region which may constrain the choice of using free state nominals (FSN) or construct state nominals (CS) in JA structure. Drawing on Labov's variationist approach (1972), for the current study's objectives, a corpus of spontaneous speech data is created. The corpus includes 32 sociolinguistic interviews of 32 speakers of JA (all reside in Amman). Using GOLDVARB X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte, and Smith, 2005), distributional analysis, multivariate analysis, and cross-tabulation approach are employed to analyze the data. An overall distribution of 1319 tokens indicates that CS is evidently more frequent than FSN in JA. Multivariate analysis is used to ascertain the statistical significance of factor groups. Region and four linguistic factors i.e., alienability, animacy, definiteness, and grammatical function are found to be statistically significant regarding constraining the variant choice. An interpretation of the effect of these factors on the observed linguistic phenomenon is offered.

Keywords: Construct state nominals; free state nominals; Jordanian Arabic; Amman.

1. Introduction

1.1. Language variation

The concept of language variation is vital to the study of sociolinguistics, expressly when the core purpose is to investigate the precise influence of a selected collection of sociolinguistic factors on the selection of a certain phenomenon.¹ It is often seen as a revolution that has changed the way

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sociolinguists view language change and the true impact of socio-linguistic factors on language use, a study which is commonly referred to in the literature as *variationist sociolinguistics*. Labov (1972), who is regarded as the founder of the discipline of variationist sociolinguistics, mentions that the core study of this branch of sociolinguistics crystalizes when there are “two or more ways of saying the same thing” (Labov 1972: 271). As a comment to this point, Al-Wer (2009: 1) mentions that “variation is an inherent characteristic of every living human language. This means that in every language there is more than one way of saying the same thing, and no individual speaks in exactly the same manner all the time and in all situations.” Likewise, Wolfram (2006: 333) notes that “if structure is at the heart of language, then variation defines its soul.” By statistically defining linguistic systems, variationists seek to understand how language works in order to contribute to the explanation of the variation and possible paths of language change.

There are differences in grammatical structures, word choice, and pronunciation within one speech community. An example of phonological variation can be observed in Arabic varieties which have multiple possible pronunciations for the word /qaal/ ‘he said,’ namely [qa:l], [ga:l], [ʔa:l], [ka:l], [gɒ:l], and [ʔɒ:l] (Al-Wer 2009). All of these different variants of the word /qaal/ ‘he said’ do not express different propositional meanings; rather they are different with respect to their social meanings (Al-Wer, 2009). Such variation of these different forms of the word /qaal/ ‘he said’ is never random but follow from the effect of certain social (e.g., age, gender, education attainment, regional origin, social class, etc.) and/or linguistic (e.g., animacy, transitivity, polarity, the type of clause, etc.) factors (see also Al-Hloul *et al.* 2023). According to Labov (2001), the first contribution of sociolinguistic research in the second half of the 20th century was to demonstrate that such variation is not chaotic. Rather, it is an underlying aspect of linguistic structure that is indicative of how language is employed to express certain social attributes.

1.2. NP genitive alternatives

A genitive construction or a genitival construction is a type of grammatical construction used to express a relation between two nouns such as possession (e.g., *Mary’s bag*) where the referent of the possessor, in some sense, possesses (owns, has as a part, rules over, is connected with etc.) the referent of the possessed (Peters and Westerståhl 2013). Note here that a genitive construction is broadly a noun whose reference is narrowed down or modified by another noun [N [N]].

In Arabic, a genitive construction is traditionally called *iḍāfah* (literally "attachment") or a construct state nominal as referred to in the current linguistic practice (Altakhaineh 2016). Trask (1993: 149) defines a genitive construction as “a term used in the grammars of certain languages to denote a

construction in which a noun is possessed or modified by another noun or a noun phrase, particularly when an overt marking of the relation occurs on the noun which is possessed or modified.” One of the genitive constructions in Arabic is Construct State (CS) which normally consists of two elements: a head noun (known as *muḍāf* "attached") and a genitive NP complement (known as *muḍāf 'ilayhi* "attached to"). Cross-linguistically, a construct state is a noun inflectional form typically designating what is possessed and accompanied by another noun designating the possessor (Borer 1999). One main characteristic of CSs is that the first element obligatorily lacks a definite article, whereas the second can be definite or indefinite. It is important to mention here that the definiteness of the second element spreads to the first element in CSs, producing a definite construction as a whole (Borer 1999). This discussion is illustrated in example (1) below.² The noun *galam* 'pen' is the head of the construct state (CS) and *l-walad* 'a boy' is a genitive NP complement:

- (1) *galam* *l-walad*³
 pen DEF-boy
 'The boy's pen'

In (1) above, the possessum (*galam* 'a pen') is presented as the entity that belongs to or that is specific to the second noun which is the possessor (*l-walad* 'the boy').

Note here that CSs do not represent a homogenous group in Arabic grammar. For example, the head noun of the CSs may have an agreement (in Number and Gender) with the accompanying NP possessor in JA when the latter is referential (Jarrah *et al.* 2020). This is seen in examples (2-3) below (the examples are taken from Jarrah *et al.* 2020: 2) where the possessed is attached to an inflection that displays the same Person and Number features of the possessor.

- (2) a. *galam* *l-binit*
 pen DEF-girl
 'The girl's pen'

- b. *galam-ha_i* *l-binit_i*
 pen-her DEF-girl
 'The girl's pen'

² All examples in this study are from Jordanian Arabic unless otherwise stated.

³ In this study, the IPA system is used in the transliteration of the examples.

(3) a. *barbiif l-kaaz*
 pipe DEF-gas
 ‘Gas pipe’

b. **barbiif-uhi l-kaazi*
 pipe-SG.M DEF-gas
 Intended: ‘Gas pipe’

Jarrah *et al.* (2020) argue that there are two types of CSs with respect to ϕ -agreement between the head of the CS and its associate (the possessor). The difference between these two types rests on whether the second member of CS i.e., the NP associate in their terminology is referential or not.

An important point to mention here is that genitive relations between the possessum and the possessor in JA can be expressed through a different construction, known in the related literature as ‘absolute state’ or ‘free state nominals’ (FSN; Altakhaineh 2016). An example of FSNs is mentioned in (4a), whereas (4b) is an example of a CS:

(4) a. *l-galam tabaʕ l-walad* (FSN)
 DEF-pen of DEF-boy
 ‘The boy’s pen’

b. *galam l-walad* (CS)
 pen DEF-boy
 ‘The boy’s pen’

The two constructions exhibit the same word order between the possessor and the possessed. The head noun precedes the genitive phrase, but they differ in terms of the form of their constituents. The genitive phrase in the CS is bare, contrasting with the genitive phrase in the free state which is marked by *tabaʕ* ‘of/for.’ This alternation is also manifested in pronominal genitive constructions (where the possessor appears as a possessive clitic) as shown in (5) below:

(5) a. *l-galam tabaʕ-i* (FSN)
 DEF-pen of-my
 ‘My pen’

b. *galam-i* (CS)

pen-my

‘My pen’

There are several differences between the two constructions. One difference pertains to the fact that in an FSN, the possessum can be prefixed with a definite article. On the other hand, the addition of the definite article to the possessum is not permissible in a CS. This is illustrated in the following examples in (6):

(6) a. *l-galam tabaʕ l-walad* (FSN)
 DEF-pen of DEF-boy
 ‘The boy’s pen’

b. *(*l-)galam l-walad* (CS)
 DEF-pen DEF-boy
 ‘The boy’s pen’

Another difference between FSNs and CSs is that in the former, nominal modifiers follow the noun they modify while in a CS, nominal modifiers can only appear after the second noun in the genitive construction (after the possessor). In other words, nominal modifiers in CSs always appear after the possessor, regardless of whether they modify the possessor or the possessum. Examples (7-8) below illustrate this difference.

(7) a. *l-galam tabaʕ l-walad ?itʕ-tʕawi:l* (FSN)
 def-pen of def-boy def-tall
 ‘The tall boy’s pen’

b. *l-galam ?itʕ-tʕawi:l tabaʕ l-walad* (FSN)
 def-pen def-tall of def-boy
 ‘The boy’s long pen’

(8) a. *galam l-walad ?itʕ-tʕawi:l* (CS)
 pen def-boy def-tall
 ‘The tall boy’s pen;’ or: ‘The boy’s tall pen’

b. **galam ?itʕ-tʕawi:l l-walad* (CS)
 pen def-tall def-boy
 intended: ‘The boy’s tall pen’

Sentence (8a) is ambiguous as the two readings are possible. The context of the sentence resolves this ambiguity which can also be done away when the two members of the CS are different in their Φ -features.

This discussion clearly indicates that FSNs and CSs are in fact two different ways to express a similar interpretation, which is according to the variationist approach to syntactic alternations an optimal instance of possible effects of sociolinguistic factors. It is the purpose of the current study to examine the role of certain linguistic i.e., animacy, definiteness, alienability, complexity, and grammatical function and social i.e., age, gender, education, region factors that may constrain the choice of using FSNs or CSs in JA structure.

1.3. The aim and questions of the study

Variation is an inherent characteristic of language; there is more than one way of saying the same thing. However, this variation is found to be a result of the influence of sociolinguistic factors in languages investigated in this regard. Therefore, one main key objective behind variationist research is to figure out the extent to which social and linguistic factors affect the linguistic choice in apparent time. Thus, the current study aims to provide a detailed exploration of the attribution of a group of socio-linguistic factors which are in charge of the alternation of NP genitives in JA. Additionally, the findings of this work are supposed to contribute to the ongoing research on how language change and variation are delimited by a subset of socio-linguistic factors, a matter that is significant in feeding the argument that language change is a result of internal and external factors.

Drawing on the variationist sociolinguistics (Labov 1972) the current study purports to answer the following questions:

1. What is the distribution of NP genitive constructions (CS and FSN) in JA as spoken in Amman?
2. To what extent is the alternation between CS and FSN socially constrained, with reference to age, gender, education, and region?
3. To what extent is the alternation between CS and FSN linguistically constrained, with reference to animacy, definiteness, alienability, complexity, grammatical function?

2. Literature review

2.1. Phonological variation

One of the first variationist studies that examines the Jordanian community is Al-Khatib (1988). His study is carried out in the city of Irbid (Hōrān). He investigates six phonological variables: (q), (dʒ), (d),

(θ), (k) and (a), across five social factors: regional origin, gender, age, education, and style in order to determine whether or not such variation is rule-governed. His study demonstrates that the language spoken by the two rural groups (the Horaniis and the Fellahiin) in Irbid City is highly varied, and that this variation is systematic. He approaches variation in the vernacular from the viewpoint of standardization, by which he means ‘approximation’ to standard Arabic. He adopts the face-to-face interview technique to elicit naturalistic speech. It is based on the speech of 38 informants from two rural groups. The Horaniis are those people who came to the city from the surrounding rural regions during the last five decades, and the Fellahiin are those who arrived from the rural areas of the West Bank after the two Arab-Israel wars in 1948 and 1967. He analyzes his data primarily in terms of groups rather than idiolects. That is to say, the behavior of the group as a whole rather than that of the individual. Individuals are aggregated in groups based on social parameters like education, age, gender, etc. in an attempt to observe the effect of those social factors on the linguistic behaviour of the participants. He finds that the use of most variables is lexically conditioned. Regarding standardization, men standardize more than women, younger speakers more than older speakers, rural speakers (Palestinians, originally) more than local Hōrānis (indigenous Jordanians). He also finds that the social context and the educational level of the speaker are the social factors that most condition and influence the variability concerning most of the phonological variables under examination. Jordanian speakers tend to use more standard features in their speech in formal contexts than in casual contexts. One of the main findings of this study is that the more educated the speakers are, the more they tend to use standard lexical and phonological features. The older non-educated speakers are more faithful to their colloquial variants than the older educated speakers. Al-Khatib observes that this is because Standard Arabic (SA) forms are normally attainable in schools. For him, the Irbid speech community is still undergoing a big deal of linguistic change.

Amman, which is the speech community that the current study investigates, has been the locus of interest to many variationists who seek for variation patterns among its speakers. One study that describes the linguistic and social situation of this speech community is Al-Wer (2007). In her investigation, Al-Wer (2007) explicates how the Ammani dialect undergoes the process of changing from chaos to order. Al-Wer (2007) mainly attempts to examine the formation of the dialect of Amman. Her study is based on an investigation of the outcome of contact between Jordanian and Palestinian dialects. She focuses on the exploration of the sociolinguistic situation, background information about dialect geography, and the population growth through the analysis of the major socio-historical events in Amman city. She assumes that “through dealing with the Amman data, we are not dealing with a continuation of change in a dialect, but with the formation of a dialect from scratch. Amman had no

dialect simply because it did not have a native and stable population” (p. 1). Her data is obtained through sociolinguistic interviews that are an ongoing research, which she calls the Amman project. She states that her sample is too small to permit statistical testing, yet it is systematic and, therefore, her data permits comparisons across the speakers.

She divides the population into three generations since the beginning of centering Amman as the capital of Jordan containing people from different social backgrounds (Jordanian and Palestinian). The first-generation speakers arrived to Amman when it had no natives, they came into contact with speakers of different dialects. Through contact with and exposure to speakers of other dialects, their native dialects underwent rudimentary levelling, as part of a koineisation process. On the other hand, children, identified by Al-Wer as stage II, unlike their parents, are considered as the first native-born generation, not only exposed to the dialects of their parents, but, in their formative years, they were also exposed to a wide range of variations contributing into the variable model. Regarding this particular generation, the data show that this generation preserves some of their parent’s linguistic features yet are affected by the mixture of features from more than one dialect. Al-Wer also states the similarities between second and third generation linguistic features. Unlike stage two which is described by Al-Wer as an unstable and chaotic, stage III marks the beginning of stability of usage and order. In other words, there is an evolution of norms and reduction of the extreme variability of Stage II. Based on her conclusions, Al-Wer refers to the third generation as the Ammani.

Aljabali (2020) is a recent study that aims to investigate the variable realizations of /k/ sound in JA as spoken in Ajloun governorate and the correlation between this variation and some social i.e., age, education, gender, and class and linguistic factors i.e., the place of articulation of the preceding sound, the manner of articulation of the preceding sound, voicing of the preceding sound, the manner of articulation of the following sound and position of k, place of articulation of the following sound, and voicing. The corpus of her study consists of thirty audio-recorded sociolinguistic interviews (Labov, 1984) of speakers of JA who were born and raised in Ajloun. After collecting the data, the researcher extracted all tokens of [k] and [tʃ] where they are variant such as /keef/ "how" which can be pronounced as /keef/ or /tʃeef/ by Ajlouni speakers. Moreover, the researcher excluded all tokens where /k/ is invariant such as /kaan/ "was." In Ajloun, no one pronounces /kaan/ as /tʃaan/, so the researcher excluded such tokens. The total number of eligible tokens was 1027.

The coded data is analyzed using a computer program, namely Goldvarb X to obtain the distribution of the variants and their frequencies. The results show that the distribution of [k] variant is higher than that of [tʃ] variant (72.8% & 27.2%, respectively). Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the social factors (age, education, and class) are statistically significant in conditioning variant

choice while gender is not: young speakers use [k] more than old speakers, highly-educated speakers use [k], followed by the middle-educated and finally by the low-educated, the higher the class is, the higher preference of /k/. In addition, the linguistic factors (the place of articulation of the preceding sound, the manner of articulation of the preceding sound, voicing of the preceding sound, manner of articulation of the following sound and the phonological position of (k)) constrain the variant choice. By contrast, the place of articulation of the following sound, and voicing of the following sound are not statistically significant in affecting the choice of the variant.

2.2. Syntactic variation

Above and beyond phonology, there are relatively few sociolinguistic studies in Jordanian Arabic (Al-Shawashreh 2016 and Hamdieh *et.al.* 2022).

Al-Shawashreh (2016) is distinguished as one of the first variationist studies that tackles syntactic variation in JA. He primarily focuses on investigating whether two syntactic variables, namely word order variability and pro(noun)-drop variability are constrained by an array of sociolinguistic factors. Concerning the first variable, he assumes that his investigation is significant due to two main reasons. Firstly, he observes that previous studies on word order in Arabic primarily draw on decontextualized and intuitive examples (mainly from written Arabic) to present that a particular word order is the basic word order in Arabic varieties, meaning that they do not adopt a systematic community-based approach by quantitatively analyzing spontaneous speech data. Secondly, previous investigations of word order in Arabic show that vernacular Arabic has changed from VSO to SVO, but very few, if any, show empirical demonstrations that this is indeed the case. Hence, due to the lack of diachronic data pertinent to the historical evolution of the spoken dialects of Arabic, and the paucity of synchronic corpus-based studies targeting everyday speech, his study focuses on actual everyday speech in order to offer an accountable analysis of the dominant word order(s) in JA, the social and linguistic factors that constrain word order variant choice, as well as the direction of change (if any) in word order. As for choosing the second variable, he claims that quantitative studies on variable expression of subject pronouns in Arabic are very rare. Henceforth, his investigation provides a chance to compare the variable expression of subject pronouns in Arabic with the well-established research on this issue in other languages.

Labov's variationist approach is adopted by the researcher. He draws on a corpus of JA recorded in the Irbid metropolitan area via conducting sociolinguistic interviews to elicit spontaneous speech data obtained from 30 native speakers. His participants are stratified according to their age, gender, level of education and urban/rural origin. To analyze his data, he employs distributional analysis, multivariate

analysis, and cross-tabulation techniques. He extracts and transcribes eligible instances of target variables in an EXCEL file ready for coding. He uses GOLDVARB X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte & Smith 2005) to analyze the data distributionally and to conduct binominal logistic regression analysis. The results reveal an important evidence-based perspective on the dominance of SV(O) word order and null subject pronouns in JA. As for word-order variation, he finds that age and education are the main social constraints on word order variant choice. Younger educated speakers (particularly those with post-secondary education) favor SV whereas the older speakers disfavor SV. This finding then strengthens the claim that word order in JA is a possible candidate for change in progress. Moving to the effect of education on word order choice in JA, Al-Shawashreh contends that the higher the level of education, the lower the percentage of VS. Uneducated speakers favour VS more than speakers with intermediate education, who in turn favour VS more than highly educated speakers. Moreover, statistical analysis of linguistic factors reveals that transitive verbs with objects and definite subject pronouns are key predictors of SV(O) word-order choice.

On the other hand, concerning pro-drop variation, he finds that only education constraints variant choice in JA. As for linguistic factors, the factor group that makes the strongest contribution to the selection of overt subject pronoun in JA is switch reference. The linguistic constraints that are found to affect variant choice in JA include transitivity, discourse genre, polarity, transitivity, tense, semantic class of verb, switch reference, grammatical person and number of subject and word order in previous clause. The last three factor groups are found to be the key predictors of variable subject expression in these modern varieties of Arabic.

Inspection of the previous related literature shows that research on language variation with reference to Arabic overwhelmingly focuses on phonological variation while less attention has been paid to syntactic variation. This, in fact, makes the present study unique as there is no single study that investigates NP genitive alternatives with respect to whether such alternation is constrained by an array of social and linguistic factors.

2.3. Theoretical framework

The framework which is implemented in the current study to achieve its goals is based on Labov's (1972) variationist approach. Every language, according to Labov (1982), shows variability that is restricted by internal and external constraints. Such variability is nonetheless not random; rather it is rule-governed by an array of social and linguistic factors that constrain the variant choice. Labov (1982) notes that if we endeavor to understand the system as a whole, we should figure out these constraints, i.e., by understanding the relative effects of the linguistic and non-linguistic factors on language

choice. The claim that no speaker's speech in a particular community functions as a complete representation of the speech of the entire community is one of the most essential tenets of the variationist approach. According to Labov (1982: 17), “This heterogeneity is an integral part of the linguistic economy of the community, necessary to satisfy the linguistic demands of every-day life.”

Another important tenet of the variationist approach is the linguistic variable. Labov (1972: 271) defines the linguistic variable as “two or more ways of saying the same thing.” The linguistic variables can be phonological (deals with sounds), morphological (deals with the forms of words), lexical (deals with the choice of words), and syntactic (deals with the structure of the sentence). Linguistic variables in a given speech community, whether morphosyntactic, phonological, lexical, or syntactic, do not vary chaotically, but systematically. Because it is systematic, this behavior can be quantitatively modeled (Tagliamonte 2006).

Drawing on this framework, the effect of social and linguistic factors on the variant choice is modelled through statistical analysis using a quantitative tool, following Tagliamonte (2006). In view of this, the variationist approach is the appropriate tool to quantitatively uncover the constraints and distribution rates of variable patterns or structures. Moreover, since the use of a vernacular is a core element in Labov's approach, the present study is based on everyday community-based speech of native speakers of JA. The significance of adopting this approach to achieve the main goals of the current study lies in the fact that alternative forms of the genitive patterns in JA might on the surface indicate that there is some redundancy in the language. However, this approach makes it clear that such forms are socio-linguistically constrained.

3. Methodology

To investigate variability and change in language, it is important to connect the study with its community in order to examine the effects of social factors on the given speech community (Al-Shawashreh 2016). To this end, the community of Amman, the capital city of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, with 4,302,730 population is the target of the current work to select potential participants.⁴

In 1906, Amman had 5,000 Circassian settlers. By the 1930's, Amman had received 5000 migrants, mainly from the Balga and Hōrānl regions in the north, Kerak and Madaba in the south, Haifa, Jaffa, Nablus, Jerusalem and Hebron in the West, along with a few merchant families from Damascus (Al-Wer 2011). Internal migration from other Jordanian and Palestinian towns and villages increased

⁴ This number is based on the census carried out by the Department of Statistics in Jordan in 2016.

progressively in the subsequent decades, but the most sudden population increases occurred in the aftershock of the wars with Israel in 1948 and 1967. In the early 1950's, Amman had just over 100,000 people and by the late 1990's, the population had increased more than fifteen times with an estimation of 1.6 million (Al-Wer 2002). The evolution of Amman has been phenomenal in terms of population, physical size, and regional geopolitical significance. The social variety of Amman provides ideal conditions for researching how language variation and change are socially entrenched. Amman has been an area of interest of many linguists who work within the variationist approaches to language. Among the main reasons for targeting this speech community particularly is the fact that Amman shows a various mixture of dialects, a situation which is significant enough to provide an excellent case for variationists to examine variation patterns among speakers. According to Al-Wer (2002), Amman is a case in point where there is no native dialect to develop from; rather a new dialect is formed in the process of the formation of the community itself.

The current study is based on a corpus collected using a sociolinguistic interview methodology (Labov 1984) to audio-record 32 native speakers of JA living in Amman in 2020. Participants are stratified according to their age (young, old), gender (male, female), education (low, high), and region (East, West). Participants are categorized in two age groups. The younger participants are those aged (18 – 38) years old, whereas the older participants are those aged (40+) years old. As for education attainment, participants who have secondary degrees or no degrees are categorized as low-educated while participants who have university or higher degrees are categorized as highly educated. This classification is illustrated in Table 1. below.

Education	Male		Female		Total
	Young	Old	Young	Old	
High	4	4	4	4	16
Low	4	4	4	4	16
Total	8	8	8	8	32

Table 1. Sampling population according to age, gender and education.

Education	Male				Female				Total
	Young		Old		Young		Old		
	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West	
High	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	3	16
Low	2	2	1	3	1	3	1	3	16
Total	16				16				32

Table 2. Sampling population according to region (East & West Amman) in light of other factors.

One major obstacle to compile a balanced sampling population concerning the region of the speaker is the access to the participants. Additionally, it was hard for us to secure the optimal number for some categories, such as old women with old education. Furthermore, movement from one location to another was difficult because of the COVID-19 epidemic and social distancing restrictions.

Being members of the Amman speech community made it easier for the researchers to gain access to the targeted participants by capitalizing on the friend-of-a-friend approach (snowball technique) (Milroy and Milroy 1977). Most participants are obtained through relying on personal social networks: family members, relatives, neighbors, and friends. People in public settings (universities, stores, supermarkets, and malls) are also approached in order to recruit additional participants.

In order to address the study's research questions, the data are recorded in the form of a sociolinguistic interview (Labov 1972) of 32 participants lasting in the range of 45-70 minutes to elicit the vernacular speech style, "the most systematic data for linguistic analysis" (Labov 1984: 29). The vernacular is referred to as the speech style which is used unreflectingly when minimum attention is paid to speech (Labov 1972). Sociolinguistic interviews increase the possibility of obtaining spontaneous speech from the participants. "Sociolinguistic corpora are by their nature extremely personal. A sociolinguistic interview is really not an interview at all, but a conversation between two people. Depending on the personality and skill of the interviewer and/or the personality and demeanor of the individual being interviewed, the conversation can be simply casual, riotous, or intensely personal" (Tagliamonte 2012: 115).

Each participant who is willing to participate is recorded using iPhone with IOS14 voice memos app. This app records voice memos using the built-in microphone. Questions on different topics that are thought to get the participant emotionally involved in the interviews are prepared (see Appendix B). This increases the possibility of getting the vernacular speech style. It is commonly recognized in sociolinguistic investigation (e.g., Labov 1972, 1984) that people are more likely to talk more formally

or employ cautious speech style when they are being recorded. This is identified as the observer's paradox (Labov 1972). To ensure the flow of spontaneous speech during the interview and to attenuate the effect of the observer's paradox, a number of conversational modules are carefully designed to seek the vernacular speech style by focusing on personal experiences of the interviewee throughout different stages of their lives (e.g., childhood, schooling, adulthood, traditions, and work). Questions during the interviews are carefully prepared to elicit vivid personal narratives that focus on emotional experiences (e.g., danger of death questions). Interviewees are given more chance to talk during the interview than the interviewer (the researcher herself). Additionally, to further avoid the effect of the observer's paradox, participants are not informed that the present study is linguistic in nature; rather, they are told that the study scrutinizes the community of Amman and how this community is changing. An important point to mention here is that in order to ensure that the participants will produce the target expressions (FSNs and CSs) in their speech during the interview, data elicitation tools are specifically designed to achieve this aim. For example, during the interview, participants are engaged in topics that require the production of genitive constructions. Below are some of these questions:

1. What is your best material possession and why is it important?
2. What do you put in your bag?
3. What is your most prized possession as a child vs. as an adult?

These interviews comprise the raw data for analysis. The interviews begin by asking the participants some general questions such as name, age, work and weather conditions, to break the ice between participants and the interviewer. This offers them the chance to speak more comfortably (Al Shawashreh 2016). After that, participants are asked some questions about past days, dreams, and memories. These are some of the questions that are administered in the interviews:

- Have you ever had a dream that really scared you/came true? What happened?
- What did you like to do when you were a child? Did you have a happy childhood?
- What was your favorite subject in school? Which teacher influenced you the most?

Such questions increase the possibility of getting the participants emotionally involved during the interviews, triggering the use of the vernacular, the desired speech style. Additionally, questions about recent natural phenomena are prepared. For instance, Al Shawashreh (2016) refers to a big snowstorm that hit the north of Jordan in January 2014 (one month before recording the interviews), leaving people without sufficient food, gas and electricity. He assumes that questions about this certain event can generate vivid personal narratives. However, since the current study is conducted at the time of

COVID-19 epidemic, questions about this recent event are carefully prepared. Questions to speakers about this event elicit some vivid personal narratives. Some of these questions are:

- How did you and your family react to the threat of COVID-19?
- What do you think about the Vaccination? Would you take it?
- How can we avoid another virus outbreak?

These interviews constitute the raw data for analysis. Drawing on the framework of variationist sociolinguistics, the targeted variables (FSNs and CSs) are extracted from the data, coded and analyzed.

Determining where the linguistic variable varies is called “circumscribing the variable context” (Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989: 60) or “the envelope of variation” (Milroy and Gordon 2003, p. 180). According to the principle of accountability, it is compulsory to circumscribe the data to only those contexts that are functionally equivalent as well as variable. The chore is to decide, sometimes by a long process of trial and error, which tokens are in and which are out (Tagliamonte 2012). All the required tokens⁵ (1319) are coded into a token file ready for statistical analysis while all the excluded tokens are left out and are not calculated for statistical procedures. The variable context includes any sentence containing CS and FSN variants. All declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative sentences that include a genitive construction are extracted from the data and coded in terms of social and linguistic factors hypothesized to condition NP genitive alternative choice.

In total, (1319) tokens are taken for statistical analysis. These tokens are coded according to the social and linguistic factors that are postulated to condition variant choice. The process of data extraction and coding is similar to Al-Shawashreh (2016). In that, the audio recordings are not described in their entirety. Instead, eligible occurrences of target variables are extracted from the audio files and transcribed in an EXCEL file ready for coding. The total number of eligible tokens is (1319). The tokens in the EXCEL file are then coded for a number of social and linguistic factors postulated to condition the variant choice. Once coding is completed, the coding string associated with each token is concatenated, taking into consideration the careful verification of the data. Afterwards, coding strings and tokens are imported into a GoldVarb token file, a flat-text file, ready for distributional analysis, multivariate analysis, and cross-tabulation analysis using GOLDVARB X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte and Smith 2005) to analyze the data distributionally and to conduct binominal logistic regression analysis.

⁵ An individual occurrence of a linguistic unit in speech or writing.

To analyze the data, distributional analysis, multivariate analysis, and cross-tabulation techniques are employed using GOLDVARB X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte and Smith 2005). These conventional data analysis tools in variationist sociolinguistics involve many steps. The first step is to determine how often the variants of a variable occur in a given body of data. The second step is to assess the distribution of variants across the full range of factors that are thought to condition them i.e., a comparison of marginal (Rand and Sankoff 1990). A key component of a distributional analysis is to scrutinize the cross-tabulation of factors in order to assess how different factors intersect with one another. According to Labov (2001), it is useful to alternate between cross-tabulations and multivariate analysis whenever we are dealing with social factors. While cross-tabulations display the existence of interaction, multivariate analysis can measure the size of the effect. Poplack and Tagliamonte (2001: 93) point out that variable rule analysis offers three key lines of evidence: “statistical significance of independent variables (at the 0.05 level), magnitude of effect, as determined by the range between the highest and lowest factor weight in a factor group, and hierarchy of constraints, or ordering of factor weights within a factor group.”

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Overall distribution

The frequencies and counts of each variant of the dependent variable in the data alone is known as overall distribution. A total of (1319) tokens are extracted from the interviews. The results in Table 3 show that the distribution of CS is evidently higher than that of the FSN variant (87.9% & 12.1%, respectively).

Variant	Number of occurrences	%
CS	1159	87.9
FSN	160	12.1
TOTAL	1319	100

Table 3. Overall distribution of NP genitive alternatives.

This result is foreseeable on the grounds that CS is a productive process in Arabic (see Borer 1999). CS is used across the board in Arabic grammar to describe all genitive relations while FSNs are restricted to some types of possessive construction (Altakhaineh, 2016).

4.2. Distributional analysis

A distributional analysis, also known as factor-by-factor analysis, is all about exploring how a context (independent factor) constrains the use of the (dependent) variant (Tagliamonte, 2006).

4.2.1 Distributional analysis of social factors

4.2.1.1. Speaker's age

Table 4 below shows that younger and older speakers behave similarly in terms of NP genitive alternatives in JA in terms of overall rates of variant selection. Younger speakers modestly use CS (89.2%) more than older speakers (86.6%). Conversely, older speakers modestly use FSN (13.4%) more than their younger counterparts (10.8%).

Age	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Young	563	89.2	68	10.8	631	47.8
Old	596	86.6	92	13.4	688	52.2
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	100

Table 4. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the speaker's age.

4.2.1.2. Speaker's gender

As for the effect of gender on NP genitive alternatives, Table 5 shows that females use CS (88.4%) more than males (87.3%) whereas males use FSN to a very low percentage (12.7%) more than females (11.6%).

Speaker's gender	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	556	87.3	81	12.7	637	48.3
Female	603	88.4	79	11.6	682	51.7
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	

Table 5. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the speaker's gender.

4.2.1.3. Speaker’s level of education

The distributional results shown in Table 6 below show that low-educated and highly-educated participants behave similarly in terms of their preference towards the CS variant (88% and 87.7% respectively). This situation is also similar for the FSN variant as the findings demonstrate that (12.3%) of highly educated participants while (12%) of low-educated participants use it. The first possible conclusion that can be deduced from these results is that one’s educational attainment does not determine his/her CS and FSN choice in JA.

Speaker’s education	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
High	541	87.7	76	12.3	617	46.8
Low	618	88.0	84	12.0	702	53.2
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	

Table 6. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the speaker’s level of education.

4.2.1.4. Speaker’s region

Table 7. shows the effect of the participants’ regions on variant choice. Participants from West Amman use FSN (13.8%) more than participants from East Amman (9.2%) while CS is used by participants from East Amman (90.8%) more than participants from West Amman (86.2%).

Speaker’s region	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
East	435	90.8	44	9.2	479	36.3
West	724	86.2	116	13.8	840	63.7
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	

Table 7. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the speaker’s region.

So far, the distributional analysis of the effect of each social factor group is individually assessed. The next step is to assess the effects of each linguistic factor group separately.

4.2.2. Distributional analysis of linguistic factors

Distributional analyses of the targeted linguistic factors i.e., the alienability of the possessum, definiteness of the possessor, the complexity of the possessor, the grammatical function of the genitive construction, and the animacy of the possessor are displayed in this section.

4.2.2.1. Animacy of the possessor

The results in Table 8. indicate that the animacy of the possessor constraints the variant choice in two different directions. CS is used when the possessor is inanimate (95.1%) more than animate possessor (81.3%). The direction reverses in the case of FSN variant. FSN is used by animate possessors (18.7%) more than inanimate possessors (4.9%).

Animacy of the possessor	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Animate	560	81.3	129	18.7	689	52.2
Inanimate	599	95.1	31	4.9	630	47.8
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	

Table 8. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the animacy of the possessor.

4.2.2.2. Definiteness of the possessor

Table 9. presents the distribution of the variants according to the definiteness of the possessor. The results indicate that CS is slightly more frequent with indefinite possessors (94.8%) than definite possessors (86.3%). Similarly, FSN is modestly more frequent with definite possessors (13.7%) than indefinite possessors (5.2%).

Definiteness of the possessor	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Definite	924	86.3	147	13.7	1071	81.2
Indefinite	235	94.8	13	5.2	248	18.8
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	

Table 9. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the definiteness of the possessor.

It should be noted here that we placed our focus on the definiteness status of the possessor rather than the possessed. The major reason for this focus is related to the fact that almost all tokens of CS and FSN in our corpus include examples of a definite possessed. Only four tokens of indefinite possessed are found. We refer the reader to Bettega (2019) for more detail about the definiteness status of genitive markers in Arabic.

4.2.2.3. Alienability of the possessum

As far as the effect of alienability of the possessum on CS and FSN variant choice is concerned, the results in table 10 below show that CS is more frequent with inalienable possessums (100%) than alienable possessums (86.3%) whereas FSN is far more frequent with alienable possessums (13.7%) than inalienable possessums (0.0%). The crucial finding here is that whenever the possessum is inalienable, FSN is never used. Concerning the case where the possessum is alienable, CS is used more than FSN variant (86.3% and 13.7% respectively). This finding clearly indicates that CS and FSN can never alternate with inalienable possessums but do alternate with alienable possessums (Eksell-Harning 1980).

Alienability of the possessum	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inalienable	155	100	0	0.0	155	11.8
Alienable	1004	86.3	160	13.7	1164	88.2
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	

Table 10. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the alienability of the possessum.

4.2.2.4. Complexity of the possessor

Table 11. below shows the distribution of variants according to the complexity of the possessor (a complex possessor consists of more than one word such as *the car of John's mother* whereas a simple possessor consists of one word such as *the car of John*). The results show that simple possessors (88.4%) modestly occur with CS more than complex possessors (83.1%). Complex possessors, however, occur with FSN (16.9%) more than their simple counterparts to a low percentage (11.6%).

Complexity of the possessor	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Complex	103	83.1	21	16.9	124	9.4
Simple	1056	88.4	139	11.6	1195	90.6
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	

Table 11. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the complexity of the possessor.

4.2.2.5. The grammatical function of the genitive construction

The distribution of variants according to the grammatical function of the genitive construction (e.g., subject, direct object, object of preposition) in Table 12 shows that CS is most frequent firstly with subjects (93.8%), then with objects of preposition (89.1%), lastly with direct objects (78.8%). As for FSN, it is most frequent firstly with direct objects (21.2%), then with objects of preposition (10.9%), lastly with subjects (6.2%).

It is worth mentioning that (714) tokens did not occur within a particular context as they appeared in the interviews as fragments, so it is difficult to assign grammatical functions for those tokens. They are assigned no grammatical function (rather, they are labeled as “otherwise”) and are not compared with the other grammatical functions i.e., the object of preposition, direct object, subject.

Grammatical function	CS		FSN		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Otherwise	639	89.5	75	10.5	714	54.1
Object of preposition	228	89.1	28	10.9	256	19.4
Direct object	186	78.8	50	21.2	236	17.9
Subject	106	93.8	7	6.2	113	8.6
Total	1159	87.9	160	12.1	1319	

Table 12. Distribution of NP genitive alternatives according to the grammatical function of the genitive construction.

So far, the distributional analysis of the effect of each social and linguistic factor group has been assessed separately. In the next section, we will present the multivariate analysis of these factors when they are run all at once.

4.3. Multivariate analysis

Multivariate analysis allows us to comprehend the statistical significance of factor groups when all factor groups are run together simultaneously (in the same run). This specific feature distinguishes multivariate analysis from distributional analysis (when factors are run distinctly). Likewise, multivariate analysis provides the analyst with three lines of evidence: (1) statistical significance, i.e., which factors are statistically significant at the $p = 0.05$ level and which are not, (2) effect magnitude (the strength of factors), i.e., which factor group is most significant (the largest range) or least (the smallest range), and (3) constraint hierarchy or direction of effects, i.e., what is the order (from more to less) of factors within a linguistic feature (Poplack and Tagliamonte 2001: 94). This evidence permits comparisons between analyses, contexts, and groups, depending on how the data is apportioned.

Corrected mean	0.909		
Log likelihood	435.937		
Significance	0.009		
Total number	1159/1319		
Animacy of the possessor	Factor weight	%	N
Inanimate	.68	95	599/630
Animate	.33	81	560/689

Range	35		
Grammatical Function			
Subject	.68	93	106/113
Otherwise	.53	89	639/714
Object of preposition	.49	89	228/256
Direct object	.35	78	186/236
Range	33		
Definiteness of the possessor			
Indefinite	.71	94	235/248
Definite	.45	86	924/1071
Range	26		
Region			
East	[.58]	90	435/479
West	[.46]	86	724/840
Range	12		
Complexity of the possessor			
Simple	[.51]	88	1056/1195
Complex	[.40]	83	103/124
Range	11		
Age			
Young	[.53]	89	563/631
Old	[.47]	86	596/688
Range	6		
Gender			
Female	[.51]	88	603/682
Male	[.49]	87	556/637
Range	2		
Education			
Low	[.50]	88	618/702
High	[.50]	87	541/617
Range	0		

Table 13. Variable rule analysis of the contribution of social and linguistic factors.

The results of the multivariate analysis of the social and linguistic factors to the probability that CS variant will be selected show that CS and FSN variant choice in JA is sensitive to one social factor i.e., region while age, gender, and education are found to be statistically non-significant. Furthermore, CS and FSN variant choice in JA is sensitive to a number of linguistic factors i.e., the animacy of the possessor, the definiteness of the possessor, the grammatical functions that are shown to be statistically significant in their contribution to the probability of selecting CS variant in JA whereas complexity of the possessor is reported to be statistically insignificant.

The numerical figures in Table 13. can be elucidated as follows. Factor weights above 0.50 denote that a factor group has a favoring effect on variant selection while those below 0.50 indicate that a factor group has a disfavoring effect.

The findings demonstrate that, based on the magnitude of effect, which is defined by the range value, the animacy of the possessor is the highest factor group that conditions variant choice (35) followed by the grammatical function (34), the definiteness of the possessor (27), and region (12). According to the constraint hierarchy within each factor group, the results implicate that inanimate possessors use CS while animate possessors disfavor it. Moreover, CS is used by subjects but preferred by objects of preposition and direct objects. In addition, indefinite possessors use CS while definite possessors prefer it. Lastly, participants from East Amman use CS while participants from West Amman prefer it.

It is worth mentioning that although alienability of the possessum plays an undeniable role in conditioning variant choice, it was difficult to have a multivariate analysis of this linguistic factor due to the knockouts that resulted in the process of running the data. A knock-out simply means that there is a 0 per cent value or a 100 per cent value in one of the cells in your analysis. You cannot run a variable rule analysis when either of these cases exist because it means that the data, so configured, is not variable. In most cases, knockouts can be handled by removing them or re-coding them in a sound linguistically justified way (Tagliamonte 2006: 152).

4.4. Discussion

4.4.1. Discussion of social factors

Inspection of all distributional analyses, cross-tabulations and multivariate analysis of social factors leads us to the crucial conclusion that only region is reported to slightly constraint CS and FSN variants while this alternation is not socially constrained with respect to participants' age, gender, and education.

As the multivariate analysis shows, based on the magnitude of effect, exemplified by the range value, region is the lowest significant factor group that constraints variant choice (12). Based on the constraint of hierarchy, participants from East Amman favour CS while participants from West Amman disfavor it. One way to interpret this variant selection is attributable to the assumption that West Amman is a wealthy area and people who come from it are normally considered as first class; thus they have a unique use of language unlike people from East Amman who do not share the same social status of those in West Amman. As is mentioned earlier, Amman is divided into prosperous, newly developed West Amman, and East Amman where you can find working class neighborhoods and more traditional Jordanian culture. Broadly speaking, West Amman is more liberal and accustomed to expats and other visitors, meanwhile East Amman is more traditional and less frequently exposed to foreigners.

Al-Wer (2007) refers to West Amman as the part of the city whose dialect is undergoing change in process. One possible difference between the more traditional East Amman and West Amman is in the socialisation pattern of the youth. In East Amman, one may observe that the youngsters spend considerably more time with their own families, and extended families often live in the same neighborhoods. On the other hand, in West Amman, the youngsters form intimate peer group relations, and spend most of their leisure time away from their homes and families. In addition, the leisure facilities in West Amman are much more widely available for the youth to spend most of their free time together. In other terms, the familial networks in East Amman are closer, and, therefore, linguistic innovations (divergence from the traditional dialects) would not be expected to permeate such tightly-knit social networks easily (cf. Milroy 1980).

Drawing on the previous discussion, we can suggest that people from West Amman are more innovative and hence they can adopt what we may assume to be an innovative form, the genitive marker *tabaʕ*, quicker than their East counterparts who are in turn more conservative.

4.4.2. Discussion of linguistic factors

As we have shown above, the complexity of the possessor is found to be insignificant for conditioning variant choice while the remaining four linguistic factors i.e., the alienability of the possessum, the definiteness of the possessor, the animacy of the possessor, the grammatical function are found to be statistically significant. This finding goes in line with numerous variationist studies that conclude that an array of linguistic factors does constraint variant choice (Abd-El-Jawad 1981, Al-Khatib 1988, Al-Wer 1991, El-Salman 2003, Al-Shawashreh 2016).

Embarking upon alienability of the possessum, the important notice that can be observed when analyzing the data is that CS and FSN can never alternate with inalienable possessums but do alternate

in alienable possessums. FSN is never used by inalienable possessums. This finding goes in line with Eksell-Harning (1980) that also concludes that inalienable possession was the preserve of CS only. Correspondingly, this finding is in agreement with Soltan (2007) that considers Egyptian Arabic (EA). Soltan (2007) manifests that while the two strategies are interchangeable with regard to alienable possession, only the CS can be used for inalienable possession (e.g., body parts and family members).

Inalienable possession involves two entities with an inseparable semantic relationship. Conversely, in alienable possession, the possessor and the possessum carry a separable semantic relationship. For instance, *Jane's mother* elucidates an inalienable construction because the relationship between Jane and her mother is inherent. On the other hand, *Jane's bag* represents an alienable structure, for Jane and the bag have an extrinsic relationship (Gebregziabher 2012: 161). With inalienable possession, the two entities have a permanent association in which the possessed has little control over their possessor (Chappell and McGregor 2011). For example, body parts (under normal circumstances) do not change and cannot be removed from their possessor. Alienable possession, on the contrary, has a less semantic association between the two entities in that most objects may or may not be possessed. Alienable possession is used generally for tangible items that one might cease to own at some point (such as my money), but inalienable possession generally denotes a perpetual relationship that cannot be readily severed (such as 'my mother or my arm;' Lichtenberk *et al.* 2011).

To clarify this finding, consider a typical alienability contrast in an adpossessive (adnominal possessive) construction, from the West Papuan language Abun (Berry and Berry 1999: 77–82):

- (11) a. *ji bi nggwe*
I of garden
'My garden' (alienable possession)
- b. *ji syim*
I arm
'My arm' (inalienable possession)

We see that in this language, an adpossessive construction with an alienable noun i.e., *nggwe* 'garden' requires a possessive (genitive) postposition, while a construction with an inalienable noun (*syim* 'arm') expresses possession by mere juxtaposition. This pattern is common across languages (Stolz *et al.* 2008).

According to Haiman's (1985) explanation in terms of iconic motivation, the mere juxtaposition construction chosen for inalienable possession shows little linguistic distance between the possessor and its possessum, and this iconically reflects the greater conceptual closeness between the possessor and its possessum (supposedly arms are not conceived of independently of their owners). By contrast,

the overt genitive marker *bi* ‘of’ between the possessor and the possessum in the alienable ‘my garden’ displays greater linguistic distance, and this reflects the greater conceptual distance between ‘garden’ and ‘I.’

Semantically speaking, since inalienable possession involves two entities with an inseparable semantic relationship and greater conceptual closeness between the possessor and its possessum implies little “linguistic distance,” the insertion of the possessive marker *tabaʕ* ‘of/for’ is not permissible. Inalienable expressions are defective nominals, meaning that they should be local to other nominals that specify them. Accordingly, the insertion of the possessive marker *tabaʕ* ‘of/for’ breaks down this adjacency.

Animacy is the strongest factor group that constraints variant choice (35). This finding contributes to the relevant literature concerning the alternation in English between the s-genitive and the of-genitive. A plethora of research on English language shows that animacy is widely considered an important factor in predicting which genitive will be chosen. The choice between the two genitives is not random but is determined by a number of factors, of which animacy has been shown to be one of the strongest (e.g., Rosenbach, 2002, and references cited therein). According to Rosenbach (2008), while animate possessors have a strong preference for occurring in the s-genitive (John’s wife > the wife of John), inanimate possessors tend to occur preferably with the of-genitive (the roof of the house > the house’s roof). That is, animate possessors are preferably realized pre-nominally, i.e., first, in English genitive constructions.

Another study that proves the significance of this linguistic factor is Alexiadou (2005). Alexiadou perceives that animate/human possessors and possessors that can be considered +topical tend to appear in the ‘s genitive while inanimate and -topical possessors appear in the of-genitive.

- (12) a. The color of the chair
b. ?? The chair’s color

Rosenbach (2008) attempts to elucidate this linguistic preference. She detects that animacy correlates considerably with other factors, in particular with topicality (or referentiality/definiteness) and syntactic weight. Animates, especially humans, are more likely to be a discourse topic and are therefore also more likely to be definite. Likewise animates are statistically more likely to be short than inanimates (see Wedgwood, 1995). Accordingly, in languages such as English where animate, topical/definite, as well as short elements show a strong preference for being placed early in linear order, it is difficult to keep the firstness effect of animacy apart from the firstness effect of topicality/definiteness and weight. That is, in examples such as *John’s book* it is difficult to disentangle

whether the s-genitive is strongly preferred because the possessor is (a) human, (b) high in topicality/referentiality, and/or (c) very short. Given these correlations, it has been claimed that animacy is epiphenomenal to other factors.

Arabic, unlike English, has the same word order for the two constructions: the head noun precedes the genitive phrase. This being the case, we cannot rely on the order effect in our interpretation. According to the constraint of hierarchy, inanimate possessors favor CS while animate possessors disfavor it. We can rely on a semantic point of view by assuming that the relationship between animate possessors and their possessums imply true possession. (e.g., *galam l-walad* ‘the boy’s pen’) the pen is the true possession of the boy. While animate referents are simply nouns, inanimate referents are specified as inherently unable to possess a perspective on the truth of a proposition (Barker 2010). An animate object has the ability to decide which things to own and which things not to own. On the contrary, with inanimate possessors, this is seemingly not the case. An inanimate object such as a chair or a window cannot own anything (e.g., *ridʒl l-kursi* ‘the leg of the chair’). Semantically speaking, the chair cannot own its leg, rather, the carpenter who made the chair composed its parts all together in which the leg is one of these parts that make up the chair. The possessor and its possessum are thus not semantically in a true possessive relationship, rather it is a relation of a unit to a group (or a group to its units). *tabaʕ* ‘of/for’ is a true possessive marker which indicates true possessive relation. It denotes the existence of a quality or characteristic pertaining to a person or thing meaning ‘belonging to,’ ‘pertaining to,’ or ‘characteristic of a person’ (Albayati, 2015).

Grammatical function is the second highest factor group that conditions variant choice (33). According to constraint hierarchy, CS is favored by subjects but disfavored by objects of preposition and direct objects. When we use FSN with subjects, we make the subject more complex as we have to insert the possessive marker *tabaʕ* ‘of/for.’ Subjects cross-linguistically tend to be simple. Evidence from this come from “heavy NP shift.” Heavy-NP shift is the tendency for speakers to place long or “heavy” noun phrase direct objects at the end of a sentence rather than in the canonical post-verbal position (Stallings *et al.* 1998). This is shown in the following examples:

- (13) a. I gave the book that I bought last week to Mary.
b. I gave to Mary the book that I bought last week.

Likewise, linguists have observed other factors that correlate with speakers’ choice of possessive alternative such as *The principle of end-weight* (Behaghel 1909). For instance, Jespersen (1921) noted that the prenominal Saxon genitive was dis-preferred in cases with very heavy possessors (Hinrichs and Szmrecsanyi 2007 for corpus-based evidence).

This finding also goes in line with Al-Shawashreh (2016), who finds light subjects (74.5%) favour SV more than heavy subjects (68%) whereas heavy subjects favour VS (32%) more than their light counterparts (25.5%). Al-Shawashreh (2016) explained his results in light of the end weight principle (Holes, 1995). When the subject is light, the verb is usually heavier (and more informationally salient) and hence its gravitation to the end of the clause.

Based on the magnitude of effect, represented by the range value, the results show that the definiteness of the possessor (26) is the penultimate factor group that conditions variant choice. Definiteness, as a linguistic factor, is reported in previous variationist studies to affect variability in a range of languages (see Al-Shawashreh 2016 for an overview). Owens, et al. (2009) find that proper nouns and definite nouns are reported to favour SVO in Gulf Arabic while indefinite nouns favour VSO. Al-Shawashreh (2016) reports that definiteness of subject is the second strongest effects on variant choice. According to the constraint hierarchy within each factor group, the results show that indefinite possessors favour CS while definite possessors disfavor it. We ascribe this to the assumption that definiteness is normally affiliated with uniqueness and familiarity (Saeed 1997). For instance, indefinite objects do not denote a unique and familiar referent. In '*galam walad*' we do not refer to a particular boy that is familiar for both the listener and the speaker. The indefinite possessor '*walad*' indicates the absence of a uniquely identifiable boy. However, this result should be taken with care as definiteness has a special relation with CS structures (in that only certain combination of definite/indefinite nouns are technically allowed). Therefore, definiteness should be treated as a special factor and investigated according to the specific role it has in Arabic. For example, structures such as "a pen of a boy" are much less frequent in language use than structures as "the pen of the boy."

Semantically speaking, an indefinite possessor has a generic interpretation which denotes that it is less likely to possess. A definite possessor, on the contrary, is unique and familiar; therefore, it is more likely to possess. This being the case, *tabaʿ* 'of/for,' which is a true possessive marker, tends to occur with definite entities.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This study has primarily aimed at examining sociolinguistic variation of NP genitive alternatives in JA. An accountable analysis of CS and FSN variation in a corpus of JA has revealed that CS is evidently more frequent than FSN in JA. Multivariate analysis of social factors has demonstrated that region is statistically significant in constraining variant choice while age, gender, and education are found to be non-statistically significant. Likewise, variant choice has been found to be linguistically constrained by a number of linguistic factors, namely alienability of the possessum, animacy of the possessor,

grammatical function, and definiteness of the possessor. On the other hand, complexity of the possessor is not statistically significant in affecting the choice of variant.

Depending on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be surmised for further future research:

1. This study is limited to Amman in scope. Therefore, the results cannot be overgeneralized to other regions in Jordan. So, it is recommended to conduct more studies on CS and FSN variation in other regions in Jordan like Jerash, Ajloun, Irbid, and Ma'an. Doing so would be very helpful in providing comparative sociolinguistic analyses of this variation in JA as well as other Arabic varieties.
2. It is worth conducting studies that track the evolution of NP genitive alternatives in JA and other vernacular varieties of Arabic such as Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni, Sudanese, Libyan, Moroccan, and Algerian.
3. It is recommended to conduct more studies on CS and FSN variation according to other different social factors such as class and other linguistic factors such as clause type (matrix vs. embedded).

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Qur'anic temporospatial allusive references in English translations on the basis of Leppihalme's taxonomy

Mahmoud Afrouz

The present study aimed at identifying strategies used by the English translators in rendering the allusive references of *The Holy Qur'an*, specifying their distribution, and revealing whether the general inclination of the translators was towards domesticating or foreignizing strategies. To this end, Leppihalme's (1997) taxonomy, as the only model exclusively dealing with allusive references in literary texts, was selected as the model of the study. The data were extracted from 28 English translations of *The Holy Qur'an*. The paper exclusively concentrated on the temporospatial allusive references. Leppihalme's model included the strategies of retention (with or without informative notes), replacement of the source-language name by another name (from either the source- or the target-language), and omission of the name. The findings revealed that all these three strategies were adopted by all translators. The strategy of replacement had the highest frequency (77.10%) while the strategy of omission was adopted only in rendering 1.00% percent of the names. Retention (by 21.90%) was found to be the second most frequent strategy adopted by English translators of Qur'anic allusive names. Additionally, it was found that 77.9% of the strategies inclined towards domestication, while only 22.10% showed tendency towards foreignization strategies.

Keywords: *Holy Qur'an*, temporospatial allusive references, retention, domestication, foreignization

1. Introduction

Religious texts—typically “literary” texts rooted deeply in a “nation’s culture” (Afrouz 2022c: 185)—would be a great challenge for translators “since they are considered as ‘sacred’ texts” (Afrouz 2022e: 2). As for literary-religious works, “translation has to attend to the language and cultural heritage of such works, for it also has the function of extending that heritage, of lending it another kind of historical depth, of transforming it into a cross-cultural tradition” (Weissbort and Eysteinnsson 2006: 3). Quoting from Robinson (2000), Naudé (2010: 285) underscored that “religious translation” is challenging due to (i) “the status of translation (Can or should religious texts be translated?” (ii)

“sacredness (Is a translated religious text still sacred, or is it a mere ‘copy’ of the sacred text? What is sacrality, in what does it lodge or reside or inhere, and can it be transported across cultural boundaries?)” and (iii) “text (What is a religious text in an oral culture? What are the limits of a religious text in a literate culture? Do liturgical uses of a translated text count?).”

Lucy (2004: 19) quotes Derrida to state that translating “sacred” texts is impossible. To strive to do so, as he maintained, would mean the rejection of “its singularity.” In the same line, “[m]any people in ancient religious worlds” deemed sacred texts as untranslatable, because they believed that “the will and order of God” was hidden in the language (Steiner 1957: 136). They thought the language of sacred texts to be “sacred and mystic” and even considered translators of such texts as profanes and sinners (Lucy 2004: 19).

But two significant notes should be reminded here. First, no language can be considered by itself as ‘sacred.’ In the contexts of sacred texts, the style and form are of paramount significance since, besides presenting aesthetic features, they potentially convey meaning. Therefore, total ignorance of formal features on the side of translators may lead to the loss of meaning. The second significant note addresses the function of religious texts. Why did God send a sacred book to human being? Did He want to address only people of a specific region and guide those who spoke a specific language? The answer does not seem to be positive. Accepting this fact requires us to accept the need for translating such texts and the belief in the possibility of practicing such a task. However, ‘possibility’ does not mean the occurrence of no challenge. One difficulty faced by translators is lexical gap.

Lexical gap, or “semantic void,” as Gambier *et al.* (2004: 11) call it, refers to cultural references produced due to the gaps and differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) cultural systems. Therefore, cultural differences majorly cause lexical gaps. In fact, although “[c]ulture can be expressed via language” (Afrouz 2022b: 2), there are some concepts and terms specifically related to the SL culture. These terms, also called culture-bound terms (CBTs) or culturally-bound expressions, are among the most challenging translation problems (Afrouz and Mollanazar 2016; Afrouz 2020, 2022d, 2023).

The *Holy Qur’an* is laden with CBTs that appear to be unfamiliar and consequently, incomprehensible to non-Muslims or non-Arabs. The CBTs embedded in *The Holy Qur’an*, being highly translation-resistant when attempting to render into English, are usually religious-specific and their semantic associations may vary from one religion to another.

CBTs embrace proper nouns and “Onomastics” (Afrouz 2022a: 1). In fact, one of the challenges that “literary” translators grapple with is proper nouns (PNs), especially those PNs which are steeply rooted in “culture” and bear allusive references (Juzelonienc̄a *et al.* 2016: 800; Nyangeri and Wangari 2019:

347). PNs are mainly names of people, “places,” “and various periods of time” (McArthur 1992: 813). Onomatology concentrates on the “etymology” of PNs (Crystal 2008: 339), including anthroponyms (names of people) and toponyms (place-names) which “are an important source of hypotheses about the history of language, dialect geography and language families” (Bussmann 1998: 835). Temporospatial names, as is defined in Merriam Webster Online Dictionary,¹ refer to the proper names relating to time and space.

The term “allusion,” being derived from the Latin word “allusionis” (i.e., a “playful” or an “indirect” reference), “generally means implicit use of someone else's words” (McArthur 1992: 29). Allusions usually “adapt their originals to new ends, the audience making or failing to make the connections” (McArthur 1992: 29). According to Leppihalme (1997: 66), proper names and key phrases are two major “sources of allusions.” Both “fictional” and “real-life” figures can “be alluded to by name” (Leppihalme 1997: 66). Allusive names may carry meaning which is easily comprehended by the readers of the source text but which may convey nothing to the target-text readers. As Jaleniauskiene and Čičelytė (2009: 41) pointed out, “it is impossible to achieve absolute equivalence because of subtle allusions hidden in proper names or specific aspects in the languages.”

Translators “reproduce” source texts in the TL, and translations can have their own “life” in the TL “and possess a somehow independent ‘identity’” (Afrouz 2019: 32; 2022f: 1). However, this independence does not mean that translators can simply ignore allusive references in the ST. In fact, what makes translating allusions a challenging task is that comprehending the implied meanings by the target-language readers requires their familiarity with background information (Pirnajmuddin and Afrouz 2007). *The Holy Qur'an* contains a lot of PNs alluded to various characters. The book is translated into English by many translators who have dealt with these elements by employing different procedures. Various strategies have different capacities to convey the allusive references. For instance, the strategy of “transference,” proposed by Newmark (1988: 214) for rendering PNs, does not seem to be efficient where allusive references and connotations are important. In *The Holy Qur'an*, we can find some allusive names which have connotations and require particular translation strategies. The present study, aiming at dealing with such issues, attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. What strategies were used by the English translators in translating the temporospatial allusive references of *The Holy Qur'an*?
2. How did various strategies distribute?

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>

3. Was the general inclination of the translators towards domesticating or foreignizing the allusive references?

2. Literature review

Many researchers have conducted studies on proper names to show how translators of various nations grapple with PNs in different text-types. The following is just a few of them mainly selected based on their general text-type. Since sacred-texts are considered as expressive-texts, the research papers merely focusing on literary-texts were opted for.

Employing Leppihalme’s (1997) taxonomy, Vahid Dastjerdi and Sahebbonar (2008) studied PN allusions in *the Masnavi* and its two English translations by Redhouse and Nicholson. They found that Nicholson used the procedure of ‘retention’ for rendering 98.53% of the PNs, while Redhouse used it in 74% of the cases. Their study was limited to personal PNs while it could have covered other types of PNs in *the Masnavi* to reach a more conclusive result.

The aim of Jaleniauskiene and Čičelytė’s (2009) article was “to draw attention to strategic choices for the translation of proper names in children’s literature.” They investigated 4 famous fantasy books rendered from German and English into Lithuanian. Their findings revealed that “localization” was the most frequently employed translation procedure (Jaleniauskiene and Čičelytė’s 2009: 31).

The article of Shirinzadeh and Mahadi (2014) aimed at investigating the strategies that Pazargadi used while rendering PNs in the lyrics of the great Persian Poet Hafez. They used Vermees’ (2003) taxonomy and came to this conclusion that the translator employed the strategy of transference most frequently.

In their joint article, Sabzalipour and Pishkar (2015) concentrated on the translation strategies employed in rendering PNs extracted from *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* and conclude that “transliteration” has been the most highly used strategy.

Nyangeri and Wangari (2019) in their joint article focused on challenges and techniques of translating PNs in literary texts. They selected “a few translated literary works from English to Kiswahili” and extracted “some of the proper nouns” and their equivalents (Nyangeri and Wangari 2019: 348). Finally, they generally concluded that “This article has argued that proper names are fundamental structural and thematic elements in literary texts that require strategic theoretical approach for their accurate translation” (Nyangeri and Wangari 2019: 362). The main problem with the paper was that the researchers did not exactly mention the corpus and delimitations of their studies.

As was reviewed, no study is conducted up to now focusing on the PNs, as allusive references, of *The Holy Qur’an*. The present paper is an attempt to fill the current research gap.

3. Methodology

The current research is a corpus-based, non-experimental study conducted to investigate the issue of proper names and the strategies for rendering them.

3.1. Corpus

The Holy Qur'an and its 28 English translations by Itani (2012), Al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan (1998), Ali (1988), Khalifa (1981/2007), Sher Ali (1955), Irving (1985), Starkovsky (2005), Pickthall (1930), Yuksel *et al.* (2007), Arberry (1955), Shakir (1980), Muhammad Ali (1917), Abdul Mannan Omar (1990), Ali Unal (2006), Aziz Ahmed (1981), Sale (1734), Saffarzadeh (2001), Abdel Haleem (2005), The Monotheist Group or MG (2012), Nikayin (2000), Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1957), Faridul Haque (1990), Muhammad Asad (1980), Muhammad Sarwar (1982), Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute or RABI (2008), Shabbir Ahmed (2003), and Saheeh International (2021) consisted the corpus of the present study.

3.2. A Model for translating allusive names

Leppihalme's (1997) taxonomy was the only model which exclusively dealt with the issue of 'allusion' in literary texts. The model included three main strategies of "retention" (with or without informative notes), "replacement" of the source-language PN by another PN (from either the source- or the target-language), and "omission" of the PN (Leppihalme 1997: 79).

4. Analyzing the temporospatial allusive references

This section concentrated on the two categories of Qur'anic temporospatial allusive references: (4.1) temporal PNs and (4.2) spatial PNs.

4.1. Temporal PNs

The name 'الْحَاقَّةُ', denoting a disaster which is sure to occur or an "inevitable fact," refers to "the Day of Judgment or to a calamitous event that would befall disbelievers" (Farid 2003, Vol. 5: 2673). Only Al-Hilal and Khan, Sale, Omar, Sarwar and Muhammad Ali provided notes for the target-text readers; other translators chose equivalents such as 'The (great inevitable/ Inevitable/ Sure/ concrete) Reality,' 'the Sure Occurrence/ incontestable/ true event,' 'The Inevitable/ Indubitable,' and 'The Inevitable Calamity.' As Muhammad Ali (1917: 1108) explained the original term, being derived from "حَقٌّ" (i.e. the truth), signifies "a severe calamity the happening of which is fixed or established," "the hour which

must come to pass,” or the hour in which 1) shall be “severe calamities,” 2) “things shall be surely known,” 3) “deeds shall be requited,” or 4) “the truth shall be triumphant” (Muhammad Ali (1917: 1109). As he pointed out, the commentators are of the opinion that “by this hour the resurrection is meant” (Muhammad Ali (1917: 1109). Sale, in a footnote, and Al-Hilal and Khan, Omar, and Sarwar, in a parenthetical note, emphasized that ‘الْحَاقَّةُ’ allusively refers to “the Day of Judgment” or ‘the Resurrection.’

Al-Hilal and Khan transliterated the allusive name ‘الْقَارِعَةُ’ as ‘Al-Qariah’ and within the parentheses they initially referred to the denotative meaning (i.e., the striking Hour) and then mentioned the allusive meaning of the name (i.e., the Day of Resurrection). Similarly, Saffarzadeh (2001) transliterated ‘الْقَارِعَةُ’ as ‘Al-Qari’ah’ and explained in a footnote that it literally means “grave calamity” and allusively designates “one of the names of the Resurrection Day” (Saffarzadeh 2001: 1411). In the same line, Sale (1734: 456), rendering the term as ‘the striking,’ pointed out that it is a name or epithet “given to the last day, because it will strike the hearts of all creatures with terror.” Furthermore, Muhammad Ali translated ‘الْقَارِعَةُ’ as ‘the rebelling calamity’ and provided the target-text readers with informative notes. Other translators, believing that the literal meaning of the PN would suffice, ignored the allusive reference that it could convey.

The term ‘سَاعَةٌ,’ being derived from “سَاع,” signifies “an hour, a part of time, a while or a little while; a space; a period; an indefinite time; a watch,” but the name ‘السَّاعَةُ’ means “the present time, now, just now, this moment; difficulty, distress or affliction; distance; remoteness” (Farid 2003, Vol. 4: 1730). However, as he contended, when the term refers to ‘الْقِيَامَةُ,’ it is employed “in three senses: (a) death of a great and famous person” which “is called [...] ‘السَّاعَةُ الصَّغْرَى’ i.e. the small resurrection; (b) a national calamity” that occurs to “a whole people on account of their evil deeds. It is called ‘السَّاعَةُ الْوَسْطَى’ (i.e. the middle Hour); (c) the Day of Judgment called [...] ‘السَّاعَةُ الْكُبْرَى’ i.e. the great Hour” (Farid 2003, Vol. 4: 1730). Most of the translators rendered ‘السَّاعَةُ’ as ‘the Hour.’ Among them, Ali Unal, Sale, Faridul Haque, Abdel-Haleem, Muhammad Asad and Starkovsky modified it with the word ‘last’ (i.e. the last hour). In Saheeh International translation, instead of the word ‘last,’ ‘final’ is used in brackets: ‘the [final] Hour.’ Yusuf Ali, Al-Hilal and Khan, Aziz Ahmed, the RABI, and Pickthall inserted clarifying notes within parentheses attached to the equivalent ‘the Hour’—the first three translators added ‘of Judgment’; the latter two added ‘of Doom.’ Muhammad Sarwar preferred to use ‘Doom’ within the main text: ‘the Hour of Doom.’ On the other hand, Muhammad Ali (1917: 662), simply rendering it as ‘the hour,’ noted that in *the Holy Qur’an* the name ‘السَّاعَةُ’ “does not necessarily imply the Day of Judgment, it often implies the time of judgment in this life, the time when the threatened doom overtakes a people.” Furthermore, as Sale (1734) pointed out, the term might also designate “the

earthquake” which would take place “a little before the sun rises from the west; one sign of the near approach of the day of judgment” (Sale 1734: 252). However, Muhammad Ali (1917: 662) rejected such an interpretation and asserted that “some consider that a sever shaking of the earth is meant as a sign of the approach of the great judgment, but even in that case it might imply any terrible calamity, such as a great war.”

The allusive name ‘الْغَاشِيَّةُ’ signifies “that which envelopes, overwhelms (covers completely and makes imperceptible) or overpowers (overcome by superior force)” and refers to the overwhelming events of “the Resurrection Day” (Qerati 1995, Vol. 10: 461). Presumably following such exegetical texts, Saffarzadeh (2000) rendered the term as ‘Ghashiah’ and provided a footnote referring to the allusive aspect of the name: “the Resurrection Day” (Saffarzadeh 2000: 1380). Al-Hilal and Khan, Sarwar, and Omar also referred to the allusive reference of the PN in parentheses. The majority of the translators merely used the strategy of replacement and deprived the target readers of the original term’s underlying meaning-components. Sale, however, mixed explicit and implicit meanings by selecting ‘the overwhelming day of judgment’ as the equivalent. Similarly, Muhammad Ali (1917) accompanied the equivalent ‘the overwhelming event’ with a footnote where he pointed out that the event is undoubtedly “the resurrection” (Muhammad Ali (1917: 1184). On the other hand, Irving’s equivalent ‘the Pall’ (i.e. a sudden numbing dread) seems far from being a flawless equivalent, because it evidently lacks the required meaning components already discussed.

Adopting the strategy of retention, Al-Hilal and Khan, Sale and Saffarzadeh transliterated the PN ‘لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ.’ Al-Hilal and Khan, however, added the clarifying note ‘Decree’ within parentheses. Other translators preferred the strategy of replacement and chose equivalents such as ‘the Night of Decree/ Determination/ Destiny/ Majesty,’ ‘the Night of Destiny and Power,’ ‘the Night of Power/ Glory,’ or ‘the grand night.’ Yuksel *et al.* and the MG rendered it as ‘the Night of Decree’—the former provided a brief footnote. Starkovsky (2005) took one further step and provided a more detailed footnote wherein he referred to the transliteration of the term ‘الْقَدْرُ’ and explained that it “is the root of ‘to be able to,’ ‘to establish,’ ‘to ponder,’ ‘power,’ ‘fate,’ and many other words.” He then referred to the equivalents offered by five translators of *The Holy Qur’an*. The translators could have provided the readership with much informative notes concerning this allusive PN. For example, they could have referred to the fact that the term ‘الْقَدْرُ’ means dignity and honor, as well as power, and therefore the PN refers to a so excellent night that no other night in the year could be a match for it. It also alludes to the night when the decrees of all human beings for the following year are established. Moreover, the PN ‘لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ’ alludes to the occasion when *the Glorious Qur’an* was sent down to the Holy Prophet of Islam. Almost all Muslims unanimously believe that this night is one of the last ten nights of Ramadan (i.e., the moth

when Muslims fast). Omar was the only translator who referred to this allusive point within parentheses. It seems also worth noting that Shia Muslims believe that ‘لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ’ falls between the 21st and the 24th of Ramadan.

4.2. Spatial PNs

The allusive Qur’anic PN ‘الأَعْرَافُ’ refers to “the walls which divide Paradise from Hell” (Penrice 1878: 96). Furthermore, according to Qerati (1995, Vol. 3: 71), the name ‘الأَعْرَافُ’ is derived from ‘عُرْفٌ’ meaning “an elevated place.” Most of the translators explicitly referred to such sense by choosing equivalents like ‘the Heights,’ ‘the Elevations,’ and ‘the most elevated places.’ While Ahmad Ali merely transliterated the PN as ‘al-A'raf,’ Al-Hilal and Khan preferred to accompany the transliterated equivalent with a clarifying note (i.e., a wall with elevated places) within parentheses. Sale (1734) also transliterated the PN and explained in the footnote that it refers to “the wall or partition which” would separate “paradise from hell” (Sale 1734: 111). Nikayin (2000) rendered it as ‘the heights’ and explained that “some translators have translated it as ‘the purgatory’” (Sale 1734: 159). It is noteworthy, however, to mention that in Roman theology, ‘the purgatory’ signifies the place in which the dead suffer limited chastisement to expiate their wrongdoing. The equivalent selected by Arberry (‘the Ramparts’ i.e., a wall built around a town for defensive purposes) does not convey the underlying sense-components. Moreover, the equivalent selected by Yuksel *et al.* (i.e. the identification station) is not flawless. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be absolutely wrong since, as Qerati (1995, Vol. 3: 71) pointed out, “الأَعْرَافُ” is the lofty barrier between Paradise and Hell where the Righteous stand upon and identify people from their face.

Most of the translators rendered the allusive name ‘الْكَوْثَرُ’ by synonymous equivalents like ‘abundance’ and ‘plenty.’ Muhammad Ali (1917: 1229), Abdel-Haleem (2005: 440) and Starkovsky (2005: 22) referred to the meaning of the name (i.e., abundance) and highlighted that it is the name of a fountain or river in Paradise—the latter gave further details by mentioning that it “is the symbol of the innumerable gifts of God” which “the faithful will cross it after the Last Judgment on their way to Paradise” (Starkovsky 2005: 22). On the other hand, Saheeh International, Daryabadi and Shakir, adopting the strategy of retention, simply transliterated the name respectively as ‘al-Kawthar,’ ‘Kauthar’ and ‘Kausar’ and deprived their readers of the allusive references of the PN. Although Al-Hilal and Khan, Faridul Haque, and Aziz Ahmed used transliterated equivalent, they provided TT readers with informative notes indicating that the PN denotes ‘Infinite excellent qualities / the greatest number of followers’ and ‘The Fountain of Abundance’ and alludes to ‘a river in Paradise’ or ‘the sweet pond on the Day of Resurrection.’ In the same line, Sale (1734: 460) transliterated the name and then

provided the readers with a footnote explaining that it means “abundance, especially of good, and thence *the gift of wisdom and prophecy*, the Korân, *the office of intercessor*, etc. Or it may” also signify “*abundance of children, followers, and the like.*” It also alludes to “a river in paradise of that name, whence the water is derived into Mohammed's pond, of which the blessed are to drink before their admission into that place” (Sale 1734: 460). Based on a tradition by prophet, the river of ‘Kausar,’ wherein Allah “promised him abundant good, is sweeter than honey, whiter than milk, cooler than snow, and smoother than cream; its banks are of chrysolites, and the vessels to drink thereout of silver; and those who drink of it shall never thirst” (Sale 1734: 460).

According to exegetical texts, ‘أُمُّ الْقُرَى’ designates “Mecca” (Qerati 1995, Vol. 8: 375); therefore, Sale interpretatively rendered it as ‘the metropolis of Mecca.’ Abdul Mannan Omar and Saffarzadeh chose the metonymical equivalents ‘the people of Metropolis (the Makkans)’ and ‘people of the Mother of the cities,’ respectively. Abdel-Haleem, Yuksel *et al.* and the MG rendered it as ‘the capital city,’ ‘the capital town’ and ‘the capital town,’ respectively. Abdel-Haleem (2005: 311), however, indicated in the footnote that ‘أُمُّ الْقُرَى’ literally means “the mother of cities” and interpretatively signifies “Mecca.” Other translators also opted for the strategy of replacement. Saheeh International, Al-Hilal and Khan, Ahmed, Sarwar, and Haque referred to the allusive meaning of the PN within parentheses (i.e., Mecca).

Baalbaki (1995: 1200) mentions the following set of equivalents for ‘هَآوِيَةٌ’: “abyss, chasm, gulf, (bottomless) pit.” The allusive name ‘هَآوِيَةٌ’ is derived from ‘هوى’ signifying “falling or descending; the Hell; the place where groups of people fall into” (Qerati 1995, Vol. 10: 575). Sarwar simply transliterated it as ‘hawiyah.’ Although Saffarzadeh (2000) also initially transliterated the name, she then elucidated in her footnote that it is “one of the names of the Hell” (Saffarzadeh 2000: 1412). Similarly, Al-Hilal and Khan accompanied their transliterated equivalent (i.e., Hawiyah) with both the denotative meaning (i.e., pit) and the allusive meaning (i.e., Hell) of the PN. Arberry, Irving, Abdel-Haleem, Shakir, Muhammad Ali, Yusuf Ali, Nikayin, Starkovsky and the RABI selected one of the aforementioned equivalents via the strategy of replacement. Sale (1734) added the word ‘hell’ to the basic sense-component (i.e. the pit of hell) and provided a footnote mentioning that “the original word Hâwiyat is the name of the lowest dungeon of hell, and properly signifies a deep pit or gulf” (Sale 1734: 456). Yuksel *et al.* and the MG chose ‘the lowest’ as their equivalents—which apparently lacks key sense-components. Even worse, Pickthall’s equivalent (i.e. a bereft and Hungry One) seems quite irrelevant and, as far as the researcher knows, no such interpretative equivalent could be found in any exegetical text.

In mosques, the direction of Mecca is indicated by ‘المحراب’ (i.e. a wooden or marble niche) and is considered as the heart of the mosque. Al-Hilal and Khan transliterated the PN as ‘Al-Mihrab’ and

associated their equivalents with a parenthetical note clarifying that it alludes to ‘a praying place.’ Muhammad Sarwar, Shakir and Muhammad Ali, using the strategy of replacement for rendering the name ‘المِحْرَابِ,’ selected the general term ‘place of worship.’ Most of the translators, adopting the same strategy, opted for equivalents such as ‘the chamber’ (i.e., a room used mainly for sleeping), ‘the Sanctuary’ (i.e., area about a church’s altar), ‘the shrine’ (i.e., a place of worship hallowed by association with a sacred man), or ‘the temple enclosure’ (i.e., place of worshipping a deity comprised of an edifice).

In rendering the term ‘الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ,’ most of the translators rendered it simply as ‘the Ancient House’ by adopting the strategy of replacement. Sale (1734: 254) mentioned that it refers to the House of K’aba, or as he wrote, “the Caaba.” Likewise, Al-Hilal and Khan referred to the allusive meaning of the PN within parentheses (i.e., the Kabah at Makkah). While Yuksel *et al.* and the MG naturalized the Qur’anic PN as ‘the ancient Sanctuary, Sarwar preferred to replace the ST name by its interpretative or allusive equivalent ‘the Kabah.’

Adopting the strategy of replacement, almost all of the translators rendered the name ‘الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ’ as ‘City of Security,’ ‘land of peace,’ or ‘safe town.’ Sale (1734: 453), Abdel-Haleem (2005: 427), Nikayin (2000: 696) and Muhammad Ali (1917: 1204) clarified in their footnotes that the name alluded to “Mecca.” Furthermore, Al-Hilal and Khan, Omar Saheeh International, and Khalifa referred to the allusive reference within parentheses. However, Sarwar preferred to use ‘Mecca’ in the main text by rendering the PN as ‘inviolable city, Mecca.’

The PN of hell, “Jahannam,” and the term ‘الْجَحِيمِ’ refer to the place “of punishment for the wicked after death” (McAuliffe 2001: 414). The PN (appeared in Aya 6 of Surah 102) designates “hell, inferno, hellfire; fire” (Wehr 1976: 113; Baalbaki 1995: 412). The name ‘inferno,’ selected by Itani as an equivalent for the PN, may refer to the dwelling of Satan and the evil forces, or the place in which sinners suffer everlasting chastisement, or the place where the wicked go after death. The name ‘الْجَحِيمِ’ is rendered by most of the translators either as ‘hell’ or ‘hellfire’ via the strategy of replacement. Irving, however, altered the meaning of the name by translating it as ‘Hades’ which, in mythology, refers to ‘the world of the dead.’ Al-Hilal and Khan used ‘the blazing Fire’ in the main text and referred to the allusive meaning (i.e., Hell) within parentheses. Interestingly, when the name appeared for the first time (in Surah 2, Aya 119), Abdel-Haleem, Abdul Mannan Omar, Shakir, Nikayin Muhammad Ali, and Yusuf Ali used different equivalents such as ‘the Blaze,’ ‘the Blazing Fire,’ or ‘the flaming fire.’ The target-readers encountered with such equivalents might not be able to guess that they would refer to ‘Hell.’ As far as observing allusive points in translation is concerned, the equivalent ‘Hellfire,’ opted for by Saheeh International, would seem to be a precise one since it contains both ‘Hell’ and ‘Fire’ simultaneously.

“Alhutama” is another name of the hellfire. According to Al-Rāzī (d. 327/938-9, cited in McAuliffe 2001: 415) “Alhutama is one of the gates of Jahannam (cf. Suyūī, Durr, viii, 620).”

Most of the translators resorted to the strategy of retention in rendering the allusive name ‘تَسْنِيمٍ.’ While Saffarzadeh simply inserted a clarifying term within the main text (i.e. Tassnim Fountain), Sale used a footnote and explained that it “is the name of a fountain in paradise, so called from its being conveyed to the highest apartments” (Sale 1734: 443). However, some translators, including Aziz Ahmed and Daryabadi, believing that it refers to the drink of a specific fountain in Paradise, preferred to select the equivalent ‘Water of Tasnim.’ In the same line, Ali Unal, who had initially transliterated the name, used a parenthetical note to refer to the allusive meaning of the PN (i.e., the most delightful drink out of the loftiest spring of Paradise). On the other hand, Yuksel *et al.* and the MG, merely used the strategy of omission and totally deleted the name and the allusion together.

The name ‘عَرَفَاتُ’ signifies “name of a mountain near Mecca, said to be so named because of the recognition which there took place between Adam and Eve, after a separation of 200 years” (Penrice 1878: 96). Saffarzadeh (2001: 67) transliterated the name as ‘Arafat’ and wrote in a footnote that it alludes to “a place near Makkah City.” Most of the translators preferred the strategy of retention. However, the MG adopted the strategy of replacement by choosing the general equivalent ‘the elevated place.’ Yuksel *et al.* simply presented the denotative meaning: ‘the places of identification/recognition.’ Such equivalents deprived the target-readers of the underlying meanings.

The term ‘بِرْزَخٌ,’ according to al-Ghazali (1995, as Quoted in Leaman 2006: 114), refers to “an intermediate realm and subsequently of separate destinations for the virtuous and the wicked is called a barzakh.” Only Saffarzadeh and Al-Hilal and Khan transliterated the name ‘بِرْزَخٌ.’ The rest went for synonymous equivalents such as ‘barrier,’ ‘bar’ or ‘partition.’ Sale and Nikayin, however, preferred to use footnotes. While Nikayin briefly notified that the name signifies “barrier or a bar between their souls and the worldly life” (2000: 370), Sale (1734: 263) provided a detailed footnote explaining that the name signifies “the interval or space between this world and the next, or between death and the resurrection” or “a bar, or invincible obstacle, cutting off all possibility of return into the world, after death.”

The word ‘الْمَسْجِدِ’ in the name ‘الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ’ is rendered by Sale, Yuksel *et al.* and the MG by adopting the strategy of replacement and choosing the naturalized equivalent ‘temple.’ Conversely, Pickthall preferred the general equivalent ‘Place of Worship.’ Al-Hilal and Khan and Saheeh International preferred to transliterate the name ‘الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ.’ Most of the translators selected ‘the Holy Mosque’ or ‘the Sacred Mosque.’

The allusive name ‘قِبْلَتُهُ’ refers to “the direction to which Muslims turn in prayers” (Nikayin 2000: 21). Before Mecca (the House of K’aba), Jerusalem was Muslims’ first Qibla. After death, Muslims are buried with their heads turned towards the Qibla. While most of the translators (e.g., Daryabadi, Sale, Shakir, Haque, Pickthall, Shabbir Ahmed, Saheeh International, Ahmad Ali, Saffarzadeh, Sher Ali, Yusuf Ali, and Khalifa) simply transliterated the name, Nikayin, Starkovsky and Muhammad Ali provided some notes for target-readers. The equivalent selected by Yuksel *et al.* and the MG (i.e. the focal point that they were on) does not seem to be precise since the noun phrase ‘focal point’ denotes ‘a point of convergence of light.’

Concerning the word ‘إِرَمٌ,’ “[t]he most popular interpretation was that ‘arim (sing. arima) were dam-like structures designed to hold back flood waters. ... Citing other Muslim sources, al-Tabarī (d. 310/923) describes the construction of the dams and their destruction after the people of Sheba” (McAuliffe 2001: 60). The name ‘إِرَمٌ’ is transliterated by most of the translators. However, Aziz Ahmed and Sarwar used the term ‘city’ before presenting the transliteration of the PN. Through this clarification, the TT readers would at least understand that ‘إِرَمٌ’ is a spatial PN. Sale, Starkovsky, Yuksel *et al.* and Muhammad Ali provided footnotes for their readers. While Sale (1734) pointed out that ‘إِرَمٌ’ refers to “the territory or city of the Adites” (Sale 1734: 448), Starkovsky (2005: 50) considered it the same as “Ubar” which is “a quasi-mythological city.” However, as Yuksel *et al.* (2007) pointed out, “the rock towers of Iram was discovered 4800 years after the destruction and disappearance of the city of Iram in Umman” (Yuksel *et al.* 2007: 386). Saffarzadeh metonymically render it as ‘a people.’

The word ‘النَّعِيمِ’ in ‘جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ’ is defined by Penrice (1878: 149) as “happiness, delight, pleasure.” Sarwar and Yuksel *et al.* replaced the name by its interpretative or allusive equivalent ‘a blissful Paradise’ and ‘gardens of paradise,’ respectively. Most of the translators chose equivalents such as ‘Gardens of Delight,’ ‘gardens of pleasure,’ or ‘Gardens of Bliss’ and rendered it by adopting the strategy of replacement.

In translating the allusive names of ‘الصَّفَا’ and ‘الْمَرْوَةُ,’ almost all of the translators preferred to transliterate them. Sale, Arberry, Irving, Shakir, Yusuf Ali and the RABI merely transliterated the names and left the target-readers with no further information. Pickthall, however, inserted an informative note within parentheses: (the mountains) As-Safa and Al-Marwah. Starkovsky (2005: 304) and Nikayin (2000: 23) provided further information in their footnotes and indicated that ‘الصَّفَا’ and ‘الْمَرْوَةُ’ were names of “two hills near Mecca.” In the same line, Al-Hilal and Khan mentioned the allusive meaning of the PN (i.e., two mountains in Makkah) within the parentheses. Abdel-Haleem (2005: 18) referred to the related allusive event and pointed out that the two hills were adjacent to the House of

K'aba “between which a pilgrim and visitor should walk up and down in commemoration of what Hagar did in search of water for her baby, Ishmael.”

Most of the translators resorted to the strategy of replacement in rendering the allusive name ‘جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ’ by equivalents such as ‘Gardens of Eden,’ ‘perpetual Gardens,’ ‘gardens of eternal abode,’ ‘Gardens of Eternity,’ or ‘Gardens of perpetual bliss.’ Sale and Nikayin provided footnotes for their readers. Interestingly, while Nikayin (2000: 256) rendered it in the main text as ‘Gardens of Eden’ and clarified in a footnote that it might also mean Gardens of “perpetual Bliss,” Sale (1734: 185) translated it as ‘gardens of eternal abode’ and referred to “gardens of Eden” in a footnote. The word ‘عَدْنٍ’ is defined in Arabic-English dictionaries as “a perpetual abode, Eden, or Paradise” (Wehr 1976: 598; Penrice 1878: 95; etc.); therefore, the MG’s selected equivalent ‘delight’ lacks the essential sense-components.

Al-Hilal and Khan, Saheeh International, Saffarzadeh, Sher Ali, Omar, and Unal transliterated the name ‘المَشْعَرُ الْحَرَامُ’ /mash`ar alharam/. The latter two translators also provided parenthetical notes for readers indicting that the PN alludes to ‘al-Muzdalifah’ or ‘Holy Mosque in Muzdalifah.’ In the same line, Saffarzadeh (2001) indicated in a footnote that it refers to “a place known as Mozdalefah near Makkah City, where pilgrims have to stop and stay one night on return from Arafat” (Saffarzadeh 2001: 67). Nikayin (2000) rendered it as ‘the Holy Edifice’ and explained that it is “located at Muzdalifah, between Arafaat and Mina where the Holy Prophet offered up a long prayer” (Nikayin 2000: 31). While Abdel-Haleem selected the general-neutral equivalent ‘place’ for ‘المَشْعَرُ,’ Sale, Arberry, Irving, Pickthall, Shakir, Muhammad Ali, Yusuf Ali, Starkovsky and the RABI chose equivalents such as ‘monument,’ ‘Memorial’ or ‘Waymark.’ Sale and Abdel-Haleem accompanied their equivalents with informative notes. On the other hand, Yuksel *et al.* and the MG rendered the name literally as ‘the restricted place of perception’ and ‘the symbol which is restricted,’ respectively. Such equivalents lack allusive references and seem to be vague for the target-readers.

The distribution of the strategies adopted by translators is revealed in Table 1:

Procedures Distribution	Retention (Ret)	Omission (O)	Replacement (Rep)
Frequency	146	7	519
Percentage	21.90%	1.00%	77.10%

Table 1. Distribution of Strategies (based on Leppihalme’s 1997 taxonomy)

The general inclination of the strategies towards foreignization or domestication is shown in Figure 1:

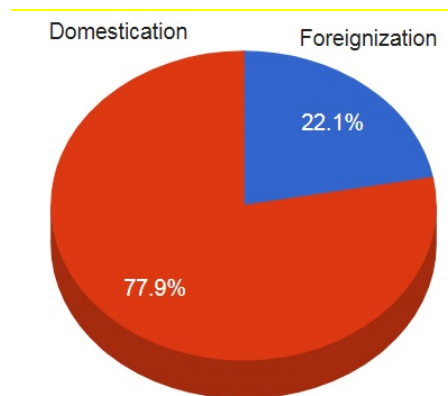


Figure 1. Inclination of the strategies

5. Conclusion

Many researchers have conducted studies on proper names to show how translators of various nations grapple with proper names in different text-types. However, a few of them dealt with the issue of allusive names in literary texts, and almost none of them, as far as the researcher knows, concentrated on allusive names of *the Glorious Qur’an* in its 28 translations. The present study was an attempt to find answers to the following questions:

1. What strategies were used by the English translators in translating the temporospatial allusive references of *The Holy Qur’an*?
2. How did various strategies distribute?
3. Was the general inclination of the translators towards domesticating or foreignizing the allusive references?

The findings revealed that all three strategies of retention, replacement and omission were used by all twentyeight translators in various occasions. None of them consistently employed a single strategy for rendering all Qur’anic allusive names. As regards the second research question, the strategy of replacement had the highest frequency (77.10%) while the strategy of omission was adopted only in rendering three proper names, which means less than one percent (1.00%). The second most frequently used strategy was found to be ‘retention’ (by 21.90%). Furthermore, it was found that 77.90% of the strategies adopted by English translators of Qur’anic allusive names inclined towards domestication, while only 22.10% showed tendency towards foreignization.

The present study confirmed the results found by Jaleniauskienė and Čičelytė (2009) who identified the strategy of localization (as a form of ‘replacement’) as the most frequent strategy of translating proper names in literary texts. On the other hand, Vahid Dastjerdi and Sahebbonar’s (2008), Shirinzadeh and Mahadi’s (2014) and Sabzalipour and Pishkar’s (2015) identifying the strategy of

'retention' as the most frequent one was not proved. It is noteworthy, however, to remind that none of these studies were conducted on Qur'anic allusive references, and just concentrated on proper names in literary texts.

This line of study can be continued to contribute to the comprehension of the challenges of translating allusive names in sacred texts and the enhancement of a more inclusive taxonomy of translation strategies for rendering them. Moreover, it is suggested for future researchers that a confirmatory research be undertaken to see if the findings of the current study are verified.

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Writing on history and framing the evolution of Jewish figures in Egyptian novels

Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī (“Orfanelli’s Hall”) by Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī

Naglaa Waly

Since his debut in 2010, the Egyptian writer Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī (b. 1966) has been distinguished by two features: setting novels in historical contexts and paying considerable attention to minorities and marginalised classes in Egyptian society. The focus of this article is on *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* (“Orfanelli’s Hall,” 2021), one of his most recent novels. In this novel, al-ʿAšmāwī addresses the presence and the life of the Jewish community in Egypt in the period between 1911 and 1972. The novelist highlights the historical issues of Jews, in parallel with the political and social changes in Egypt over several decades of the 20th century. In addressing political and economic issues related to this period, he questions and subverts the official, exclusionary versions of history. Against this backdrop, *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* offers a case study with two aims: firstly, to discuss recourse to historical context and its connection with political and socio-cultural concerns and secondly, to point out the evolution of Jewish characters in post-2011 Egyptian narratives.

Keywords: Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī; *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī*; Historical setting; Jewish characters.

1. Introduction¹

Ever since his first novel, Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī’s writing has been characterised by two remarkable features. Firstly, his novels are often set in a historical context and, secondly, he deals significantly with minorities and marginalised classes in Egyptian society.

The focus of this article is on *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* (“Orfanelli’s Hall,” 2021), one of his most recent novels. There, al-ʿAšmāwī addresses the presence and the life of the Jewish community in Egypt before

¹ This article draws on my previous study (Waly 2021) that introduces the Egyptian writer (b. 1966) Ašraf al-ʿAšmāwī’s literary works since his debut in 2010, and discusses his novel *Bayt al-Qibṭiyya* (“The House of the Copt Woman,” 2019) as a recent model of the Coptic theme in post-2011, exploring its new sensibility in dealing with this delicate issue, especially in Upper-Egypt. It also unearths the writer’s unrelenting commitment to social and political realities.

and after 1952, highlighting the historical issues of Jews, in parallel with the political and social changes in Egypt over four decades of the 20th Century. Against this backdrop, *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* offers a case study with two aims. Firstly, to discuss recourse to historical context, its connection with political and socio-cultural concerns and the writer’s commitment to these issues. Secondly, to point out the evolution of Jewish characters in post-2011 Egyptian narratives, considering the constant increase of narrative works that have addressed the Jewish theme from 1980 onwards (cf. LeGassick 1989).

A glance at the literary production in Egypt following the 1979 treaty² bears out the observation of a gradual and constant rise in novels that address Egyptian Jews. This trend captured the attention of scholars such as LeGassick (1989) and Beinin (2016).

LeGassick (1989) explains that this trend was due to a new consciousness formed after the signing of the treaty, in a kind of political realism after years of rupture and enmity with the Jews. It could also have been due to new sense of confidence stemming from post-1973 military and diplomatic success and the return of Sinai, which led to a more sympathetic view of Jews.

Similarly, Beinin (2016) points out that the treaty sparked a surge of interest in the Egyptian Jewish community—in both Egyptian and Western public discourse—that continues today. The conditions of its past and present have been continuously examined, with a combination of empathic curiosity, hostile suspicion, scholarly inquiry and nostalgia.³ Moreover, Beinin argues that literary works in the early 2000s that emphasise the positive contributions of Jews to modern Egypt could be a sort of implicit opposition to the political regime, expressed by a reevaluation of what was considered the relatively more democratic and cosmopolitan era of the monarchy, Beinin (2016: 87) writes:

In the 2000s, nostalgia for the era of the monarchy and positive memories of Egyptian Jews became a vehicle for indirect criticism of the Mubarak regime.

Adopting Beinin’s approach, which can legitimately be applied to the current era in Egypt, this article aims to discuss *Ṣālat ʿUrfānillī* as a recent iteration of positive representation of Jews in Egyptian

² The peace treaty that Israel and Egypt signed in March 1979 closely reflected President Carter’s proposals at Camp David and formally ended the state of war that had existed between the two countries. Israel agreed to withdraw from Sinai, and Egypt promised to establish normal diplomatic relations between the two countries and to open the Suez Canal to Israeli ships (which until then had been banned from the waterway). These measures were duly carried out. However, rather than following Egypt’s lead, most Arab countries ostracised Egypt and expelled it from the Arab League.

³ It is not only novels but there is a remarkable proliferation of production of history books, memoirs, film and soap-operas such as *Yahūd Miṣr Fī al-qarn al-ʿiṣrin* (Abū al-Ġār 2021) and *Muḍakkarrāt Yahudī Miṣri* (Arie 2023) and soap-operas such as *Ḥārat al-Yahūd* (2015).

narratives. In my analysis of the novel, I argue that al-'Ašmāwī, through his historical context, is able to write his own statement on social and political concerns vis-à-vis the authority system. Herein, the novel doesn't produce only a story, but it is interested with a purpose and is of political and ideological nature. In this sense, the idea of the literary work as strategic responses to particular situations surfaces (Burke 1941). Drawing on Brukeian's notions, Jameson(1981), in *the political unconscious*, advocates mode of interpretation in which, "in a double gesture, one rewrites the literary text in such a way as to reveal it as itself a rewriting of a prior historical or ideological subtext"(quoted in Eagleton 2012: 169).

In similar vein, Mehrez(1994: 9) explains the doubling of writer's role in Arabic region:

not only are writers involved in producing a story, but very frequently they are equally intent on providing the story behind that story: the historical, ideological, and political context in which such a story (and not another) was not just possible but necessary.

The article draws on the studies by Mehrez (1994) and Jacquemond (2008), who employ literary, history and sociology to investigate the dynamics, negotiations and constraints that shape the field of cultural production in Egypt. Mehrez, in her "Egyptian Writers Between History and Fiction" (1994), sheds light on the complementary relationship between history and narrative that can only enrich and deepen our understanding of a given culture or society. She argues that neither literature nor history make us relive an event; they can only show it through different kind of representations. Thus, by making different choices in modes of representation, history and literature can never be neutral: "each, in its own way, is bound to and by authority or legal subject [...] (according to Hegel, this authority or legal subject is the State;" Mehrez 1994: 5-6).

Similarly, Jacquemond (2008), theoretically grounded in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, provides a meticulous examination of the cultural field in Egypt. He highlights the relationship between the Egyptian state and intellectuals in the 20th century and the role of state repression and patronage in shaping claims to literary autonomy. In his "Conscience of the Nation" (2008), Jacquemond asserts that the legacy of *Nahḍa* project, which perceived the role intellectuals as that of "raising consciousness and educating people," is still dominated even in post-independence Egypt.

Therefore, Egyptian writers, in their symbolic role of "consciousness-raisers," employ literary writing as "an important channel for political and social criticism" (Jaquemond 2008: 36), when political activity is severely restricted.

Samia Mehrez and Richard Jacquemond both observe that different Egyptian writers have historically negotiated dual positions in the political and literary spheres, employing a double language

as both "organic intellectuals" and "autonomous artists." From this perspective, al-'Ašmāwī offers a clear example of this dual position he is a Judge and former state security prosecutor and, at the same time, a writer who reveals great sensitivity towards the political and social issues of his country.

The presence of Jews in Egyptian novels has received relatively a little attention. In discussing the evolution of the Jewish figure, I will take into account the studies carried out by Altoma (1978); Zeidan (1989); LeGassick (1989); Starr (2009); Boustani (2013); Beinini (2009, 2016); Youssef (2019).

For the sake of clarity, I have divided my study into three parts. The first part presents a brief overview on the Jewish figure in the Egyptian narrative; the second focuses on the plot of the novel and the writer's narrative strategies; the third contextualises the depicting of the Jewish character and shows how the novelist, through his historical context, presents a searing critique of military politics in ruling Egypt.

2. Jewish figures: a brief overview

Zeidan (1989) contends that the presence of Jewish characters, especially females, in early Arabic novels, rather, in the few years after Haykal's (1914) *Zaynab*, was for aesthetic reasons; that is, in order to build up stories with the involvement of the female character in public life that could not be possible due to the exclusion of Arab women. Therefore, a widely-employed method to overcome this obstacle was to deploy non-Muslim or non-Arab female characters, due to their relative freedom of movement and ability to interact with men. However, in this period, saturated with secularised national consciousness, we can find examples of realistic and spontaneous incorporation of Jewish figures in Egyptian novels, who are portrayed in the same way as Muslim and Christian characters. For instance, the characters of the Jewish doctor and the Jewish nurse in *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* ("Ibrahim the Writer," 1931)⁴ by Ibrāhīm al-Māzini (1890-1949).

According to Joseph T. Zeidan (1989: 59), a study of Jewish figures in the Arabic novel cannot escape classification and periodization:

We cannot, I am afraid, in a study of this nature, escape the problem of classification and periodization in examining the image of the Jew in Arabic literature. We can discern two main images of Jews in the Arabic novel. One, a relatively short-lived one, was employed before the complete politicization of relations between Arabs and Jews. The second image evolves along the

⁴ Written in 1925-1926 and published in 1931, the novel presents the title character's romantic adventures with three different women. In a 1939 article addressed to al-Hakīm, the author admits that the novel contains pages from his life (cf. Mossa 1997: 328-332).

distinctive lines of politics. The second image experienced change following the phases of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, one can distinguish three major periods of development: pre-1948, 1948-1967, and 1967-1973 (Zeidan 1989: 59).

Departing from Zeidan's thesis in tracing back the Jewish figure in Egyptian novels, it is not difficult to observe that prior to 1948, the presence of Jews was very sporadic and they were almost absent as main characters. For instance, Jewish characters were quasi-absents in the works of the Arabic Nobel laureate Naḡīb Maḥfūz. In his writing, the presence of Jews was very scarce, despite his growing up in the old *Ġamāliyya* neighbourhood of Cairo's historic Jewish quarter, *ḥārat al-Yahūd* ("the Jewish quarter").⁵ In two novels published pre-1948, Maḥfūz portrays Jews with typical stereotypes and moral shortcomings: Jewish girls are seductresses and of dissolute mores in *Ḥān al-Ḥalīlī* ("Khan al-khalili," 1946), while in *Zuqāq al-Midaq* ("Midaq Alley," 1947), Jewish girls are the cause of Hamīda's envy when she sees them on her daily walks outside the Alley. In the same novel, we find 'Alwān's account of the cunning of the Jewish racketeer with whom he was engaged in black market activities. Similarly, the novel *Fī qāfilat al-zamān* ("In the Caravan of Time," 1947) by al-Saḥḥār unravels hostility and contempt for the Jewish figure, depicting Rāšīl (the Jewish dressmaker) as a wicked, manipulative person. Indeed, these malevolent stereotypes have become more widespread in Arabic literary works owing to the escalation of tensions in Palestine and the establishment of the Jewish State in 1947-1948. Consequently, the images of Jews became the reflection of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Perhaps, in this period, Iḥsān 'abd al-Qudūs was the only Egyptian writer who addressed Jewish themes without stereotypes, but with a tolerant vision that transcended the violent conflict. In more than one interview, he asserts in that his writing on Jews is a reflection of his childhood experiences with neighbours and friends. In his short story *Ba'īd 'an al-'Ārḍ* ("Far from Land," 1950)⁶ he conveys a political message, exploring a Jewish woman's transformation from Zionism to the acceptance of intercultural and humanistic values. Jewish character as a second character has continued to appear in several works

⁵ When Maḥfūz was asked why he does not deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict in his novels, he replied that this issue can be dealt with either directly or indirectly and in order to talk about the conflict with Israel, one has to be personally involved. Thus, he left this issue to the Palestinian writers. He asserted: "Egypt was not occupied by Israel and we did not have the refugee problem, but our battle with Israel is a conflict of civilisations. Therefore, when I criticise Egyptian society and point out the negative sides, I deal with this indirectly" (translation from the Arabic by the author of this article). See in this respect al-Šāmī (1970).

⁶ Set in 1948, the novel involves a shipboard romance between a young Egyptian journalist dedicated to the Palestinian cause and a Jewish-American girl. Both are traveling to the United States; they are in love, but their happy and intimate relationship collapses as soon as news arrives that war has broken out in Palestine. The work is an effective piece of controversy, points being made with clarity and precision within a convincing context (cfr. LeGassick 1989)

of ‘Abd al-Qudūs in the period 1948-1967. In the period from 1967-1973 there was almost absence of Jewish character in Egyptian narrative, although the war of 1967 was a turning point in the modern history of the Arab country.

A few months prior to peace treaty on 1979, ‘Abd al-Qudūs published *Lā tatrūkūnī hunā waḥdī* (“Don’t Let Me Alone”),⁷ dealing with the life of a Jewish-Egyptian woman converted to Islam in order to continue her life in Egypt.

Furthermore, through a comprehensive reading of Egyptian novels addressing Jews, I argue that from 1980 onwards, the image of Jews in the Egyptian narrative could be, though non-exhaustively, classified into three categories. The first category presents an image perceived through the prism of the Arab-Israeli conflict, therefore mistrust towards the Jewish figure is present, as we can see in the behaviour of the narrator and his friends towards Jacques Hassoun in the novella *ḥalwat al- ḡalbān*⁸ (“Khalwat al-Ghalban,” 2003) by Ibrāhīm ‘Aṣlān, and with the Jewish Julia in *Warda* by Ṣun‘ Allāh Ibrāhīm. Boustani (2013) observes that in these stories, the ambiguity of the borders between Jews and the State of Israel is at the origin of this mistrust. In the second category, Jews are portrayed as a part of the cosmopolitan Egyptian society of the first half of the 20th century. An example is the character of Rāṣīl in Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Maḡīd’s *Tuyūr al-‘anbar* (“Ambergris Birds”). In these novels, Jewish and foreign characters are often used to represent the cosmopolitan cities of Cairo or Alexandria, and to show an expansive cultural vision. The third is an image perceived through human experience, portraying members of the Jewish minority and focusing on their feelings, anxiety and disappointments in works that foreground the Jewish community’s problems and provide an opportunity to address the reasons for loss and nostalgia. In these novels, Jewish characters are portrayed with humanity and empathy, such as Yusūf in ‘Aḥir Yahūd al-Iskandariyya (“The Last Jew in Alexandria,” 2005) by Futayḥa Mu‘tazz, Nādīah in *Sayyidat al Zamālik* (“Lady of Zamalek,” 2016) and ‘Urfānīllī, the father and son, in *Ṣālat ‘Urfānīllī* (“Orfanelli Hall”) by al-‘Aṣmāwī (2021).

⁷ The novel was published in 1979, the year of the signing of the famous peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. ‘Abd el-Qudūs pointed out that he had dealt with stories with Jewish characters before 1979, and explained that the publication of his novel at the same time as the Camp-David agreement was purely coincidental.

⁸ The novella describes the encounter between the narrator and, with the famous Jewish psychologist of Egyptian origins, Jacques Hassoun (1936–99), during a reception given by the French Writers of Paris.

3. *Sālat ʿUrfānillī*: Spatio-temporal settings and synopsis

The novel revolves around ʿUrfānillī, a young Jewish Egyptian of Italian descent, and his childhood Egyptian friend Mansūr Turkī. Manṣūr, a wicked man endowed with strong character, is very good at manipulating people while ʿUrfānillī has a weak character. Manṣūr founded an auction house for antiques with ʿUrfānillī as a partner but soon took full control of the auction house. Manṣūr tried to use Layla, ʿUrfānillī’s wife to please King Farouk, who was a compulsive womanizer. Thus, Manṣūr sends the woman to the king with a box of jewels. While she is awaiting the King in his private apartments with the jewels box in her hands, all of a sudden, the Queen comes in, and accuses her of being a thief. When ʿUrfānillī becomes aware of what has happened, he suffers from a heart attack, later on, Layla dies under mysterious circumstances. Then ʿUrfānillī and Layla’s son, named after his father and his father's best friend, plots revenge on Manṣūr and finally kills him. Eventually, ʿUrfānillī initiates his legal battle against Manṣūr’s wife and son to reclaim the auction hall after Manṣūr's passing. In the time span of the novel’s events, which appear to take place approximately from the 1930s to the early 1970s, we find a portrayal of key moments in Egyptian history such as the fire of Cairo, the 1952 coup, the declaration of the Republic of Egypt and the 1967 defeat.

4. *Sālat ʿUrfānillī*: Narrative strategies

Sālat ʿUrfānillī is skilfully constructed as a three-part novel. Each part is related by one of the three main characters and ends with the death of its narrator. Therefore, the three voices share the narrative in a polyphonic text. The voice of ʿUrfānillī the father and Manṣūr have more or less equal weight, while more pages are dedicated to ʿUrfānillī’s son. The central, connecting character is that of Manṣūr Turkī, as each of the other two narrators recounts his own story with him. The three characters are presented to us in the first person; thus, we learn the story alongside the narrator as it unfolds, hearing the narrator’s thoughts and feelings and understanding experiences in the way the narrator himself experiences them. In Booth’s words, “as soon as we encounter an “I” we are conscious of an experiencing mind whose views of the experience will come between us and the event” (Booth 1982: 151). Moreover, one of the most interesting things about the first-person narrator is that the point of view is very subjective and opinionated in ways that may not reveal the whole truth or the “full story.” Thus, relating the events in the first person creates an uncertainty of the truth which re-enacts the Borgesian idea that reality and historical truth are unknowable.

Another narrative strategy is the presence of inner monologue in the characters’ narration. This allows the reader to partake deeply in the thoughts and feelings of the protagonists, offering a powerful mode of access to history and memory. In this case, the reader becomes an implicit witness to the protagonists’ accounts. For this purpose, al-‘Ašmāwī also uses dialogical narration; Maṣṣūr, at the opening of his account, addresses his dead friend and justifies his attitudes with him. In this way, in our opinion, the narrator involves readers as witnesses and transcends the boundaries between them and the narrator’s voice.

The novel is written in standard Arabic, enriched by several details; the writer provides the reader with many details about the secrets of antique dealers and auctions and how to distinguish an antique from a replica and how he can verify this by feeling the surface with his hands and sometimes with his tongue. The writer’s care in supplying exact detail encourages belief in the setting (cf. Gardner 1983).

Moreover, the narration of the second and third main characters is rich in emotional pressure. The writer aptly represents the ambivalent feelings between Maṣṣūr and Urfānillī junior and how it wavered between love, hatred and mistrust. These details that resemble lived experience are called *qualia*.⁹ As explained by Herman, quoted in Vickroy (2014: 139): “when reproduced in narrative, these help readers envision a character’s experience, and by extension, his or her consciousness.”

Another writer’s strategy is intertextuality; during the narration, there is the momentary appearance by Zaynab al-Maḥlāwī, one of the main characters in his former novel *Sayyidat al-Zamālik* (“The Lady of Zamalek”):

وقع اختياري على المريضة بولا، زوجة المرحوم سولومون شيكوريل [...].، إلتقيت بزينا المحلاوي السيدة المصاحبة لها، اخبرتني في ضيق أن الزيارة ممنوعة، ثم أشارت إلى دفتر زيارات احضرته معها لتخفيف تكديس الزوار بالجناح... انتظرت لفترة حرصا على مصافحة السيدة زينا بحرارة لتتذكرني وقت اللزوم، لكنها مطت شفيتها وزامت كعادتها باشمئناط.¹⁰ -

I chose the patient Paula, wife of the late Salomon Cicurel [...]. I met Zaynab al-Maḥlāwī, the lady who accompanied her. She told me with anguish that visits were forbidden, then pointed to a visitors' booklet she had brought with her to reduce the crowding of visitors in the ward [...]. I waited for a while, eager to shake Mrs Zainab’s hand warmly, so that she would remember me in case of need, but she tightened her lips and continued with dissatisfaction as usual (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 154).

⁹ Term (singular *quale*) coined by philosophers of mind and used by narrative theorists focusing on consciousness. Philosopher Janet Levin describes *qualia* as “the qualitative, experiential, or felt properties of mental states” (Vickroy 2014: 139).

¹⁰ All the translations of the Arabic quotations are by the author of this article.

By reintroducing the character of Zaynab al-Maḥlāwī, al-‘Ašmāwī triggers reader’s’ minds into scenes from the previous novel and prompts them to connect between the two novels. Consequently, al-‘Ašmāwī reveals that the wickedness of the characters in the previous novel has not been silenced, but has resurfaced in the lives and actions of the new protagonists.

5. Image of Jews in *Salāt ʿUrfānillī*:

The novel is inaugurated by the account of ʿUrfānillī Alvīzī, the first Jewish main character. From the very first sentences, he shows a fragile and insecure personality:

يرأودني شعور غريب بأنني مثل عربة يصعد إليها وينزل من يشاء، أريد شخصا واحد يبادلني الثقة التي أعطيتها للناس، شخصا يجلس إلى جوار ي حتى نهاية الرحلة، يمنحني الطمأنينة ولا يجعلني أخشى تركه لي وحدي

I have a strange feeling that I'm like a carriage going up and down whoever he wants, I want one person who exchanges the trust I give to people, someone who sits next to me until the end of the journey, gives me reassurance and doesn't make me afraid that he would leave me alone (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 5).

The American critic Stanley Fish (2011:99) calls the first sentences an “angle of lean,” as “they lean forward, inclining in the direction of the elaborations they anticipate.” In this case, the reader is more likely to predict ʿUrfānillī’s easily-manipulated character and his falling into his friend’s traps.

The portrayal of ʿUrfānillī breaks with the usual negative stereotypes of Jews. He is naive, unskilled and has a good sense of ethics, but he is completely subservient to his friend Maṣṣūr. Moreover, through his account of his family, he paints a picture of people with a strict moral code. His father, for example, refused out of pity to denounce a worker who stole from him.

The other main Jewish character is ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr, the son of ʿUrfānillī, who bears the name of his father and his father's best friend, Maṣṣūr. ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr is intelligent and his character is stronger than his father's. At the age of twelve, he begins to work in the auction hall to learn the secrets of the trade and shows great talent. For young ʿUrfānillī, Maṣṣūr represented an object of fascination and respect, until his uncle informed him of Maṣṣūr’s role in the destruction of his family. From that day on, the young man’s feelings turned to hatred and resentment.

The account of ʿUrfānillī's son is initially told through the eyes of a young boy who narrates the difficult situation of losing his parents. The use of this technique obviously increases the reader’s identification with the protagonist, as the reader is naturally drawn to feel more sympathy for the experiences of a young boy. This sympathy is fostered by the character’s detailed and lengthy account

using interior monologue. In other words, by showing most of the story through the eyes of ʿUrfānillī’s son, the author ensures that we are travelling *with* him rather than *against* him. In fact, the reader continues to sympathise with him, despite the fact that he has murdered Maṣṣūr.

ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr is also portrayed as a political activist who joined the movement called *al-Ḥarakah al-Dīmuqrāṭiyyah li-l-Taḥrīr al-Waṭanī ḤADITŪ* (“Democratic Movement for National Liberation”)¹¹ and collaborates for a while with communists. This detail alludes to a historical fact: the participation of Jews in the revival and reformation of the Egyptian communist movement (Beinin 1998).

The novelist features him as nationalist in the sense conceptualised by Hans Kohn: “Nationalism is a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due the nation-state. A deep attachment to one’s native soil, to local traditions and to established territorial authority” (1955: 9). A significant example of this supreme loyalty, can be found in his reaction to 1967 defeat. He felt a deep sadness and he sustained Nasser’s reinstatement, though the unfair sanctions taken by Nasser against the Jewish community in Egypt:

لا زعيم بلا أخطاء وعبد الناصر لم يكن نبيا، رغم هزيمتنا ورغم الحراسة المفروضة على الصالة، مازلت
أحبه وأثق في نواياه... أريد بقاءه ليحكمنا، لا بديل له.

No leader is without faults and Nasser was not a prophet, in spite of our defeat and the confiscation of the hall, I still have love for him and trust in his intentions... I want him to stay, he is irreplaceable (al-ʿAšmāwī 2021: 342).

There are several Jewish characters in the novel. Two of them, in particular, deserve our attention, as do the female characters. The first is ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr's uncle, Yusūf Ḥuṣnī: an intellectual, an

¹¹ In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Egyptian-Jewish communist Henri Curiel (191-78) was active in several antifascist political formations. He founded the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation (HADETU – *al-Ḥaraka al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya li-l-Taḥrīr al-Waṭanī*) in 1943, which formed the core of what became Egypt's most influential communist organization for most of the next 20 years. Another Francophone Jew, Hillel Schwartz, founded the *Iskra* (“Spark”) organisation, named after Lenin's Bolshevik newspaper, in 1942. *Iskra* was the largest of the communist organizations in the mid-1940s, with a high proportion of middle and upper-class intellectuals, Jews, and other *mutamassirūn* among its members. Jewish students at elite French secondary schools recruited their Muslim and Coptic schoolmates into *Iskra* through a combination of political-intellectual and social activities that enabled young men and women to mix freely, openly defying prevailing social norms. Early in 1947, *Iskra* absorbed People’s Liberation (*Taḥrīr al-Shaʿb*), an organisation founded and led by Marcel Israel, a Jew of Italian citizenship. Then, in May, Curiel’s HADETU united with *Iskra* to form the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (Beinin 1998).

idealistic Marxist member of ḤADITŪ, whose commitment to the Egyptian nation is unquestioned (indeed, he was so fervently anti-Zionist that he killed the Jewish journalist Albert Mizrāḥi, for collaborating with Zionist groups). Yusūf, who committed suicide in prison, strongly influenced his nephew's nationalist consciousness and ideology.

The second is Hārūn, the old Jewish man who taught Maṣṣūr and ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr the secrets of antiques. Maṣṣūr describes him as “the father and the compass that guides my life” (al-ʿAšmāwī 2021: 128). He is wise, mysterious, and has a strong impact on Maṣṣūr. In his portrayal of this character, the novelist seems to draw on the antique dealer in Balzac’s *The Magic Skin*.

The novel introduces us to a half-dozen female characters (three of them Jewish and three of them Muslim). On the one hand, ʿUrfānillī’s mother, wife, and Naḡāt, ʿUrfānillī’s son’s fiancée. On the other hand, Maṣṣūr’s mother, his wife and his second wife. ʿUrfānillī’s mother and his wife are both imbued with all the virtues of the idealised national woman. Both are kind, faithful and virtuous, in contrast with the wicked and dubious reputation of Maṣṣūr’s mother and the evil intentions of his two wives.

Immediately obvious is the strategic juxtaposition of the two virtuous Jewish women against Nagat, who is portrayed as a seductress and a malicious woman. With her father’s help, she managed to deceive and murder ʿUrfānillī-Maṣṣūr. This reminds the reader that the Jewish community, as any human community, can encompass good and bad elements.

Interestingly, Naḡāt’s father, Arqaš, is a Jew who changed his religion several times, converting from Judaism to Coptic Christianity to Islam. He is described as *lā malla lahu* (“without religion;” al-ʿAšmāwī 2021: 205).

Here the novelist suggests an implicit link between the ease with which one could switch between religions and a dubious morality. The few Jews with poor morals in the novel are precisely those who changed their religion or forged their identity with Muslim names in order to stay in Egypt.

The Egyptian identity of the Jewish characters is foregrounded in the novel. To this end, al-ʿAšmāwī paints a broader, more inclusive picture of Egyptian identity, asserting an authentic Egyptian identity for his Jewish characters even though they are of foreign origin, as we can see by Maṣṣūr’s statement to ʿUrfānillī’s son: *انتم مصريون ودي بلدكم زي ما دي بلدنا* (al-ʿAšmāwī 2021: 175): “you are Egyptians and this is your country, exactly as it is ours.” Therefore, ʿUrfānillī and his son are not *mutamaṣṣirūn* but fundamentally Egyptian, despite their hybridised Egyptian identity due to their Italian origins.

In addition, al-ʿAšmāwī points out throughout the novel that many Egyptian Jews were loyal citizens to their country. The novelist seems to draw the depiction of this devotion from Rousseau’s *Social Contract* (1762). He portrays pre-1952 Egyptian society as a true political society. It was based

solely on the virtue of its citizens and their fervent love of the fatherland. Perhaps a more striking expression of this devotion is the portrayal of Albert Mizrāḥi, a journalist who helped rich Jews smuggle money out of Egypt. But out of concern for the Egyptian economy, he refused to transfer Manṣūr's money abroad:

أنت موش يهودي والحكومة موش بتضايقتك، لو أنا ساعدت كل الناس في تهريب فلوسها، حتبقى مصر مديونة
زي انجلترا، برضيك نعمل كده في البلد اللي عشنا فيها احلى ايامنا وأديتنا خيرها

You are not Jewish. The government does not bother you. Egypt would be in debt like England if I helped everyone smuggle their money. It would please you if we were to do this to the country in which we spent our best days and which has given us so much (al-'Ašmāwī 2021: 178).

It is noteworthy that, despite the emphasis on their Egyptian identity, both ʿUrfānīllī and his son are addressed in the novel as *ḥawāḡh* (‘foreigner’), a term of respect that is commonly used to address foreigners living in Egypt. All those working in the hall are forced, on Manṣūr's orders, to address them as *ḥawāḡh*, while Manṣūr is addressed using the Italian term “Maestro.” This ambivalence stems from Manṣūr's awareness of foreigners' high status in his country under colonisation. Therefore, by assimilating their patterns, he is enhancing his own status. For example, he replaces his *ṭarbūš* with a hat. This behavior seems to align with Bhabha’s ‘mimetic desire:’ “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as ‘almost the same but not quite’” (Bhabha 1994: 122).

To sum up: al-'Ašmāwī reverses the usual discourse in Egyptian fiction, which sets the despicable behaviour of the Jewish character against the moral integrity of the Muslim character, by presenting a positive image of Jewish identity. The kindness and sense of morality of most Jewish characters contrasts with the opportunism and ruthlessness of the Muslim protagonists. The main Muslim character is drawn in such a way as to make the reader despise him and to sympathise with the other two Jewish main characters, especially ʿUrfānīllī, who seems to be the most vulnerable party in the relationship with Manṣūr. Moreover, the extremely positive depiction of the Jewish female characters seems to be an attempt on the writer’s part to create a counter-discourse that challenges the dominant idea of Jewish women in the Egyptian narrative.

6. Historical setting: Nostalgia and writing on history

The novel is filled with historical elements, with overt “realistic” references to events and characters. The writer deploys the real names of Italian and Greek auction house owners who resided in Egypt in the early 20th century, such as George Levy and Castsaros, and real historical events as well. These

elements enable the novelist to construct the history that binds his narrative, in Jameson's words, "in order to act on the real, the text cannot simply allow reality to persevere in its being outside of itself, inertly, at a distance; it must draw the real into its own texture" Jameson (quoted in Eagleton 2012: 171).

Nevertheless, the novelist manipulates historical data; for instance, he alters the true history of Albert Mizrāḥi, a leading figure in Egyptian journalism, who owned and edited two newspapers and lived in Egypt until 1960.¹² In the novel he was killed by ʿUrfānillī Maṣṣūr's uncle for his collaboration with Zionists. Likewise, he draws the story of ʿUrfānillī's wife being arrested at the king's private flat from a real incident happened in 1945, albeit he changes its details.¹³

This technique seems to draw on the postmodern theory on historical accounts, where such sources are viewed under the lens of a sceptic, as explained by Linda Hutcheon in "A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction." Hutcheon argues that historical data, even intentionally false data, is often used to legitimise the work of fiction, but also to subvert the historical discourse. "Historiographic metafiction acknowledges the paradox of the reality of the past but its textualized accessibility to us today" (Hutcheon 2004: 114). With this twofold strategy, the writer, on the one hand, manages to emulate the spirit of Cairo secular society, to celebrate—and to some extent fictionalise—what has been called by Starr (2006) a 'lost Egyptian cosmopolitanism,' where there was a Muslim-Jewish-Christian conviviality without any religious-based distinctions. On the other hand, the author seizes the opportunity to rewrite a dominant historical record from his point of view.

In *Sālat ʿUrfānillī*, we can observe the author's intention to create a dialectical and ideological relationship between the text and the world it represents, each developing the other, and to fill the lacunae and silences of official history or, in Jacquemond's words, how he becomes the "underground historian" or "parallel sociologist" of his country (Jacquemond 2008: 90).

As I mentioned earlier, the novel maps out social, political and economic changes in Egypt in the period between the late 1930s and 1972. In particular, it focuses on the impact of these shifts on the lives of Jewish characters, on the aristocratic class and on Maṣṣūr, whose work and life are intertwined with them. Undoubtedly, one of these crucial events is the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. Through the first main narrator, the novelist summarises the crisis of Jews in Egypt in that year,

¹² For more on Mizrahi, see Beinin (1998).

¹³ A true historical incident is the basis of the story of a real incident that took place in 1945, when Queen Farida found a woman named Layla Sherin in the king's flats and denounced her. It was later discovered that she had an assignation with the king. To avoid the scandal, she was diagnosed with mental illness and ended up in an asylum (Stadiem 1992). Cf. also <https://elbashayer.com/1713851/865512>

emphasizing the involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood¹⁴ which, by the late 1930s, became antagonistic to the Jewish presence. In a few lines, ʿUrfānillī relates the tensions aroused by the Palestinian issue and the outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Egypt before and during the first Arab–Israeli war of 1948:¹⁵

جاء اعلان دولة قيام اسرائيل منذ شهرين، ليجعلنا نعيش أجواء حرب مرة ثانية، جاليتنا كبيرة تقترب من مائة ألف يهودي تقريبا لكن لم يعد مرحبا بنا على أرض النيل مع أننا لانريد الهجرة إلى هناك ولم نفكر يوما في ترك مصر وساذج من يتصور فينا ذلك، لكن المصريين المسلمين البسطاء تغيروا معنا فجأة، نجح حسن البنا وجماعته في غسل عقولهم المتحضرة، ليس أمامي بعد مصر حامي إلا تسجيل ملكيتي بالصلاة وبيعها ثم الهجرة من مصر، لكني ايضا لن أذهب إلى اسرائيل.

The declaration of the State of Israel came two months ago, making us live in a climate of war again. Our community is numerous, approaching a hundred thousand Jews, but we are no longer welcome on the land of the Nile, even though we do not want to immigrate there, and we have never thought of leaving Egypt, and Anyone who imagines such a thing is truly naive, yet the simple Muslim Egyptians have suddenly changed their attitude towards us. Ḥasan al-Bannā and his group managed to wash their civilised minds. After my father-in-law's death, I have no choice but to register my property, sell it, and then emigrate from Egypt. But I will not even go to Israel (al-'Ašmāwī 2021: 101).

Here, ʿUrfānillī’s words seem imbued with fear and despair. He, an Egyptian citizen, is forced to leave his homeland due to the sudden hostility and hatred of his Muslim brethren. He decides to leave Egypt, but he will never emigrate to Israel. In these lines, the novel re-humanises the Jews, rejecting the official rhetoric of them seen as a fifth column. Furthermore, it is quite significant that ʿUrfānillī died suddenly in 1948, as if his death represented the death of the peaceful coexistence of the Jewish community in Egypt.

¹⁴ The 1930s and 1940s have been interpreted as the period of radicalisation of the political and social arena, when Islamic radicalism and right wing-nationalism started to play a more evident role (Miccoli 2015).

¹⁵ During the summer and fall of 1948, Jews and their property were attacked repeatedly. On June, 1948, a bomb exploded in the Karaite quarter of Cairo, killing 22 Jews and wounding 41. Several buildings were severely damaged. The Egyptian authorities unconvincingly blamed the explosion on fireworks stored in Jewish homes and antagonism between Karaite and Rabbanite Jews. *Al-Ahram* reported that the police and firemen reacted to the fire quickly and effectively. But Jewish witnesses on the scene testified that the response of the authorities was sluggish and negligent [...] The government did little to protect Egyptian Jews and their property from bombings and other attacks generally attributed to the Muslim Brothers during the summer of 1948. The regime was not necessarily ill-disposed towards the Jewish community, but it feared confronting the Muslim Brothers, who did not distinguish between Jews and Zionists. Vigorously defending the rights of the Jews of Egypt during a war against the Jews of Palestine would have been difficult for an unpopular regime to explain to the public. During 1949 and 1950, about 20,000 Jews left Egypt, 14,299 of whom settled in Israel; the others went to Europe, North America and South America (Beinin 1998: 36).

The other key event was the 1952 *coup d'état* by the Free Officers. This Movement did not initially have a significant impact on the legal status of foreign and minority residents of Egypt (cf. Beinin 1998). However, the emergent Movement does not pose a threat to Manṣūr at least at the beginning; his account of the declaration of the Republic in 1953 reveals contempt and scepticism. He compares the new Republic of Free Officers to a premature infant doomed to die:

اعلنوا مصر جمهورية بدلا من مملكة مثل جنين مبتسر محكوم عليه بالموت، مددت شفقتي ممتعضا، نحن فيما يبدو على موعد مع
التعاسة، لكن لا أحد يوافقني على كلامي غير زبائني القديمة.

They proclaimed Egypt a republic instead of a kingdom like a premature fetus condemned to death. I stretched my lips unsatisfied. It seems we have an appointment with misery, but no one agrees with my words except my old clients (al-'Ašmāwī 2021: 201).

Here, the novel contends that the Free Officers were plunged into the task of governing without any experience or preparation¹⁶. Thus, their Republic was doomed to fail. With this instance, al-Ašmāwī is a remembrancer against the official dogma surrounding the Free Officers. He questions and subverts the representation of official historical records about the Free Officers¹⁷ depicted by the state-media as virtuous elite individuals, with and their Movement called a 'blessed Movement' in Egyptian history textbooks. Moreover, it is worth noting that with the outbreak of the 2011 revolution, there was systematic propaganda aimed at mobilising popular sentiment in favour of the military and army allying with the people. This sentiment was resurrected later, after Mursī was overthrown, and in post-2013 Egypt there was a revival of the Nasserist cult.¹⁸

¹⁶ For more information on the 1952 *coup d'état*, see Solari (1954) and Abdel-Malek (1968).

¹⁷ The Free Officers was a group of generally junior officers who had been accepted by the Military Academy during the 1930s, after the annulment of certain restrictions on entry to army schools. Until then, the Academy had closed off the chance of a military career to all but well-known rich and landlord families; this created a professional rather than a military career institution. These junior officers were very pragmatic army officers, not intellectuals, who would understand discussions surrounding the need for new weaponry, the establishment of military alliances, and the so-called communist threat. The Free Officers were against corruption, which had so personalised King Faruq's administration and the feudalist-styled party structures characterized by the Wafd Party (Budak 2022: 58; see also Harris 1967).

¹⁸ al-Sisi himself revived the Nasserist cult by participating in the 43rd memorial ceremony of Nasser's death. He also allowed the spreading of posters with his picture adjacent to the venerated president, invited Nasser's son and daughter to official ceremonies (such as the one held to commemorate the "October War"), and used Nasser's "magic words" in his speeches. When these phrases were pronounced by Sisi, Egyptians were able to see him as the successor to Nasser, the Egyptian leader who fought the Muslim Brotherhood domestically and led Egypt to the leadership of the Arab World and the non-aligned community. <https://jcpa.org/article/sisi-fever-will-general-next-president-egypt/>.

In his tracing of historical moments, al-‘Ašmāwī does not touch upon the 1956 Suez/Sinai War, which was a real turning point in the conditions of Egyptian Jewry, leading to the emigration of thousands of them. The novel briefly explores, however, the consequences of Nasser’s nationalist policies and hints at the historical fact that Jews became susceptible to blackmail after 1956 and the creation of the Jewish Division (National Committee for the Struggle against Zionism; cf. Laskier 1995), whereby it was enough to report suspicions against them in order to confiscate their money and expel them from Egypt, as Manṣūr did with his new partner. Elsewhere, Manṣūr speaks of the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, which can lead to the arrest of a person on the mere reporting of suspicion of belonging to the movement, in an implicit parallelism with the increasing abuse of State Security laws and the perpetual state of emergency of the current regime:

إذا اردت التتكيل بجارك، كل ما عليك أن تتقدم لأقرب مركز بوليس لتقول للضابط [...] : أنا شاكك أن جاري أخوان، اجتماعات قرب الفجر ومعاهم مصحف

If you want to take revenge on your neighbour, just go to the nearest police station and tell the officer [...]: 'I suspect that my neighbour is one of the brothers, he organises meetings at dawn and he carries a copy of the Koran with him (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 210).

A central concern of the novel is the inefficiency and corruption of the military regime, to which the narrative repeatedly returns. On many pages, the novelist reveals his contention about the corruption and malfunction of state administration under the military regime. This contention could be sustained by documents to which he has access in his quality of judge and former state security prosecutor.

As we find in Manṣūr's account about the jewellery and collectibles that disappeared from the royal palaces in Egypt, while the few remaining collectibles were sold at very low prices, when the Free Officers had decided to sell Farouk’s gargantuan collection of objects of art and personal possessions by public auction on 1954. The novel underscores that the committee formed by the Council of the Command of the Revolution had rather inefficient and non-expert members:

عرفت من الكردي ان في شهر فبراير القادم سيعقد أكبر مزاد بالشرق سيبيعون فيه مقتنيات فاروق المتبقية بالقصور، كتمت ضحكتي وملت على اذن زميلي صبحي جاد هامسا: هو لسه في حاجة من مقتنيات فاروق علشان يبيعوها؟ ده احنا لقينا القصور تقريبا فاضية، كأن أهلها عزلوا من زمان [...] بيتهيا لك الناس دي حتهرب كل حاجة برة مصر وبيبعوها بالافات وبكرة افكر.

I heard from Al-Kurdi that next February the biggest auction in the East would be held, at which Farouk's remaining palaces' belongings would be sold. I stifled laughter and leaned into the ear of my colleague Subhi Gad, whispering: Is there anything left to be sold of Farouk's collectibles? We found the buildings almost empty, as if their inhabitants had moved out long ago [...]. These people are preparing to smuggle everything out of Egypt in order to sell them and gain thousands of pounds, and tomorrow I will remind you of this (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 216).

In another passage, the writer gives us a vivid portrait of the political and moral corruption in post-1952 Egypt. He mentions a specific—and real—case in which the unparalleled and one-of-a-kind items from Farouk’s stamp collection were sold for a very low price:

لا أحد يصدق السعر المفتوح ولا قيمة الترسية في غالبية القطع، أنا شخصيا بعث أشياء مقلدة باضعاف القيمة التي تباع بها مقتنيات وفي نهاية لو تركوا لي الأمر برمته لأدخلت خزينة مصر عشرة ملايين جنيها ثمنا لنصف هذه المقتنيات...فاروق الأول ملك مصر اليوم، كانت مجموعة من طوابع الملك التي تمثل اربعين بالمائة من اصدارات البريد الملكية، قد بيعت بنحو ستة الاف جنيها ومن بينها عشرة طوابع قيمتها الحقيقية نصف مليون جنيه. اعتبر مندوب الرئاسة مبلغ الستة الاف مبلغا كبيرا

No one believes the opening price or the premium value for most of the pieces, I personally have sold counterfeit items worth many times that of the collectibles of Farouk I, King [...] If they had left the whole affair to me, the Egyptian treasury would have gained ten million pounds as the price for half of these collectibles. By the end of the day, a collection of the King's stamps [...] had been sold for around six thousand pounds, including ten stamps which have a value of half a million pounds. The president of the committee considered the six thousand a large sum (al-‘Ašmāwī 2021: 226).

An informed reader of current Egyptian affairs will find that this account on the past is intertwined with the present political reality in Egypt. In the terms employed by Fanon (1963: 220) “incessant interaction with the impending, the real and the past.’. If we consider that al-‘Ašmāwī finished the novel in December 2020, it is not be difficult to understand that the writer is alluding to a real political issue; a presidential decree issued on September 4, 2020, ordering the transfer of ownership of several state-owned real estate assets to The Sovereign Fund of Egypt (TSFE). Thus, Egyptian assets are exposed to the threat of sale through deals that had immunity (they could not be challenged before courts).¹⁹ Here, al-‘Ašmāwī is warning readers of the recurring patterns of corruption or, in Mehrez’s words, “the preoccupation with the present brings about revisitations of the past” (Mehrez 1994: 14).

Significantly, the account of pre-1952 Egyptian society portrayed by the three main characters features the city of Cairo with its beautiful landscape, and harmonious heterologous society, as well as the corruption of the regime, in a nostalgic and ironic tone. This depiction coincides with the description of reflective nostalgia, studied by Svetlana Boym (2001) who defines it as nostalgia that “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time.”

¹⁹ See ‘How did al-Sisi legitimise selling state assets?’ at <https://egyptwatch.net/2020/09/09/how-did-al-sisi-legitimise-selling-state-assets/>

Boym explains that reflective nostalgia can be ironic and humorous: “It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, just as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical reflection” (Boym 2001: 26).

Moreover, exploring nostalgia can and should open up a negotiation between the present and the past which, in Denis Walder’s words, leads “to a fuller understanding of the past and how it has shaped the present for good and bad” (Walder 2011: 9).

I argue that, by locating his stories in a historical setting and over a period of time, al-‘Ašmāwī is able to use temporal distance and the device of nostalgia to explore the political and social changes in Egypt over several decades and to investigate, question and subvert the official, exclusionary versions of history. As observed by Mehrez (1994: 61):

They participate in the production of an alternative discourse that confronts and dislocates the dominant discourse on history, thus forcing us as readers to reread, rethink, and reposition our ideas about our place and time—past, present and future.

7. Conclusions

Sālat ‘Urfānillī presents an interesting case study for more than one aspect. The most significant is the manipulation of historical material and events so as to criticise the political regime in Egypt, either during the Farouk era or after 1952. The novel conveys an in-depth understanding of the failure of the military regime and inscribes how the great aspirations of a revolution could degenerate into mediocre political machinery, opportunism and corruption as with the Movement of the Free Officers. al-‘Ašmāwī has reason to be preoccupied with alarming developments in politics and economy in the present; this is reflected in his writing, which seems to be an alternative socio-political action. In Jameson's words: “there is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, that everything is “in the last analysis” political” (Jameson 1983: 5).

More importantly, given the novel's concern with shattering the stereotypical image of Jews created by the establishment of the Israeli state and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Jewish narrators assume the responsibility of winning the reader's sympathy and presenting an image of ordinary Egyptian citizens who are loyal and devoted to their country

In al-‘Ašmāwī’s portrayal of Jews, it is safe to say that he seeks a counterforce to the parochial nationalism and pays homage to the Egyptian nationalists of the early years of the 20th century, who insisted on the indivisibility of Egyptian nation as in the famous essay *al-Yawm wa al-Ġad* (“Today and Tomorrow;” 1928) by Salāma Mūsā, in which he asserts that religion is no longer the basis of the community, but a matter of individual ‘private faith’ (Suleiman 2003).

It is worth noting that it is his second attempt to address the life of Jews in Egypt and his courage in portraying Jewish characters as victims of political change in Egypt has been criticised by some Egyptian critics, such as Fateen Lotfy,²⁰ who views it as a sort of political statement that contradicts reality, especially in the current phase of the non-stop crisis in the Middle East.

Furthermore, in a holistic reading of al-'Ašmāwī's literary project, we find that it rarely raises issues related to the present, and his novels are predominantly set in the first half of the 20th century, in the era of Egyptian secular society that lives on through its constant dialogue with historical events to describe and dismantle the oppressive and disillusioned reality surrounding it. His writing reflects a general feeling of unrest and social injustice, and captures the spirit of disillusionment after the so-called Arab Spring in Egypt. This gives his works an ideological function, as in Terry Eagleton's words:

Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the 'social mentality' or ideology of that age (Eagleton 1976: 13).

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²⁰ <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/18/62/411058/Books/Reviews/Book-Review--Orfanellis-Hall-plays-in-dangerous-wa.aspx>

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Three cases of critical engagement of Sufis with modern Islamic trends

Francesco Alfonso Leccese

This article focuses on the topic of Sufi intellectual resistance through some emblematic case studies of Sufi authors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. First, it analyses *Fitna al-Wahhabiyya*, a treatise that was written by Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān (1817–1886) in 1878, which proved to be a seminal work for later Sufi authors, and shows that some of the issues addressed in this text are recurrent ones in anti-Wahhabi polemics. Indeed, the cultural resistance of Sufism from the 19th century to the present day has been primarily directed against the doctrines of Wahhabism, the first current of Islamic thought to be structurally anti-Sufi. The fact that Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān was the Mufti of Mecca and a recognised scholar shows that these polemics were fully integrated into the scholarly religious debate of official Islam, in which Sufism and its doctrines occupied a prominent position. Furthermore, some Sufi masters set themselves the goal of refuting the theories of materialism and rationalism that were in vogue in the Islamic world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The work of the Egyptian Sufi master Sīdī Salāma ar-Rāḍī (1866–1939) entitled *al-Insāniyya*, published in 1938, is a polemical treatise against materialism, atheism and spiritualism that probably reflects the influence of René Guénon. The third case study examined is that of the Sudanese master Muḥammad ʿUṭmān ʿAbduhu al-Burhānī (1904–1983). The latter is an exemplary case of Sufi resistance in the second half of the 20th century, both in the face of censorship and in the face of the attempt to bring Sufi brotherhoods under government control.

Keywords: Sufism; Wahhabism; Modernism; Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān; Sīdī Salāma ar-Rāḍī; Muḥammad ʿUṭmān ʿAbduhu al-Burhānī.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to highlight the role of Sufi cultural activism between the late 19th and early 21st centuries. As various Islamic trends emerged that challenged traditional Sufism from different perspectives, scholars affiliated with it were not passive recipients of criticism, but participated in an active exchange of ideas that contributed to the making of “modern Islam.” This article builds on De Jong and Radtke (1999) to argue that the debate surrounding Sufism, especially in the modern age, intersected with a variety of issues: theological purism; the meaning of modernity;

and the power of new states to control the religious sphere. The three cases discussed below are examples of Sufi engagement in polemics related to these three aspects. In the first case, we will examine Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān's theological arguments against the "Wahhabi" school. The latter, in its essence, cannot be considered a product of Muslim encounters with modernity; rather, it built on and expanded pre-existing anti-Sufi trends within the Sunni tradition. Nevertheless, because of its opposition to long-established and quasi-universal practices of intercession, as its opposition to reliance, in jurisprudential matters, on the opinions of the "four schools" of Sunnism, "Wahhabism" was initially perceived by many Sunni theologians as a "modern deviation," and it is this image of it that is reflected in Daḥlān's writings. The second case is Sīdī Salāma ar-Rādī's rejection of scientific positivism and "spiritualism:" ar-Rādī (possibly under the influence of the French intellectual René Guénon) built his case for a defence of the Muslim tradition as a whole, in both its exoteric and esoteric aspects, seen as two sides of the same coin. The third case is Muḥammad 'Uṭmān 'Abduhu al-Burhānī's resistance to the state censorship of selected "Sufi innovations:" in arguing for the autonomy of religion from the political sphere, the case of the Burhānī order contributed to what was rapidly becoming one of the most challenging instances of Muslim engagement with modernity.

2. The defence of Sufism by a Meccan scholar: Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān

Historically, Wahhabism was the first Islamic religious movement to be structurally defined as anti-Sufi and, due to its puritanical and activist nature, as a forerunner of contemporary Islamic radicalism. Its founder, Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1796), a Salafi theologian from Naḡd, a region of present-day Saudi Arabia, was a proponent of a simplified version of Islam whose primary aim was to abolish certain Islamic practices and doctrines that had become entrenched over the centuries and replace them with a literal interpretation of the Koran and the Sunna.

Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb soon distinguished himself among his contemporaries for his ideas, which drew the firm condemnation of many 'ulamā'—including his father and his brother Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, the author of the first refutative short treatise on Wahhabism, written around 1753 ('Abd al-Wahhāb 1888-1889; Traboulsi 2002)—in the Ottoman world and the Indian Subcontinent.

In particular, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and his disciples were blamed for having launched an anathema, *takfir* (literally an "accusation against someone of being an unbeliever—*kāfir*"), against those who did not abide by the rigorist interpretation they advocated. This anathema was directed against the representatives of certain currents of Islam, particularly the Sufis, who were accused of having

introduced reprehensible innovations (*bid'ā*) into Islamic practice, which from the Wahhabi point of view was evidence of deviation from the correct doctrine of the oneness of God (*tawhīd*).

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb essentially proposed to abandon the various recognised theological and juridical schools (*madhabs*)¹ in favour of a theologically and doctrinally simplified version of Islam that was literalist in the interpretation of the Koran and the Sunna and puritanical in its practice: an Islam which totally rejected the doctrines—starting from that of *waḥdat al-wuḡūd*—and the methods of Sufism, such as intercessory prayer (*ṣafā'a*) and *dīkr* gatherings (*ḥaḍra*).

Despite the small following enjoyed by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb among his contemporaries, Wahhabism was long considered a heresy on a par with Kharijism, by which it was in many ways inspired to which it was in many ways related. Wahhabi doctrine only succeeded in asserting itself thanks to its partnership with the Saudi family, a bond destined to last until today in memory of the pact made in 1744 with the Emir Muḥammad Ibn Sa'ūd (d. 1765).²

It should also be noted that, until pre-modern times, Sufism had been one of the disciplines recognised by official Islam, as it enjoyed the general favour of 'ulamā' and rulers. Before the spread of Wahhabi theories, anti-Sufi criticism had concerned only specific practices or doctrines adopted by individual brotherhoods and exponents, without ever resulting in a general condemnation of Sufism (Radtke 1999).

Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān (1817–1886) was one of the so-called “scholars of the age,” the most prominent theologians and jurists of the Arabian Peninsula, who taught according to a fixed schedule at the al-Ḥarām Mosque in Mecca and at the Maṣḡid al-Nabawī in Medina. Born in Mecca, Daḥlān became the Shāfi'ī *mufti* of Mecca from 1871 after studying with a number of 'Alawīs from Ḥaḍramawt, which put him in contact with East Africa and a wider Indian Ocean 'ulamā' circle (Bang 2003; Bang 2014: 27-28).

Daḥlān was a prolific writer: not only did he cover the traditional Islamic sciences that were the subject of study in Mecca, but he also distinguished himself as the only 19th-century historical writer in Mecca, producing a number of treaties on controversial issues.³ His most influential work is *Fitna al-*

¹ The abolition of law schools is visually evoked by the disappearance of the representative pavilions of the four law schools in Mecca. Present for centuries in the inner courtyard of the Great Mosque of Mecca (*al-maṣḡid al-ḥarām*) in the place where pilgrims perform their ritual circumambulation (*tawāf*), they were demolished by Saudi-Wahhabi rulers as early as the 1950s. See Hurgronje (1880), Peterson (1996: 180), Sardar (2014: 313-342) and Wheeler (2006).

² For an historical overview of Wahhabism, see Algar (2002), Delong-Bas (2004), Commins (2006) and Lauzière (2016). On the development of Wahhabism in the contemporary era, see Ventura (2006: 17-35) and Bori (2009).

³ For a biographical overview of his figure, see Schacht (1991). On Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān's career as a “historian” and his role in the religious milieu of Mecca, see Sharkey (1994) and Freitag (2003).

Wahhābiyya, published in 1878, a booklet where Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb is described as a reformer repudiated by his family for a number of controversial opinions not shared by contemporary jurists and theologians.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb is stigmatised for having defined the pious visit (*ziyāra*) to the Prophet’s shrine and the request for intercession (*tawassul*) as *širk* (idolatry or polytheism). According to Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān, the pious visit to the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina or to those of other prophets, saints and their successors is to be considered legitimate, as is the request for their intercession. As a matter of fact, Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān accuses al-Wahhāb of creating a new school of jurisprudence that actually accuses all previous generations of Muslims of idolatry. «Al-Wahhab claimed that the intention behind the *maḏhab* he invented was “to purify the *tawḥīd*” and “reject *širk*.” He also claimed that people had been following *širk* for six hundred years and that he had revived the religion for them» (Daḥlān 2012: 4).

Daḥlān considered Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s intention to purify Islamic beliefs the result of an erroneous interpretation of the Koran. In particular, Daḥlān accused Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb of taking some Koranic verses (Q. 46: 5; Q. 10: 106; Q. 39: 3; Q. 31:25; Q 39:38) addressed to hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) and applying them to believers (*mu’minūn*). According to Daḥlān, it is misleading to compare hypocrites who deify their own idols with believers because «the believers do not believe that the prophets or the “saints” (*‘awliyā’*, the “friends of God”) deserve to be worshipped or to be ascribed divinity, nor do they exalt them as one would exalt God. They believe that these people are good slaves of God, and that through their blessings (*baraka*) God bestows His mercy on His creation. Hence, when the slaves of God seek the blessings (*baraka*) of the prophets and saints, they seek these blessings as a mercy from God» (Daḥlān 2012: 4). In his treatises against the Wahhabis, Daḥlān views the practice of visiting holy men’s graves (*ziyāra*) or the recitation of *ḍikr* as Islamic devotional acts in accordance with *šarī‘a*.

Daḥlān therefore stigmatises the selective use of some decontextualised Koranic sources, emphasising that the *ziyāra* and *tawassul* are fully justified by the Koran and the *Sunna*. Daḥlān compares the Wahhabis to the Kharijites, defining them, on the basis of a *ḥadīṭ* as those who took the verses revealed about the hypocrites and applied them to the believers.

Fitna al-Wahhābiyya is not only a doctrinal but also a historical text. It briefly reconstructs the history of Wahhabism in the Arabian Peninsula from the various occupations of Mecca and Medina to the Ottoman intervention through the Khedive Muḥammad ‘Alī and his son Ibrāhīm (Sardar 2014: Ch. 7). During the periods of Mecca’s occupation, the population had to abide by Wahhabi doctrine and pious visits to the tombs of the saints were forbidden (1803). During the second occupation (1805), the population was even forced to eat dog meat due to a lack of food supplies (Daḥlān 2012: 10). In 1805 the

city of Medina was also conquered and the two holy cities were under Wahhabi control for seven years. Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān describes this historical phase as a period of isolation in which people were forced to adopt Wahhabi religious practices. According to the author of *Fitna al-Wahhābiyya*, it was in those years that the custom of sewing *kiswa* on a black cloth was introduced in Mecca and the consumption of tobacco was banned. Furthermore, the pilgrim caravans from Egypt and Bilād al-Šām were forbidden to enter Mecca; they carried the *maḥmal*, the ceremonial palanquin mounted on a camel, which was the symbol of the Ottoman Sultan's authority over the holy places.⁴ Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān then reconstructs the military clashes of the Wahhabis, first with Muḥammad ʿAlī and later with Ibrāhīm, up to the victory over the Wahhabis (1812-1813) in Mecca and Medina and, eventually, in Daʿriyya (1818), followed by the execution or deportation to Istanbul of some members of the Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and al-Saʿūd families, and finally the restoration of Ottoman authority over these holy places. Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān also reports that during the Wahhabi occupation the domes on the tombs of the saints were destroyed (Daḥlān 2012: 10), as in the case of the cemetery of al-Baqʿī in Medina, which was demolished in 1806, while the recitation of the prayers contained in *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* was prohibited (Daḥlān 2012: 14). The reference to this work, without naming its author, gives us an idea of how widespread its knowledge and recitation were among the Muslims of Mecca. *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt wa šawāriq al-anwār fi dhikr al-ṣalāt ʿal alā al-Nabī al-mukhtār* («Waymarks of Benefits and the Brilliant Burst of Lights in the Remembrance of Blessings on the Chosen Prophet») is a collection of prayers for the Prophet written by the great 15th-century Moroccan Sufi master Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad al-Ġazūlī (d. 1465), whose fame spread thanks to this work (Cornell 2021; Abid 2021). *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* testifies to the love of the believers for the Prophet Muḥammad (Ventura 1997), seen as the “Perfect Man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the intercessor (*šafīʿ*) of his community, the mediator par excellence between God and man, and the synthesis between the totality of the human race and the divine. For the Sufis, Muhammad ultimately personifies the reality or eternal light of the verb, the Muhammadian truth or light, *haqīqat muhammadiyya, nūr muhammadi* (Ventura 2017).

In the conclusion to his treatise, Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān defines Wahhabism as a movement that shed blood and plundered the two holy cities, “a *fitna* for the people of Islam” (Daḥlān 2012: 14).

The influence of Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān was far-reaching: he was an acknowledged Sunni scholar who held the position of Shāfiʿī *mufti* of Mecca and influenced the networks of the ʿAlawīs from Ḥaḍramawt. This family Sufi brotherhood is also called the ʿAlawīyya *ṭarīqa*, because they claim descent from both the Prophet and a Sufi order established in Ḥaḍramawt from the chain of transmission

⁴ For an overview of the material culture and visual arts related to pilgrimage to Mecca, see Porter (2012).

(*silsila*) going back to the teachings of the Andalusian-Maghrebian Sufi master Šu‘ayb Abū Madyan (d. 1197). The ‘Alawīs from Ḥaḍramawt spread Shāfī-Sunnism around the Indian Ocean and among the Swahili-speaking populations of East Africa (Bang 2003). In the 19th century, the ‘Alawīs disseminated the teachings and treatises of Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān, with whom several of them had studied in Mecca.

The treatises of Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān achieved great popularity. In particular, *Fitna al-Wahhābiyya* enjoyed enormous circulation in the 19th and 20th centuries, even outside of the networks of the ‘Alawīs, and established itself as the starting point for any anti-Wahhabi theological debate, as it remains today. It has been reprinted by various publishers, such as the Turkish Hakikat Katebi of Istanbul, a publisher associated with the İklas Foundation which was established in honour of Hüseyin Hilmi Işık (1911-2001) a disciple of Abdülhakîm Arvâsî (1865-1943), a renowned master of the *ṭarīqa* Khālidiyya Muğaddidiyya Naqşbandiyya. Hüseyin Hilmi Işık himself wrote a series of treatise against Wahhabism and can be seen as an heir to the anti-Wahhabī genre inaugurated by Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān.⁵

3. An Anti-Modern Sufi stance: Sīdī Salāma ar-Rādī

The roots of 20th- and 21st-century Islamism can be traced back to the religious revivalist movement of the late 19th and early 20th century, generically defined as Islamic reformism (*işlāh*). This movement spread through the works of a number of Muslim intellectuals with different orientations, including Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Afgānī (1838-1897), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) and Rašīd Riḍā (1865-1935). In order to reaffirm the centrality of Islam in colonised Muslim societies, they emphasised its political function, reinterpreting the faith from a rationalist and modern perspective (Hourani 1962: 103-244; Kedourie 1966; Sedgwick 2009). This movement was born to counterbalance the ongoing racialisation process against Muslims (Aydin 2017: 37-64), as a result of the contemptuous judgements of some Orientalists, including Ernest Renan (1823-1892), about the incompatibility of Islam with progress (Renan 1889: 375-401). In this context, the first structural attack on Sufism, its doctrines, practices and brotherhoods emerged. While up until then the criticism, however heated, had remained limited to specific doctrines or personalities, (with the exception of the structurally anti-Sufism doctrine of Wahhabism), at the beginning of the 20th century Sufism and its brotherhoods suffered for the first time a sort of general excommunication (*takfir*).

⁵ For an analysis of the cultural role of the Naqshbandi order in modern Turkey and of Hüseyin Hilmi Işık’s publications, see Algar (1985) and Peskes (2000).

From a reformist point of view, the Sufi doctrine, centred on an esoteric interpretation of the Koran, was seen as antithetical to modernity; consequently, since the Sufi masters perpetuated religious traditions incompatible with the rationalist vision, they were singled out as the main culprits for the backwardness of Islamic societies. The same internal organisation of the brotherhoods represented an obstacle to state centralisation, almost a “parallel” power.

Another form of Sufi-inspired cultural resistance can be found in the works of a contemporary Egyptian Sufi master, Sīdī Salāma ar-Rāḍī (1866-1939). His figure is associated with the establishment and affirmation of the Ḥāmīdiyya Šāḍīliyya brotherhood in a historical context of social and political changes hostile to Sufi brotherhoods, when, according to some researchers, traditional brotherhoods had proved incapable of attracting new disciples. In their analysis, the precise internal regulations (*qanūn*) of the Ḥāmīdiyya Šāḍīliyya made it an exception and an exemplary case of so-called *reformed Sufism* (Gilsenan 1973). On the contrary, for other scholars, the success of the Ḥāmīdiyya Šāḍīliyya was to be found in the patronage of the state, which made it a model brotherhood, rather than in its internal organisation (De Jong 1974; Luizard 1990: 27; Luizard 1991).

According to Paul Chacornac, Sīdī Salāma ar-Rāḍī had an intellectual relationship with René Guénon (1886-1951) during his stay in Egypt. Chacornac confined himself to the brief observation that “Guénon went to his meetings for a while, discussing religious problems with him” (Chacornac 1958: 95). It is not unlikely that some of the “religious problems” to which Chacornac alludes concerned the intrusion of the modern world and certain Western *deviations* into Egypt, which in those years was witnessing the introduction of scientific, spiritualist and occultist doctrines that had already become widespread in Europe a few decades earlier. In addition to being a spiritual master of great renown, Sīdī Salāma ar-Rāḍī was also well known for his interest in what he called (probably under the influence of his exchanges with Guénon) “modern deviations” and for denouncing the damage that the scientific view of Western origin was doing to Egyptian culture. His most important work, from this point of view, is a book entitled *al-Insāniyya* (“Humanity”), probably first published in 1938, in which the author criticises from a traditional point of view the biochemical, medical, evolutionary and spiritualist conceptions of the physical, psychic and spiritual constitution of the human being. The general tenor of this work is highly critical of modern Western civilisation and represents an attempt to propose a traditional Islamic viewpoint.

Ar-Rāḍī lashes out against atheists as follows: “Those who have lost the light of reason and have called themselves materialists. They have denied the existence of the Creator and God has blinded them to the marvellous miracles, the extraordinary composition and the surprising organisation, which neither leaves nor animals escape; indeed, all this derives from a Wise Regulator” (Ar-Rāḍī 1938: xx).

Ar-Rāḍī thus criticises those scientists who deny the existence of *ǧinns* and demons, “arguing that they do not really exist and ridiculing those who speak of their existence.” At the same time, he denounces those who spread “spiritism.” The combination of a critique of the Western materialistic worldview with a critique of “spiritism” is extremely rare among Muslim theologians of the time, and it is here, in particular, that the traces of ar-Rāḍī’s exchange with Guénon are most visible. Ar-Rāḍī writes: “In our time, some people have wanted to demonstrate the effects of spiritual powers. They have conversed with spirits and this phenomenon has been called the «science of spiritism» or «hypnosis.” This science is considered to be part of the magic, which is forbidden by *šarīʿa*, since it is not devoid of demonic influences. Some of them have become so immersed in this study that they speak of a real evocation of spirits, and this science continues to spread at the hands of the wicked and the non-religious. These are simple prodigies and not true spiritual charisms, for indeed we are dealing with magic, turpitude and deception!” (Ar-Rāḍī 1938: xx).

Al-Insāniyya represents a different kind of intellectual resistance from *Fitna al-Wahhābiyya*, a polemic against Western scientific ideas as well as what were considered fashionable spiritual practices at the time. Unlike Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān’s treatise, which reflects a debate within the Muslim world, namely that between the Sufi religious establishment in Mecca and emerging Wahhabism, Sīdī Salāma ar-Rāḍī’s book attacks aspects of European positivism that attracted and influenced some exponents of Islamic reformism, such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh (Hammond 2022).

4. Sufi resilience against state censorship: Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān ‘Abduhu al-Burhānī

Another example of intellectual resistance is provided by Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān ‘Abduhu al-Burhānī (1904-1983), a Sudanese master who, with the introduction of his own brotherhood, the Burhāniyya, in the second half of the 20th century, began to find a large following in Egypt. The aspect that I would like to underline here is that through his Sufi teachings, which conflicted with the reformist demands promoted by the Egyptian state, Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān represented an emblematic case of resistance to an “official” and “reformed” form of Sufism promoted by the state.

Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān had introduced his *ṭarīqa* into Egypt in the 1930’s, but by the 1950’s his disciples still numbered only a few dozen people. During the following years it expanded, thanks not only to the strong charisma of its founder (Mayeur Jouen 2009), but also to the policies of the Nasser government (1956-1970), which allowed and encouraged the activities of Sufi orders, while at the same time exercising strict control over them (De Jong 1983).

A new religious policy emerged under President Sadat (1970-1981). Under pressure from radical Islam, the regime brought the *al-maǧlis al-aʿlā li ʿl-ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya* (“Supreme Council of Sufi Orders”)—

established as the *mağlis al-šūfi* (“Sufi Council”) as early as the late 19th century (De Jong 1978)—under its strict control and adopted a literal reading of the Koran, promoting a kind of state fundamentalism. The new political atmosphere was very difficult for the Sufi orders and especially for the Burhāniyya.

By the 1970’s, the Burhāniyya had reached about three million followers. When Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān travelled to Egypt in 1974, the train he took from Khartoum to Cairo was greeted at every station by a celebratory crowd who greeted him as if he were a statesman.

In that same year, however, controversy and subsequent censorship erupted over his work, *Tabri‘at al-ḍimma fī nuṣḥ al-umma wa taḍkirat ūlī al-albāb li-l-sayr ilā al-ṣawwāb* (“Purification of Conscience in the Admonition of the Religious Community and a Warning to Those Endowed with Intellect towards Righteousness”). His previous book, *Intiṣār awliyā‘ al-Raḥmān ‘alā awliyā‘ al-Šayṭān* (“The Triumph of the Friends of the Merciful over the Friends of Satan”), published in 1970, had instead gone unnoticed, partly because it was only intended for circulation within the brotherhood. Although *Tabri‘at al-ḍimma* was mainly addressed only to the disciples of his *ṭarīqa*, a group of Salafists sent copies to al-Azhar University and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, labelling its contents as heretical. The investigation conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior led to the confiscation of the book in 1975 (the same year as the beginning of the controversy over the reprinting of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, which lasted until 1979). All activities of the brotherhood were banned and a violent press campaign was launched against Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān and his *ṭarīqa*.

The campaign was mainly conducted by certain periodicals, such as *Taṣawwuf Islāmī*, which had also published articles by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and *al-Aḥrām*, which published many defamatory letters against ṣayḥ Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān and his disciples in the following years. Among the many reports that circulated about him was a recurring one, according to which the Sudanese master lived in a luxurious residence, near which he had built a large *zāwiya*. The controversy that erupted over *Tabri‘at al-ḍimma* was a true example of anti-Sufi censorship. Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān’s work was only an anthology of Sufi texts and did not present any original ideas, limiting itself to recurring themes in Sufism, such as the hidden meaning of the Koran, the importance of inspiration (*ilhām*) in its interpretation, the figure of the Prophet and the *ahl al-bayt* (the family of the Prophet).

The volume was essentially a collection of several authors divided into four parts: in the first, Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān dealt with the Prophet and the pre-existence of the *nūr muḥammadiyya* (“Muhammadian light”), faithfully reporting the writings of ‘Abd Allāh Abū l-Barakāt al-Yaf‘ī, Aḥmad al-Salawī, Ġalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī and the *Qāb qawsayn wa multaqa‘ al-nūmāsayn* (“At a Distance of Two Arcs and the Meeting between the Two Laws”) by ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Ġilī. The second part dealt instead with *mi‘rāğ* (the celestial journey of the Prophet) and the hierarchies of the saints: *quṭb*, *awṭād*, *nuğabā’* and

abdāl. The third part contained quotations from parts of *Ġawāhir al-Bihār* by Ġalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī and of fragments of *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* by Ibn ‘Arabī on the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya* (“Muhammadian truth”) and the *ahl al-bayt*. Finally, the fourth consisted of the writings of Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān himself on the path to be followed for spiritual realisation. Following the controversy surrounding *Tabri‘at al-dimma*, the *ṭarīqa* Burhāniyya in Egypt did not obtain official recognition from the Supreme Council of Sufi Brotherhoods. It is therefore believed that the case erupted because some Sufi doctrines, which should have remained secret, were made public (Hoffman 1995: 300-327; Leccese 2017).

Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān was able to spread his brotherhood in a historical context that was unwilling to accept Sufi thought. In his preaching, he actively worked to counter the false beliefs that in his opinion had been introduced by Wahhabism and in which he identified a degeneration of Islam using the same arguments that Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān had used a century earlier.

The case of Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān ultimately reveals the paradox of the Muslim states that have set themselves the goal of regulating Sufism and censoring classical Sufi treatises, which to this day continue to be the intellectual heritage of a Sufi tradition that has regenerated itself over the centuries through its most charismatic Sufi masters.

5. Conclusion

While the three authors proposed as case studies differ profoundly from each other, they are equally representative of a form of Sufi intellectual activism that is characteristic of Islamic societies: each of them not only contributed to the religious debate in his home country and historical era, but went a step further by criticising attempts to modernise Islam in his writings.

Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān (1817–1886) was presented first among the three authors analysed because of his crucial role in influencing the teachings of the Sufi masters of the following centuries and their apologetic literary works, and thus in defending Sufism. Daḥlān’s critical approach reflects a historical period in which Sufi practices were popular and still fully accepted by the religious establishment. The fact that Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān was the Mufti of Mecca and a recognised scholar shows how these polemics were fully integrated into the scholarly religious debate of official Islam, in which Sufism and its doctrines occupied a prominent position. *Fitna al-Wahhābiyya* thus became a reference work in the Sufi networks of Daḥlān’s time, as well as those of the following centuries. The popularity of this work is evidenced by its numerous reprints and translations into different languages. From a Sufi perspective, the Wahhabi movement, which claims to return to the origins of Islam by rejecting practices that have become entrenched over the centuries, actually embodies an early form of modernisation of Islam.

The second author, Sīdī Salāma ar-Rādī (1866-1939), exemplifies the intellectual climate in Egypt in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. The increasing encroachment of European colonialism, both economically and culturally, exposed Muslim intellectuals to the influence of the values established in Europe since the Enlightenment (Leccese 2023). Influenced by the French intellectual René Guénon, ar-Rādī devoted one of his works, *Al-Insāniyya*, to the refutation of positivism and “spiritualism,” the latter of which was particularly in vogue in France at the beginning of the 20th century and had been introduced into cosmopolitan intellectual circles in Cairo.

The third and last author examined is the Sudanese Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān ‘Abduhu al-Burhānī (1904-1983), an exemplary case of the Sufi masters’ claim to autonomy in a historical context characterised by attempts to “govern” Sufism. In particular, at the beginning of the 20th century, the Egyptian authorities supported the development of a “reformed” Sufism, i.e. one that would be highly regulated and would promote “sober” practices and doctrines under government control. Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān ‘Abduhu al-Burhānī, a charismatic Sudanese master with a large following of disciples, represented a danger in the eyes of the state authorities. The incompatibility of his teachings with the canons of reformed Sufism and the great popularity of his confraternity, the Burhāniyya, led to an emblematic case of anti-Sufi censorship that began with the banning of one of his works, *Tabri‘at al-ḍimma*.

Our analysis allows us to argue that Sufism—with its doctrines and rituals—still represents the beating heart of Islamic culture today. While it is true that its involvement in intellectual debate is not always manifest, the mediating function of Sufism is still active and relevant today both in the life of contemporary Muslim societies and in globalised Western ones,⁶ bringing with it signs of a richness intrinsic to its long cultural production.

⁶ A significant example of the contribution of contemporary Sufis to this kind of debate is given by the very concise but effective article *How Would You Respond to the Claim that Sufism is Bid‘a?*, originally published on the Web in 1985 and republished on various websites (Keller 1985), by Nuh Ha Mim Keller, an American convert who after training at the University of Al-Azhar, has lived in Jordan since 1980 with a small community of disciples. Another example of this Sufi intellectual activism is the book entitled *Refuting Isis* (Al-Yaqoubi 2016). This refutation of the religious and ideological foundations of ISIS, first published in 2015 by Muḥammad al-Ya‘qūbī, a Syrian Sufi master belonging to the Ṣādīliyya, must be counted among the most noteworthy documents in the panorama of the Sufi doctrinal-political engagement in recent years to counter the spread of Islamic radicalism. The work follows a twenty-eight-page document written in Arabic and published on 19 September 2014, entitled *Open Letter to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi*, initially signed by one hundred and twenty Islamic authorities—many of them Sufis—from around the world. In both texts, the ideological and doctrinal principles of Da‘ish are challenged, according to the classical instruments of Islamic doctrine.

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Uncompromising accommodation

Remarks on modern Iranian Shi'i Sufism's attitude to resistance

Alessandro Cancian

Starting from the report of an incident occurred in Tehran in 2018, which triggered a wave of repression and resistance involving members of a popular Iranian Sufi order, the Ne'matollāhī-Gonābādī, this article explores the ways and forms in which modern Shi'i Sufism articulates its identity at the social and political level and vis-à-vis the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In doing so, this essay tackles the ways in which this identity is voiced and how individual members of the mystical order manifest their proximity to some areas of the reformist camp. This political vitality and outspokenness, along with forms of resistance adopted by the members of the brotherhood in the face of the increasingly pronounced aggressiveness of the Islamic Republic towards Sufism, testifies the complexity of the nature of the order's relationship with the political sphere. The analysis of the texts and the praxis of the order's notables and their disciples shows that the oft-repeated declaration of distance from politics are genuine but far from simplistic, a far cry from unconditional political quietism Sufism is often accused of. By addressing this complexity, in this article the author sets out to address the many paradoxes inherent in this clash and the battle for the appropriation of the legacy of mysticism in contemporary Iranian Twelver Shi'ism, which is grafted onto a broader discourse on political authority in Shi'ism and revolutionary Iran.

Keywords: Ne'matollāhiyya, Gonābādī Sufism, Shi'i Sufism, Twelver Shi'ism, Islam and religion, authority in Islam, resistance, Iran.

1. Introduction

On the night of 19 February 2018, hundreds of people took to the street in a residential neighbourhood in north Tehran. Demonstrators of all ages, including women and teenagers, had gathered on Golestān-e Haftom with a very specific aim: defending, at any cost, the residence of Nūr 'Alī Tābandeh (d. 2019), the then 90-year-old master of a Sufi order, the Ne'matollāhī-Gonābādī. Tābandeh, whose *tariqat* (lit. "way," generally used to indicate an organised brotherhood) name was Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh, was the *qoṭb* (lit. "pole," meaning the supreme master) of the brotherhood and, as long as he was alive, the most

important personality of Shi‘i Sufism. He passed away in December 2019. Possibly the most influential mystical order in contemporary Iran, the Gonābādīs have been the preferred target, over the last two decades, of hostile initiatives by some sectors within the authorities of the Islamic Republic. The attention, it goes without saying, was neither called for, nor appreciated by the Sufis.

In the preceding days, the Gonābādī dervishes had gathered in front of the police station on Pasdaran Avenue to protest against the arrest of a member of the community, Nematollah Riahi, a few days earlier. The demonstrations soon turned into clashes with the police and *basij* forces (the volunteer paramilitary militia), as a result of which some police officers and demonstrators lost their lives.¹ Over the following days, more than three hundred dervishes were arrested (Radio Free Europe 2018), many of whom are still detained in three of Tehran’s prisons. Nūr ‘Alī Tābandeh was put under strict surveillance, confined in his house, and cut off from his followers, with whom he kept communicating through public statements published on different media outlets connected with the Order until his demise on 24 December 2019.²

The events represented the culmination of a trend initiated in 2006, when the demolition of the *hoseyniyyeh* (the Iranian equivalent of a Sufi lodge) “Sharī‘at” in Qom inaugurated an escalation of intimidation and repression (Aftab News 2006), and triggered a pattern of increasingly brazen and open defiance of the Gonābādīs toward the Islamic Republic. A form of resistance, no doubt, that has specificities and peculiarities in the framework of both the history of the order and the recent history of Iran. In the following pages, I will try to put these events in their wider context with reference to both these respects.

2. Resistance, Shi‘i Islam and Sufism

In covering the theme of modern and contemporary Shi‘i Sufism and its elements of resistance one needs to address the question of what paradigm of resistance one should use. One might consider the Islamic Republic of Iran’s claims to some kind of moral leadership, or at least moral primacy, of the “Axis of resistance;” the ideological foundations of the State within the history of Shi‘ism, i.e. a religion whose history is marked by resistance and protest; and the trends of resistance to the *velāyat-e faqīh*

¹ See the long and detailed report on the events contained in the report “Living Under Suppression: The Situation of the Gonabadi Dervishes in Iran” (IHRDC 2021). It is an activist group’s report, and as such it needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. However, judging from my knowledge of the events, it is overall fairly reliable.

² Nūr ‘Alī Tābandeh Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh’s successor is Seyyed ‘Alī Reḏā Jadhbi. His *ṭarīqat* name is Thābet ‘Alī Shāh and he is currently the 40th “pole” (*qoṭb*) recognized by Gonābādī Sufis.

(the government/hieropolitical authority of the doctor of Islamic law) and its provisions within Iran. Thus, it is of crucial importance here to briefly assess the subject of resistance and the way I am using the term in this essay.

Despite recent proliferation of scholarship on resistance, consensus on its definition is far from achieved (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). Across disciplines, resistance has been extensively analysed from different points of view, from social control and structure to agency, resulting in a multitude of theoretical approaches. Some of these approaches occupy a middle ground between political science, jurisprudence and philosophy (Agamben 2003: 9–21; Zevnik 2009) sharing some elements with activist political agendas, as testified by influential and fashionable works such as *Empire* (Hardt and Negri 2000).³ One of the issues that stands out from a perfunctory look at the literature is the lack of focus and of a consistent framework—an element that, as I will explain below, may even be an advantage.

In western political thought, the concept surfaces in early modern debates about dealing with tyrannical rules, to become in the 19th–20th centuries usually referred to by anarchists, up to its widespread use in relation to the fight against Fascism in Europe and colonial and neo-colonial forms of occupation and oppression (Scheuerman 2021).

A degree of ambiguity seems to be inherent to the term itself. “Resistance” is used with reference to both violent and nonviolent political action aimed to overturn the status quo, but it has also been used by conservative movements to highlight resistance to progressive and liberal change. There seems to be one common element, however, pertaining to taking passive or active initiative to establish or reinstall a legitimate moral order (Scheuerman 2021). This last element resonates with medieval Twelver Shi‘i debates on the legitimacy of collaborating with a tyrannical ruler (Madelung 1980; Rasekh 2016).

In light of this, to best assess the framework in which I am setting the following discourse, one needs to take into due consideration a number of factors, because the debate on resistance and its legitimacy, if not obligation, needs cultural, political and juridical context. If one considers the differences between Muslim and Western classical theories on the very nature of legislative authority (Hallaq 2014), It becomes apparent that theorisation primarily based on Western political history as a reference cannot be applied to the Muslim world without necessary adjustments.

In this regard, because I am here analysing intra-Shi‘i dynamics, two factors seem pertinent. The first is the absence of the legitimate ruler, the Imam. For Twelver Shi‘is, the current Imam, the only legitimate political ruler, has been in occultation, or concealment (*ghayba*) since the year 940, and will

³ On the intellectual thread linking Giorgio Agamben and Tony Negri, see Attell (2009).

only return “at the end of times” (*ākhir al-zamān*) to restore justice on earth. Until then, no rule is fully legitimate (Arjomand 1979). The issue is obviously heatedly debated, for there is a trend in Shi‘i political theory that considers the authority of the doctors of the religious law as fully subsidiary to that of the hidden Imam (for a history, see Sachedina 1998; Madelung 1982). However, that the fact that the religious and political authority ultimately belongs to the Imam only is hardly questionable. The second factor is that at the root of Twelver Shi‘ism lies the sense of having suffered from the most hideous possible injustice, because the divinely ordained leadership of the first Imam, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661), has been usurped (Madelung 1997). Since then, the history of his followers (the Shi‘a, meaning “the party” of ‘Alī) is a long one of exclusion, marginalisation, persecution and oppression, from which derives as a logical conclusion the need to resist.

Therefore, and given these caveats, while there is no consensus on a univocal use of resistance as an analytical tool, for the sake of this article I will use it with the flexible meaning of civil resistance to an authoritarian state rule. While I second the need for analytical rigour, and the necessity of taking into consideration the nuances highlighted above, I am equally convinced that an obsession for rigidly categorising everything would impede any possible kind of understanding of sociological concepts, leading to the paradoxical result of the deconstruction of *all* categories.

3. Modern Iranian Sufism and resistance

Before rising to the leadership of the possibly most influential Sufi order of Iran (Cancian 2013), the Gonābādī branch of the Ni‘matullāhiyya,⁴ Nūr ‘Alī Tābandeh Majdhūb ‘Alī Shāh⁵ was a lawyer and jurist (educated both in the secular and the religious systems), and held positions in the judiciary, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Justice in pre-revolutionary Iran (Sufism.ir 2007). In 1953, he moved to Paris to continue his higher education, obtaining a degree in French literature and a doctorate in law. Tābandeh maintained a connection with the francophone world through successive research and study trips in Paris. Among the results of this connection was an intellectual relationship with the celebrated French Iranologist and philosopher Henry Corbin and the publication in Iran of two translations: Roger Lacombe’s *La crise de la démocratie* (Lacombe 2004) and Frantz Fanon’s *L’An Cinq de la Révolution Algérienne* (Fanon 2006). The latter translation in particular, published by Haghghat Publishing (*Enteshārāt-e Haqīqat*), which can be considered the order’s semi-official publishing house, is a testimony

⁴ On which see Lewisohn (1998), Pourjavady and Lamborn Wilson (1978).

⁵ The following information on the life of Nūr ‘Alī Tābandeh are mainly based on his biography: Khebreh-Farshjī (2007).

to an unflinching orientation toward an ethos of resistance by the order, which in its traditional outlook, does not flirt with universalist, post-Islamic postures as, for example, the Munawwar^ʿalishāhī branch does. An apparent paradox here emerges of a mystical movement that, while preserving elements of anti-colonial thought, stands up with staunch determination against a polity that claims to represent the voice of the oppressed and the wretched of the world.⁶

4. Gonābādī sufism and the issue of authority

The relationship of the Gonābādīs, and of other Sufi affiliations for that matter, with the powers that be and the various forms of rule, is obviously far more complex than a simple dynamic compromise/resistance would suggest. It has been suggested that Sufi approaches to domination and resistance have a particular tendency to ambiguity in Shiʿī spheres (Ortner 1995): legitimacy, in Shiʿī Islam, is subordinated to the Imamate (Van den Bos 2015). More than ambiguity, however, I would suggest that Sufism in Iran, and *a fortiori* within Shiʿism, had to negotiate its denominational positioning through changes of regimes, resisting assimilation, inculturation or outright suppression in different ways. Until the events of 2006, there were indeed Gonābādī dervishes in Iran who viewed their religiosity as a protest against the Islam promoted by the state. However, their influence was comparable to those who sought to align Sufism with the religious framework of the Islamic Republic (Van den Bos 2002: 3).

Negotiation, accommodation and resistance have been, however, elements inherent to the very birth of modern Shiʿī Sufism, as my long-running study of the *tafsīr Bayān al-saʿāda* tries to articulate (Cancian 2022; Cancian 2019). Shiʿī Sufism underwent different waves of persecution since its return to Iran from India in the late 18th century. After its first-generation masters were persecuted (and some even executed at the order of the religious jurists; see Cancian 2020b), the subsequent generation, in roughly the first half of the 19th century, accommodated to the exoteric religious authority, mingling with them almost undercover (Tabandeh 2021). The writing of the *Bayān al-saʿāda* by Solṭān ʿAlī Shāh Gonābādī, the eponymous master of the Gonābādī branch of the Niʿmatullāhiyya, represents a vocal performative act of writing, which had the power of a foundational act, claiming legitimacy for Sufism within Twelver Shiʿism, while at the same time negotiating those elements of charismatic authority

⁶The works and the transcripts of the declarations and sermons of Nūr ʿAlī Tābandeh can be found here: [http://www.sufism.ir/MysticalBooks\(6\).php](http://www.sufism.ir/MysticalBooks(6).php).

and uncompromising Sufi doctrine that earned the first generation of masters persecution and accusations of impiety.

This necessity of negotiation highlights a paradox. Sufi mysticism, in its varied manifestations, has been part of the social fabric of Iranian Shi‘ism since its dawn.⁷ At the same time, however, Sufism lies at the core of a religiopolitical conundrum that surfaces in moments of political crisis or instability. This conundrum seems to have entered a new cycle of visibility over the last two decades.

It is appropriate at this point to return to Nūr ‘Alī Tābandeh. While one can find in the master’s numerous declarations the reiteration of the traditional apoliticism of his predecessors,⁸ one cannot avoid noticing that this apoliticism is better articulated as equidistance from political parties, or the absence of a political line dictated by the order to the disciples. In fact, the life of Tābandeh is testimony to his concern for the social and political affairs of his country. In his youth, after supporting Mohammad Mossadegh’s⁹ nationalisation of the oil industry, in the late 1950s he was a member of the Central Committee of the National Resistance Movement (*Naḥḍat-e Moqāvemat-e Mellī*, Khebreh-Farshjī 2007: 10), founded by Ayatollahs Maḥmūd Ṭāleqānī and Reḍā Zanjānī. Later he was defendant lawyer of several revolutionary and political figures before and after the revolution, notably among them the Ayatollah Mortaḍā Pasandideh, brother of Rūḥollāh Khomeini (IRNA 25 December 2019). Tābandeh’s activity as a judicial expert in state institutions has been highlighted above. In 1990, before becoming Great Master of the Gonābādī order, he was among the signatories of a petition to the then President Hashemi Rafsanjani, in which a reform of the *velāyat-e faqīh* was deemed necessary to avoid autocratic rule (BBC Persian 24 December 2019). As a result, he was sentenced to serve eight months in prison. More recently, before the 2009 presidential elections, even though no official statement was produced, Mehdi Karrubi’s vocal defence of the dervishes in the wake of several attacks on Sufi gathering places starting with the 2006 attack in Qom, resulted in the dervishes’ more or less open endorsement of the reformist candidate’s bid for presidency. As we will see below, the pressure placed on the order over the last decade forced it to resist in ways more open than in the past century.

Sufis in Iran have a solid social base across classes, and Gonābādī dervishes are represented in all strata of society, sometimes discretely even among government officials (Selsele-ye Ne‘matollāhī 2008). The trend appears to have undergone a period of consolidation under the guidance of Sāleḥ ‘Alī

⁷ For an overview, see Lewisohn (1999).

⁸ On apoliticism in the Ni‘matullāhiyya, see Cancian (2020a).

⁹ Moḥammad Moṣaddeq (d. 1967), was a nationalist politician who, under his term as prime minister (1951-1953), nationalized the Iranian oil industry. He was overthrown by a US-assisted monarchical coup in 1953 (Katouzian 1990; Abrahamian 2013).

Shāh (d. 1950; Gramlich 1965: 64), likely explaining the failure of the state and part of the religious establishment's endeavors to eradicate the order. This social weight, coupled with the sway that the masters hold over their disciples, is ample grounds for the state to harbour suspicions regarding the dervishes' allegiance to the principles of the Islamic Republic, viewing them as a potential threat.

In the next sections, I will analyse the sensitive elements of the Gonābādī Sufis' thought in matters pertaining to authority and political legitimacy. In this framework, I will refer to the struggle to reclaim the heritage of mysticism in contemporary Twelver Shi'ism, which is grounded in the wider context of the discourse on political authority in Shi'i Islam and in post-revolutionary Iran. By referring to this framework, I intend to assess if, and to what degree, the attrition between the Gonābādīs and the Islamic Republic is the result of an intrinsic political element existent within the Order, or if it is produced by general dynamics of resistance to the state, independent of the teachings of the order.

5. Gonābādī Sufism, society and politics in the 19th and 20th centuries

According to a report by an English missionary of the early 20th century, the then *qoṭb* of the Gonābādī Sufis, Nūr 'Alī Shāh II (d. 1918) authored a short treatise in which he invited the people of Iran to unite under the aegis of Sufism, to put an end to the chaos and disintegration of Iran in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 (Miller 1923).¹⁰ While Miller's note is vague and lacks information for locating the source for this treatise,¹¹ his reference highlights the ambiguity and epistemological instability of the articulation of authority among Twelver Shi'is in contemporary times. Nūr 'Alī Shāh's claim for authority virtually places the master in the same camp with that part of the Shi'i religious elite that expressed need for the members of the clergy to take direct control of the state. One needs to consider, however, both the exceptionality of the time in which the declaration appeared (if ever, in 1918), and the fact that Nūr 'Alī Shāh's successor was a staunch opposer of the Sufis' involvement in politics (Gramlich 1965: 54). Nūr 'Alī Shāh could be considered an exception to the Order's general trend in the 20th century, in some way attuned to the expansive attitude of Twelver Shi'i ulama of the time. This expansive tendency is an essential trait of the "rationalist" clergy (*uṣūlī*, lit. "principlist," from the

¹⁰ Miller arrived in Khorasan five years after the demise of Nūr 'Alī Shāh II. He did not have the opportunity to meet with his successor Ṣāleḥ 'Alī Shāh during his sojourn. The main source for his report was Mollā Ḥādī Sabzavārī's grandson Ḥājj 'Emād al-Dīn, who was one of Nūr 'Alī Shāh's authorised shaykhs.

¹¹ No evidence exists, to my knowledge, of this book having ever been written. Nūr 'Alī Shāh briefly touched upon the matter in a declaration published in the newspaper *Īrān* on 14 April 1918 (Hey'at-e Taḥrīriyye 2016–7: 155–157), so there is a chance Miller was referring to that.

expression *uṣūl al-fiqh* “principles of jurisprudence”) in the modern period (Heern 2015), and the Sufis’s main referent in their process of negotiation of their position within Shi‘ism.

Ni‘matullāhī Sufis consolidated their doctrinal foundations in the framework of Twelver Shi‘ism in the late 19th century. At the time, the dispute between “rationalist” and “traditionist” ulama (respectively, *uṣūlī* and *akhbārī*) had been long won by the former (Newman 1992). The victory established the rationalists as the main religious reference for Twelver Shi‘ism (today the term refers, in general, to Uṣūlism) but religious scholars in late Qajar Iran tended to include revered traditionists among their ranks, for an outright exclusion of characters whose rank and knowledge was universally recognised would have not been credible (Newman 2005). The Gonābādīs eventually occupied a position of compromise (Cancian 2021), resorting to the blurred doctrinal lines that existed between some of the most renown protagonists of the dispute (Gleave 1994; Gleave 2007: 56–58; Heern 2015: 52–53), and simultaneously trying to avoid division within the community. This position, tactical as it may be, interrogates the issue of the Gonābādīs’ allegiance to Uṣūlism, and therefore is relevant to our investigation of the Sufis’ resistance to the status quo. Although the Gonābādīs claim citizenship within *uṣūlī* Shi‘ism, their opinions on spiritual authority are peculiarly inspired by both classical Sufism and early Shi‘i esotericism and its idea of the transcendent nature of the Imam. This combination has a bearing on their adherence to the doctrine of the *marja‘iyya* (the primacy of the most learned of the doctors of the law; see Walbridge 2001).

A look to the work of Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh Gonābādī (d. 1909),¹² the eponym master and 34th *qoṭb* of the order, is particularly useful in this regard. Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh proposes a binary structure of religious authority in which the doctors of the law are the custodians of only one of the aspects of Shi‘ism’s spiritual authority (*walāya*, or *valāyat/velāyat* in Persian).¹³ Their legitimacy derives from an uninterrupted chain of transmission, parallel to the one from which the Sufis derive their own authority (Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh, 2000–1: 129–130). The master proposes an alliance between the ulama and the mystics that would restore the unity broken under the Safavid dynasty (15th–19th centuries). Because in Qajar Iran the discourse on authority is intrinsically connected to that on involvement in politics and its legitimacy, the treatment of the theme of *walāya* by Ni‘matullāhī authors is essential.¹⁴ To be sure, there is no systematic “political thought” of Gonābādī Sufism. Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh does hint, in

¹² On Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh’s life, works and legacy see Reḡā ‘Alī Shāh (2004–5), Pazouki (n.d.: 69–83), Cancian (2014: 88–10).

¹³ On this complex and articulated notion in Shi‘i Islam, see Amir-Moezzi (2002), Corbin (1971–2 :33–38). In Sufism see Chodkiewicz (1986), Palmer (2019).

¹⁴ See Van den Bos (2015: 190–207) and Scharbordt (2010).

some of his works and his private correspondence, at a general political pedagogy, referring to responsibility to the nation and offering some practical pieces of advice on how to deal with the social and political spheres, but nowhere does this come close to any kind of political theology, let alone ideology.

The presence of political discourse in the masters' works can be described as tenuous, existing but surfacing sporadically and without systematicity. It is possible, however, to connect the dispersed dots and try to produce a discourse on the matter, for silence itself can be telling. I have already mentioned Nūr 'Alī Shāh's declaration. The same master authored a treatise on the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*, see above) that would place him in the Uṣūlī camp, and could be read as a performative act of speech. It must be noted, in this regard, that uṣūlī tendencies have always gone hand in hand with the ulama expanding their claims over politics (Amir-Moezzi 1993). However, one can regard Nūr 'Alī Shāh as an exception, also leading a life that was different and more adventurous than that of the other masters. Solṭān 'Alī Shāh never provided details of how a Sufi should put his or her responsibility as a member of the community in practice. The master's position seems to represent a synthesis of quietist currents flowing through classical Sufism and the traditional Shi'ī idea that, whereas no political regime has full legitimacy during the absence of the Imam, society needs law and a power able to enforce it to function. With these powers, one need to compromise. Solṭān 'Alī Shāh's thought here presents some obscure points (Van den Bos 2015: 203), and hence, more than a century since his assassination in 1909, there is still debate on his support for the Constitution, or lack thereof (although my own opinion on the matter is that there is no substantial reason to not take his equidistance at face value, as articulated in Cancian 2022; also Pazouki n.d.: 78–9). In one passage of the *Valāyat-nāmeḥ*, Solṭān 'Alī Shāh refers to the “administration of the country” (Solṭān 'Alī Shāh 1984–5: 158–63), alluding to the wrongdoings committed by Qajar provincial authorities as forerunning the fall of the monarchical order. However, the whole discourse on the administration of the country occurs in the wider context of the master's continuous reference to the correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm. According to Solṭān 'Alī Shāh, as much as each believer is enjoined to keep his or her inner microcosmic realm/country (*mamlakat-e ṣaghīr*) in functioning order, he or she has also responsibility for the macrocosmic country/realm (*mamlakat-e kabīr*; Solṭān 'Alī Shāh 1984–5: 158). This seems hardly an indication of factional politics. Yet, on the other hand, biographical sources have Solṭān 'Alī Shāh publicly denouncing Qajar autocracy and praying for the premature demise of the ruler Nāṣer al-Dīn Shāh (Reḍā 'Alī Shāh 2004–5: 138).

In the absence of an open, religiously motivated and state-supported attempt at containing or eradicating Sufism, therefore, there are no structural elements in the work of Solṭān 'Alī Shāh that

allow a reconstruction of his political stance. Resistance to oppression (*zōlm*), which is a constituent element of Twelver Shi‘ism and would later become one of the Islamic Republic’s leitmotifs, seems to leave space to other, more pressing concerns and to the master’s project of integrating mature Gonābādī Shi‘i Sufism into the doctrinal categories of Uṣūlīs (Cancian 2022). The form of government, for Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh, is not essential but, rather, instrumental and disposable. The value of the political and juridical or normative framework is relative; what really matters is the spiritual and material prosperity of the community. The master explains this in several passages of different works, in which he connects this relativity to the complementary duality of *islām* and *īmān*, that is, respectively the submission to an exoteric order and the realisation of the real faith through initiation. *Islam* is what provides the legal framework for the tidy deployment of social life, having the function of “preserving the blood and the property of people”. *Īmān*, on the other hand, attainable through the initiation, is the means through which the faithful is granted access to the *walāya* of the Imams (Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh 1964–5, I: 50–51; Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh 1984–5: 43–7; Solṭān ‘Alī Shāh 2008–9: 187).

6. Conclusion: compromising resistance, uncompromising accommodation

During a meeting I had with the Nūr ‘Alī Tābandeh over the Nouruz holidays of 2004 (March 2004) I briefly broached the subject of the order’s stance towards political and social issues (*Goftogū-hā* 2004). To the question of whether or not he thought there was a hope of containing mounting injustice, the master stated that “when the flood is coming, all you can do is protect what you can protect of your house, so you can reconstruct from that once the flood has receded.” While it did not sound like a manifesto for political action, the statement pointed at the necessity of resisting injustice. After all, Nūr ‘Alī Tābandeh was the master of a mystical order that has endured persecution and attempts of eradication since the late 19th century, in waves of different intensity. When I met the master again in 2009, a few days before the contested presidential elections that marked the second mandate of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Nūr ‘Alī Shāh made a clear reference to how his movement would meet the increasingly brazen attacks that it had been targeted with in the last few years. His words “we do not turn the other cheek” seem uncannily foresighted from the vantage point of the events of Golestān-e Haftom. Shi‘ism is characterised by a distinctive tendency to protest in particular in its interface with its gnostic elements, to the point that it has been suggested that the interface between it and Sufism should be located as much in the insularity of its mystical theology as in the revolutionary practice of such rebellious movements as the Sarbedārān or the Ḥurūfīs: its philosophical tradition was “as much theorized in secluded royal libraries as practiced on militant battlefields of history, poised precisely against those monarchies” (Dabashi 2011: 142-143).

The rhetoric of resistance imbues every corner of the Islamic Republic of Iran's discursive practices (Kramer *et al.* 1987), and even reform attempts from within are looked at and talked about as reactionary initiatives aimed to crush the front of revolutionary resistance (Milani 2001). In this context, Sufism needs to negotiate its way to represent its resistance, which is a matter of survival, even before being a matter of principle, as genuine and not prejudicially poised to join any effort to overturn the order of the State. At the same time, there is the need to preserve Sufism's, and Gonābādī's in particular, emphasis on equidistance.

In a conversation published on one of the semi-official websites of the order (Selsele-ye Ne'matollāhī 2008), Nūr 'Alī Tābandeh commented extensively on the recent wave of anti-Sufism that hit the dervishes in Iran. It is a very informative and outspoken piece, in which the master does not spare vehement criticism of the Iranian system. The crux of the issue is identified in the preoccupation of the ulama (and of the political system dominated by the ulama in the Islamic Republic) with the growing popularity of Sufism, and of the Ni'matullāhiyya in particular. The master touches upon different matters, from the history of the relationship between the order and the state in the latest two centuries, to issues of familial succession of the leadership and the construction of the shrine of the masters of the order in Beidokht, near Gonābād. However, the government's preoccupation with the "development of organised Sufism" seems to be one of underlying themes. While admitting that the Gonābādīs have expanded their influence in the social sphere in the last century (he uses the word *towṣe'eh*, used in modern Persian for "development"), Nūr 'Alī Tābandeh stresses that this development is just a manifestation of the inner states of the dervishes, and that the State's political outlook on it is entirely misplaced. This reactive pressure, which the master affirms to have hit the Sufis with different intensity from the late Safavid times onwards, reached a tipping point in the last two decades, in parallel with the increasing growth of Sufism and other alternative spiritualities (also potentially offering the opportunity for expressing forms of resistance; Doostdar 2018), and determined the elements of resistance to intertwine with the uncompromising tendency to accommodation inherent to the order.

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“The bitter wine of my life” Bitterness and tragicity in *The Blind Owl*

Mehrdad Bidgoli

Sadegh Hedayat’s masterpiece *The Blind Owl* (1936) is repeatedly called the greatest Iranian modern novel and one of the best literary productions of the twentieth century. Its contemporary modernist movements such as surrealism, symbolism and expressionism are the ones Hedayat had been familiar with and they become the medium via which his anonymous narrator communicates his story. Drawing upon Zhao Feng’s recent essay on surrealism and soteriological desire, this intervention suggests that surrealism for Hedayat in *The Blind Owl* does not play a soteriological role as it does for many surrealists, Andre Breton chief among them. Hedayat’s version seems much more extreme, cynical and tragic, delicately flavored with a persistent existential sense of *bitterness* which pervades the text.

Keywords: Sadegh Hedayat; *The Blind Owl*; existence; bitterness; tragic; surrealism; soteriology.

1. Preamble

Sadegh Hedayat (also Sādeq Hedāyat, صادق هدایت) is one of the first and most significant modernist figures in Persian literature. His magnum opus *The Blind Owl* (1936-37) or (1314-1315) *بوف کور* is frequently called the greatest Iranian modern novel and, following its translation into French and English in the 1950s, one of the best literary productions of the twentieth century.¹ It is, as many scholars have suggested, the first modernist novel in Persian literature and sets the standard for many novels to follow its vein. Scholars have identified symbolism, surrealism and expressionism as its dominant stylistic techniques (see, for instance, Yavari 2008; Katouzian 2012).² At the time of its

¹ First translated into French by Roger Lescot in 1953 and into English by D. P. Costello in 1957.

² Various significant interpretations of *The Blind Owl* in particular and Hedayat’s fiction in general include Bashiri (1974), Shariatmadari (1975), Hillman (1978), Bashiri (1984), Katouzian (1991), Katouzian (1993), Tahbaz (1997), Katouzian (2007) and Rahbari (2017).

composition, Hedayat had presumably been familiar with these movements in art and literature, and had been trying to experiment with the corresponding techniques to possibly come up with an original account of a human existence piqued and bittered by various forms of predicament.

Scholars have tried to unearth the roots of Hedayat’s novel in western modernist movements (see, for instance, Mansouri-Zeyni 2013) as well as in eastern Persian myths and folkloric tales, and ancient philosophies/religions such as Zoroastrianism and Buddhism (see, for instance, Simidchieva 2003). They become the medium via which the anonymous narrator of *The Blind Owl* communicates his traumatic (un)lived experiences. Considering the fact that Hedayat seems to be experimenting with various perspectives and, as Nasrin Rahimieh puts, “longing for new art forms” (Rahimieh 1989: 16), I propose he is trying to offer an idiosyncratic, hard-boiled version of surrealism in what turns out to be a peculiar account of love and hate. Drawing upon Zhao F. Ng’s recent essay on surrealism and soteriological desire in the renowned *Literature and Theology* journal (2020), I argue that surrealism for Hedayat—at least in *The Blind Owl*, if not his other works of this nature, such as *Buried Alive* (زنده به گور) or *Three Drops of Blood* (سه قطره خون)—does not play a soteriological role as it does for many surrealists, Andre Breton chief among them. Hedayat’s version seems unique and one of a kind, a work which is much more extreme, cynical and tragic, delicately flavored, I suggest, with a persistent sense of existential bitterness. Hedayat is at pains to demonstrate the human predicament and tragicality via a bitterness which pervades his text.

2. *The Blind Owl*

The Blind Owl is generally regarded as a surrealist work (Shamissa 1993: 22), and although techniques pertaining to symbolism and expressionism are also discernible in the text, in this excursus we limit ourselves to this significant and central aspect of the novel. Before embarking upon the main discussion, a summary of this complicated surreal story seems helpful to freshen the mind of the reader about what happens in the course of the text. The novel is, typical of a surrealist work, narrated in a first-person perspective. The speaker is a lovelorn pen-case painter and the text is famously divided into two parts. The first section takes place in the present time [around 1935-36 (1314-15)] and centers on the sorrowful accounts of an agonized unnamed narrator who writes about his hopelessness while he tries to speak a sense of his “sore” or “scar” (زخم) into his “shadow” (سایه) (Hedayat 2013: 16; Hedayat 2004: 9-10). The shadow is in the shape of an owl (a sagacious as well as evil animal in many cultures) which devours everything he utters in words.

اگر حالا تصمیم گرفتم که بنویسم، فقط برای این است که خودم را به سایه‌ام معرفی بکنم؛ سایه‌ای که روی دیوار خمیده و مثل این است که هر چه می‌نویسم، با اشتهای هر چه تمام‌تر می‌بلعد. برای اوست که می‌خواهم آزمایشی بکنم، ببینم شاید بتوانیم یکدیگر را بهتر بشناسیم. چون از زمانی که تمام روابط خودم را با دیگران آزمایشی بکنم، ببینم شاید بتوانیم یکدیگر را بهتر بشناسیم. (Hedayat 2004: 10-11) بریده‌ام، می‌خواهم خودم را بهتر بشناسم.

I have decided that I should write. That I should introduce myself to my shadow—the stooped shadow on the wall that voraciously swallows all that I put down. It is for him that I am making this experiment to see if we can know each other better. Since the time when I severed my ties with others, I want to know myself better (2013: 16).

The shadow is perhaps a part of the narrator's selfhood which is fallen apart and is somehow self-destructively eating itself from within (Bidgoli 2022: 874-875). This section reveals the narrator's love for an already dead, mysterious girl whom he first sees from afar in his room and one night, coming back home from his wanderings around the city, magically finds her behind the door. The man takes her into his room and the girl lies on his bed. Moments later the man finds out that the girl is dead. He tries to draw her eyes, with which he was infatuated the most, and then mutilates her body and puts them into a bag and goes to a cemetery; an old "rag-and-bone" man (پیرمرد قوزی، پیرمرد خنزرینزری) helps him with his carriage and takes him to the cemetery. While burying her, he finds an old jar in the grave. Back in his room, he figures out that the eyes painted on the jar mysteriously look like the eyes he had drawn from the girl's visage. The eyes would thus turn into a haunting gaze throughout the whole narrative.

The second longer part takes place in the distant past, probably in the middle ages, in old Persia and in the city of Rayy (today's Tehran). The narrator obviously undergoes a hallucinatory remembrance and/or imagination of things past under the influence of drug (opium and wine) after he lost the girl and was left only with two images of her two eyes: he has already drawn an image of her eyes when she was in his shabby, deathly room, and he has also fixated on another pair of these eyes painted on the jar he found in the cemetery. Despite being hallucinatory and/or imaginary, this plunging into the past reveals many aspects of the narrator's misery, which connects his current state to the unfortunate complexities and perversions of his predecessors. It becomes clearer in this section that Hedayat has gained help from Freud's ideas regarding the unconscious and the influence of the collective sorrows and agonies suffered by the previous generations and still found in the depths of the unconscious. In this section, we witness that the man's life and family are filled with incest and oedipal desires. His uncle is in love with his mother; the narrator himself loves his mother and hates his father and uncle; most importantly, the man falls in love with a prostitute and gets married to her. The

marriage is not however consummated due to the girl’s reproach. The narrator, similar to the first part, wanders around the city and tries to find and kill the supposed lovers of his wife. The old “rag-and-bone” man is a mysterious, hateful figure he repeatedly sees in both parts of the novel, especially in the second part, one who is probably among the girl’s lovers as well. Unable to kill the lover(s) and consummate the marriage, the man finally decides to kill his wife and free himself from the incestuous/adulterous binds he hates to struggle with. In the final moments of the story, it is revealed that the narrator sees himself in the mirror and finds out, to his disgust, that he looks like the rag-and-bone old man (Hedayat 2004: 119-120; Hedayat 2013: 66).

3. Bitterness and tragicality in *The Blind Owl*

Love is generally regarded as one of the main themes of the surrealist projects. Absolute and eternal love can be, as suggested by Breton, a solution to man’s various antinomies that can lead to salvation. As Zhao Feng suggests, Breton’s contempt for religion turns out to be paradoxical and includes “a gesture of faith” that tries to erase the old world and its God and introduce a “new earthly paradise” in an immanent ontology.

It is thus possible to sketch out the preliminary outlines of the trajectory of a certain soteriology here. The movement that is charted here is one that takes us from our phenomenological and existential encounters with absence, loss, and suffering, to a place of reconciliation that Breton names a ‘state of grace.’ Moving away from a conception of—and a life lived in—a form of love embedded within a lapsarian metaphysics of ‘sin’ and ‘evil’, toward that ‘state of grace’ in which love is presented as absolute plenitude, names the salvational arc from tragic necessity to spiritual reconciliation (Zhao 2020: 368).

In the case of Hedayat and *The Blind Owl*, however, especially with the final return to the present in the second part of the novel, there is no reconciliation, no “state of grace.” Rather than a sense of unity and reconciliation, Hedayat’s novel offers a continual sense of detachment and distance. If there is to be “an hour of love” which brings the subject and object into a “continued, perfect coincidence” (Andre Breton, *Mad Love* 1987, qtd in Zhao 2020: 11-12), it only momentarily and partially happens in the climax of the *first* part of the novel between the man and the *corpse* of the girl (one can wonder if it is a face-to-face encounter with death itself). The trajectory Hedayat charts seems to me a movement back and forth from a bitter tragicality to a tragic bitterness, or from bitterness, suffering and loss to the (absurd?) repetition and intensification of bitterness, suffering and loss, stressed and aggravated even further, with no end, disappointing the narrator even about death as a possible finality; in between lies an evanescent, dreamlike *glimpse* of love perceived in the magical eyes of the beloved which is soon

vanished with her grotesque, unexpected death. This perpetual, ever increasing ontological darkness and tragic pain, I suggest, is conveyed through the phenomenological gustatory imagery of bitterness that the narrator repeatedly tastes in his beloved, her shadows/lovers,³ and in himself as well.

As mentioned earlier, one of the central themes of a surrealist project is undoubtedly love. In *The Blind Owl*, the hallucinatory and vertiginous narrative mainly revolves around the narrator's rapacious desire for an angelic/sluttish woman. This unfulfilled and unrequited love traumatizes the whole narrative and is the wound or "sore" or "زخم" about which the narrator is (fated?) to write, not to merely say it to others—because it is useless as he thinks there is a "frightful chasm" (Hedayat 2013: 16) or "ورطه‌ی هولناک" (2004: 10) between him and others—but to *satiat*e his shadow, "to introduce" himself to himself, to come to know himself before his death (Hedayat 2013: 16-17). It seems that it is the desire for the "attractive malice" of that strange and inscrutable girl that has provided him with this extremely *bitter* experience, which gives way to a bitter sense of selfhood as well (if the man can really be said to possess a sense of selfhood at all):

در این دنیای پست پر از فقر و مسکنت، برای نخستین بار گمان کردم که در زندگی من یک شعاع آفتاب درخشید؛ اما افسوس، این شعاع آفتاب نبود، بلکه فقط یک پرتو گذرنده، یک ستاره‌ی پرنده بود که به صورت یک زن یا فرشته به من تجلی کرد و در روشنایی آن یک لحظه، فقط یک ثانیه، همه بدبختی‌های زندگی خودم را دیدم و به عظمت و شکوه آن پی بردم، بعد از این پرتو در گرداب تاریکی که باید ناپدید بشود دوباره ناپدید شد. نه، نتوانستم این پرتو گذرنده را برای خودم نگه دارم. (Hedayat 2004: 11).

I thought in this base world, full of poverty and misery, for the first time in my life, a ray of sunshine shone on my life. But alas, instead of a sunbeam it was a transient beam, a shooting star that appeared to me in the likeness of a woman or an angel. In the light of that moment that lasted about a second, I witnessed all my life's misfortunes, and discovered their magnitude and grandeur. Then that beam of light disappeared into the dark abyss for which it was destined. No. I could not keep that transient beam for myself (Hedayat 2013: 17).

This tragicality of desire and love in Hedayat's novel can be traced via a pervasive sense of existential bitterness that the author inculcates in the text. I suggest that the existential recurrence of bitterness—bitter love or desire (and later, in the second part of the novel, a desirable bitterness)—can give us a clue to trace this tragicality in *The Owl*. Much has been written on this novel, perhaps more than many works in Persian literature, but nobody to my knowledge has offered a suitable treatment of this idea

³ The girl's little brother is another one in whom the narrator feels this bitterness: in one of his encounters with the kid, the narrator says "I kissed him on his open lips, which resembled my wife's; his lips tasted like the bitter end of a cucumber, acrid. Probably the whore's lips, too, taste the same" (46). This encounter with the kid and his bitterness recurs later on.

yet. This, I argue, is an existential tragic bitterness and bitter tragicity that can be termed *Hedayatesque* in nature, and the narrator seems to be hovering in the interstices.

Bitterness is a frequent motif and a (rather absurdly) repetitive and recurrent sensation in the novel. Highlighting this existential bitterness might reveal parts of Hedayat’s general treatment of desire in mankind and connect the dots to hint at an important aspect of his narrator’s predicament and tragicity. The word bitterness appears nine times in the course of a rather short novel (I have used Iraj Bashiri’s 2013 English translation). This gustatory imagery is usually connected with the sensation, the taste and the remembrance/recollection of the beloved (who is the central object of desire) and its recurrence drastically increases as we proceed to the final pages and the final climax [we have five usages from page 60 to page 65 in English translation (on pages 106, 108 and 114 in the original Persian text)]. The accelerating recurrence of this imagery does not seem accidental. And bitterness seems not irrelevant to the word “desire” (میل), itself appearing in the text seventeen times, the word “existence” (وجود) occurring twelve times⁴ and the word “being” (هستی) also occurring at least nine times, in its impersonal sense similar to “existence.”

During the narrative, bitterness is hardly ever dissociated from the beloved and the man’s being/selfhood which is overwhelmed with an insane desire for her. It seems that there is an existential impact on the narrator himself as he identifies his “entire being” with this grotesque desire, which is in turn closely connected to bitterness. The “bitter wine of [the narrator’s] life” [2013: 33; شراب تلخ (Hedayat 2004: 48)] comes to be suggestive of how his “entire being” allegorized as love is tied up with tragicity. The idea of the tragic, for Hedayat, seems to entail a sense of continual “missing the mark,” so to speak, or failure—which is of a certain magnitude, at least for the subject—in achieving that which is desired, ending in predicament and psychological collapse. The odds become even more tragic when we come to know that the subject of failure deterministically inherits his tragic condition and predicament from distant pasts (as symbolized in the old jar and the mysterious gaze).

Before the germination of the desire for the girl, only painting would console the narrator, while after the encounter with the girl, he sees painting as a “ridiculous amusement” [Hedayat 2013: 17; شغل مضحک نقاشی (Hedayat 2004: 12)]. But his desire and love turn out to be almost equally fruitless as the man achieves the ethereal girl only when she is dead [which is the culmination of part one (Hedayat 2013: 23-25)] and consummates with the sluttish girl only when he kills her [which finalizes part two (2013: 65-66)]. During these two narratives, bitterness plays an important role, almost flavoring the

⁴ The word “nonexistence” also appears two times throughout the text.

narrative and accompanying the narrator anytime he feels the vicinity of the girl or her shadows or when he remembers them (e.g. 61) and anytime he actually embraces or kisses the girl (e.g. 63 and 65).

Earlier in the novel, the initial general sensation is mentioned via the narrator's first encounter with a static image of an angelic girl and an old man (perhaps his alter ego or his repulsive and bitter sense of selfhood). The dreamlike image is connected with the lips (more frequently used) and the eyes (equally frequent) of the girl, the man feeling a strange sense of attraction to those parts of her:

دختر درست در مقابل من واقع شده بود، ولی به نظر می‌آمد که هیچ متوجه اطراف خودش نمی‌شد. نگاه می‌کرد بی آن که نگاه کرده باشد؛ لبخند مدهوشانه و بی اراده‌ای کنار لبش خشک شده بود، مثل این که به فکر شخص غایبی بوده باشد.

از آن جا بود که چشم‌های مهیب افسونگر، چشم‌هایی که مثل این بود که به انسان سرزنش تلخی می‌زند، چشم‌های مضطرب، متعجب و تهدیدکننده و وعده دهنده‌ی او را دیدم و پرتو زندگی من روی این گودی‌های (Hedayat 2004: 15) براق پرمعنی، ممزوج و در ته آن غرق شد.

Although the girl was standing exactly opposite me, she was not paying any attention to what was happening around her. She was looking without seeing anything. An unconscious, involuntary smile had dried to the corner of her lips; it seemed as though she was thinking of an absent person. It was from the stool that I saw her dreadful charming eyes, eyes that, at the same time, were enchanting and reproachful. It was to the shining and dreadful balls of those worried, threatening and inviting eyes that my single beam of life was attracted, and it was to the depth of those same eyes that my life was drawn and in them was annihilated (Hedayat 2013: 19).

The description clearly indicates the first germination of desire in the man. The “unconscious, involuntary smile” and the sense of loss which it signifies “as though she was thinking of an absent person” precede the “reproachful”⁵ abyss into which the man soon finds himself fallen (“it was to the depth of those same eyes that my life was drawn and in them was annihilated”). His desire and the gravitational force of the girl (mostly her eyes and lips) would later on unite him with her, or would rather collapse him into her. In the first part, the man's tragic desire unites him with the dead body of the girl, only to taste the deathly bitterness in her mouth once and for all: “Her mouth was acrid and somewhat bitter; it tasted like the bitter end of a cucumber” [2013: 23; طعم ته خیار را (2004: 26) می‌داد]; in the second part, the desirable bitterness [i.e. the “stub-end of a cucumber” (2013: 60-65)] drives the man to the slut and eventually collapses him into her, their bodies being “welded together” [65; گوشت تن ما را به هم لحیم کرده بودند (2004)]. In the final pages of the novel, I must repeat, the man tastes and feels this bitterness much more frequently [“the bitter end of a cucumber” (46, 60), “the

⁵ It is also interesting that the word “reproach” (with its derivatives and as a verb as well) occurs six times in relation to the girl and her uncanny charm.

mildly bitter taste of cucumber” (61), “the mildly bitter taste of the stem end of a cucumber” (63), “her mouth tasted acrid like the bitter end of a cucumber” (65)].

Whether life’s bitterness is tragic or life’s tragedy is bitter remains equivocal throughout the novel, though there is little doubt that Hedayat is trying to explore both of these standpoints. I suggest the man falls in an abyss between an unfulfillable, bitter desire (exemplified in the first shorter section of the novel) and a desirable bitterness (exemplified in the second longer section of the novel), neither of which appears to have necessarily or clearly preceded the other. Both parts of the novel seem to be a trial to come to terms with this split that has struck and bittered the man’s sense of selfhood. The novel’s first section happens in the present and the second section is a drug-induced hallucinatory recollection of a distant past which itself ends with a return to the present. In an alternative way, we can thereby see that this perspective on the narrative constructively parallels the man’s attempt to capture and totalize a picture of *truth* in the first part with the derailment of that picture by the bitter *reality* of the second part, thus undoing the entire narration and leaving the process absurdly fruitless, somehow anticipating Albert Camus’s argument in 1942 and what he articulates regarding human existence and predicament in *Le mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l’absurde (The Myth of Sisyphus)*.

4. By way of conclusion

If life for Hedayat’s narrator is bitter and tragic, neither love nor possibly art can play the soteriological role of a savior: they seem to be only furthering this pain qua bitterness. The narrator finds his art “ridiculous” after seeing the ethereal girl, but he also finds love tragically unattainable (perhaps only attainable in death?); later on he finds it only intensifying his predicament, and finally he tries to end it but fails as he sees his selfhood and his existence too bitterly persistent, “welded” to desire and eros. Through love/art, one is only repeatedly reminded of the same predicament and tragic condition, it seems, or is somehow given more deepened and persisting senses of bitterness through exploring/imagining its ontological varieties and possibilities. Neither death nor suicide seems to be the solution, and when in the second part Hedayat’s narrator kills the other and frees himself from her chainlike embrace, he looks at *himself* in the mirror (an iconic moment of looking into one’s selfhood) and surprisingly sees that he identically looks like one of the slut’s shadows/lovers [“the old rag and bone man” پیرمرد خنزرپنزی (Hedayat 2004: 119)], recapturing/eternalizing bitterness in himself once again [“the bitter end of a cucumber” (Hedayat 2013: 65-66) طعم کونه‌ی خیار تلخ (Hedayat 2004: 114) or دهنش طعم کونه‌ی خیار می‌داد و گس مزه بود (118)], similar to the bitterness that he tasted in the girl’s deathlike bosom at the end of the first part and the slut’s and her brother’s mouths and lips in the second part (65 and 63 respectively).

In the final analysis, it seems that it is this absurd persistence and eternal continuity and repetition of “being” which is infinitely tragic and bitter in *The Owl*, arguably in Hedayat’s writings in general. This sense of absurdity and inevitability of being was seemingly sutured to the zeitgeist of the time, as first proposed by the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in his early 1935 essay “On Escape” and more fully developed in his *Existence and Existents* (1978) written during World War II and published in 1948.⁶ Hedayat’s narrative refers to this persistence of “being” as tragic and delicately flavors it with an existential bitterness. Excruciated by this absurd persistence, the only dim hope for Hedayat’s narrator—if there is anything hopeful in the man—can be the “utter nothingness” after his death (Hedayat 2013: 32; امید نیستی پس از مرگ; Hedayat 2004: 94), which can possibly eliminate that absurd persistence. If, and only if, there is to be any kind of transcendence or salvation, it is through a transmigration to *absolute* nothingness, saving the self from the inescapability of being which is fallen into the abyss between a bitter tragicity and a tragic bitterness. For the narrator, in the end, that transmigration does not happen and he is left in the abysmal bitterness that flavors the human condition as tragicity and despair.

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⁶ Levinas discusses this fundamental, ground-zero sense of existence—from which there is no escape—as the *il y a* or *there is*.

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Political and social dynamics of class in revolutionary Urdu poems by

Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Habib Jalib

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Revolutionary poetry is considered the most concentrated verbal expression and literary mode practically suited to provoke political uprisings and revolts in a society. This article explores the intricacies of class on political and social grounds in the revolutionary Urdu poems of Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911–1984) and Habib Jalib (1928–1993). Given the pace of social progress in Pakistan, the writings of these poets have played a radical role in shaping people’s ideology by educating them about freedom of expression and provoking them to speak out against imperialism and other exploitative systems of the status quo. The power dynamics in the devastating system of capitalism in Pakistan led to the exploitation of workers and the suppression of their rights. Against the background of these problems, through close reading, this article analyses selected poems by progressive writers—Faiz and Jalib, under the guidelines of Marx on class, Gramsci’s hegemony, and Louis Althusser’s ideological and repressive state apparatuses. This article concludes that the revolutionary poetry of these two poets aims to transform the social and political fabric of Pakistani society.

Keywords: class; hegemony; ISA (ideological state apparatuses); Marxism; RSA (repressive state apparatuses); revolutionary poetry.

1. Introduction

Progressive Writers Movement was the iconoclastic, Marxist-leaning literary movement started in London in the mid-1930s by two British-Indian writers, Sajjad Zaheer¹ (1905-1973) and Mulk Raj Anand²

¹ Syed Sajjad Zaheer, an Indian Urdu writer was one of the founders of the Association of Progressive Indian Writers (1935, London). This radical revolutionary was also a member of the Communist Party of India.

² Mulk Raj Anand was also the founding member of the Progressive Writers Association. He is admired for his valuable ideas in drafting the manifesto of the association. Anand was the pioneer of Indo-Anglian fiction.

(1905-2004). The movement was brought to India in late 1935 by Zaheer, who then organized the first all-India meeting of the Progressive Writers Association on 9-10 April 1936 in Lucknow with the eminent Hindi-Urdu novelist and short story writer Premchand³ (1880-1936) as President (Faiz, Coppola and Beg 1974:128). The movement inspired a large number of writers and intellectuals of the time. Faiz and Jalib were also eminent parts among several others. They engaged in the movement through their writings on anti-imperialist attitudes, political reforms, and the ideology of human development.

Much has been written and said about Faiz and Jalib as their poetic verses have become part of films, public concerts, and newspapers, but in academia, formal and systematic research is the least available area. This article examines how the two writers bring about change in the social and political structure of society through their revolutionary poetry. Their writings awaken people against social injustices, inequalities, and imperialistic agendas. Since the works of these authors are less widely used in research, this article attempts to bring these authors into the arena of academic research by emphasizing their egalitarian ideologies through an analysis of a few selected poems. Furthermore, this study deals with the analysis of the essential concepts of class, hegemony, and ideological and repressive state apparatuses in *مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت مری محبوب نہ مانگ* (*Mujh se pahli si muhabbat mari mahbub na māng*, 'Don't inquire for the love I gave you once, my darling'), first published in Faiz's collection of poems *نقش فریادی* (*Naqsh-e faryādi*, 'The Image of One who Laments') in 1943, and *دستور* (*Dastūr*, 'The Constitution'), initially written in 1962 by Jalib under the theoretical perspectives of Marxism.

Poetry remained a prominent literary form in Urdu literature, later followed by short stories and then novels. In Pakistan, *mushairas* (poetry symposia) are regularly broadcast on radio and television, attracting a large and diverse audience. These public poetic concerts are a partial medium of political and social commentary. When it comes to revolutionary poetry, it touches people's emotional and moral sensibilities, because revolutionary poetry can always be used to raise awareness among people of diverse nations (Hussain and Sohail 2011: 8). Occasionally, revolutionary poetry also conveys the tragedy of displacement from native roots and the trauma of exile.

The revolutionary poetry of Faiz and Jalib is one of the most vibrant examples of contemporary writing traditions. Their verses are a commentary on Pakistan's political and social problems (Arif

³ Dhanpat Rai Srivastava/ pen name *Premchand* was elected the first president of the Progressive Writers Association. The writers associated with this literary movement wrote for equality and social justice for all classes, races, and ethnicities. Premchand is considered a pioneer of Hindi and Urdu social fiction.

2010:45). Sometimes, these writers inform about critical moments in history, such as the fall of Dhaka in former East Pakistan during the civil war and the successive emergence of Bangladesh as a separate nation in 1971. In other cases, their poetry is written to rouse the Pakistani public against dictatorship and martial law.

Under the umbrella of the Progressive Writers Movement, the revolutionary poetry of Faiz and Jalib has played an essential role in communicating progressive ideologies. Furthermore, revolutionary ideas never remain still, they travel and become a global voice. Faiz's wife, Alys Faiz emphasizes the fact about the growing influence of the Progressive Writers Movement:

The movement spread with both force and swiftness, along with Urdu to several other languages of South Asia, such that it became, next to Gandhi, the most powerful literary force in the literature of South Asia during the first half of the twentieth century (Faiz, Coppola and Beg 1974: 129).

Faiz himself writes of the movement: The Progressive Writers' Movement began as a labor movement process, and it was as if several schools were opening in the garden (Faiz, Coppola and Rahman 1974:128). Moreover, Faiz explains progressive literature in his article *Progressive Concept of Literature* "... only those writings are progressive that may fast-track the stride of social progress, and they are fully measured up to the artistic strictures" (Faiz 2000: 2).

Faiz Ahmad Faiz was a famous Marxist Urdu poet and a member of the Pakistan Writers Association (PWA). He was imprisoned several times because of his left-wing solid tendencies and socialist political stance, which gave him solitude. In this loneliness, he contemplates and writes his humanistic thoughts, and eventually transforms them into heart-breaking poetry. The musicality of Faiz's poems offers the slightest possibility of commendable translation due to his poetic genius; however, the poems have been translated into English for detailed understanding and to reach a wider audience. Like working-class poets, progressive writers – Faiz and Jalib too, sided with the poor classes of Pakistani society against their exploitation in their daily works. These authors believed that action could eliminate suffering (Singh 2016: 01). Additionally, Faiz and Jalib introduce basic notions of history into the narrative of their poetry, and Faiz can arguably be compared to the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in taking a similar revolutionary approach (Rahman 1999: 108). Faiz's literary taste is also compared with other poets of different literary cultures, such as English, Russian, and French, which explains why he has sometimes been referred to as a cross-cultural writer (Rehman 1999: 110). Edward Said writes about Faiz:

The crucial thing to understand about Faiz ... is that like Garcia Marquez he was read and listened to both by the literary elite and by the common masses. He would use classical forms (*qasida*, *ghazal*,

masnavi, qita) and transform them before his readers rather than a break from the old forms. You could hear old and new together. His purity and precision were astonishing, and you must imagine therefore a poet whose poetry combined the sensuousness of Yeats with the power of Neruda. He was, I think, one of the greatest poets of this century, and was honored as such throughout the major part of Asia and Africa (Said 1992: 92).

Faiz remains relevant mostly because of the themes that deal with timeless and universal issues like human miseries, inequalities, and injustices (Dawn 2011: 2). Noman-ul-Haq, a Pakistani scholar and historian, appreciates the poetic expression of Faiz by writing that it is unparalleled in the whole history of Urdu poetry because of its use of metaphors, the string of nouns, the rhythm, and the structure that will never go stale (Dawn 2011: 1). At first, Faiz wrote about the conventional themes of love and beauty, which later with his maturing political flair, developed into a depiction of socio-political realities. Muhammad Arif in his *Romance and Poetry* writes that Faiz's feelings for nature and women amalgamate with the love of homeland since his love for his homeland dominates everything else (Arif 2010: 56). Faiz championed socialist humanism through his poetry, giving a whole new meaning to the familiar love imagery so prevalent in the traditional genres of Urdu literature.

His poem *Mujh se pahli si muhabbat marī maḥbūb na māng* ('Don't inquire for the love I gave you once, my darling') is a beautiful and celebrated example of the conventional treatment of love and beauty which ultimately leads to an intense awareness of the harsh socio-political realities. Sufferings in his poetry are never private. Along with widening social perspectives, the poem depicts the rise of (inter)national over personal, the factual over the imaginary, and bitter truths over beautiful lies, as the poet believed in internationalism, unity in diversity, and global cultures. With a radical departure from the conventions of love, he asks his beloved (while acknowledging her huge importance) to agree with taking his social pledge as an imperative duty. Like Marx, Faiz too believed in mankind's basic needs which a life involves, including the everyday habits of eating, drinking, habitation, clothing, etc. There is a revolutionary reorganization of society within the change of this shift in writing as Marx also points out that class structure consists of ruling and oppressed classes and the struggle between these two classes determines the social relations between human beings. These tensions and conflicts arouse masses, including the general public as well as intellectuals and writers for the restructuring of society (Bendix and Lipset 1976: 6).

The history of Pakistan has been torn by underhand deals, financial gifts, putting price tags on souls, selling consciences in self-interest, and compromising on principles. The fame and admiration of Habib Jalib took a tremendous turn after the publication of his poem *Dastūr* ('The Constitution'), which he wrote as a rebuttal to the nuisance of the newfangled Constitution of 1962 imposed by the then military president of Pakistan, Ayub Khan. This Constitution was a milestone in the country's

history that sanctioned the shift from governmental democracy to a despotic presidential system. Through his poetry, Jalib made a remarkable and helpful contribution towards creating a free democratic society by defining the Constitution in the poem mentioned below. After facing the hardships of the military presidencies of Ayub Khan and later Yahya Khan, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the founder of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), assumed charge as Prime Minister in 1973, it was expected that Jalib would take some rest in the hope that Bhutto's sociopolitical views and ideologies would stir up the stagnant social environment of Pakistani society. However, Jalib's hope did not turn into reality. As Bhutto raised more in power in the backwash of a weakened military following the fall of Dhaka; it was absurd to note that the distance between the ideology of the Pakistan People's Party and the policies implemented by the government went tremendously widened. With his ambition for power, Bhutto's attitude towards other political and democratic leaders confirmed for him the impression of an autocrat. It was an upsetting experience for a dynamic player such as Jalib, who could only turn his voice against the ruthless government and once again was sent to prison (Barelvi 1991: 20). He contended with the civil and military dictatorships in Pakistan, as his poetry echoes the voice of the people of Pakistan, especially the oppressed, downtrodden and broken people. In so doing, he used his poetry to fight against social injustices, coercion, and abuse of power. When seen through a critical lens, Jalib's collection of the verse, like that of Faiz, also gives the impression of a sociopolitical trajectory of Pakistan.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundations of Marxism have informed this revolutionary study with Karl Marx's idea of class, Louis Althusser's ideas of ISA (ideological state apparatuses) and RSA (repressive state apparatuses), and Gramsci's idea of Hegemony. Marx's idea of the ruling class and the working class, and the oppressed class's struggle towards a revolution to bring harmony to society was revolutionary. Like Marx, the reorganization of society on an equal level was also an absolute dream of revolutionary writers. Marx's view that the proletariat class is the reason for the capitalist class's existence indicates that class structure needs to be revised to 'no class' which, Marx calls "a classless society" (Giddens and David 1982: 57). Marx defines class as the manifestation of economic difference (Nazir 2013: 194) and his notion of classless society conveys the idea of equality among all the people. Though the existence of class, as Olin Wright observes in his book, *Understanding Class*, is central to the existence of contemporary capitalism, and to fulfill the economic opportunities and conditions, it merely leads toward class exploitation and mechanical features of macro-power relations (Wright 2015: 39) making the phenomena of class existence complex. It makes possible to move power into the hands of those

once powerful, who then get more power, while the others get subjugated, lower, and weaker to be exploited by the powerful. These ideas of power dynamics, Faiz and Jalib also discuss through their poetry.

Furthermore, Gramsci's conceptual marker of hegemony is also critical for progressive writers because hegemony in a capitalist system works through coercion. To Gramsci, hegemony is not only cultural but moral and ideological control of one group, usually powerful, on the subalterns or the weaker. The element of consent is central to the working of hegemony. Moreover, he opines that people with hegemonic power see the world with their ascending agenda. For him, the state is the primary coercive force while fulfilling its agenda of consent through the working of its institutions—family, churches, etc. Gramsci elaborates that the class exercising hegemony is economically powerful and articulates its supremacist ideologies in the discourse of the working class in a unified manner which is achieved through false consciousness (Bates 1975: 19). Working class can only subdue their false consciousness when they come across elite practices which bring in them the consciousness of revolution.

Althusser further opines that the unified entities or institutions acting as repressive state apparatuses are controlled by the ideological state apparatuses (education, media, churches, army, trade unions, and family), which were not formerly controlled by the state. While Ideological State Apparatuses work by ideology, they get entangled over those points where both are in control of the authoritative ideologies as Althusser writes that the “state is the machine of repression” (Althusser 2014: 49). Althusser's idea of state oppression is similar to Gramsci's idea that the state is the primary institution of coercion. Repressive State Apparatuses are also called ‘hard power,’ which operates by exercising violence (Althusser 2014: 45). Only the working class's resistance can combat the working of these ideologies through repression.

3. Faiz Ahmad Faiz

Faiz was primarily a poet. But he was also an essayist, a filmmaker, a soldier, a journalist, a political protagonist/ thinker, a savior of art, a trade unionist, a teacher, and above all a great humanist. He was a humanist with a holistic vision, for whom politics and culture run side by side. There is harmony between his ideas and their practice. For example, his idea that art serves humankind's struggle for peace, justice, equality, freedom, and progress, becomes a fact in his writings. He devoted his life and poetic talent to the entire liberty of humankind and believed in the human spirit instead of believing in race, colour, nationality, and religion. Faiz established worldwide that man's struggle between subjugation and freedom articulates the battle between socialism and imperialism. He was a strong

admirer of the Russian Revolution and wanted to see the same spirit in his people; consequently, he wrote to provoke them (Ahmad 2007: 10).

Born on 13 February 1911, Narowal, Faiz Ahmad Faiz comes from British Indian Punjab (now in Pakistan). He studied at Government College Lahore and served as a lecturer in English. Later, he served in the army. In 1946, *The Pakistan Times* appointed him as an editor, and in 1951 Faiz was imprisoned with some other military and political personnel for an alleged conspiracy to overthrow the government. The news of his death sentence remained in the air, but he was released after four years in 1955. Later, the government of Pakistan conferred *Nishan-e Imtiaz*,⁴ in 1990 upon this publicly honoured poet (Dawn 2011: 3). Further, Faiz is the first Asian poet to receive the Lenin Peace Prize, a Soviet comparable to the Nobel Peace Prize.

Vividly, renowned intellectuals like Patras Bukhari and Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum, the accomplished names in Urdu, Punjabi, and Persian poetry, were Faiz's earliest mentors in poetry at Government College, Lahore. He recited his poem *Iqbal* at the annual *mushaira* of Lahore College, where Sir Muhammad Iqbal⁵ (1877-1938) was the guest of honour; and Faiz was awarded first prize for this recitation. Later the poem was published in the college's literary magazine *Ravi* which shows that his poetic genius was acknowledged even in his student life.

Paradoxically, the military regime of Ayub Khan in Pakistan (1958-1969) brought intolerant reactionary behaviour and a suffocating attitude among people. However, Faiz, through his poetry, became a national symbol and a sacrosanct. Faiz preferred self-exile after Bhutto's execution in Zia's regime of terror. He was evicted from Beirut during Israel's pressure on Lebanon, and he came to Pakistan in 1982. He died on November 20, 1984 (Ahmad 2007: 25).

3.1. Analysis of Faiz's poem

It is apologetic to note that the evils and tribulations are so much prevalent in Pakistani society that revolutionary writers' writings will never get old. Famous Pakistani classical singer, Tina Sani appreciates Faiz as, "Faiz Ahmad Faiz... (Was) like a comrade, his thoughts were soft but effective and inspired the classical singers as did others in the plays; his verses never get old because the situations

⁴ "Also called Order of Excellence is one of the state organized awards. It is awarded for achievements towards world recognition for Pakistan or exceptional services for the country."

⁵ "Sir Allama Muhammad Iqbal was a 20th C. Pakistani Muslim poet, philosopher, politician and an advocate. He is also known as 'The Sage of the Ummah' and a Pakistani thinker."

and problems in the country have not altered. Today we sing him because of his beautiful poetry, missing out on the reasons behind his poems that had predictions” (Tribune 2003: 01). With these extolling words, there comes the selected poem *Mujh se pahli si muhabbat marī maḥbūb na māng*:

مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت مری محبوب نہ مانگ
میں نے سمجھا تھا کہ تو ہے تو درخشاں ہے حیات
تیرا غم ہے تو غم دہر کا جھگڑا کیا ہے
تیری صورت سے ہے عالم میں بہاروں کو ثبات
تیری آنکھوں کے سوا دنیا میں رکھا کیا ہے
تو جو مل جائے تو تقدیر نگوں ہو جائے
یوں نہ تھا میں نے فقط چاہا تھا یوں ہو جائے
اور بھی دکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا
راحتیں اور بھی ہیں وصل کی راحت کے سوا
ان گنت صدیوں کے تاریک بہیمانہ طلسم
ریشم و اطلس و کمخاب میں بنوائے ہوئے
جا بہ جا بکتے ہوئے کوچہ و بازار میں جسم
خاک میں لٹھڑے ہوئے خون میں نہلائے ہوئے
جسم نکلے ہوئے امراض کے تتوروں سے
پیپ بہتی ہوئی گلتے ہوئے ناسوروں سے
لوٹ جاتی ہے ادھر کو بھی نظر کیا کیجے
اب بھی دل کش ہے ترا حسن مگر کیا کیجے
اور بھی دکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا
راحتیں اور بھی ہیں وصل کی راحت کے سوا
مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت مری محبوب نہ مانگ
(فیض 1990: 47)

“Don't inquire for the love I gave you once, my darling
I had thought if had you, life will be illuminated
If I had your sorrows, those of the universe would mean nothing
Your face would bring permanence to every spring
What else is there except your eyes to see, in the world
If I found you, my fate would bow down to me
This is not how it was; it was merely how I wished it to be
There are other afflictions in the world than those of love
There are delights other than the delight of mutual love
The dreadful magic of uncountable dark centuries
Woven in silk, satin, and brocade
On every corner are bodies, being sold in the market and streets
Throbbing between layers of dust, bathed in blood
Bodies retrieved from the cauldrons of diseases
Discharge flowing from their rotten ulcers

Still returns my gaze in that direction, what can be done
 Even now your beauty is tantalizing, but what can be done
 There are other sorrows in the world than those of love
 There is joy other than the joy of having a beloved
 Don't inquire for the love I gave you once, my darling.”⁶

Faiz’s quest to address the socio-economic tensions and power dynamics within society was not eclipsed by his romantic poetry. However, those verses were crucial as a festive time to deliberate on the issues of his people. He was devoted to the traditional form of lyric poetry, transforming its content by merging romance and revolution. In the opening lines, Faiz revisits his relished memories of romantic love, once his most prominent source of solace. He addresses his beloved, reviving how her beauty illuminated his dark life, ultimately making him forget the whole world and how he used to sink into her eyes. She was the center of his life, his sole concern, and his only consideration. He wanted nothing but her in the whole universe, from his fate, and in his prayers. From thereon, there is a vivid transformation of romantic tendencies, personal pains, empathetic humanistic thoughts, and limited idealistic perspectives into the realization of truths. It finally makes him admit the idealistic love notions as he realizes that there are more considerable pains other than love that afflict the public اور بھی دکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا (aur bhī dukh haiñ zamāne meñ mohabbat ke sivā, ‘There are other afflictions in the world than those of love’). He no longer dwells in the happy realms of the pleasures of union with his beloved but instead looks for wider humanistic and intellectual interests. So, he is undoubtedly referred to as the poet of humankind, having his writing with a syncretic essence across time and place.

Faiz’s political commitment does not mean he would not address his beloved in the rest of his works. When he addresses his beloved most often, revolution is involved, as Indian poet Agha Shahid Ali remarks, “as the lost or cruel lover” (Ali 1990: 82) who is unwilling to return. In this way, the subject of Faiz’s poetry remains true: the loss of the loved one—whether it is a lost lover or a lost ideology. Since Faiz’s idea travels from the pursuit of a lover to the ideology of revolt for the better fate of the working class, it echoes Marx’s belief in the revolution that Marx considered both deeply important and unavoidable to the evolution of society. Marx believed that workers would lose only their chains in a revolt against the capitalists’ and industrialists’ exploitation; however, it would create a global communist society by bringing equality irrespective of rank, wealth, and nationality. Following Marx’s belief system, Faiz renounces his love because he has seen all the ruthlessness of the social systems where there is inequality, corruption, and manipulation of people along with poverty. Faiz was also

⁶ All the Urdu texts have been translated by the author.

able to discern the centuries-old status quo of the government and elite classes, beautiful veiling of ugly truths, and afflictions of masses, as well as poverty, misery, homelessness, and pettiness of human life. This pessimistic situation further depicts the starving human beings, diseased bodies, and triviality of human life by showing people being killed in the streets, children dying of hunger, women selling their bodies for insignificant amounts of money, and human beings suffering from incurable diseases for the non-availability of medicines. Faiz remarks that the solution to these despondent situations is possible through Communism, which Marx describes as the most egalitarian and natural system of existence. He does not deny the beauty of the beloved, her alluring charms, and the provocative power of her eyes; he does not deny the existence of romantic love, but he recurrently says that the above-mentioned brutal pains are sharper than the personal joy of the beauty of beloved. The world of love does not lose its appeal in his life. However, Faiz prefers humanity over his happiness. He finds serenity in the world's peace, that in Marx's terms, is possible through the working class's revolt, and Faiz also preaches the same idea. Thus, emotion has been transformed into motion blurring the lines between the romantic and the revolutionary to bring an image of an ideal state or, as Marx called it, a welfare state. Faiz mentions,

لوٹ جاتی ہے ادھر کو بھی نظر کیا کیجے
اب بھی دل کش ہے ترا حسن مگر کیا کیجے
(Faiz 1990: 47)

Still returns my gaze in that direction, what can be done
Even now your beauty is enticing, but what can be done

Furthermore, Faiz's preoccupation with the poor class, workers, and the oppressed, what Marx calls the proletariat or peasant class, stems from his involvement with the Progressive Writers' Movement; thus, his poetry depicts his personality, and his progressive writings act as a tool for social development. Marx also believed that capitalism is essentially self-destructive and a threat to prosperity, so there is a need to educate the proletariat class to overthrow the system of capitalism through revolution and establishing Communism. Faiz's poem is a vivid announcement of his expedition toward conveying awareness to the people to stand against the absolute powers so that there is equality and harmony in society. Faiz believed that smiles and tears were not individual phenomena but rather powerful expressions of emotions that highlight the community's ambitions and disappointments as the absolute value. This poem conveys Faiz's blissfulness because of his political struggle and solidarity as different and broader forms of love and an amalgamation of personal

delight and communal responsibilities. This poem inspires one to take on the heavy burden of social transformation and establish a classless society (Marx's idea of Communism) based on peace, equality, and justice. Faiz fulfills this responsibility without being entrapped in the aura of anger and bitterness by transcending his romantic emotions, so that they do not interfere with his poetic productivity, social responsibility, and creativity.

Finally, Faiz suggests a change in his poem. His revolutionary concentration mellowed as he matured in his political thoughts, and his concept of freedom broadened. The synthesis of the political and the romantic pervades his poetry. Sometimes the two are inseparably entangled: the political meaning informs the romantic and the romantic the political (Rahim 2008:12). He maintained hope throughout his journey and remained stuck to his quest, though whatever was the cost. As a national hero, he contributed to realizing individuals' potential and making people aware of their rights and freedom; as a poet, he remade the world with his creativity.

4. Habib Jalib

Habib Jalib (1928-1993) was born as Habib Ahmed in Hoshiarpur, a district in British Indian Punjab. After the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, he migrated to Pakistan. His political activism made him popular among the working class in Pakistan. Since he was a celebrated Pakistani revolutionary Urdu poet with Marxist and Communist political views, he was known as a 'People's Poet.' Jalib's enthusiastic writings about the plight of the people and social issues captivate the readers, and his poetry echoes his ideology and vision of life. At the time when all writers of 'substance' were increasingly 'Persian sing' because Persian was the lingua franca before the British colonization of the Indian subcontinent, Taimur Rehman, a Pakistani professor and political activist, stated that Jalib wrote his inspiring verses about the plight of suppressed masses in a very colloquial manner that was accessible to all (Zaidi 2014: 03).

Jalib was first imprisoned during the martial law regime for his defiant views on Ayub Khan's capitalistic policies. Addressing a rally held at the famous Mochi Gate⁷ in Lahore, Faiz Ahmad Faiz said about Jalib, "No poet since Wali Dakhani⁸ (1667-1707) has been able to capture a larger audience than Habib Jalib" (Mir and Mir 2006: 86). Jalib's poetry replicated his clear vision, un-fumbling and

⁷ One of the thirteen gates of the Walled City of Lahore which were built during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. The door leads to Mochi Garden, a famous spot for political rallies.

⁸ Wali Muhammad Wali was a popular classical Urdu poet from India who composed poetry under his pen names of Wali Dakhani, Wali Aurangabadi, and Wali Gujarati.

undeviating empathy for humanity, and his love for suppressed human beings, human rights, and jurisprudence, simultaneously serving as the main themes of his poetry. His masterpiece *Dastūr* was written against the capitalist policies of President Ayub. Ayub's regime symbolized oppression (the repressive state) and the darkest period of dictatorship in the country's history. The poem was considered a voice against capitalism and in favour of the oppressed. Jalib himself says, "I saw our dreams shattering one by one. How we could establish democracy and freedom in our country, I kept thinking, and then I wrote this poem" (Barelvi 1991: 7). He was locked up by the military authorities of the time for reciting *Dastūr*. Reciting his verses, Jalib stirred the political rallies of Lahore and later the people across Pakistan. After that, *Dastūr* was sung in Pakistan by all and sundry as a hymn. Notably, in Jalib's poem, the verse 'We do not accept such a constitution' was a popular chant (Pakistan Forum 1971: 1). The government made efforts to stop him from reciting the poem through pressure, coercion, bullying, and bribery, but all went in vain (Jalib 1991: 59).

Jalib was popular with the Pakistani people because of his agitated and human-centred poetry. Though he was banned by the government from reciting his poems in public, undeterred, he continued to write his egregious works against the regime. He called it atrocities against the masses and ridiculed the power dynamics using satire and humour. This technique distinguishes him from the older group of progressive writers like Faiz, who does have a serious tone (Toor 2014: 03). There were the principles behind his poetry, emotional energy, and the socio-political musicality that stirred the massive people. He could never settle with the martial law of Ayub Khan, and once, during a live transmission of Radio Pakistan in 1959 (01: 2022 لون), to oppose the martial Law policies, he tersely recited:

کہیں گیس کا دھواں ہے کہیں گولیوں کی بارش
شبِ عہدِ کم ننگاہی تجھے کس طرح سراہیں

there is the smoke of teargas in the atmosphere,
bullets are raining in the surrounding,
how can I praise you?
the night of the period of short-sightedness.

Jalib died on March 12, 1993 and was buried in Lahore. The Government of Pakistan, posthumously awarded Jalib the highest civilian honor, *Nishan-e- Imtiaz*, in 2009, which then went to Tahira Habib Jalib, the daughter of this legendary poet.

4.1. Analysis of Jalib's poem

Habib Jalib's poem *Dastūr* has strong Marxist tendencies. This poem is not ambiguous in its meaning; its expression is clear and direct, as Jalib says what he feels without any discretion or reservation. Althusser's theory of ISA (ideological state apparatuses) and RSA (repressive state apparatuses) (Jubilee 1988: 16) is apparent in the poem, which begins with a retort against the state. *Dastūr* was first included in his book *Sar-e Maqatal* ('سر مقتل', 'Toward Execution') published in 1968 which was banned and confiscated by the martial law authorities.

دیپ جس کا محلات ہی میں جلے
چند لوگوں کی خوشیوں کو لے کر چلے
وہ جو سائے میں ہر مصلحت کے پلے
ایسے دستور کو صبح بے نور کو
میں نہیں مانتا میں نہیں جانتا

میں بھی خائف نہیں تختہ دار سے
میں بھی منصور ہوں کہہ دو اغیار سے
کیوں ڈراتے ہو زنداں کی دیوار سے
ظلم کی بات کو جہل کی رات کو
میں نہیں مانتا میں نہیں جانتا

پھول شاخوں پہ کھلنے لگے تم کہو
جام رندوں کو ملنے لگے تم کہو
چاک سینوں کے سلنے لگے تم کہو
اس کھلے جھوٹ کو ذہن کی لوٹ کو
میں نہیں مانتا میں نہیں جانتا

تم نے لوٹا ہے صدیوں ہمارا سکوں
اب نہ ہم پر چلے گا تمہارا فسوں
چارہ گر دردمندوں کے بنتے ہو کیوں
تم نہیں چارہ گر کوئی مانے مگر
میں نہیں مانتا میں نہیں جانتا
(جالب 2005: 129)

“The light which gleams only in citadels
Turns up the delight of the public in the shadows
Derives its strength from others' weaknesses
Such type of system, like dawn without light
I refuse to accept, I refuse to acknowledge

I am not afraid of execution
Tell the world that I am a martyr

Why do you terrify me with the prison walls?
This drooping destiny, this night of obliviousness
I refuse to accept, I refuse to acknowledge

"Flowers are budding on twigs," you say
"Every glass overflow," you say
"Wounds are healing themselves," you say
These bare-faces lies, this abuse of the intelligence
I refuse to accept, I refuse to acknowledge

For centuries, you have taken our peace of mind
But your ruling is approaching a culmination
Why do you make-believe you can subdue miseries?
Even if one claims that you've healed them
I refuse to acknowledge; I refuse to accept."

Jalib declares his contempt for a capitalist system in Pakistan that feeds on the blood of the poor to keep the lights burning in the palaces of the privileged few. Jalib joined the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto because socialism was part of its manifesto; however, Bhutto backed out of his promises to the people of Pakistan, and it brought an ideological clash for Jalib who criticized Bhutto's policies and was imprisoned. Jalib refers to Bhutto's government as the repressive state apparatus. He blames the state for exploiting the proletariat for its benefit. Jalib also coined the slogan بیس گھرانے (*Bees Gharanay*, '20 Families') as a protest against the ownership and control of eighty percent of the country's resources in the grip of only twenty elite families of Pakistan. In contrast, the rest of the eighty percent of people were being fed only on twenty percent of the country's resources. He further declares that he is not fearful of writing against the ideological shackles controlled by the ruling elite (Zaidi 2014: 1).

Furthermore, Jalib is fearless in the face of all atrocities as he announces that he is neither afraid of the death sentence nor imprisonment. Jalib refers to himself as *mansoor*,⁹ 'a martyr.' He proclaims that he is not afraid of the police or the mullahs, the tools of the repressive state apparatus, who heap charges of blasphemy on those who defy the status quo. Jalib was skeptical about the mullah-

⁹ Mansoor is a reference to the Persian Sufi saint Mansoor Al-Hallaj (858-922), who was executed because he went too far on the path of truth and called himself *انالحق* (*anal-Haq*, 'The Truth, God'). His claim was interpreted as the claim of divinity, and on another level, as the annihilation of his ego (Ibn Al-'Arabī 2007: 1).

military alliance in Pakistan, the interrelated workings of religion and the military, as they wanted to control the public by their blind obedience.

Another essential agent of the ideological state apparatus is the media. Jalib exposes the role of mass media in this poem as he narrates how media hides, molds, (de)forms, and reforms the societal realities to convince the people to instinctively obey the ruling class to maintain their unquestioned authority on the lives of the masses. He describes how the media censors everything and reshapes people's ideologies to perpetuate the ruling class's ideas. However, Jalib refuses to yield to this enslavement of minds, saying --- *اس کھلے جھوٹ کو --- ذہن کی لوٹ کو --- میں نہیں مانتا ---* (*is khule jhuuṭ ko zehñ kī luuṭ ko maiñ nahīñ māntā*, 'These bare-faces lies... this abuse of the intelligence.... I refuse to accept').

In the current context, Gramsci's concept of hegemony is often employed to explain the authority of the media in contemporary societies. Concerning the media, the concept of ideology refers to the ideas behind a media narrative and the ideological agenda of the producer of that narrative (Jubilee 1988: 8). Within society, the predominant accepted ideas and values will be those of the dominant class, and ideas are accepted via the process of hegemony. Jalib criticizes politicians' exaggerated claims, for they are made only to discourage the public from taking action against state institutions, what Althusser terms as Repressive State Apparatuses, and Jalib refuses to accept and acknowledge this type of government which only practices capitalism and dictatorship, and does not provide rights to the poor classes.

As a Marxist, Jalib addresses these ideological state apparatuses (ISA), the media, political organizations, and religious institutions that they should practice happiness, prosperity, and equality in society by listening to the voices of the people and by practicing real democracy, which points out toward socialism- in which there is no exploitation of the poor. However, when the political and ruling authorities do not do practically and only halt the false notion of helping the poor and wounded ones, Jalib mentions them as "bare face lies," and considers it the failure of the government which accomplishes her duties only cursorily, in words, slogans, and dialogues. He challenges the politicians' claims of bringing happiness, prosperity, and healing wounds as "bare, unaccomplished, and unadorned" within sociological analyses of the media, where words are without actions.

By the end of the poem, Jalib turns the whole political system on its head by blatantly refusing to accept any of its workings. He accuses state institutions- police, army, and churches of depriving people of their freedom and exploiting their minds, and challenges the status quo by negating the capitalist's ideology. He also warns that this system will soon end (maybe through a revolution). He questions the politicians' high claims of serving people facing poverty when they are too absorbed in caring for their interests. He believes the capitalists to be the biggest exploiters and unworthy of being called the well-

wishers of society. He refuses to acknowledge their power and questions their services, loyalties, and fidelities to the commoner. Thus, the political ideology of Habib Jalib and his resistance against oppression also reflected in his poem, make him the treasure of ingenuity and an immortal figure.

5. Conclusion

The revolutionary poetry of Faiz and Jalib has raised hope in the people of Pakistan, transformed them to think, and motivated them to oppose imperialism and social systems of exploitation. Their writings have enabled people to speak out for their rights and fight against the hegemonic intentions of the government and ruling classes. Their works have also proved that in order to get rid of the oppression of capitalists and to cure the plight of the working-class further struggle is needed. Jalib's poem is an iconic struggle passing on a lesson to the people for a decisive revolutionary step. On the other hand, through his poetry, Faiz has also encouraged the oppressed people to change their environment to achieve the goal of individual mental freedom. Overall, it has been noted that the poems of Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Habib Jalib reflect the pulse of the people. They represent the oppressed masses, and through their writings, they fight against social injustices, state oppression, and abuse of power. When viewed collectively, these writers' poetic works have shown Pakistan's socio-political timeline. Both poets have excelled in their global mindedness and service to humanity through poetry, rising above the growth of toxic ideas of division—be it on the basis of class, ethnicity, or nationality—that has sickened the sub-continent (India and Pakistan) for decades. Hence, this article concludes that the thought-provoking and motivating poetry of Faiz and Jalib is a medium to shift society's social and political fabric even in the contemporary era.

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The sleep of the good

Meditation on *buddho* in the Sudattasutta and its *aṭṭhakathā*

Giuliano Giustarini

This paper addresses the Sudattasutta of the Pāli Yakkhasaṃyutta and its direct commentary (*aṭṭhakathā*), both extremely significant in outlining meditative techniques that entail the figure of the Buddha as their object in order to arouse and cultivate wholesome factors of the path to liberation, such as faith and joy. These practices, applied to a variety of meditative techniques, have become popular in contemporary South-East Asia and, to some extent, in contemporary Theravāda worldwide. The examination of the Sudattasutta and its *aṭṭhakathā*—with the original translation of the latter—will shed light upon the dawn of this contemplative practice and of the cultural background behind it.

Keywords: Buddhist studies; mindfulness meditation; recitation of the *buddho*; Pāli commentaries.

1. The practice of *buddhagatā sati*

A major characteristic of the Sudattasutta (S CST4 I.242, PTS I.210-212) is the presence of the rare and significant locution *buddhagatā sati* (“mindfulness turned to the Buddha”), similar to the more frequent *kāyagatā sati* (“mindfulness turned to the body,” i.e., the first application of mindfulness in the *satipaṭṭhāna*-method) and to the compound *buddhanussati* (recollection of the Buddha, being it the first of the six recollections). Elsewhere in the Tipiṭaka the locution *buddhagatā sati* occurs only in the Anāthapiṇḍikavatthu of the Vinaya (Vin Cv, CST4 304, PTS II.155), which presents verbatim the same story and teaching of the Sudattasutta, and in the stanza 296 of the Dhammapada:

suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti sadā gotamasāvakaḥ |
yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca niccaṃ buddhagatā sati ||

The disciples of Gotama always wake up to a good awakening,
[for] there is in them, night and day, continuously, mindfulness turned to the Buddha.

Here *buddhagatā sati* appears in a sequence that includes not only *kāyagatā sati* (the last in the sequence), but also *dhammagatā sati* and *saṅghagatā sati*. The linguistic choices of this stanza obviously hint to the

double meaning of awakening-awakened, viz., literal and with regard to the final liberation.¹ In the *Sandhitattheragāthā* there is a reference to the practice of *buddhagatā saññā* (cognition turned to the Buddha), clearly equivalent of *buddhagatā sati* (Th st. 217, PTS 27).² The commentary (*Paramatthadīpanī*) describes it as a practice of cognition/perception (*saññā*) accompanied with the recollection of the Buddha (*buddha-anussati*), consisting in remembering the qualities of a/the Buddha (Th-a PTS II.82).³

2. The recitation of *buddho* in South-East Asia

In the last four-five decades, teachings of several renowned Thai monks have become extremely popular in Buddhist circles and have reached an international audience. The foundation and thriving of monasteries of Ajahn Chah's Forest Saṅgha tradition throughout Europe and America, the translations of Thai Buddhist texts by Bhikkhu Thanissaro and his account on the Forest Saṅgha tradition, but also, from a more general perspective, the spread of the Vipassanā movement in the world attracted many Buddhist meditators to the teachings and anecdotes of Thai forest monks who practiced and taught in the past two centuries.⁴

These teachings include a meditative technique consisting in reciting the word *Buddho* uninterruptedly, or in combining the repetition of its two separate syllables “bud” and “dho” with the rhythm of the breath in *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of the in- and out-breath) exercises (Lei 2023: 3) or with the raising and lowering the foot in *caṅkama* (walking) meditation (Chah 2007: 79; Akiñcano 2006: 13), but also in integrating it into any kind of activity (Chah 2007: 309; Thate 1988: 2). This technique is indicated either as a prerequisite to concentration or as a direct way to good or correct concentration (*sammāsamādhi*) for its role in motivating, focusing, and calming the mind (Maha Boowa 2012: 47), or also as a strategy to develop mindfulness and insight (Chah 2007: 448). It was also practiced by counting the beads of a *mālā*, along with the recitation of “Dhammo” and “Saṅgho” performed in the same way (Tiyavanich 1997: 325).

¹ On the lexicon of awakening in the Pāli Canon, cf. Anālayo (2021) and Giustarini (2012).

² This stanza also occurs verbatim in the *Sanditthattherāpadāna* (Ap CST4 I st. 27, PTS I.210) and is quoted in the *Nettipakaraṇa* (Netti CST4 95, PTS 138).

³ On the meanings, etymologies, and synonyms of *buddha*, see for instance: Paṭiś CST4 I.161-162, PTS I.173; MNidd CST4 162, PTS II.457-458, and Sadd CST4 Dhātumālā 230, PTS 483,24-29 (§1133). Occasionally, like in the *Brāhmaṇasutta* (*Udāna* CST4 I.5, PTS 3), the term *buddha* refers not only to Gotama or the *sammāsambuddhas* of the past and future, but more generally to all the *arahants*, i.e. those who have destroyed the poisons (*āsava*) and reached final liberation, *nibbāna*.

⁴ About the rise and development of the *Kammaṭṭhāna* Forest movement and its relationship with the two official monastic orders in Thailand, viz., the *Dhammayuttika Nikāya* (*Thammayut*) and the *Mahā Nikāya*, see e.g. Swearer (2010), Tiyanich (1997) and Thanissaro (2005).

The application of these methods within the Thai tradition can be traced back to Ajahn Sao Kantasīlo (1859-1942) who transmitted it to Ajahn Man (or Mun, 1870-1949) before the latter was instructed in Burma (Tiyavanich 1997: 63, 71; Lei 2023: 3). It should be kept in mind that Ajahn Man is widely perceived as the founder of the Thai Forest tradition (Swearer 2010: 12), which in turn represents a significant shift in Thai Buddhism and in the history of Theravāda as a whole. The repetition of *buddho* was relatively common at the beginning of the twentieth century (Tiyavanich 1997: 65).

The combination of *buddho* with standard meditative practices was taught by other Thai Forest monks like Ajahn Man, Ajahn Fan Ajaro (1898-1977), Ajahn Li (o Lee) Dhammadharo (1907-1961), Ajahn Thate Desaransi (1902-1994), Ajahn Maha Boowa (o Mahabua) Ñāṇasampanno (1913-2011), Ajahn Chah (1918-1992), and also by the most prominent Western disciple of the latter, Ajahn Sumedho (1934-), who presented it as a “reflection on the way things are” (2012: 35-39: cf. 2004a: 120; 2004b: 2). In Thailand it was not restricted to the monastics: it is reported that Ajahn Fan and Ajahn Man, to name two major preachers of the *buddho* recitation, recommended it to villagers to ward off [the fear of] ghosts (Tiyavanich 1997: 163, 279). Although it is difficult (and beyond the scope of this article) to trace the origins of the practice of reciting *buddho* in post-modern Thailand, it is noteworthy that there are canonical and post-canonical precedents.

3. Joy and purification by reciting *buddho* according to Pāli sources

In the aṭṭhakathā of the Sudattasutta (S-a CST4 I.242, PTS I.309-311), the recitation of *buddho* precedes and favors the sleep of Anāthapiṇḍika, who couldn't see the Buddha after a long journey. The same commentary describes the practice of *buddhagatā sati* as consisting in the recitation of the word *buddho*, a specific practice that is still taught in South-East Asian Theravāda monasteries. This description matches an illustration in verses found in the commentary of the Jātaka:

buddho 'ti mama sutvāna pīti uppajji tāvade |
buddho buddho 'ti kathayanto somanassaṃ pavedayiṃ ||
 Having heard the word *Buddha*, joy arose in me at once.
 By reciting *Buddho Buddha*, I experienced happiness.
 J-a st. 52, PTS I.12

These verses are quoted in an Abhidhamma commentary, the *Aṭṭhasālinī*, with *vacanaṃ* (“word”) instead of *mama* (“to me” or “in me”).⁵ The *Jātaka* commentary, a few verses below the stanza above cited, ascribes the quality of purification to this practice:

adaṃsu te mam’ okāsa sodhetuṃ añjasaṃ tadā |
buddho buddho ’ti cintento maggaṃ sodhem’ ahaṃ tadā ||
Then, they offered me an opportunity, a road to purify.
Then, by thinking *buddho buddho*, I purified the path.⁶

This practice clearly echoes the *buddhānussati* presented in various Suttas as the first of the six recollections, viz., *buddhānussati*, *dhammānussati*, *saṅghānussati*, *silānussati*, *cāgānussati*, and *devatānussati* (e.g. *Anussatiṭṭhānasutta*, A CST4 VI.9, PTS III.284). The association of joy (*pīti*) with the recollection of the Buddha is explicitly asserted by the commentator *Dhammapāla* (M-pṭ CST4 II.385, Be II.175) and is also found in other schools, like the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* (e.g. Av 64).

The commentary of the *Sudattasutta*, besides enhancing the virtue of practicing the *buddhānussati* by reciting the word *buddho*, uses the locution *buddhagata-pasāda*, meaning the bright conviction or confidence in the Buddha, a brightness in the heart so powerful that resembles daylight (see the translation of the *Sudattasuttavaṇṇanā* below). The commentary is crucial in identifying the recitation of *buddho* before sleeping as a specific practice and not merely an edifying episode. Whether the *aṭṭhakathās* are to be considered as complementary to the canonical material or later works by *Buddhaghosa* (a matter still debated and not addressed in the present article), they represent the historical continuation of concepts and practices throughout the centuries following the death of the Buddha. In the specific case of the recitation of *buddho*, the *aṭṭhakathā* may be identified as a plausible (and pivotal) source for some meditative techniques still popular in contemporary Theravāda.

In conclusion, the *Sudattasutta* and its *aṭṭhakathā* reveal an unusual angle to teach and practice the *buddhagatā sati/saññā/anussati*, with an explicit emphasis on its contribution to the arising not only of faith or conviction (*saddhā* and *pasāda*), but also of joy, enthusiasm (*pīti*), which is an essential element in the list of the factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*) and in the standard definitions of the

⁵ Dhs-a CST4 Be 43, intentionally omitted in PTS 32—with the reference to the J-a verses. The words *vacanaṃ* and *mama* are alternated throughout the occurrences of this verse in Pāli literature, whether in CST4 or PTS editions (e.g. Bv CST4 v. 41, PTS st. 42, p. 8).

⁶ J-a st. 55, PTS I.13. Repetitions of words or phrases are quite common in Pāli texts, as instrumental to stress a word or a concept, like in the case of *loko loko* (S CST4 IV.68, PTS IV.39).

meditative stages (*jhāna*). This approach strikes as the most probable precursor of the recitation of *buddho* in modern South-East Asia.

4. Translation of the *Sudattasutta*

One time the Bhagavant was living at Rājagaha in the Cool Wood. Meanwhile, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika had reached Rājagaha because he had something to do.⁷ The householder Anāthapiṇḍika heard this: “Apparently a Buddha has arisen in the world.” He was yearning to go and see the Bhagavant when this came to the mind of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika: “Today is not the time to go and see the Bhagavant. At this point, I will go to see the Bhagavant tomorrow.” Then he went to sleep with mindfulness turned to the Buddha. That night he got up three times thinking that it was dawning. At some point the householder Anāthapiṇḍika moved to the gate of the cemetery; non-humans opened the gate. At some point, light vanished and darkness came about, and fear, terror, goosebumps arose in the householder Anāthapiṇḍika who was leaving the city, and he desired to go back. Then the *yakkha* Sivaka uttered a speech:⁸

One hundred thousand⁹ elephants, one hundred thousand horses, one hundred thousand carts
pulled by she-mules,
One hundred thousand girls are not worthy one sixteenth part of taking one step forward.
Progress, householder, progress!
Progressing is better than regressing.

At that point, darkness vanished and light came about, and fear, terror, goosebumps quietened in the householder Anāthapiṇḍika. And for a second time, light vanished and darkness came about, and fear, terror, goosebumps arose in the householder Anāthapiṇḍika who was leaving the city, and he desired to go back. And for a second time, the *yakkha* Sivaka uttered a speech:

One hundred thousand elephants, one hundred thousand horses, one hundred thousand carts
pulled by she-mules,

⁷ Bodhi (2000: 311): “on some business.” Some terms and passages are translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi in the light of the commentary. Here I choose a more literal translation for the root text and the clarification of the commentary, so to show how the earlier needs the latter.

⁸ The term *sadda* here stresses the sound of the voice of the *yakkha*, a sound that is described in the commentary. On the figure and role of the *yakkhas* in Pāli Buddhism, see Giustarini (2021: 896).

⁹ See Bodhi (2000: 482, n. 586).

One hundred thousand girls are not worthy one sixteenth part of taking one step forward.
Progress, householder, progress!
Progressing is better than regressing.

Then, darkness vanished and light came about, and fear, terror, goosebumps quietened in the householder Anāthapiṇḍika. And for a third time, light vanished and darkness came about, and fear, terror, goosebumps arose in the householder Anāthapiṇḍika who was leaving the city, and he desired to go back. And for a third time, the *yakkha* Sivaka uttered a speech:

One hundred thousand elephants, one hundred thousand horses, one hundred thousand carts pulled by she-mules,
One hundred thousand girls are not worthy one sixteenth part of taking one step forward.
Progress, householder, progress!
Progressing is better than regressing.

Then, darkness vanished and light came about, and fear, terror, goosebumps quietened in the householder Anāthapiṇḍika. At that point, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika went to the Cool Wood to see the Bhagavant.

At that very time, the Bhagavant had risen just before dawn and was walking back and forward outdoor. The Bhagavant saw the householder Anāthapiṇḍika coming from quite a distance. After seeing him, he went down from the walking path and took a seat prepared for him. While sitting, the Bhagavant said to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika: “Come, Sudatta.” The householder Anāthapiṇḍika thought, ‘the Bhagavant called me by name!’ and, joyous and elated, immediately prostrated himself with the head at the feet of the Bhagavant. Then he said to the Bhagavant: “O Bhante, did the Bhagavant sleep comfortably?”

Always, indeed, sleeps comfortably the brahmaṇ¹⁰, the one who is completely extinguished (*parinibbuto*),
The one who does not soil himself in sense-pleasures, cooled down (*sītibhūto*), free from clinging to possessions.
Since he has cut off all the attachments, since he has removed distress from the heart,
Serene, he sleeps comfortably, having reached peace of mind.

¹⁰ In the *Suttaṭīka* the Buddha often reinterprets the term *brāhmaṇa* in a positive light, e.g. in the *Dhammapada* (v. 388) e in the *Vasethasutta* (M 98). Cf. Neri-Pontillo (2014).

5. Translation of the Sudattasuttavaṇṇanā (*aṭṭhakathā*)

In the eight [discourse] the phrase “because he had something to do” refers to trading business (*vāṇijjakamma*). Anāthapiṇḍika and a merchant from Rājagaha were each other’s brothers in law. When there were precious items and products in Rājagaha, the Rājagaha merchant took them and [312] with five-hundred carts went to Sāvatti; and when he was one *yojana* away he announced his own arrival. Anāthapiṇḍika went out to meet him, paid him great honors, put [the items] on one vehicle and entered Sāvatti. If an item could be sold quickly, he sold it; if not, he left it at his sister’s house and went away. Anāthapiṇḍika also did just the same. [in the other direction, travelling from Sāvatti to Rājagaha]. It was he who went [to Rājagaha] on exactly that business on this occasion. This [phrase above] is said with reference to that.

On that day, however, the Rājagaha merchant did not hear [that] Anāthapiṇḍika, who was staying just a *yojana* away, had sent a letter to announce his arrival, [and] he went to the *vihāra*¹¹ to listen to the Dhamma.

After listening to the Dhamma-talk, he invited the monastic *saṅgha* in the presence of the Buddha to his own house for the following day and arranged the excavation of a furnace and the splitting of the firewood. Anāthapiṇḍika was thinking, “now they will come to meet me, now they will come to meet me,” but he did not receive the welcome at the gate of the house and once he entered the house was not paid much honor. He was greeted only to this extent: “Which good news on your children? Aren’t you tired for the journey?” The Rājagaha merchant, seeing that Anāthapiṇḍika was so busy, asked “Are you arranging a wedding?” He engaged in a conversation just like it occurs in a section [of the Vinaya],¹² and after hearing the word ‘Buddha’ from his mouth he attained the fivefold bliss.¹³ This [bliss] arose from his head to the back of the feet, arose from the back of the feet and reached the head, arose from both and flowed into the center, arose in the center and reached both. After asking three times, “householder, did you say ‘Buddha?’” [and being answered] “I said ‘Buddha,’ householder,” he was immediately touched by bliss. He commented “even the word ‘Buddha’ itself is difficult to find in this world.” With regard to this story, it is told [in the sutta] that “the householder Anāthapiṇḍika heard this: ‘Apparently a Buddha has arisen in this world.’” With regard to the passage, “This came to

¹¹ Here the term *vihāra* indicates a Buddhist monastic abode for public meetings and talks (cf. PED, s.v. *vihāra*).

¹² Vin Cv CST4 304. Here the whole episode is told in detail, and the *ṭīkā* has some passages corresponding to those in this *aṭṭhakathā*.

¹³ The *ṭīkā* explains the expression “fivefold bliss” (*pañcavaṇṇaṃ pitim*) in terms of the five levels of intensity by which bliss occurs.

the mind [of the householder Anāthapiṇḍika]: ‘Today is not the time’ etc.,” it is told that he had asked to that merchant: “O householder, where does the Teacher live?.” And the latter replied: [313] “Buddhas are difficult to be met with, like poisonous snakes; the Teacher is dwelling in a cemetery,¹⁴ it is impossible for someone like you to go there at the moment.” And then this came to him. The phrase “he went to sleep with mindfulness turned to the Buddha” is explained as that day he had gone to sleep with no thought about the one hundred items or about his attendants and he didn’t even had dinner; instead, he just climbed his seven-storey palace, went to the decorated bed prepared for him, and fell asleep repeating “*Buddho, Buddho...*” This is the reason why [in the discourse] it is said “he went to sleep with mindfulness turned to the Buddha.” “He even got up three times thinking that it was dawning” means that when the first watch of the night was just passed he got up calling to mind the Buddha (or: remembering [that in the morning he would go to see] the Buddha), and then a strong, bright conviction¹⁵ arose in him, the light of bliss appeared and all the darkness was dispelled, and what happened was like the kindle of one thousand lamps, or the arising of the moon or the arising of the sun. He thought “I have indeed reached brightness,¹⁶ [as it seems to me that] the sun is risen,” but after raising and looking up the moon standing in the sky, he realized “only one watch of the night is passed, and there are still two left” and went back to sleep. In the same way, he got up at the end of the middle wake and at the end of the last wake of the night, totally three times. But at the end of the third watch, when it was early in the morning, he raised, reached the terrace and stood just in front of the great gate: the gate of the seven-storey building was open. He descended the palace and went to walk in the street. “[Non-humans] opened [the gate]” means that [non-humans] opened [the gate] after reflecting thus: “This great merchant, departing in order to go to attend the Buddha, was the attendant of the three gems for the establishment in the fruit of stream-entry, and built an incomparable monastery for the saṅgha; therefore the gate of the community will be open for him on the four sides: it would not be appropriate to keep the gate closed to him.” “Vanished” (*antaradhāyi*) implies [the following story]: it is told that Rājagaha was overpopulated, and there were nine crores [of inhabitants] inside the city and nine outside the city; as a result, eighteen crores of people lived there. Many people died untimely, and it was impossible to carry [their bodies] outside; so, they erected a watchtower and threw

¹⁴ PTS adds: “in the cool wood.”

¹⁵ The term *pasāda* here refers to the double meaning of *pasāda*, brightness, clearance, and conviction, serene confidence in the Buddha; the *ṭikā* gives only the latter, but it is clear that this passage refers to inner brightness mistaken for external brightness, i.e. the daylight.

¹⁶ PTS: *pasādaṃ*; CST4 reads *papādaṃ*, possibly a typo: the term does not occur anywhere else and is not found in dictionaries; the parallel passage, in the *Vinaya-ṭikā* (*Sāratthadīpanī-ṭ* CST4 III.304), reads *pamādaṃ*.

[the bodies] outside the gate. The merchant went just outside of the city, and since he was walking on feet his body was wet with sweat, and also the back of his feet hurt. Flies were flying and surrounding him. A foul smell struck his nostrils. His bright conviction in the Buddha lessened. Therefore [314] light vanished for him, and darkness came about. “[The *yakkha*] uttered a speech” means that [the *yakkha*] uttered a speech with a mellifluous voice, like if he was ringing a beautiful bell, with the intention of arousing energy in the merchant. In regard with “one hundred thousand girls,” the previous words [one hundred elephants, one hundred horses, and one hundred carts pulled by she-mules] should be linked to this word “thousand.” The resulting sense would thus be “one hundred thousand elephants, one hundred thousand horses, one hundred thousand carts pulled by she-mules, and one hundred thousand girls;” in other words, it is explained that each one would be one hundred thousand. In “of a stride,” a stride is to say that in the same walk the measure between the two feet should be equal to a fist-gem. “Are not worth the sixteenth part” means that once one stride is divided into sixteen portions, a single fraction of them would be further divided per sixteen, meaning that each one is tenfold, in the same way sixteen footsteps are sixteen-fold, and each portion of this subdivision is called the sixteenth part: those four hundred thousand are not worthy that sixteenth part. It is said that one hundred thousand elephants, one hundred thousand horses, one hundred thousand carts pulled by she-mules, and one hundred thousand girls, and the latter adorned with jeweled earrings, or all princesses of Jambudīpa, such attainment would be counted as the sixteenth part of the more eminent intention occurring when one goes to the *vihāra*. And in virtue of what this is seized by going to the *vihāra*? After going to the *vihāra*, one is immediately established in the fruit of stream-entry, because when one goes [to the *vihāra*], this [sequence of intentions] goes on [in them]: “I will make a sacred offering of perfumed garlands and so on, I will pay homage to the *cetiya*, I will listen to the Dhamma, I will make a sacred offering of lights, I will invite the *saṅgha* and offer gifts to it, I will establish myself either in the bases of training (*sikkhāpada*) or in the refuges.”

In regard with the phrase “darkness vanished,” they say that when he reflected “I have created the perception that I am alone, and this [perception] is following me; this is the reason why I am scared,” the sun appeared. Indeed, a strong and bright conviction in the Buddha arose in him, and this was the reason why darkness vanished, and it went on the same way for the rest of the track too. Furthermore, when he was passing through the dreadful path of the charnel ground, he saw multiple corpses, with skeleton, flesh, blood etc., and heard verses of dogs, jackals, etc. By increasing the bright conviction again and again, he crushed all that danger (*parissaya*) and left.

In regard with [the exhortation] “come Sudatta,” they say that the merchant, when he was going [to the *vihāra*], reflected thus: “In this world there are many sectarians, such as Puraṇa Kassapa and

others, who claim ‘we are buddhas, we are buddhas; how could I be certain about the buddhahood of the Teacher?’” And this [idea] came to his mind: “Many people know me by the name I received because of my qualities, and they don’t know instead the name I received from my family. If [the Teacher will call me by the name I received from my family, he will be a buddha.” The Teacher, by knowing [the merchant’s] mind, thus spoke.

“Completely extinguished” is to be intended as completely extinguished by the complete extinction of the defilements. “Attachments” is tantamount to cravings. “Peace” corresponds to the pacification of the defilements. The term “*pappuyya*” (having reached) is just another word for *patvā* (having reached).¹⁷ This said, the Teacher gave a gradual talk;¹⁸ on top of that, he expounded the four authentic conditions. The merchant listened to the Dhamma-teaching, got established in the fruit of stream-entry, he invited the monastic *saṅgha* in the presence of the Buddha, and from the following day onwards he started offering plenty of gifts to the saṅgha. Bimbisāra and others sent this message to the merchant: “You’re a visitor (*āgantuka*), demand [even] the impossible (*yaṃ na pahoti*).” He declined all [these invitations] by saying “you are already too busy,” and in a week he donated plenty of gifts, powerfully carried (*ānītavibhavena*) by five hundred carts. At the conclusion of the donation, he convinced the Bhagavant to accept a residence for the *vassa* in *Sāvatti*, he made build and donated forty-five *vihāras* in the hundred thousand of *yojanas* between *Rājagaha* and *Sāvatti*; then he went to *Sāvatti* and there made build the great *vihāra* of *Jeta* wood and gave [all of them] to the *saṅgha* of the *bhikkhus*, in the presence of the Buddha. [End of the commentary on] the eight [discourse].

Pāli texts

Peyyālas have been replaced with the text elided. On the use of the *peyyālas* see Gethin 1992: 156 and Wynne 2004: 107.

Punctuation, removal of capital letters, or regularization of the spacing are changed silently.

Editorial symbols and abbreviations

]	lemma
	daṇḍa
cf.	confer / compare with

¹⁷ Along with *pāpuṇivā*, they are two forms of the tvādiyantapada of the verb *pāpuṇāti*, Skt. *prāpnoti* (PED, s.v. *pāpuṇāti*).

¹⁸ See Gethin 2003: 208.

em.	emendation
ep	equally possible
om.	omitted in / absent in
SsPTS _{ED}	Sudattasutta, Pali Text Society edition
SsCST4 _{ED}	Sudattasutta, Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka, 4th edition
SsaPTS _{ED}	Sudattasutta commentary, Pali Text Society edition
SsaCST4 _{ED}	Sudattasutta comemntary, Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka, 4th edition

Sudattasutta (S CST4 I.242, PTS I.210-212)

ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā rājagahe viharati sītavane | tena kho pana samayena anāthapiṇḍiko gahapati rājagahaṃ anuppatto hoti kenacid eva¹⁹ karaṇīyena | assosi kho anāthapiṇḍiko gahapati buddho kira²⁰ loke uppanno ti | tāvad eva²¹ ca pana bhagavantam dassanāya upasaṅkamtukāmo ahosi²² | [211] ath'assa²³ anāthapiṇḍikassa gahapatissa etad ahosi²⁴ | akālo kho ajja bhagavantam dassanāya upasaṅkamtum | sve dān' āham²⁵ kālena bhagavantam dassanāya upasaṅkamissām' iti²⁶ buddhagatāya satiyā nipajji | rattiyā sudam tikkhattum vuṭṭhāsi pabhātan ti²⁷ maññamāno | atha kho anāthapiṇḍiko gahapati yena sīvathikadvāram²⁸ ten'upasaṅkami²⁹ | amanussā dvāram vivariṃsu | atha kho anāthapiṇḍikassa gahapatissa nagaramhā nikkhamantassa āloko antaradhāyi andhakāro pātur ahosi³⁰ bhayaṃ chambhitattam lomahaṃso udapādi | tatova³¹ puna nivattitukāmo ahosi | atha kho sivako³² yakkho antarahito saddam anussāvesi³³ |

¹⁹ kenacid eva SsPTS_{ED}] kenacideva SsCST4_{ED}.

²⁰ kira SsCST4_{ED}] kiro SsPTS_{ED}.

²¹ tāvad eva SsPTS_{ED}] tāvadeva SsCST4_{ED}.

²² ahosi SsPTS_{ED}] hoti SsCST4_{ED}.

²³ ath'assa] em. athassa SsPTS_{ED} athassa SsCST4_{ED}.

²⁴ etad ahosi] SsPTS_{ED}] etadahosi SsCST4_{ED}.

²⁵ sve dān' āham] em. sve dānāham SsCST4_{ED} svedānāham SsPTS_{ED}.

²⁶ upasaṅkhamissām' iti] em. upasaṅkhamissāmīti SsPTS_{ED} gamissāmīti SsCST4_{ED}.

²⁷ pabhātan ti SsPTS_{ED}] SsCST4_{ED} pabhātanti.

²⁸ sīvathikadvāram SsPTS_{ED}] SsCST4_{ED} sīvathikadvāram.

²⁹ ten'upasaṅkhami SsPTS_{ED}] tenupasaṅkhami SsCST4_{ED}.

³⁰ pātur ahosi SsPTS_{ED}] pāturahosi SsCST4_{ED}.

³¹ tato ca SsPTS_{ED}] tatova SsCST4_{ED}.

³² sīvako SsPTS_{ED}] sivako SsCST4_{ED}.

³³ saddam anussāvesi SsPTS_{ED}] saddamanussāvesi SsCST4_{ED}.

sataṃ hatthī sataṃ assā | sataṃ assatarīrathā³⁴ |
sataṃ kaññāsahassāni | āmukkamaṇikuṇḍalā |
ekassa padavītiḥārassa | kalam nāgghanti soḷasiṃ |
abhikkama gahapati | abhikkama gahapati |
abhikkamanan te seyyo | na³⁵ paṭikkamanan ti |

atha kho anāthapiṇḍikassa gahapatissa andhakāro antaradhāyi āloko pātur ahoṣi³⁶ | yaṃ ahoṣi bhayaṃ
chambhitattaṃ lomahaṃso so paṭippassambhi | dutiyam pi kho anāthapiṇḍikassa gahapatissa āloko
antaradhāyi andhakāro pāturahosi bhayaṃ chambhitattaṃ lomahaṃso udapādi | tato ca³⁷ puna
nivattitukāmo ahoṣi | dutiyam pi kho sīvako yakkho antarahito saddam anussāvesi |

sataṃ hatthī sataṃ assā | sataṃ assatarīrathā³⁸ |
sataṃ kaññāsahassāni | āmukkamaṇikuṇḍalā |
ekassa padavītiḥārassa | kalam nāgghanti soḷasiṃ |
abhikkama gahapati | abhikkama gahapati |
abhikkamanan te seyyo | na³⁹ paṭikkamanan ti |

atha kho anāthapiṇḍikassa gahapatissa andhakāro antaradhāyi āloko pātur ahoṣi | yaṃ ahoṣi bhayaṃ
chambhitattaṃ lomahaṃso so paṭippassambhi | tatiyam pi kho anāthapiṇḍikassa gahapatissa āloko
antaradhāyi andhakāro pāturahosi bhayaṃ chambhitattaṃ lomahaṃso udapādi | tato ca⁴⁰ puna
nivattitukāmo ahoṣi | tatiyam pi kho sīvako yakkho antarahito saddam anussāvesi |

sataṃ hatthī sataṃ assā | sataṃ assatarīrathā⁴¹ |
sataṃ kaññāsahassāni | āmuttamaṇikuṇḍalā⁴² |
ekassa padavītiḥārassa | kalam n'āgghanti soḷasiṃ |
abhikkama gahapati | abhikkama gahapati |

³⁴ assatarīrathā SsCST_{4ED}] assasarī rathā SsPTS_{ED}.

³⁵ na SsPTS_{ED}] no SsCST_{4ED}.

³⁶ pātur ahoṣi SsPTS_{ED}] pāturahosi SsCST_{4ED}.

³⁷ tato ca SsPTS_{ED}] tatova SsCST_{4ED}.

³⁸ assatarīrathā SsCST_{4ED}] assasarī rathā SsPTS_{ED}.

³⁹ na SsPTS_{ED}] no SsCST_{4ED}.

⁴⁰ tato ca SsPTS_{ED}] tatova SsCST_{4ED}.

⁴¹ assatarīrathā SsCST_{4ED}] assasarī rathā SsPTS_{ED}.

⁴² āmuttamaṇikuṇḍalā SsPTS_{ED}] āmukkamaṇikuṇḍalā SsCST_{4ED}.

abhikkamanan te seyyo | na⁴³ paṭikkamanan ti |
 atha kho anāthapiṇḍikassa gahapatissa andhakāro antaradhāyi āloko pātur ahosi⁴⁴ | yaṃ ahosi bhayaṃ
 chambhitattam lomahaṃso so paṭippassambhi | atha kho anāthapiṇḍiko gahapati yena sītavanam yena
 bhagavā tenupasaṅkami |

tena kho pana samayena bhagavā rattiyā paccūsasamayam paccuṭṭhāya abbhokāse caṅkamati |
 addasā kho bhagavā anāthapiṇḍikam gahapatiṃ dūrato va⁴⁵ āgacchantam | disvāna caṅkamā orohitvā
 paññatte āsane nisīdi | nisajja kho bhagavā anāthapiṇḍikam gahapatiṃ etad avoca | ehi sudattā 'ti | atha
 kho anāthapiṇḍiko gahapati nāmena maṃ bhagavā ālapatīti haṭṭho udaggo tatth'eva bhagavato pādesu
 sirasā nipatitvā bhagavantam etad avoca | kacci bhante bhagavā sukham asayitthā 'ti⁴⁶ |

sabbadā ve sukham seti | brāhmaṇo parinibbuto |
 yo na limpāti kāmesu | sītibhūto nirūpadhi⁴⁷ |
 sabbā āsattiyo chetvā | vineyya hadaye darām |
 upasanto sukham seti | santiṃ pappuyya cetaso⁴⁸ 'ti ||

Sudattasuttavaṇṇanā (Aṭṭhakathā; S-a CST4 I.242, PTS I.309-311)

aṭṭhame kenacid eva⁴⁹ karaṇīyenā 'ti vāṇijjakammaṃ adhippetam | anāthapiṇḍiko ca rājagahasetṭhi ca
 aññamaññaṃ bhaginipatikā⁵⁰ honti | yadā rājagahe uṭṭhānakabhaṇḍakam mahaggham hoti tadā
 rājagahasetṭhi⁵¹ tam gahetvā [312] pañcasakaṭasatehi sāvattim gantvā yojanamatte ṭhito attano
 āgatabhāvam jānāpeti | anāthapiṇḍiko paccuggantvā tassa mahāsakkāram katvā ekayānam āropetvā
 sāvattim pavisati | so sace bhaṇḍam lahukam vikkiṇīyati⁵² vikkiṇāti | no ce bhagiṇīghare⁵³ ṭhapetvā

⁴³ na SsPTS_{ED}] no SsCST4_{ED}.

⁴⁴ pātur ahosi SsPTS_{ED}] pāturahosi SsCST4_{ED}.

⁴⁵ dūrato va SsPTS_{ED}] duratova SsCST4_{ED}.

⁴⁶ sukham asayitthā 'ti SsPTS_{ED}] sukhamasayitthā'ti SsCST4_{ED}.

⁴⁷ nirupadhi SsPTS_{ED}] nirūpadhi SsCST4_{ED}.

⁴⁸ cetaso] cetasā SsPTS_{ED} SsCST4_{ED} (cf. A CST4 III.35, PTS I.138; see Bodhi 2000: 482, n. 589).

⁴⁹ kenacid eva SsaPTS_{ED}] kenacideva SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵⁰ aññamaññabhaginipatikā SsaPTS_{ED}] aññamaññaṃ bhaginipatikā SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵¹ rājagahasetṭhi SsaPTS_{ED}] rājagahasetṭhi SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵² vikkiṇīyati SsaPTS_{ED}] vikkīyati SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵³ bhagiṇīghare SsaPTS_{ED}] bhaginighare SsaCST4_{ED}.

pakkamati | anāthapiṇḍiko 'pi tath' eva karoti | svāyaṃ tadāpi teneva karaṇīyena agamāsi | taṃ sandhāy' etaṃ vuttaṃ |

taṃ divasaṃ pana rājagahaseṭṭhī⁵⁴ yojanamatte ṭhitena anāthapiṇḍikena āgatabhāvajānan' atthaṃ⁵⁵ pesitaṃ paṇṇaṃ na suṇi. dhammassavan' atthāya⁵⁶ vihāraṃ agamāsi | so dhammakathaṃ sutvā svātanāya buddhappamukhaṃ⁵⁷ bhikkhusaṅghaṃ nimantetvā attano ghare uddhanakhaṇāpanadāruruphālanādīni kāresi | anāthapiṇḍiko 'pi idāni mayhaṃ paccuggamaṇaṃ karissati idāni karissatī' ti gharadvārepi paccuggamaṇaṃ alabhitvā antogharaṃ pavittṭho paṭisanthāraṃ 'pi na bahuṃ alattha | kiṃ mahāseṭṭhī⁵⁸ kusalaṃ dārakarūpānaṃ | nasi magge kilanto 'ti ettako va paṭisanthāro ahosi | so tassa mahābyāpāraṃ disvā kiṃ nu kho⁵⁹ te gahapati āvāho vā vivāho vā⁶⁰ bhavissatī' ti khandhake āgatanayen' eva kathaṃ pavattetvā tassa mukhato buddhasaddaṃ sutvā pañcavaṇṇaṃ pītiṃ paṭilabhi | sā tassa sīsena utṭhāya yāva pādapiṭṭhiyā pādapiṭṭhiyā utṭhāya yāva sīsā gacchati ubhato utṭhāya majjhe osarati majjhe utṭhāya ubhato gacchati | so pītiyā nirantaraṃ phuṭṭho buddho 'ti tvaṃ gahapati vadesi | buddho' t' āhaṃ gahapati vadāmi' ti⁶¹ evaṃ tikkhattuṃ pucchitvā kho eso dullabho lokasmiṃ yadidaṃ buddho 'ti āha | idaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ assosi kho anāthapiṇḍiko gahapati buddho kira loke uppanno 'ti |

etad ahosi akālo kho ajjāti so kira taṃ seṭṭhiṃ pucchi | kuhiṃ gahapati satthā viharatī 'ti | ath' assa so [313] buddhā nāma durāsadā āsivisasadisā honti | satthā sivathikāya vasati | na sakkā tattha tumhādisehi imāya velāya gantun' ti ācikkhi | ath' assa etad ahosi | buddhagatāya satiyā nipajjī 'ti taṃ divasaṃ kir' assa bhaṇḍasakaṭesu vā upaṭṭhākesu vā cittaṃ 'pi na uppajji sāyamāsam 'pi na akāsi | sattabhūmikaṃ pana pāsādaṃ āruyha supaññatt' ālaṅkatavarasayane buddho buddho 'ti sajjhāyaṃ karonto va nipajjitvā niddaṃ okkami | tena vuttaṃ buddhagatāya satiyā nipajjī 'ti |

rattiyā sudaṃ tikkhattuṃ utṭhāsi pabhātan 'ti maññamāno 'ti paṭhamayāme tāva vītivatte utṭhāya buddhaṃ anussari ath' assa balavappasādo udapādi pītiāloko ahosi sabbatamaṃ vigacchi

⁵⁴ rājagahaseṭṭhī SsaPTS_{ED}] rājagahaseṭṭhi SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵⁵ āgatabhāvajānan' atthaṃ SsaPTS_{ED}] āgatabhāvajānanatthaṃ SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵⁶ dhammassavan' atthāya SsaPTS_{ED}] dhammassavanatthāya SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵⁷ buddhappamukhaṃ SsaPTS_{ED}] buddhappamukhaṃ SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵⁸ mahāseṭṭhī SsaPTS_{ED}] mahāseṭṭhi SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁵⁹ kiṃ nu kho] kiṃ nu SsaCST4_{ED}, kinnu kho SsaPTS_{ED}.

⁶⁰ āvāho vā vivāho vā SsaPTS_{ED}] āvāho vā SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁶¹ buddho' t' āhaṃ gahapati vadāmi' ti] buddho' t' āhaṃ, gahapati, vadāmi' ti SsaPTS_{ED}, buddho tāhaṃ, gahapati, vadāmi' ti SsaCST4_{ED}.

dīpasahassujjalam viya canduṭṭhānam sūriyuṭṭhānam⁶² viya ca jātam | so papādam āpanno vatamhi sūriyo uggato 'ti uṭṭhāya ākāsatāle ṭhitam candam ulloketvā eko va yāmo gato aññe dve atthi 'ti puna pavisitvā nipajji | eten' upāyena majjhimayāmāvasāne 'pi pacchimayāmāvasāne 'pī 'ti tikkhattum uṭṭhāsi⁶³ | pacchimayāmāvasāne pana balavapaccūseyeva uṭṭhāya ākāsatālam āgantvā mahādvārābhimukhova ahosi sattabhūmikadvāram sayam eva vivaṭam ahosi | so pāsādā oruyha antaravīthim paṭipajji |

vivarimsū 'ti ayam mahāseṭṭhi buddh' upaṭṭhānam gamissāmī 'ti nikkhanto paṭhamadassanen' eva sotāpattiphale paṭiṭṭhāya tiṇṇam ratanānam aggupaṭṭhāko hutvā asadisam saṅghārāmaṃ katvā cātuddisassa ariyagaṇassa anāvaṭadvāro bhavissati | na yuttamassa dvāram pidahitun 'ti cintetvā vivarimsu | antaradhāyī 'ti rājagaham kira ākiṇṇamanussam antonagare nava koṭiyo bahinagare navā 'ti | tam upanissāya aṭṭhārasa manussakoṭiyo vasanti | avelāya matamanusse bahi nīharitum asakkontā aṭṭālake ṭhatvā bahidvāre khipanti | mahāseṭṭhi nagarato bahinikkhantamattova allasarīram pādena akkami | aparam 'pi piṭṭhipādena pahari | makkhikā uppatitvā parikirimsu | duggandho nāsapuṭam abhihani | buddhappasādo tanuttam gato⁶⁴ | ten' [314] assa āloko antaradhāyī andhakāro pāturahosi | saddam anussāvesī 'ti seṭṭhissa ussāham janessāmī 'ti suvaṇṇakīṇikam ghaṭṭento viya madhurassarena saddam anussāvesi |

sataṃ kañṇāsahassānī 'ti purimapaḍānī 'pi iminā va saḥassapaḍena saddhim sambandhanīyānī | yath' eva hi sataṃ kañṇāsahassānī sataṃ saḥassānī hatthī sataṃ saḥassānī assā sataṃ saḥassānī rathā 'ti ayam ettha attho. iti ekekaṃ sataḥassam eva⁶⁵ dīpitaṃ | padavītiḥārassā 'ti padavītiḥāro nāma samagamane dvinnam paḍānam antare muṭṭhiratanamattaṃ | kalam n' āgghanti soḷasin' ti tam ekaṃ padavītiḥāram soḷasabhāge katvā tato eko koṭṭhāso puna soḷasadhā tato eko soḷasadhā 'ti evam soḷasavāre soḷasadhā bhinnassa eko koṭṭhāso soḷasikalā nāma tam soḷasikalam etānī cattāri sataḥassānī na agghanti | idaṃ vuttam hoti sataṃ hatthisaḥassānī sataṃ assasaḥassānī sataṃ rathasaḥassānī sataṃ kañṇāsahassānī tā ca kho āmukkamaṇikuṇḍalā sakalajambudīparājadhītarō vā 'ti | imasmā ettakā lābhā vihāram gacchantassa tasmim soḷasikalasaṅkhāte padese pavattacetanāva uttaritarā 'ti | idaṃ pana vihāragamanam kassa vasena gahitan 'ti | vihāram gantvā anantarāyena

⁶² dīpasahassujjalam viya canduṭṭhānam sūriyuṭṭhānam SsaCST4_{ED}] dīpasahassujjalam viya canduṭṭhānam sūriyuṭṭhānam SsaPTS_{ED}.

⁶³ eten' upāyena majjhimayāmāvasāne 'pi pacchimayāmāvasāne 'pī 'ti tikkhattum uṭṭhāsi] eten' upāyena majjhimayāmāvasāne pi tikkhattum uṭṭhāsi SsaPTS_{ED} eten' upāyena majjhimayāmāvasānepi pacchimayāmāvasānepīti tikkhattum uṭṭhāsi SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁶⁴ buddhappasādo tanubhūto SsaPTS_{ED}] buddhappasādo tanuttam gato SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁶⁵ ekekaṃ sataḥassam eva SsaPTS_{ED}] ekekasatasahassameva SsaCST4_{ED}.

sotāpatti-phale patiṭṭhahantassa | gandhamālādīhi pūjaṃ karissāmi cetiyaṃ vandissāmi dhammaṃ
sossāmi dīpapūjaṃ karissāmi saṅghaṃ nimantetvā dānaṃ dassāmi sikkhāpadesu vā saraṇesu vā
patiṭṭhahissāmi 'ti gacchato' pi vasena vaṭṭati yeva |

andhakāro antaradhāyī 'ti so kira cintesi ahaṃ ekako 'ti saññaṃ karomi | anuyuttā 'pi me atthi |
kasmā bhāyāmī 'ti sūro ahosi | ath' assa balavā buddhappasādo⁶⁶ udapādi | tasmā andhakāro
antaradhāyī 'ti | sesavāresu 'pi es' eva nayo | api ca purato purato⁶⁷ gacchanto bhīṃsanake susānamagge
aṭṭhikasāṅkhalikasamaṃsalohitantiādīni 'pi⁶⁸ anekavidhāni kuṇapāni [315] addasa soṇasiṅgālādīnaṃ⁶⁹
saddaṃ assosi | taṃ sabbaṃ parissayaṃ punappunaṃ buddhagataṃ pasādaṃ vaḍḍhetvā maddanto
agamāsi yeva |

ehi sudattā 'ti so kira seṭṭhī⁷⁰ gacchamāno va cintesi | imasmiṃ loke bahū pūraṇakassapādayo
titthiyā mayaṃ buddhā mayaṃ buddhā 'ti vadanti | kathaṃ nu kho ahaṃ satthu buddhabhāvaṃ
jāneyyaṃ 'ti | ath' assa etad ahosi mayhaṃ guṇavasena uppannaṃ nāmaṃ mahājano jānāti |
kuladattiyāṃ pana me nāmaṃ aññatra mayā na koci jānāti | sace buddho bhavissati kuladattikaṇāmena
maṃ ālapissati 'ti | satthā tassa cittaṃ ṇatvā evam āha |

parinibbuto 'ti kilesaparinibbānena parinibbuto | āsattiyo 'ti taṇhāyo | santin' ti kilesavūpasamaṃ
| pappuyyā 'ti patvā | idaṃ ca pana vatvā satthā tassa anupubbikathaṃ kathetvā matthake cattāri
saccāni pakāsesi | seṭṭhi dhammadesanaṃ sutvā sotāpatti-phale patiṭṭhāya buddhappamukhaṃ
bhikkhusaṅghaṃ nimantetvā punadivasato paṭṭhāya mahādānaṃ dātuṃ ārabhi | bimbisārādayo
seṭṭhissa sāsanaṃ pesenti | tvaṃ āgantuko | yaṃ na pahoti⁷¹ taṃ ito āharāpehi 'ti | so alaṃ tumhe
bahukiccā 'ti sabbe paṭikkhipitvā pañcahi sakaṭasatehi ānītavibhavana sattāhaṃ mahādānaṃ adāsi |
dānapariyosāne ca bhagavantaṃ sāvattiyaṃ vassāvāsaṃ paṭijānāpetvā rājagahassa ca sāvattiyaṃ ca
antare yojane yojane satahassaṃ datvā pañcacattālīsa vihāre kārento sāvattiyaṃ gantvā
jetavanamahāvihāraṃ kāretvā buddhappamukhassa bhikkhusaṅghassa niyyādesi⁷² |

⁶⁶ buddhappasādo SsaCST4_{ED}] buddha-pasādo SsaPTS_{ED}.

⁶⁷ parato parato SsaPTS_{ED}] purato purato SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁶⁸ 'pi SsaPTS_{ED}] om. SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁶⁹ soṇasiṅgālādīnaṃ SsaCST4_{ED}] soṇasiṅgālādīnaṃ ca SsaPTS_{ED}.

⁷⁰ seṭṭhī seṭṭhi SsaPTS_{ED}] seṭṭhi SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁷¹ na pahoti] na ppahoti SsaPTS_{ED} nappahoti SsaCST4_{ED}.

⁷² niyyādesi SsaPTS_{ED}] niyyādesīti SsaCST4_{ED}.

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Abbreviations

Ap	Apadāna
Av	Adhikaraṇavastu
Be	Burmese edition
Bv	Buddhavaṃsa
CST4	Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka, 4th edition (VRI digital edition)
J-a	Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā
M	Majjhima Nikāya
MNidd	Mahāniddeśa
Netti	Nettipakaraṇa
Paṭis	Paṭisambhidāmagga
S	Saṃyutta Nikāya
S-a	Sārattappakāsini (Saṃyutta Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā)
Sadd	Saddanīti
st.	stanza, strophe
Th	Theragāthā
Th-a	Paramatthadīpanī (Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā)
Vinaya Cūlavagga	Vin Cv

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Buddhist and Christian diplomacies pursuing peace amidst the Second World War

Official communications between Thailand and the Vatican

Claudio Cicuzza

This article discloses and analyses a selection of letters, reports, and official missives exchanged between the Holy See and the governments of Thailand during the Second World War. The collected documents are kept in the Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, in Rome, and contain evidence of the attempts made by the two diplomacies, one Christian and the other Buddhist, to establish a dialogue and find a solution to the pressing problems that were complicating the country's already difficult situation during the world conflict. A beneficial solution to these problems was found by Thai diplomacy, based on a considered interpretation of Buddhist teachings and their fundamental tolerance, and by the Vatican, which not only recognised the value of this different religious thought but also Thailand's complex position within the balance of powers in Southeast Asia in the mid-20th century.

Keywords: Buddhism; Thailand; Christianity; Vatican; World War 2; Religious Dialogue.

1. Introduction¹

During the last three years, I was fortunate and privileged to be entrusted with the task of studying and cataloguing several Buddhist Manuscripts in the Pali language from central Thailand, kept in the Vatican Library. Consequently, I developed a genuine interest in the circumstances of the arrival of

¹ I am deeply grateful to Father Flavio Belluomini, Director of the Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, for his kind help at the Archives and his valuable suggestions. I want to express my gratitude to Professor Dr Pagorn Singsuriya (Mahidol University, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities) for his enlightening explanations of Thai culture, history, and society, and to Dr Chris Baker (Siam Society) for helping me to unravel Thai history and admire its complexity. I very much appreciate the feedback offered by the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of my manuscript and their insightful comments and suggestions. All remaining errors are mine.

those codices to Rome and the related history of the diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Southeast Asian countries, particularly the Kingdom of Thailand.²

Therefore, I started studying the massive collection of official documents exchanged between Bangkok and Rome, which are nowadays contained in the precious folders of the Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. In the first phase of the survey, I decided to confine my scrutiny to the twentieth century, while in my most recent inspections, I focused on documents that date back to the XVII Century. The results of the entire research will be published in forthcoming articles.

Hitherto, among those interesting records, minutes, letters, and notes, I could not detect any report of donation or acquisition of sacred texts. But something drew my attention in the collection of documents from the XX Century:³ I came across a significant emergence of grave records issued during the Second World War. This exchange of communications and missives was carried on between different members of the Siamese Government and the members of the clergy living in Thailand, together with the Vatican administration in Rome. The topics discussed in these records and the sharp intensification of urgency conveyed by their words reveal the devastating and universal human suffering during those troubled years.

In this article, I offer an annotated selection of the documents I have found, translated from Thai, French, and Italian. It is clear to me that, beyond Thai governments' political calculations and possible internal divergences of opinion among the different components existing in the Catholic Church's complex world, the dialogue between Siam and the Vatican was able to prevent additional tragedies and deaths by disentangling the many complications that the fluctuating phases of the World War brought. I am convinced that the religious substratum of these discussions was crucial for the dialogue to become fruitful and lead to mutual understanding. Indeed, it is undoubtedly true that the Thai people had accepted Christianity with the usual Buddhist inclusivity, and their tolerance perfectly fits the most profound Christian teachings. The respect that Thai Christians continued (and continue) to have for Buddhism significantly demonstrates this. Representatives from both sides, possessing refined political wisdom and statesmanship, could not ignore this attitude of manifest openness and

² In all the documents I analysed, written approximately 80 years ago, the Italian word for Thailand follows the correct official international spelling, i.e. "Thailandia," and not the erroneous "Tailandia," with unaspirated and unvoiced dental "t" used in Italian dictionaries and standard wording until a few years ago.

³ Nuova Serie (anni 1923-1958) (henceforth: NS), vols 1486, 1544, 1545.

acceptance: the Vatican allowed Thai Catholics' veneration of Buddha as a "teacher," and the Siamese government accepted the presence of Catholic priests, albeit increasingly "indigenous."

Unfortunately, we will never know how many lives this dialogue and encounter between Buddhist and Christian diplomacies saved, but I assume the number is large.

2. Growing concerns

The global hostilities of the Second World War assumed a peculiar form in Thailand, marking a watershed and plunging the country into a more central position in world strategies.

The Second World War proved to be a boundary between eras. The memory of an absolute monarchy faded. The great households disintegrated. The old colonial powers retreated. The liberal nationalist ideas of the 1920s and 1930s were first pushed aside by the militaristic nationalism of the wartime era, then crushed by the anti-communist fervour in the aftermath. (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014³: 164–165).

Alongside enduring the disruptions caused by the tragic events of the global conflict, Thailand faced internal political challenges characterized by efforts to steer the country's framework towards a more nationalist trajectory.

Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram, who served as Thai prime minister between 1938 and 1944 and, later, between 1948 and 1957, "saw the war as an opportunity to restore all of Thailand's lost territories, which had been a dream of Thai rulers since Chulalongkorn. He intended to construct a Greater Thailand that would encompass all areas inhabited by the Thai race" (Strate 2015, 66).⁴

Even the very change of the country's name from "Siam" to "Thailand," which occurred under his premiership with the support of Wichitwathakan—an admirer of Mussolini on whom he wrote a laudatory study (Baker, Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014:³ 126-128)—must be placed in this context of territorial expansion and intense nationalism. The reinvigorated sense of pride of the country combined with other historical and political elements such as the political closeness to Japan (and thus also to the other "Axis Powers," i.e. Germany and Italy) pursued in those years, the expansion of Japan itself in Asia, and the French domination of Indochina, made the presence of Catholic missionaries in the country problematic to say the least: "[w]ithin the National Humiliation narrative, the Church was more than a foreign religion; it was a symbol of imperialism" (Strate 2015: 92).

⁴ A short and clear description of the nationalist phase of Thai history can also be found in Terwiel (2005: 271–278).

I will not elaborate here on the history of Christianity (Catholic and Protestant) in Thailand nor on the political situation of this country between 1940 and 1945, the years in which the documents I present in this article were issued: an exhaustive discussion of them would require more space. The final bibliography lists several modern studies, analyses, and careful investigations, which will be helpful to offer a vivid historical image of Thailand during those difficult years. This article is a documental contribution to a better comprehension of that part of Thai history. The well-kept material of the Archives effectively evidences how sophisticated, complex, and fecund the communication between the Catholic Church and the Thai governments was in those years, firmly aimed to achieve better stability in that region and the safety of many Thai people.

The predominant number of documents in which priests clearly expressed concern about Thai Catholic people living in Thailand are dated from 1940.⁵ These apprehensions gradually escalated until a grounded sense of worry for the lives of priests—mostly belonging to the French clergy—and Thai Christian people also became widespread. Undeniably, all these vicissitudes were associated with the Franco-Thai War (October 1940 – January 28, 1941).

Furthermore, the Catholic Church stated its concerns not only for those forms of violence but also for the number of Christian Thai people who decided to convert from Catholicism to Buddhism. A letter sent by Monsignor Gaetano Pasotti⁶ to the *Délégation Apostolique en Indochine*, Hué (Annam) [Apostolic Delegation in Indochina, Hue, Vietnam] revealed the attempts to promote conversions of Thai air force aviators from Catholicism to Buddhism (NS vol. 1486: 495). Mgr. Pasotti translated into Italian articles from unspecified Thai newspapers published in September 1940: in those lines is written that Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, Minister of war, congratulated one state aviator on his conversion to Buddhism and wished him all blessings from the “three holy things” for his military career and private business.⁷ The Thai government considered these conversions spontaneous decisions, while the ecclesiastics suspected interference of the Thai government that was ready to offer

⁵ Catholic missions were objects of attacks, and sometimes even onslaughts, in many colonies. In Vietnam, for example “[i]t was not until the 1840s that the protectorate of the Catholic missions drove France to significant political and military involvement in eastern Asia. For the next two decades, anti-Christian violence witnessed the killing of tens of thousands of Vietnamese converts, as well as the imprisonment, torture, and execution of missionaries” (Daughton 2006: 63).

⁶ Gaetano Pasotti was an Italian Catholic bishop (appointed April 7, 1941). He was Superior of the Ratchaburi mission and remained at the head of that mission even when it was elevated to “apostolic prefecture” (1934) and then to “apostolic vicariate” (1941).

⁷ “Il Ministro della guerra intende di congratularsi con lui et gli augura tutte le benedizioni della – Tre Cose Sacre – perché la sua carriera militare e i suoi affari privati abbiano buon successo.” Probably the “three holy things” are the Three Buddhist Jewels, *Triratna* (in Thai รัตนตรัย), i.e. the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha.

rewards and help to the converted. Cardinal Francesco Marmaggi's unbiased explanation of this problem at the beginning of his Report is particularly clear.⁸

The positions expressed in the documents I present here seem particularly valuable because they do not deny the presence of problems but reveal a sincere intention to unravel the skein of that intricate circumstance. On the 25 January 1941, Mgr. Pasotti wrote a letter to Plaek Phibunsongkhram in which he showed great understanding and diplomatic openness, and the Thai government responded with public announcements, demonstrating a lucid willingness to dialogue: the Vatican and the Thai government were, beyond doubt, trying to avoid more significant conflicts. Mgr. Pasotti's words are both an acknowledgement of the various existing problems (showing concerns for any sort of violence, not only against Christians but also against Buddhists) and a masterly diplomatic endeavour to interact with the Thai government in a receptive manner.⁹

Copy of letter addressed to Plaek Phibunsongkhram, Chief of Ministers [25 January 1941].

Your Excellency,

[...]

1. *Killing of the Phras* [Buddhist monks, Bhikkhu or Phra Bhikkhu, พระภิกษุ]. This was reported on the radio and in the newspapers, and it was with deep sorrow that we heard this news. We say to you at once: We Catholics condemn this attack with all our might. Life is sacred, and God's commandment is categorical: Do not kill. [...]

2. *Desecration of the Buddha's statue and Pagodas*. We strongly condemn such desecration.

3. *Doubt about the loyalty of Thai Catholics*. I know I am touching on a very sensitive issue. I simply say that if they are faithful to the teachings of their religion, they cannot but be good citizens. They know that they must love their country, a love of predilection, and they still know that Authority is sacred. God has instituted the existing Authorities, so whoever resists power resists the divine institution. This is Catholic thinking. Individual infidelities are possible in all classes of people to whatever religion they belong. However, we think that the faults of individuals cannot be attributed to a doctrine or an entire mass, just as a whole army cannot be condemned [235] if some soldier is vile and treacherous.

4. *For a Catholic Church ruled by Thai clergy*. This corresponds perfectly with the mind and directives of the Vatican, and there are examples in Japan, China, India, Africa, etc. In Japan, for example, the Archbishop is Japanese. If Your Excellency believes that my humble work, even if it has no official character, may be helpful to you, I place myself at your complete disposal to communicate to Rome your and your government's wishes. I can assure you that they will be taken into the warmest consideration.

⁸ See Appendix at the end of the article.

⁹ Some concepts and words used by Mrs Pasotti might appear incompatible with the modern idea of state and nation, but we have to contextualise his letter, insert it into that problematic historical moment, and fathom its real goals.

5. *Buddhism and Catholicism*. Having come to Thailand a dozen years ago, I have made it my duty to study Buddhism in its theoretical part and observe it in the people's daily lives. I do not only admire all that is good and great in Buddha's morals, but I can also assure you that I have always had great respect – and wanted others to have it too – both for the glorious traditions of the Thai people and for each of them, whatever their religious beliefs. Especially being the latter, as Your Excellency rightly wrote in the instruction sent to all the Governors of the different Changvats [provinces, จังหวัด] on 15 September B.E. 2482 [C.E. 1939], a personal affair and one of conscience. Differences in religion must not imply antagonisms or divisions of hearts in any way; everyone can follow any religion, either because that religion is practised by the more significant part of the people in which he lives or because of his personal convictions. Even with Phras we have always had respect and cordial relations.

The Bangkok Chronicle of 18 December 1940, in the article “Thailand religious tolerance,” among others, wrote: “In presenting Phra Buddha or the Image of the Lord Buddha at any ceremony, we carry [236] no idea of idol worship as pagans. Phra Buddha represents only the symbol of the Great Master [...]” In this regard, I would like to express my own personal idea: conceived in this manner, the worship of the Buddha cannot present difficulties for a mutual understanding. In this sense, [analogous], delicate, and vital issues were studied in Japan and China with the highest understanding by the Vatican and the governments of those countries. The conclusions arrived at were that they satisfied national needs and aspirations with the duties of a good Catholic. [...] [237]

Reply from Direk Jayanama, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand [17 February 1941].

[...] He [the Chief Minister, i.e. Plaek Phibunsongkhram] has understood your intentions very well, as well as your spirit of friendship for the Thai race and the Buddhist religion. And for this, he thanks you very much. As for the religious movements of these days, they must be ascribed to this: undoubtedly, several of those who profess the Catholic religion have tried to betray the Thai race as a consequence of the fact that French Fathers have been (are) too busy with politics. On the other hand, His Majesty the King, the leader of us Thai, is a Buddhist, and we therefore wish to follow in his footsteps. Be that as it may, His Excellency the Chief Minister thanks you immensely for all the good you have done to aid the Thai people (NS, vol. 1486: 234–237).

On the Thai side, an emblematic action aimed at seeking dialogue with the Catholic Church is a leaflet issued in 1941 (just two weeks after Mgr. Pasotti's letter), in all likelihood, with the government's consent. It was named “Religious Freedom (อิสระทางศาสนา):¹⁰ this is the voice of Justice, this is the voice of Humanitarianism, this is the voice of Constitution, this is the voice of the Leader of the country,” in which we find some fundamental statements.¹¹ The quotations we find on the first page of this

¹⁰ The most used spelling is ศาสนา (*sāsana*).

¹¹ The leaflet was published on the 8th of February 1941 [2484] by Udomphan Publication, Samut Songkhram. It contains passages extracted and reprinted from the book (จาก หนังสือ) รัฐธรรมนูญแห่งราชอาณาจักรสยาม พร้อมด้วยคำอธิบายโดยย่อของสำนักงานโฆษณาการ พ.ศ. ๒๔๘๐ [2480] [*The Constitution of Thailand, along with a brief description by the Advertisement Office, 1937*]. Concerning the freedom of religious cult, only a few months later (15 October

document—clearly intended to spread a message of social stability based on the legal and constitutional acceptance of all religious beliefs within the Kingdom—are taken from Thailand’s first Constitution, promulgated in 1932. The quoted parts come, in particular, from the prologue to the Constitution, “General Provision” (บททั่วไป), Section (มาตรา) 1, and from the Second Chapter (หมวด), “Rights and Duties of Siamese People” (สิทธิและหน้าที่ของชนชาวสยาม), Section 13. The first article of the 1932 Constitution guarantees the protection of every citizen based on the principle expressed in the same constitution “regardless of origin or religion” (ไม่ว่าเหล่ากำเนิดหรือศาสนาใด). The leaflet explains that Thai people can profess Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. Section 13 focuses on the freedom of religious worship related to any creed. This freedom is clearly stated and can only be restricted because of possible public order (ความสงบเรียบร้อย) and morality (ศีลธรรม) infringements.

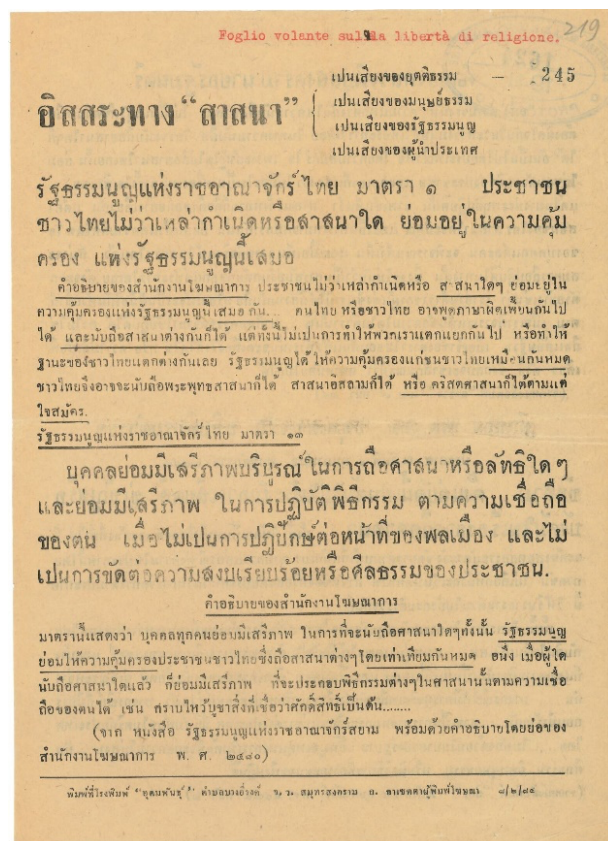


Figure 1. Leaflet 1941, NS vol. 1486, f. 245r (courtesy Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples)

1941) an article appeared in the “Bangkok Times,” in English, which quoted the words said by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab in 1928: “The attitude of this country from time immemorial has been that of complete toleration of the freedom of religious thought. The State religion has always been Buddhism, but the state does not interfere with its people in the matter of faith” (NS, vol. 1486: 360).

Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkhram and Police General Adul Aduldejcharat formulated more pragmatic and practical assessments on the second page of the leaflet.

Truthfully, differences in religious beliefs should not cause conflict or disagreement among people. Everyone has the freedom to follow any religion, either by tradition or by personal choice. Because if someone does not follow any religion, it is not in accordance with public opinion, and it shows that they lack moral restraints. However, in practice, I believe that all religions essentially teach the same principles. The value and appropriateness of the teachings of any religion depend on each individual's personal judgment and perception. When one recognises the genuine goodness in any teaching, it is appropriate to adopt and practice it. This should not be seen as being fickle or inconsistent in any way. For example, we may read a book by an author we do not respect or even dislike. If we find something valuable in his/her writing, it is appropriate to remember and apply it. Dismissing the entire content just because we dislike the author is not wise and might even be considered narrow-minded.¹² [Plaek Phibunsongkhram]

Clause Three: From this day forward, all disparagement, threats, or coercion regarding religious beliefs will be halted. This responsibility falls upon the local police, who are tasked with vigilant observation and management of this directive, executing their duties diligently and appropriately as each case may require, as strictly outlined in this proclamation. There is to be no bias or exemption for any individual. Should there be any obstacles or doubts regarding the implementation of this proclamation, an immediate report should be made to the Police Department.

The reason for this is to support the government in revising the national borders between Thailand and French Indochina. Some groups have exceeded their bounds with excessive aggression, and others have fragmented into factions and individuals, engaging in conflict, disparagement, and threats against each other. In some cases, corruption has been intertwined with personal gain and, in others, covert harm. These actions could potentially disturb international relations, especially with countries friendly to Thailand. They are not aligned with the government's policies and could represent a cause of unrest, violating ethical and humanitarian principles and the proper conduct expected of civilised people.¹³ [Adul Aduldejcharat]

¹² หนังสือพิมพ์ ตำรวจ เล่ม ๙ หน้า ๓๔ [from the newspaper *Police*, vol. 9: 34].

¹³ จากหนังสือพิมพ์ นิกอร์ วันอังคาร ๔ กุมภาพันธ์ พ.ศ. ๒๔๘๔ หน้า ๒ [from the newspaper *Nikorn*, Tuesday, February 4, 1941, p. 2].

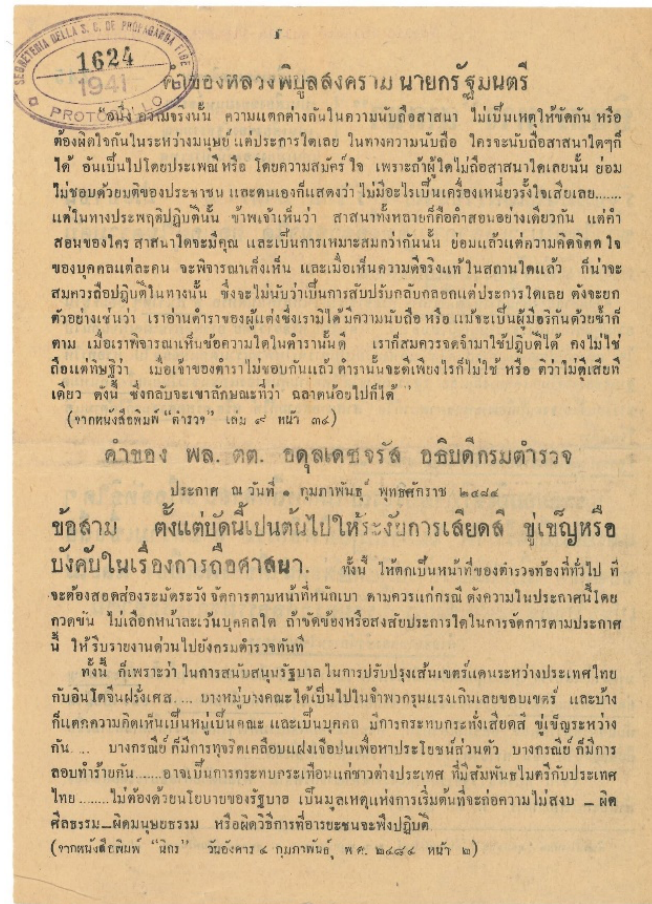


Figure 2. Leaflet 1941, NS vol. 1486, f. 245v (courtesy Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples)

The leaflet’s text clearly discloses the attempt, if not to eliminate, at least to reduce additional social conflicts by implementing a substantial wise tolerance in respect of the various religious traditions. This effort was produced not only by legitimate political expediencies but, I believe, also by the natural Buddhist attitude to receptiveness. The same perspective appears in the diplomatic actions of the Catholic Church, which, with great care and not a few difficulties, pursues the goal of averting violence and deaths while maintaining intact the fabric of diplomatic relations both internally, in the complex system of missions, and externally, with the political governments of the various countries in which it operates.

The action of the notorious “Thai Blood Party (or “Thai Blood Group,” *Khana Lueat Thai* [คณะเลือดไทย]) made this dialogue much more complex in those years, and many of the persecutions

continued.¹⁴ The vital need to “replace the French clergy with Italian and German priests” became increasingly urgent, and this occurred because “the dependence of the Thai Catholics on the Apostolic Delegation in Indochina appears unwelcome to the Thai Government, both for fear of French interference and because it diminishes the prestige of the independent Thai government.”¹⁵

3. Two cornerstones of dialogue: Indigenous Vicariate and the Buddha as a “Great Master”

Two solutions, undoubtedly decisive, were devised by the representatives of the Catholic Church to find a definitive end to the pressing problems of that tumultuous period. The first was of a social nature and envisaged leaving the conduct of the Church in Thailand in the hands of Thai priests and prelates, thus giving the government and the Siamese citizens the possibility of feeling the Catholic faithful closer to them and building a relationship of deep trust. The second was more theological in nature, aimed at solving the complicated problem of worshipping the Buddha that continued to be performed even by Catholics. The fact that the Buddha had never been considered a “god” but, at least according to the observations that were spread in those years, instead as a “venerable master” allowed the Catholic Church to accept Buddhism substantially as a “philosophical-moral” tradition, and at the same time allowed the Thai Christians (at least the Catholic ones) a peaceful existence, thus being able to perform the ordinary devotional acts towards the “Master” Buddha serenely, without causing any doctrinal diatribes.

The plan to detach Thailand from the Apostolic Delegation of Indochina and form an autonomous Delegation, which did not happen until 1957 (Filipazzi 2006, 182–183), combined with the idea of increasing the number of “indigenous” priests to the point of appointing a Thai Bishop, was clearly the way forward. However, these structural changes in the Thai Church had to take place gradually, as harmoniously as possible, without social and political traumas, to avoid internal problems within the Church and unnecessary conflicts with the Thai government that would have created dangers to people’s lives. This is not the place to deal with such a complex subject, in which Vatican diplomacy

¹⁴ “At the hands of the ‘Thai Blood Party,’ however, persecution continues. Bangkok Vicariate only. In the meantime, in addition to the closure of thirteen schools, two Catholic churches were destroyed, seven closed, two threatened, and two indigenous priests were sentenced on a pretext to two years in prison, while two others are on trial” (“Per opera ‘Thai Blood Party’ tuttavia persecuzioni continuano. Solo Vicariato Bangkok nel frattempo oltre chiusura di tredici scuole due chiese cattoliche sono state distrutte sette chiuse due minacciate due sacerdoti indigeni condannati con un pretesto due anni prigionie e altri due sono sotto processo”). From a telegram dated 23 May 1941, by Mgr. Pasotti, sent through the Italian Embassy to the Cardinal Secretary of State (NS, vol. 1486: 179).

¹⁵ From the same document quoted in the previous footnote (NS, vol. 1486: 179).

showed all its skill and wisdom. I will limit myself to saying that significant admonitions to adopt a more cautious approach to the problem came from Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, in a letter to Cardinal Luigi Maglione, in which he pointed out that if Mgr. Pasotti had advised against the return of the French priests to Thailand—precautionarily removed from the country to avoid significant problems for them—he himself could have appeared as a “tool” in the hands of the government (NS, vol. 1486: 180–181). But, on the other hand, another factor seemed to be evident not only in Vatican circles but also to the representatives of the Kingdom of Italy in Thailand: the possibility of Mgr. Pasotti being stripped of his position as *de facto* representative of the Church in Thailand to give this position back to a French member of the Apostolic Delegation of Indochina, namely Mgr. Drapier, would have been viewed not benevolently by the Thai government (NS, vol. 1486: 436).¹⁶ For political reasons, the latter preferred to collaborate with Italian missionaries and would have seen the confirmation of Mgr. Pasotti’s presence as a “gratifying appreciation by the Holy See of the international importance of Siam and its position of autonomy” (NS, vol. 1486: 436). A clear explanation of these events can be found in Cardinal Marmaggi’s report.

The political problems were enormous, and the leaders assigned to make decisions had to balance multiple factors (military alliances, future political scenarios, civilian safety, the balance of power within the various countries and the Catholic Church itself, etc.), which often changed abruptly. But the central point remained to safeguard people’s lives, and from what we read in the available documents, this urgency always remained the fundamental prime objective.

Regarding the problem of the veneration of the Buddha, as we have already seen above, the solution was to accept this cult also within the religious life of a Thai Catholic, in view of the fact that the Thais did not consider the Buddha as a “god” but as a “great teacher of life” who had divulged in his “teachings profound moral truths [...] and truth, wherever it is found, deserves honour because all truth is a gift from God.”¹⁷ This allowed Thai Catholics to be entirely within Buddhist society without denying their religious beliefs. It also allowed the Catholic Church not to be perceived as a “foreign entity” in the country but as a fully accepted and respected religious tradition.¹⁸

¹⁶ In NS (vol. 1486: 450) we find a note dated 1942 from the Sacra Congregazione De Propaganda Fide, in which it is said that Mgr. Drapier is back in Indochina as Apostolic Delegate, but the Thai authorities do not recognise him anymore.

¹⁷ Mgr. Pasotti’s words (NS, 1544: 770–771).

¹⁸ On this very complex topic and on its history, which can be traced back to the sixteenth century in China, see also Moffet (2005: 602): “When Gützlaff, the first Protestant missionary, stepped ashore in Siam in 1828 he found that Roman Catholics had been intermittently at work there for three hundred years, since 1567 and perhaps even earlier. But in the 1700s, the after-effects of the China rites controversy brought persecution of Christians to Buddhist Siam. As the missionaries to China had been expelled for refusal to honor Confucian rites, so now Siam expelled French priests for refusing to honor Buddhist

4. Successful colloquies and synergies

While the fate of the Second World War was unfolding, not without further tragedies, and while Thailand was going through one of the most complex periods in its history, with heavy uncertainties about possible alliances and the unpredictable consequences that these political agreements could have caused in the country, a glimmer of reconciliation seemed to be opening up, at least within the problems that had developed between the Holy See and the Thai government. It goes without saying that the dialogue between the two diplomacies indeed cannot be separated from the events that the entire world was experiencing in the meantime, immersed in the last year of that horrible war. However, over and above political and strategic considerations, I believe that the almost total end of the violence directed towards Christian communities and the general social instability caused by it can be counted as one of the most important successes of the Vatican and Thai diplomacies, united in the search for a peaceful *modus vivendi*, which was able, even though still within a world conflict, to lay the foundations for future coexistence in a global context radically changed by the events of the war.

The words spoken by Pridi Phanomyong, regent of King Ananda Mahidol, at the celebration of the new Cabinet presided over by Prime Minister Khuang Aphaiwong, were memorable and constituted the fulcrum around which a sense of mutual trust was rebuilt. The speech was delivered in Bangkok on 8 August 1944 and was published on the front page of the Bangkok Chronicle on 9 August 1944, in English translation. Here is the section that most relates to the subject of this article:

[...] Furthermore, as His Majesty, the King is the upholder of religion, I would also appeal to the Government to uplift the religion the people profess. As the majority of the people of our country are Buddhist, His Majesty the King, who is the upholder of the Buddhist Faith, has lifted the Buddhist religion to ever-increasing glory. Moreover, I would also ask you to bear in mind that the people of many provinces also profess the Islam Faith, while a certain section embrace Christianity or other religions. The Constitution grants liberty of religion and freedom of worship, and since, under the Constitution His Majesty the King is the Upholder of religion, I would ask you to endeavour to assist other religions as may be possible. Such assistance is not contrary to Buddhist principles which lay stress on generosity. In fact, it would be considered an act of charity to assist the people of other creeds to enjoy the same religious rights under the constitution. I would, therefore, appeal to the people, irrespective of creed, to always have the welfare of the country foremost in mind. Finally, I pray that your sincere intention and your fidelity to Country, Religion, King and Constitution will watch over and protect you from all dangers. May you be physically and spiritually strong to carry on the work of administration for the happiness of the people, and may the sovereignty of the Thai nation be perpetrated throughout all ages. [...]

state ceremonies. All missionaries were expelled in 1779, but were recalled by the king a few years later in the interests of establishing better trade relations with the West.”

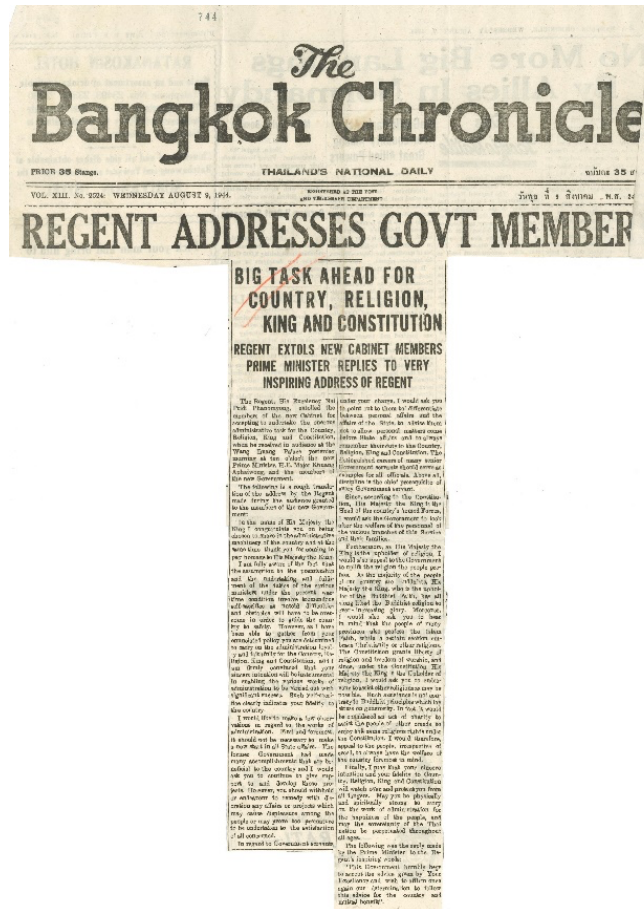


Figure 3. Article on Bangkok Chronicle, NS vol. 1544, f. 744 (courtesy Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples)

Regent Pridi Phanomyong’s words clearly assumed greater importance than all previous declarations, even if supported by the constitutional charter. The Apostolic Vicar of Bangkok, Mgr. Pasotti, immediately sent a telegram to Cardinal Maglione in Rome, informing him of this positive advancement in diplomatic relations with the Thai government. Mgr. Pasotti added that, in an audience with the Regent (probably held on 16 August), the latter expressed a high esteem for the Holy Father, giving Pasotti a very good impression (NS, vol. 1545 : 353–354).

August 8 Regent Thailand Pridi Phanomyong addressed Thai Government touching religious question too. Stop. After references Buddhist religion added quote I would also ask you bear mind people many provinces also profess Islam while certain section embrace Christianity other Religions. Stop. Constitution grant liberty religion Freedom whorship.

P2/60

And since under Constitution His Majesty the King is Upholder religions I would ask you endeavour assist other religions as may be possible. Stop. Speech published all newspapers Bangkok Chronicle

commented this will bring good cheer hearts those although not Buddhists nevertheless good thl. Stop. Received audience Regent 16. Stop. Very good impression. Stop. He showed high esteem Holy Father. Pasotti.

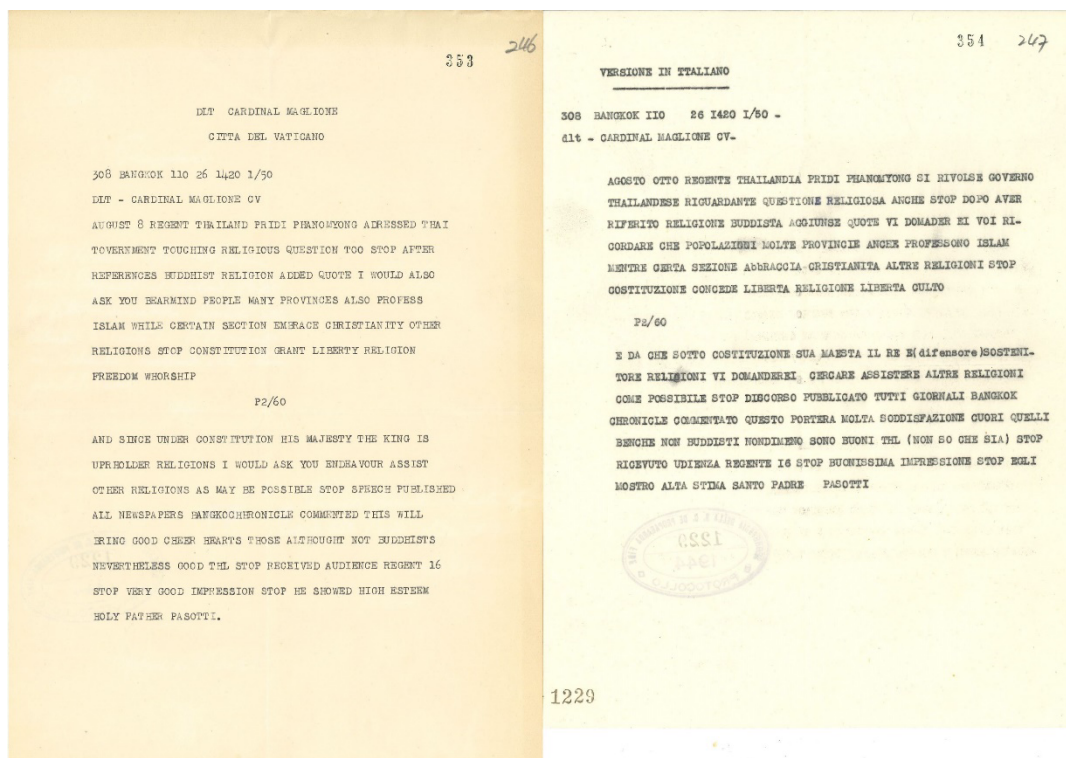


Figure 4. Pasotti's Telegram, NS vol. 1545, ff. 353–354 (courtesy Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples)

Mgr. Perros sent a second telegram to the Substitute of the Secretariat of State, Mgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, who signed and forwarded it on 8 September 1944 to the Secretary of Propaganda Fide, Mgr. Celso Costantini. The text confirmed the excellent outcome of the meetings and the new course of relations initiated by Pridi Phanomyong and Gaetano Pasotti.

His Excellency Pridi, Regent of Thailand, after having proclaimed religious freedom testified with the Prime Minister great benevolence towards the Catholic mission in a special audience to the Apostolic Vicar of Bangkok and missionaries with mention and sympathetic wishes for His Holiness Pius XII response of the holy father to the regent would be welcome as happy prelude later results. Perros (NS, vol. 1545: 184).

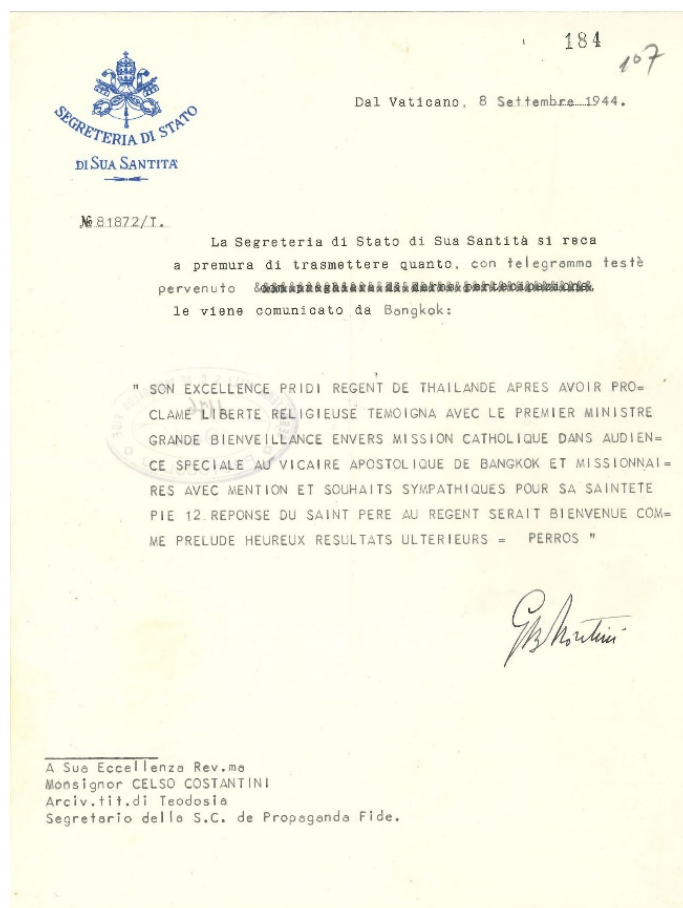


Figure 5. Perros' Telegram, NS 1545, f. 184 (courtesy Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples)

The last document I have been able to find relating to this negotiation is a telegram sent by Mgr. Pasotti to the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, dated 16 December 1944. It concludes this remarkable process of understanding and dialogue between two diplomacies which, although belonging to different cultures and religious traditions, were united by a common desire to establish peaceful coexistence and by the conviction that this new society, while coming to life almost miraculously in the midst of a furious World War, would be projected into a hopefully fairer future, thus preparing for a peace that would come for the whole world only a few months later. The text is concise but very significant.

Referring telegram November very glad communicate religious status Thai Laos mission back normal. Stop. Where still existing churches given back. Stop. Cult everywhere restored. Stop. Personally cannot restrain signalize solicitous decisive action minister interior. Stop. Joy Catholics immense. Pasotti (NS, vol. 1544: 720).



Figure 6. Pasotti's Telegram, NS 1544, f. 720 (courtesy Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples)

5. Francesco Marmaggi's report

The final report by Cardinal Francesco Marmaggi, published in May 1944, offers a vivid summary of all the events that happened during the Second World War in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries. Nevertheless, he also gives a very objective description of Thailand's vicissitudes during those years. Marmaggi was not able to include the positive conclusion of the diplomatic dialogue that occurred in December 1944: however, his description of the situation is crucial for our comprehension of the historical events. We notice a sort of empathic understanding of Thai and, more generally speaking, Asian people's political and social problems. This seems to be a hidden leitmotiv during the entire report, but in a couple of passages, it manifests itself absolutely clearly. He expresses the idea that we can remove any form of hostility and have a productive dialogue only if Westerners offer "facts" to Asian people, without biases and self-interests. The problems were caused by foreign political interferences and not "on a religious ground;" for this reason, the dialogue can be created and consolidated mainly on this very ground. Another crucial point of Vatican policy in these lands was the Catholic Church's profound determination to form a vicariate administrated by Thai priests, called "indigenous ecclesiastical circumscription," leaving aside any Western presence.

The translation of the first chapter of the Report is offered here: it is an important historical contribution to the comprehension of the relations between Thailand and the Vatican. The emphasis on specific sentences (marked by italics) is mine (see Figure 7).¹⁹

6. Conclusions

Thailand, immersed in the Second World War, experienced, perhaps more than other countries, the contradictions of a period when alliances changed very often, resulting in rapid metamorphosis of the idea of “friendly” and “unfriendly” nations. In this context, additional animosities arose. They were undoubtedly linked to the global conflict but also had an independent nature because they were essentially based on the concept of freedom of religion. These hostilities could have resulted in even more profound forms of violence, which would have been difficult to control and could even have extended far beyond Thailand. The documents that I have summarily analysed here, substantiated my contention that the Vatican and Thai diplomacies were able to base their pre-eminent dialogue precisely on their own religious traditions and, on this basis, were able to find common ground. Many problems were if not entirely solved, at least understood and appeased. This openness and ecumenism were vigorously pursued within the Vatican, but a significant portion of the members of the Thai government was also firmly convinced that further unrest and conflict ignited by divergences due to different religious beliefs would not be tolerable. Thailand became a sort of laboratory for the coexistence and the development of the dialogue between Buddhists and Christians, which continues to be vital and fruitful today.

¹⁹ Francesco Marmaggi, *Sulla costituzione di un vicariato indigeno nel Thailand e nomina del Vicariato Apostolico (con cartina geografica). Relazione con sommario*, Sacra Congregazione “De Propaganda Fide,” No. 9, maggio, Rubr. 18/5 – prot. n. 593/44, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1944, pp. 1–12 [Francesco Marmaggi, *On the Establishment of an Indigenous Vicariate in Thailand and Appointment of the Vicar Apostolic (With Map). Report with Summary*, Sacred Congregation “De Propaganda Fide,” N. 9, May, Rubr. 18/5 – prot. n. 593/44, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, Vatican City 1944, pp. 1–12.]. NS, vol. 1545, pp. 118–125.

7. Appendix: First chapter of the final report by Francesco Marmaggi

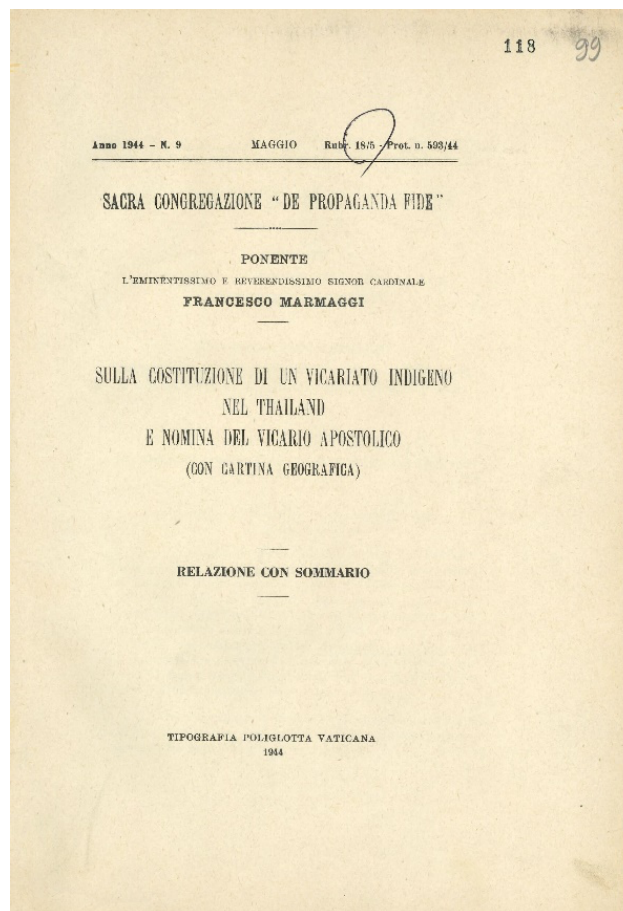


Figure 7. Cover page of Marmaggi's Report, NS 1545, f. 118 (courtesy Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples)

The present situation of the Catholic Church in Thailand: The nationalistic spirit in the Far East in our times

1. – The situation of the Catholic Church in Thailand (Siam's official name since 24 June 1939) had become increasingly complex over the last decade. In the second half of 1940, it worsened rapidly until, in the last months of the year, it became outright persecution, although nothing official had been decreed against the Church, which therefore remained legally free to exercise its activity. *The movement arose against the French missionaries out of political circumstances, but in reality, it involved the Catholic Church as such.*

2. – One would not fully understand the events in Thailand if they were not set in the general situation in the Far East. [2]

Throughout the Far East, the nationalistic spirit, which had never died out and had even had violent outbursts in the past, has been increasingly consciously asserting itself, especially since some forty years ago: that is, since the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905).

The victory of an Asian nation against a powerful European empire (or one that claimed to be so) was seen as a victory of Asia against Europe. The Asians, for whom the incontestable superiority of European and Western power in general, at least if not of civilisation, was an unquestionable truth, had a revelation of their own strength and felt they could triumphantly and effectively oppose their ancient civilisations to Western civilisation. *The European War* of 1914-1918, the political events and economic/racial conflicts of the post-war period, and now the present world conflict, especially following Japan's entry into the war (8 December 1941), contributed for various reasons and in multiple ways to give the nationalistic spirit the character of an active anti-foreigner movement. We could say that Eastern civilisations have moved from the defensive to the offensive or, if you prefer, from passive to active defence.

Christianity has been regarded as a foreign religion peculiar to the West, which, therefore, has nothing to say to Eastern peoples and can only distort their actual energies. Hence, the struggle, more or less open according to place, is against it. The West can keep its Christianity; for the East, eastern religions.

It seems appropriate to note that such hostility is much more a feeling than a rationally founded persuasion. This must, of course, also be said of similar moods in Western nations. But it is more particularly true of the East.

[This hostility seems stronger in Asia] first of all because the intimate interpenetration of sentiment with reasoning activities constitutes, in the unanimous opinion of all experts of Oriental [cultures], a common characteristic of the entire East in general, albeit with profound differences from people to people. And then, the hostility towards the West is nourished by accumulated resentments [3]—*unfortunately not always unjustified*—of national and racial pride. In terms of history and culture, the roots of those peoples lie in a glorious past, and it must also be admitted that their suspicious *mistrust towards foreigners did not arise without a cause*.

Arguments, even the most correct ones, do little or nothing to effectively combat this widespread feeling of hostility precisely because it is, above all, a feeling. *Only facts, which, together with absolute*

disinterest, concretely demonstrate trust, esteem and respect for these peoples, can succeed in producing a gradual change of spirits.

As far as the work of the Church is concerned, missionaries in recent years have placed ever sharper emphasis on the urgent need to reach out to the Eastern soul with an open heart. The erection of indigenous ecclesiastical circumscriptions meets the most genuine tradition of missionary activity from its origins, and it is by now unanimously considered one of the indispensable means to win the trust of the peoples to whom the Gospel is proclaimed and to dispose them to accept it favourably. This is especially true in the East. Although, even in recent times, there has been resistance that has not yet entirely disappeared, it can nevertheless be said that this [reluctance] has not been directed against the principle [of having indigenous ecclesiastical circumscriptions], apart from what may have happened sometimes in the past. Today [that principle is] recognised by all as incontestable. *Nor have [these reluctances] taken as their reason or pretext an alleged congenital inability of some races to govern themselves.* [These reluctances] were based – or are still based – only on an insufficient preparation of the indigenous clergy. There was a request for more time, but nobody denied that that was the goal.

The Holy See acted with circumspect prudence but also with resolve. And in particular circumstances, it has proceeded, even if all the conditions that would generally be required were not yet in place. Such was, for example, the case in Japan. [In this country], between the end of 1940 and the beginning of 1941, all the districts were entrusted to the national clergy: [this was considered possible because], even though they were too few to carry out the missionary programme in full, [4] they indeed were well prepared in mercy and knowledge.

3. – It would seem that even for Thailand, the problem of whether, where, and to what degree to erect an indigenous ecclesiastical circumscription objectively presents itself as a matter of extraordinary circumstances, at least in part. Since the EE. VV. Rev. can judge it with ample knowledge of the facts, an attempt will be made here to set out, as clearly as possible, the various complex aspects resulting from the documents in possession of this Sacred Congregation.

The political situation in Thailand in its reflection on the religious situation

4. – The common anti-foreigner sentiment in the Far East may help to understand Thailand's hostile attitude towards the Church. However, to explain how this hostility manifested, it is also necessary to remember the particular political moment the nation is going through.

King since 1935 is Ananda Mahidol (พระบาทสมเด็จพระปรเมนทรมหาอานันทมหิดล พระอัฐมรามาธิบดินทร). Born in 1925, he has not yet actually assumed power. He has lived in Switzerland (in Lausanne) for several years

to complete his education there. Since 1938, the Head of Government in Thailand has been HRH Prince Aditya Dibaya Abha [*sic* – Aditya Dibabha, อาทิตย์ทิพอาภา]. However, the actual authority was, and still is, practically exercised by the Minister-President, Col. Luang Pibula Songgram [*sic*, Plaek Phibunsongkhram, แปลก พิบูลสงคราม], head of the exclusive military circle. His attitude in domestic policy proved to be that of a driven nationalist and, in foreign policy, that of an irredentist. The Decree of 23 June 1939, by which it was stipulated that from the following day, 24 June, the official name of Siam would be “Thailand,” was intended precisely to proclaim Siam’s aspirations to all territories inhabited by “Thai” peoples, the Siamese themselves being part of this group. In the “White Paper,” published by the Ministry of Propaganda on 12 November 1940, those aspirations were specified as territories with an area of 467,500 km² and a population of 3,840,000. Nevertheless, for the time being, they did not claim to achieve that much. [5]

In reality, if one were to literally take the “Pan-Thai” assumption that underlies the new name “Thailand,” these [territories] would not be Siam’s only aspirations.

In fact, the “Thai” group (whether one can properly speak of a sufficiently identified race is disputable), originating in China, has ramifications from the south of the Malay peninsula to Kuangsi [prob. Guangxi, 广西壮族自治区, เขตปกครองตนเองกว่างซีจ้วง] and Hainan Island [海南島, เกาะไหหลำ], passing through Siam, Burma, Laos and Upper Tonkin [東京 Đông Kinh, ดั่งเกี้ย]. However, to our knowledge, nothing concrete has been manifested by the Thai government so far. We mention it here only because it may serve to understand the state of mind better.

5. – The persecutory acts against the Catholic Church coincided with a manifestation of irredentism, i.e. the tension between Thailand and France.

On 12 June 1940, France and Thailand concluded a non-aggression treaty. [In this accord], among other provisions, they stipulated mutual respect for territorial integrity. The pact was ratified by the Thai Parliament on 13 August 1940 and, on the 19th of the same month, by Marshal Pétain [Henri-Philippe-Omer Pétain], Chief of the French State (1940-1944).

However, before ratifications were exchanged, the Thai government declared in September that the pact’s entry into force was conditional on France granting certain territorial advantages. France objected, which caused acts of war (from 3 January 1941, when Thai troops crossed the border).

On 20 January 1941, Japan offered its mediation, which was accepted by both sides on the 24th, when an armistice was signed. It was extended several times when it expired and lasted until March. On 11 March, France accepted the conditions set by Japan, ceding part of Indochina’s territories to Thailand.

6. – In September 1940, the first signs of the fight against the Church began. The press published that two (or three) Catholic officials had abjured [6] their religion to switch to Buddhism and that the Minister of War had declared himself willing to favour such acts.

From 15 October, the then Apostolic Vicar of Laos, Mgr. Gouin (who had resigned in 1943), who had his usual residence in Nong-Seng (*sic*, Nong Saeng, นนองแสง, Nakhon Phanom province, จังหวัดนครพนม) in Thai territory (on the right bank of the Mekhong River [*sic*, Mekong River, แม่น้ำโขง], the border with French Indochina) was kept under military surveillance.

On 28 November, the episcopate was invaded by the police, and on the 29th, he was imprisoned. On the same day, after being exposed to ridicule in a cage with two missionaries, he, two missionaries, and an 82-year-old nun were put in a boat and sent to French territory. Then, the other French missionaries and nuns followed the same fate.

In the Apostolic Vicariate of Bangkok, the hostile acts began around the same time (20 November) and became more decisive at the end of the month and in December. Practically all the French and religious missionaries had to leave Thailand's territories: only in the Apostolic Vicar remained a few missionaries, confined to Bangkok, with no possibility of exercising their ministry (*Somm.*, no. IV). Hostilities were less violent in the Apostolic Prefecture of Rajaburi [*sic.*, Ratchaburi, ราชบุรี] (from April 1941 Apostolic Vicariate), entrusted to the Italian Salesians. As in other parts of Thailand, pressure to abandon their religion was put on Catholics with threats and dismissals. However, the missionaries were, with only a few exceptions, respected.

It is not the case here to detail the events of the persecution. For more detailed information up to December 1941, Propaganda issued a note to the Secretariat of State, which is reported in *Somm.*, n. IX, to serve as a reminder of the situation. [The document was delivered] through Monsignor Apostolic Nuncio of Italy to the Minister of Thailand at the Quirinal Palace.

On the whole, it can be said that the persecution was markedly violent in the territories of the Apostolic Vicariate of Laos, bordering Indochina, even with the shedding of blood. [And it can also be said] that the fight against the Church had an explicitly anti-French character. [7]

7. – After the peace between Thailand and France, persecution took a less violent course. The French missionaries and nuns from the Apostolic Vicariate in Bangkok have been able to return and appear to have resumed the exercise of their ministry. It seems that the teaching brothers of French nationality have also returned and, according to news from the French Embassy, have been able to reopen their

schools. What is sure, in any case, is that, at least until about the middle of 1943, Catholic schools could not be reopened in various parts of the Vicariate.

The French missionaries and nuns who had to leave the Thai part of the Apostolic Vicariate of Laos remained in Indo-Chinese territory. Here, the indigenous clergy carries out the ministry with the help of the Salesians. In the southern provinces, there is relative calm; in the north, however, persecution continued until last year. In the Apostolic Vicariate of Rajaburi, there was a moment of turmoil following the Italian armistice of 8 September 1943. All or almost all the Italian Salesians, both those in the Rajaburi Vicariate and those stationed in other Thai territories, were interned. After a short time, however, they were freed indeed as a consequence of the establishment of the Italian Republic [*sic.*, he probably means the “Italian Social Republic,” 1943-1945]. As far as we can assume, they can now exercise their ministry without any particular difficulty.

Nevertheless, the hostility against the Catholic Church continues in different forms, but always actively. Thus, for example, giving news about the territory of Chantabun [*sic.*, Chanthaboon, จันทบุรี, Chanthaburi, จันทบุรี] (south-eastern part of his Vicariate), Mgr. Perros, the Apostolic Vicar of Bangkok, reported that the Christian schools were closed. The Christian pupils obliged to attend pagan schools, had been harassed to join their fellow pupils in acts of homage to Buddha [*sic.*, Buddha]. Only after their firm resistance, encouraged by their parents, could they now limit themselves to passively attending school events of pagan worship without any trouble (*Somm.* n. XIX). Moreover, according to the information given by Monsignor Pasotti (February 1943), any path to public employment seems to be permanently barred for Christians. [8]

The anti-Catholic struggle seems to be specially promoted by the “Thai Blood Party [or Thai Blood Group, คณะเลือดไทย]:” an association that is not officially recognised, and perhaps on occasion disavowed by the government, but instead covertly supported by it. In some places, it has used an exaggerated form of boycott against all Catholics (*Somm.*, n. VI). What and how extensive its activity is today is unknown to Propaganda; probably, given the clandestine nature of the movement, not even the missionaries on the ground know exactly. However, everything makes one think it continues as much and more than before. *Indeed, the political moment, with the alliance between Thailand and Japan and the nationalistic-racial ideas preached in all tones in the Far East, is not such as to favour feelings of tolerance.*

Suspicious against Catholic Missions for serving as an instrument of political penetration

8. – In Thailand, the anti-Catholic movement is based not only on anti-foreigner sentiment in general but also on a more specific accusation: the Catholic Missions are allegedly an instrument of French political penetration.

The grave misunderstanding between the Catholic Church and France, between the Catholic religion and the French religion (which in other places and at other times might perhaps not have created such serious inconveniences), [developed] in a nation bordering on French territory [and] aroused by its rulers and intellectual class to vast irredentist aspirations and suspicions towards France of devious intentions, lends itself very effectively to casting the Catholic Missions and the faithful followers in a bad light and under suspicion. As mentioned above, the last persecution claimed to be nothing more than a legitimate defence against an invading foreign nation, and the Catholics were accused of being the homeland's destroyers, belonging to the 'fifth column' in the service of France.

It was precisely on these accusations, and not on religious grounds, that the condemnation of certain priests (at least five) was based, one of whom was sentenced to hard labour for life, another to 15 years. [9]

The misunderstanding seems to be widespread and to find much credence among the Thai people: this is at least the impression one gets both from the reports of Mgr Pasotti (*Somm.*, n. II, VII) and from the memorandum of Fr Eylembosch (*Somm.*, V), as well as from the news about the persecution given by the Apostolic Vicars of Bangkok and Laos and by Mgr Apostolic Delegate of Indochina (cf. *Somm.*, n. III, IV).

It is not the case here to examine – nor would one have sufficient elements to do so – whether it was propagated in good or bad faith. Nor is it the intention to judge whether and to what extent French missionaries may have contributed with some unwise attitude to creating and maintaining it. Regarding the present question, what is of interest seems to be mainly the statement of fact.

Nor do we want to derive any argument of unfavourable judgment for the French missionaries from the fact that similar accusations have not been raised against the Italian Salesians, for it is evident that their respective positions are different. The Salesians have only been in Thailand since 1927, while the French have been working there for three centuries. They belong to a distant nation and, until recently considered, also because of its good relations with Japan, a friend or sympathiser; they work in territories far from the centre, while the French Missions include the capital and the area on the Indochina border.

Political interferences

9. – The latest events of the Catholic Missions in Thailand, the Propaganda's measures, and the projects to face the difficulties arising from the persecution and to clear up misunderstandings, were followed with manifest interest by the French Government and, with more caution, by the Italian Government.

The French Government intervened with the Holy See on two issues (*Somm.*, nos. X, XI, XII, XIII): (a) an extraordinary assignment given to Mgr Pasotti; (b) a project to erect an indigenous Mission with a centre in Bangkok.

We believe it is opportune to make quick mention of this, as it may illuminate the general situation. In a telegram that reached Propaganda on 8 March 1941 [10], Mgr Drapiel, Apostolic Delegate of Indochina, proposed, given the circumstances created by the persecution, that Mgr Gaetano Pasotti, Apostolic Prefect of Rajaburi, be promoted to the episcopate.

At an audience on 3 April 1941, the Holy Father deigned to elevate the Apostolic Prefecture of Rajaburi to the rank of Vicariate and appoint Mgr Pasotti as Apostolic Vicar with episcopal status.

In a telegram dated 7 April 1941, Archbishop Pasotti was instructed to “consider the affairs of the Missions provisionally with these ecclesiastical Superiors; and, if necessary, with the civil authorities in the name of the Missions themselves.” Furthermore, in a letter dated 23 April, he was told to act as Apostolic Administrator “*sede plena*” for those Thai territories where the Ordinaries were prevented from exercising their jurisdiction.

Moreover, in the same letter, he was told: “Above all, you should study whether, where, and how to establish an indigenous Mission. It is unquestionably a matter of urgency.” This contributed to the discontent of the French government because Monsignor Pasotti proposed, as will be seen below, the erection of an indigenous Vicariate with its centre in the capital, Bangkok, the seat of a French Vicariate.

Signs of dissatisfaction began to arrive from the French Embassy to the Holy See in August 1941: it was requested that, as the situation had now been clarified, the assignment given to Mgr Pasotti to provide for the Missions of Thailand should cease as circumstances required (Somm., n. X).

By telegram of 19 December 1941 to Mgr Pasotti, Propaganda approved the idea he had expressed that the indigenous Vicariate should have its centre in Bangkok; and Mgr Pasotti drew up a plan to this effect in agreement with Mgr Perros. The essential elements of it were telegraphed to Propaganda on 17 March 1942 (*Somm.*, n. XV).

However, in the meantime, in notes dated 9, 18, and 31 March, the French Embassy raised objections about Monsignor Pasotti's activities in Thailand and the planned transfer of Bangkok to an indigenous Apostolic Vicar.

Propaganda then proposed to the Secretariat of State to [11] have Mgr Drapier himself judge whether he should resume his office for Thailand (*Somm.*, n. XIII). The Secretariat of State declared itself favourable to the idea; therefore, on 13 April 1942, Mgr. Drapier was asked to telegraph whether it would be possible for him to resume his office in Thailand; if so, he was asked to make arrangements with Mgr. Pasotti and Mgr. Perros is for erecting an indigenous vicariate, possibly with its centre in Bangkok.

On 22 April 1942, the following reply reached Propaganda: «Crois possible reprendre charge Thailand. Étudierai avec Vicaires Apostolique²⁰ question en cours conformément volonté Saint-Siège.» [Believe it is possible to resume taking charge of Thailand. I will study with the Apostolic Vicars current question in accordance with the wishes of the Holy See.]

On the same day, Propaganda sent Mgr Pasotti the following telegram: “If Mgr Drapier will be able to resume his office in Thailand, Your Excellency will refer any assignment to him and give him appropriate information.”

Mgr Drapier went to Bangkok, it seems, at the beginning of July for a short visit, promising to return for a more extended stay.

At this time, the Italian Embassy to the Holy See also intervened with a “Memo” transmitted for inspection by the Secretariat of State to Propaganda on 31 July (*Somm.*, no. XV). Basing himself on the news received from the R. Minister of Italy in Bangkok, the Italian Ambassador reported: “Mgr. Drapier had not found Mgr. Pasotti in Bangkok, on a visit to the Missions in the interior. The Salesians informed the Thai Government of the transfer of Mgr. Pasotti’s appointment to Mgr. Drapier, and for his part, the latter informed the same Government that he had appointed Mgr. Pasotti as his permanent representative.” In a written note, the Thai Government replied to *the Salesians* [italics by the author] that they could not take note of the communication made to them. The Italian Royal Minister in Bangkok [12] had contacted the Thai Foreign Minister to clarify the situation.

Several considerations followed, tending to show that it was opportune to give the post back to Mgr Pasotti, who was a grateful person to the Thai government, while with Mgr Drapier, as a Frenchman and an Apostolic Delegate based on French territory, they did not want to have any relations.

²⁰ The Apostolic Vicars of Rajaburi, Bangkok and Laos. The Apostolic Vicar of Laos had also put forward the idea of an indigenous Mission. This will be mentioned below.

Actually, as Propaganda pointed out to the Secretariat of State, a rather strange state of affairs had arisen: Mgr. Pasotti, a Holy See appointee (as the Thai government had at least recognised him as such), had become Mgr Drapier's representative to a government that remained intensely hostile to France despite the officially concluded peace. Moreover, this government hardly understood what an "Apostolic Delegate" was because, in Thailand, the Apostolic Delegate never had a residence or a conspicuous position.

This state of affairs has remained unchanged since then.

Nor have there been any other direct interventions by the Governments of France and Italy.

As for the French government, it should be noted that it had no further reason to appeal to the Holy See, having seen its wishes fulfilled. In fact, Archbishop Drapier resumed his office in Thailand, and Propaganda in November 1942 allowed, taking into account the wishes of the French missionaries, that Bangkok be left to them for the time being, and the indigenous mission project be prepared for another suitable area.

As will be said in the following paragraphs, a further examination of the situation led Propaganda to return to the project of an indigenous Apostolic Vicariate with its centre in Bangkok.

Biographical data

Prince Aditya Dibabha (พระเจ้าวรวงศ์เธอ พระองค์เจ้าอาทิตย์ทิพอาภา) (Bangkok 27 July 1900 – Bangkok, 19 May 1946).

General Adul Aduldejcharat (อตุล อตุลเดชจรัส, Bangkok, 28 June 1894 – Bangkok, 17 December 1969).

H.M. King Ananda Mahidol (พระบาทสมเด็จพระปรเมนทรมหาอานันทมหิดล พระอัฐมรามาธิบดินทร) (Heidelberg, 20 September 1925 – Bangkok, 9 June 1946 [Reign: 2 March 1935 – 9 June 1946]).

Cardinal Celso Benigno Luigi Costantini, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (1935–1953), (Castions di Zoppola, 3 aprile 1876 – Roma, 17 ottobre 1958)

H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (สมเด็จพระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ กรมพระยาดำรงราชานุภาพ) (Bangkok, 21 June 1862 – Bangkok 1 December 1943).

Professor Dr Direk Jayanama, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand (1935-1946) (ดิเรก ชัยนาม, Phitsanulok province 18 January 1905 – Bangkok 1 May 1967).

Father Antonin-Fernand Drapier (Creuë-en-Woëvre, 28 April 1891 – [n.p.] 30 July 1967).

Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Roma, 4 September 1872 – Roma, 12 July 1960).

Monsignor Ange-Marie Gouin (Les Épesses, 1901 – Le Landreau, 1975).

Luang (หลวง) Khuang Aphaiwong (other spelling: Kuang; Abhaiwong or Abhaiwongse [หลวง อภัยวงศ์], Battambang [ทัตต์ชัย]/Phra Tabong [พระตะบอง], 17 May 1902 – Bangkok, 15 March 1968).

Cardinal Luigi Maglione, Secretary of State (Casoria, 2 March 1877 – Casoria, 22 August 1944).

Cardinal Francesco Marmaggi (Roma, 31 August 1876 – Roma, 3 November 1949).

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, Substitute for General Affairs, Pope Paul VI (Concesio, 26 September 1897 – Castel Gandolfo, 6 August 1978).

Mgr. Gaetano Pasotti (Pinerolo, February 5, 1890 – Bangkok, September 3, 1950).

René-Marie-Joseph Perros (Guewenheim, 12 March 1870 – Bangkok, 27 November 1952).

Marshal Henri-Philippe-Omer Pétain (Cauchy-à-la-Tour, 24 April 1856 – L'Île-d'Yeu, 23 July 1951).

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Ancestral monumentalization

Considerations on the keyhole-shaped tumuli in Korea

Andrea De Benedittis

This study examines the key-hole tumuli discovered in the Yöngsan River basin, focusing on their significance within the historical context. Notably, this region garnered attention for its jar coffins and haniwa-like artifacts, previously undocumented in the Korean peninsula. Although key-hole tumuli, a burial tradition typical of Japan, are infrequently found in this area, so far fourteen have been unearthed. Typically located on plains or hills near coastal or river areas, their placement suggests a connection between the burying community and maritime trade routes.

While some scholars propose that these monuments were constructed for Wa immigrants unable to return to Kyūshū due to local unrest, I contend that they represent an effort by the Wa people or a closely associated community to establish a symbolic and ideological connection with the Chōlla territory, thereby gaining control over its resources. After discussing various aspects of the burial customs in Korea and examining the theories proposed by Korean and Japanese researchers, this article aims to interpret the trend as a brief, but intentional, effort by a new group to establish their importance in the Yöngsan River basin by constructing elaborate burial structures.

Keywords: keyhole-shaped tumuli; Korean archaeology; colonialism; tombs; Yöngsan River.

1. Introduction¹

This article seeks to illuminate some aspects of the key-hole tumuli excavated in the Yöngsan River basin, a territory in the southwest of the Korean Peninsula encompassing the city of Kwangju and the South and North Chōlla provinces. Historically, this region attracted considerable attention during the colonization period due to its jar burial and haniwa-like artifacts, previously undocumented in the Korean peninsula (Kim Nakjung 2009: 15).² The key-hole tumuli, a funerary tradition distinctive to the

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² Outside of the Yöngsan River basin, cylindrical haniwa have only been excavated in Kunsan, Kyehwado, Kosōng, and Kōje. On the other hand, earthenware products with almost the same production technology as haniwa have been excavated in the

Japanese archipelago, during the so-called 'kofun period' (from about 300 to 600 CE), are unexpectedly present in the Yöngsan River basin, with fourteen identified so far (Kim Nakjung 2009: 221). Other continental funerary architectures, such as brick chamber tombs, were extensively imported and adopted during the period referred to by past historians as the Three Kingdoms Period (which spanned from approximately 57 BCE to 668 CE)³ and Korean megalithism traces back to the bronze age. What makes this archaeological phenomenon uniquely significant is that the tradition, which does not come from the continent but rather from the Japanese archipelago, lasts in the area for less than a century and does not form a single locally concentrated cluster, rather the tombs are scattered in territories isolated from each other. Such dispersion suggests a certain degree of mobility of the 'burying group,' implying that the tombs may have been built by a powerful and wealthy immigrant community.⁴ This community likely controlled lucrative trade between certain regions of Japan and Korea and aimed to assert political power within the territory, taking advantage of the political and military vacuum in the peninsula notably after Koguryö relocated its capital to P'yöngyang in 427 CE and the fall of Hansöng (modern Seoul and Paekche's first capital) to Koguryö invaders in 475 CE (Kim Nakjung 2009: 226). While scholars like Im Yöngjin claim that these monuments were constructed for Wa immigrants who could not go back to Kyūshū due to local instability (Im Yöngjin 2012: 120), I argue that they reflect the deliberate strategy of a Wa community, or a group closely linked to the. This community deliberately avoided adopting local customs, constructing these tombs to symbolically assert their presence in the Chölla region. The introduction of a new type of funerary architecture might, therefore, signify not only respect for the original traditions of the community but also a desire to eradicate local customs and reconnect their heritage to a specific territory. The Yöngsan River basin, boasting significant agricultural productivity and an exceptional labor and military force, held strategic importance for maritime routes that facilitated trade between Japan, Korea, and the continent.

After introducing some aspects of this funerary practice in Korea and examining some of the theories proposed by Korean and Japanese studies, this article aims to explore the phenomenon of a short-lived funerary trend introduced by an immigrant 'burying group' from northern Kyūshū. Taking

Kyöngdang area of the earthen fortification in P'ungnap, so it is clear that haniwalike earthenware products were available in Paekche territory during Hansöng period, but it is still difficult to identify the roots and background of that importation.

³ Actually, a genuine "three kingdom period" in Korea probably lasted from the mid-6th century until 668. Before this period, entities without textual documentation would only become visible through material evidence.

⁴ Community is understood here to mean simply a group of people that have something in common with each other, which distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups (Cohen 1985: 12).

into consideration various theories proposed by Korean and Japanese studies, I interpret this trend as an unsuccessful attempt by the immigrant community to establish their presence in the Yöngsan River. The community built lavish funerary buildings to create a fictitious local lineage, which would grant them greater political sway in the territory.

According to Arthur Saxe's Hypothesis #8 'formal disposal areas for the dead are used to affirm corporate group rights over crucial but restricted resources' (quoted in Pearson 1999: 136). Social groups may employ formal disposal areas for the dead to symbolize corporate membership rights and inheritance (Douglas 1995: 79). Lynne Goldstein supports this, stating that corporate group rights to use and control crucial but restricted resources are attained and legitimated by lineal descent from the dead.⁵ In this context, the construction of megalithic tombs, a completely unprecedented feature in the local archaeological landscape,⁶ was intended to contribute to the consolidation of control over the crucial resources in question, especially maritime and fluvial routes, in addition to agricultural ones. Thus, the overarching objective was to achieve a systemic seizure of the area's economic resources.

2. Preliminary remarks

The keyhole-shaped tumuli, commonly defined by both Korean and Japanese archaeologists "square front round back-shaped mounded tomb," (Korean *chönbang huwönbun*, Japanese *zenpö köenfun* 前方後円墳) represent a distinctive monumental funerary structure constructed between the second half of the 3rd century and the 7th century CE. These tumuli are found extensively across the Japanese archipelago. It is generally assumed that this type of burial system acquired its distinctive shape when the passage portion of the round tomb, covered with a heap of earth, was merged into the burial mound. Deceased individuals interred in these tumuli were accompanied by a generally homogenous set of grave goods, including bronze mirrors, bronze and iron tools, and weapons. Subsequently, characteristic jasper/green tuff products were included in this inventory (Mizoguchi 2009: 15). In Korean archeology, the character 'pun' (墳) generally denotes tombs with a distinctly visible tumulus (Kim Nakjung 2009: 31). This is not the only mounded-type tomb built in Korea at that time; at least from the 4th century CE onward several wooden chamber tombs with stone mound (積石木槨墳) were simultaneously constructed in the Silla territory.

⁵ Quoted in Mike Parker Pearson (1999: 136).

⁶ This area also contains evidence of five or six distinct burial customs; jars, capsule-type jars, high mound tombs, horizontal-type stone chambers, keyhole-shaped tumuli, and Paekche style stone chambers.

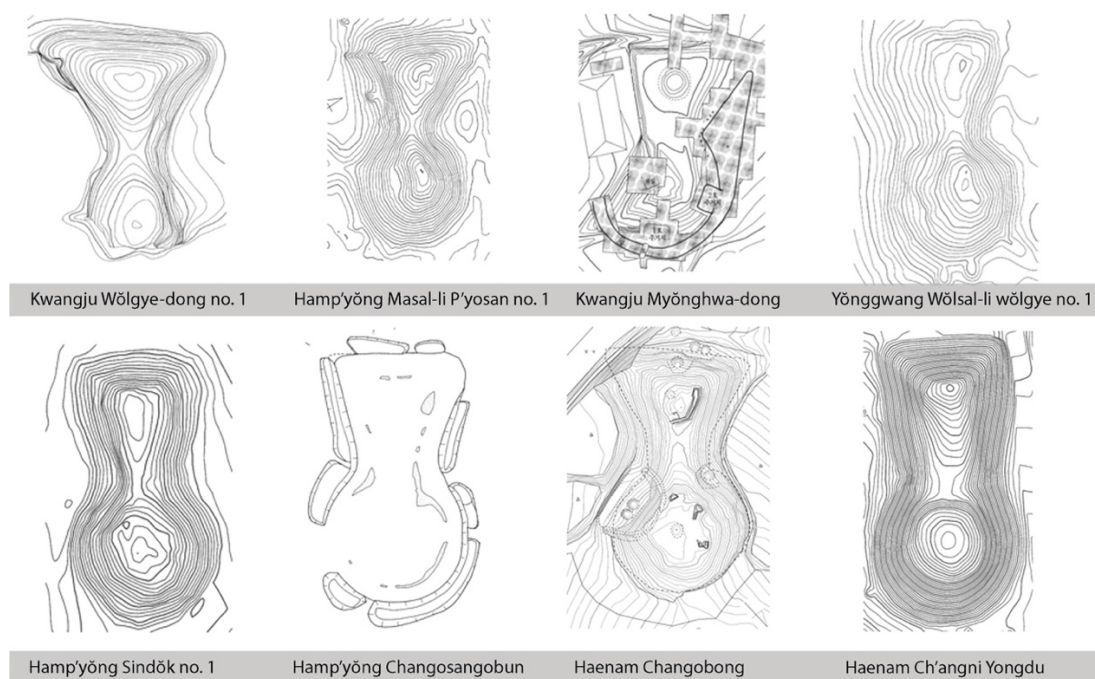


Figure 1. Key-hole tumuli aerial view (adapted from Sō (2007: 84).

The Japanese-style keyhole-shaped tumuli are located mainly in the Yöngsang River basin area and the coastal areas of Koch'ang, Yönggwang, and Haenam. Koch'ang Ch'iram-ni is the northernmost example while the southernmost exemplar is that of Haenam Pangsalsal-li Changobong. In terms of size, the smallest is Kwangju Myöngghwa-dong (33m), while the biggest one is Haenam Pangsalsal-li Changobong (76m). However, they are relatively small in comparison to those built in Japan, where some of the early keyhole-shaped tumuli are enormous. For example, the Hashitaka tumulus, believed by certain scholars to be Queen Himiko's tomb, measures about 280 meters in length. The largest tomb, Daisenryō kofun (大仙陵古墳), is approximately 468m long. It is believed to be the final resting place of Emperor Nintoku, and it is thought to have been constructed over a period of 20 years in the mid-5th century.⁷ However, it is important to note that the construction of tumuli in Korea occurred during the late phase of Japan's Kofun period (500-600 CE), during which there was a significant decrease in the size of tumuli overall (Mizoguchi 2013: 297).

A notable disparity arises when comparing the fourteen keyhole-shaped tumuli identified in the Korean territory to the vast count of approximately 5,200 tumuli in Japan. Moreover, the largest examples of these tumuli were constructed in the present-day Nara basin, the region that would later become the seat of the successive capitals of the ancient Japanese state (Mizoguchi 2009: 15). It seems

⁷ See Mizoguchi (2013: 214) for the dimensions of the main tumuli in Japan.

that many of the burial artifacts discovered in the keyhole tombs were sent by the ruling authority situated in the Nara basin and the Osaka plain, within the Kinki region, to the outlying regions. Such findings suggest that the start of the Kofun period aligns with the emergence of a centralized and organized coalition among different ruling entities (Barnes 2007: 173-177).

Apart from the two tumuli discovered in Kwangju Wŏlgye-dong, which are in proximity, the remaining tombs are scattered and isolated from each other. This contrasts sharply with the situation in Japan, where tumuli were constructed over an extended period and exhibited a notable topographical concentration. These mounds were usually located on plains or hills near the coast or riverfront, indicating a link between the economy of the group that built them and maritime routes. The location of the tombs may be related to what Mizoguchi calls 'port of trade settlements,' which occupied the nodal coastal regions of Kyushu and western Japan (Mizoguchi 2013: 219). Given that maritime trade primarily involved rowboats rather than sailboats, it is reasonable to infer that Wa sailor men necessitated regular stops to allow oarsmen to recover from fatigue (Woo Jae-Pyoung 2018: 193). The southwest coast of Korea emerged as a crucial region requiring strategic locations for these necessary rest and replenishment stops. Small communities of traders presumably took advantage of these opportunities, despite the risks involved, due to the lucrative nature of the business.

#	Tomb name	Length	Haniwa	Internal structure
1	Yŏngam T'aekal-li Charabong	35.6	-	Vertical type, stone chamber
2	Hamp'yŏng Yedŏng-ni Sindŏk no. 1	51	-	Horizontal type, stone chamber
3	Kwangju Wŏlgye-dong no. 1	44	Yes	Horizontal type, stone chamber
4	Kwangju Wŏlgye-dong no. 2	33	Yes	Horizontal type, stone chamber
5	Kwangju Myŏnghwa-dong	33	-	Horizontal type, stone chamber
6	Haenam Ch'angni Yongdu	41.3	Yes	Horizontal type, stone chamber
7	Kwangju Yogi-dong	50		
8	Tamyang Kosŏng-ni	24		
9	Tamyang Sŏngwŏl-li	38		
10	Haenam Pangsalsal-li Changobong	76	Yes	Horizontal type, stone chamber
11	Hamp'yŏng Changnyŏl-li Changosangobun	68	Yes	
12	Hamp'yŏng Masal-li P'yosan no. 1	46		
13	Yŏnggwang Wŏlsal-li wŏlgye no. 1	39		
14	Koch'ang Ch'iram-ni	55	Yes	Horizontal type, stone chamber

Table 1. Tombs recognized as keyhole-shaped tumuli in Korea (adapted from Kim Nakjung 2009: 208).

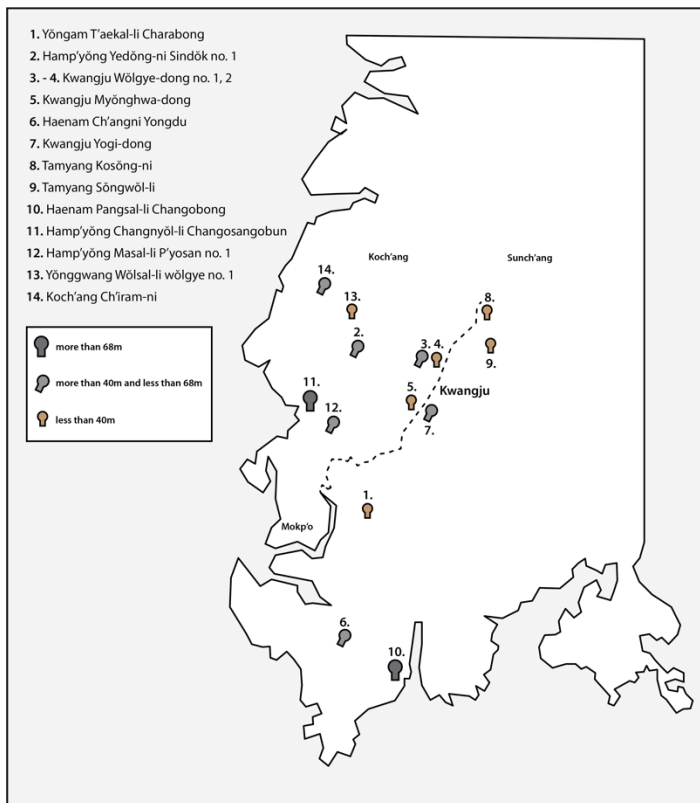


Figure 2. Map of the fourteen key-hole tumuli discovered in Korea (adapted from Kim Nakjung 2009).

Since the 1960s, some scholars have proposed that the Mounded Tomb Culture of the Early Kofun period resulted from the imposition of Yamato power over western Japan. However, it is challenging to support the notion that all of western Japan encompassed by the Early Kofun Mounded Tomb Culture was directly under Yamato control, especially given the limited extent of the Yamato State even in the fifth century, which was confined to the Kinai Region (Barnes 2014: 3-29).

Remarkably, constructions believed to be typical only of Japanese archaeology, specifically the keyhole-shaped tumuli, began to be discovered in Korea in the 1980s. At present, at least fourteen tombs of this type have been unearthed in the Peninsula. In addition, other tombs such as Kwangju Yogidong, Changsöng Chinwön Sandong-ni, and Tamyang Künsöng Woech'udong, may also belong to the category of keyhole-shaped tumuli, so that the total amount may increase in future (Yi Yöngch'öl and Kim Yönghui 2011: 150).

The stone room structures within the Korean keyhole tumuli closely resemble those in Kyūshū. Im Yöngjin has identified two types of stone chambers (primary burial facilities) in Korean keyhole tumuli: the Northern Kyūshū type and the Higo type (肥後) type (Im Yöngjin 2012: 120). The North Kyūshū-style stone chambers, such as Kwangju Wölgye-dong and Haenam Pangsalsal-li Changobong, date primarily from the latter quarter of the 5th century to the second quarter of the 6th century. On the

other hand, the Higo-style stone chambers, such as those found at Kwangju Myŏnghwa-dong and Haenam Ch'angni Yongdu, were built mainly at the beginning of the 6th century.

Lee (2014: 82) emphasizes a tangible material culture link between the Yŏngsan River basin and northern Kyūshū, extending back to at least the Bronze Age, possibly even earlier. Shared practices, such as jar burials and the exchange of material culture as reflected in the tomb inventories demonstrate the historical connection between the regions. Historically, the northern Kyūshū region held a more advantageous position for obtaining prestigious items from China and Korea, along with access to raw materials crucial for iron production believed to be located in the southern Korean peninsula (Mizoguchi 2013: 214).

Notably, during the last quarter of the 5th century, the Iwai power in the Ariake Sea region of Kyūshū expanded its influence into the northern part of the island. In the second quarter of the 6th century, the Kyūshū region was integrated into the Yamato regime. Im Yŏngjin takes these circumstances to mean that the deceased of the North Kyūshū-type stone chamber tombs in the Yŏngsan River basin are likely to have been Northern Kyūshū rulers who fled in exile due to Iwai's control of Northern Kyūshū during the last quarter of the 5th century. Meanwhile the deceased of the Higo-type stone chamber tombs are presumed to be Ariake sea region rulers fleeing the Yamato regime's control of Northern Kyūshū in the second quarter of the 6th century (Im Yŏngjin 2012: 120). Adding a layer of complexity, archaeological sites associated with Kūmgwan Kaya from the 3rd to the 5th centuries, such as Taesŏng-dong, contain artifacts from Japan, particularly originating from the central Kinai region of Japan, mainly Nara and Ōsaka (Woo 2018: 186).

The majority of the keyhole-shaped tombs in Korea share striking similarities with those found in the Japanese archipelago. These common features include the presence of moats, the use of red pigment to decorate the interiors of stone chamber tombs, and the use of cylindrical pottery for ritual purposes (Lee 2014: 76). However, some subtle differences distinguish Korean keyhole-shaped tumuli from those in Japan. Korean tumuli tend to include local pottery and lack the roofing stone (Korean *chūpsŏk*, Japanese *fukiishi*, 葺石) which typically covered Japanese burial chambers and burial mounds (Kwŏn Oyŏng 2017: 142). Notably, hybridization phenomena were quite frequent in the peninsula, such as in Nangnang or Koguryŏ tombs (De Benedittis 2022: 67), suggesting that some structural or stylistic characteristics of the tombs were selectively adopted due to the preferences of the adopting group, while some other choices were determined by local stone and material conditions. Kim Nakjung (2009) prefers to think that the group in the Yŏngsan River basin, inexplicably adopted only some specific aspects of that funerary tradition as a symbol to emphasize their association with the Wa (Kim Nakjung 2009: 221).

Given the typology of objects found in these tombs, it is generally agreed that they were constructed in the late 5th century and throughout the 6th century. This construction period spans approximately two generations and corresponds to the reigns of kings Munju (455-475 CE), Samgŭn (477-479 CE), Tongsŏng (479-501 CE), and Muryŏng (501-523 CE). A more generous estimate would include the last period of King Kaero (455-475 CE) and the beginning of the mandate of King Sŏng (523-554 CE). However, the majority of keyhole-shaped tumuli in Korea seem to have been constructed in the early 6th century, during the reign of King Muryŏng.⁸ This funerary tradition stands out as one of the shortest in duration in Korea.⁹

3. Hypotheses on the origins of the buried remains in Korean keyhole-shaped tumuli

In 1983, Kang Ingu first entertained the hypothesis that the Kosŏnggun Songhak-dong tomb no. 1 belonged to the category of keyhole-shaped tumuli. Subsequent surveys confirmed the identification, including the Haenam Pangsŏl-li Changobong and Hamp'yŏng Changnyŏl-li Changosangobun tombs. The excavation of the tomb of Hamp'yŏng Yedŏng-ni Sindŏk no. 1 provided conclusive evidence that the internal burial structure corresponded to that of a 'chamber tomb' typical of Kyūshū island. Furthermore, the presence of haniwa and sueki pottery at the Myŏnghwa-dong and Wŏlgye-dong tumuli in the city of Kwangju further supports the hypothesis of the Japanese origin of these tombs (Pak Ch'ŏnsu 2011: 176).¹⁰

⁸ For more on this, Sŏ (2007).

⁹ While a trend of monumentalization of tombs was already established in the territory of Silla from at least the 4th century CE, it became particularly noticeable in the 6th century with the emergence of wooden chamber tombs with stone mounds, exemplified by structures like Hwangnam Taech'ong, (120m long and 22m high) and Nosŏ-dong Ponghwangdae tomb (78.5m long and 21.2m high).

¹⁰ Sŏ emphasizes, however, that the wooden haniwa and the wooden furnace discovered in Wŏlgyedong no. 1 are more closely associated with the Kinki region (Sŏ 2007: 102).

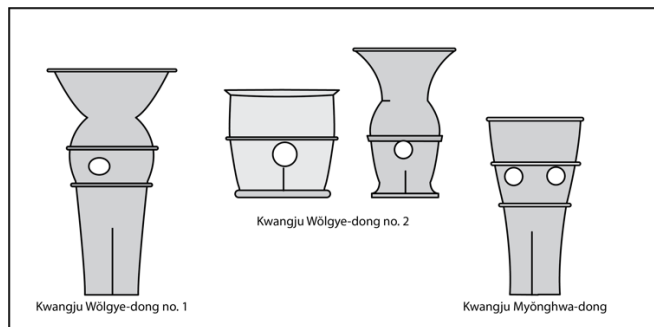


Figure 3. *Haniwa* unearthed from keyhole-shaped tumuli in Korea dating from the 6th century (adapted from Sō 2007: 102).

As this area has already been previously considered by some Japanese historians as one of the areas under the control of Mimana,¹¹ the discovery of these tombs has aroused strong interest and fear in Japanese and Korean researchers, respectively. Originally, one of the main proponents of the colonial theory was Suematsu Yasukazu, who in his book (*Mimana kōbōshi*, “A history of the rise and fall of Mimana,” 任那興亡史, 1949) proposed that Mimana was a Japanese colony on the Korean Peninsula that was active from the 3rd to the 4th centuries, but first focused his attention on the Kaya area. However, this idea has lost popularity since the 1970s, mainly because of the lack of archaeological evidence. In the 1960s the North Korean archaeologist Kim Sōkhyōng was one of the pioneering scholars who first attempted to refute the theory (Cho Insōng 2022: 255-256). Thanks to the results of the survey of the tombs of Kaya in the area of Yōngnam in the 1970s and those of the royal tombs of Kaya from the 1980s, the Mimana hypothesis progressively lost its credibility (Kwōn Oyōng 2017: 133-151).

The discovery of Japanese-style tombs in the Yōngsan River basin has sparked both intense interest and concern among Japanese and Korean researchers alike, given the historical considerations associated with the region. Initially, some Korean scholars were reluctant to acknowledge the existence of these tombs for fear that their discovery might provide new evidence for the Mimana theory. These dynamics have also given rise to the tendency to call these graves ‘Korean drum mounded tumuli’ (*changgobun*, 長鼓墳), to avoid an obvious and direct association with the Japanese tombs. Similarly,

¹¹ During the Japanese Occupation Period in Korea (1910–1945), some Japanese historians proposed a theory that Yamato had colonized the southern part of the Korean peninsula from the 3rd to the 6th centuries CE through a government office in Mimana, as mentioned in the *Nihon Shoki*. However, this theory lacks corroboration from Chinese or Korean sources and is unsupported by archaeological evidence. Despite its lack of validity, the idea persisted in Japanese historiography and textbooks, remaining a contentious issue today (Lee 2014: 71).

instead of the Japanese term *haniwa*, the expression ‘Cylindrical pottery around the perimeter of the mound’ (*T’onghyŏng punju t’ogi*, 通形墳周土器) has been employed (Sö: 2007). In any case, no keyhole-shaped tumuli were built during the 4th and the beginning of the 5th centuries, when Mimana was presumably established, but their construction in the Korean territory began just as Mimana started to lose its power in the region. Moreover, the scattered nature of these tombs challenges the notion of a centralized Wa government office in the peninsula, rather, the tombs are widely dispersed (Pak Ch’önsu (2011: 248). In addition, the period of construction of these tombs is significantly circumscribed, so even if the burying community tried to take control of this area, the attempt must not have lasted for more than a century. Since the first discoveries of the keyhole-shaped tumuli, much research has been conducted on the topic, acknowledging its sensitivity, particularly from a political perspective. The ‘scatteredness’ of these tombs makes it more difficult to understand which community these tombs could belong to. These tumuli do not form a concentrated necropolis, rather they are dispersed in the basin of the River Yöngsan, a region where, from the late 3rd century, the most typical burial system was instead the ‘jar coffin.’

One of the most widely debated issues between Korean and Japanese scholars is whether to attribute these tombs to ‘local chiefs’ or to ‘Japanese immigrants’ to the area. While there are some discrepancies in opinions, proponents of the “local chiefs” hypothesis—Habuta Yoshiyuki (土生田純之, 2000), Pak Sunbal (朴淳發, 2000), Tanaka Toshiaki (田中俊明, 2000), Kazuo Yanagisawa (柳澤一男, 2001), Akihiko Oguri (小栗明彦, 2000)—generally agree that at this stage the territory of the Yöngsan River basin was not yet, or not completely, under Paekche’s direct control. Instead, local chiefs attempted to halt Paekche’s southward expansion by strengthening their alliance with the Wa. According to Kim Nakjung, some local forces in the Yöngsan River basin, maintaining a close relationship with Paekche but desiring political independence, also engaged with northern Kyūshū forces in order to gain international prestige and counterbalance their diplomatic relations within the Korean Peninsula (Kim Nakjung 2009: 225, Söng Chöngyong 2012: 116). Therefore, these tombs represented a political symbol of the international networking established in the area and served as a warning against the enemies of the community who built them.

Contrary to the references in the *Nihon Shoki* regarding Paekche’s growing influence in the Chölla region,¹² this idea is no longer considered as historically reliable. It is more plausible that Paekche

¹² “Seven provinces were accordingly subdued [...]. Then they moved their forces, and turning westward, arrived at Kohyejin, where they slaughtered the southern savages [...] and granted their country to Paekche” (Aston 1896: ix, 29, yr 249).

started progressively gaining control over this territory only from the early 6th century. Some believe it is challenging to imagine that the recipients of these tombs are men of Wa origin, especially considering the vastness of the territory in which they are located (Sō 2007: 107).

The second hypothesis is that they might instead be migrants from Japan. Azuma Ushio (1995) proposes that the individuals buried in these graves were a group of influential migrants from Kyūshū who settled in the area. However, Lee argues that the status of these Wa-origin immigrants must have been relatively low, considering that the sizes of Korean tombs ranged from 33 to 76 meters, while Japanese tombs averaged hundreds of meters in length (Lee 2014: 77). Yōn Minsu (2011: 141) contends that there are no discernable political or military trends in the Japanese archipelago, such as Northern Kyūshū, that would justify a mass migration to the southern part of the Korean peninsula during this period, making such hypotheses less convincing. Even the Iwai rebellion against the Yamato court in 527 CE¹³ may not have been a significant catalyst for determining migratory patterns. Instead, there was migration from the southern part of the Korean peninsula to the Japanese archipelago, such as the Kaya region, especially during the military campaigns of King Kwanggaet'o of Koguryō in the last quarter of the 4th and 5th centuries, but reverse migration from the Japanese archipelago is difficult to imagine (Yōn Minsu 2011: 141-3).

While mass migration from Japan to Korea during this period seems unlikely, considering the importance and vitality of commerce with Korea, it is plausible that some influential people from the archipelago moved to better control maritime routes and affairs. Moreover, with the increasing influence of Yamato on the Kyūshū and concurrently with the Iwai rebellion, there may have been a stronger need to secure additional resources to compete with Yamato, justifying an intensification of relations with the Yōngsan River area. After renouncing their trade with Kaya which was definitively conquered in 562 CE by Silla, the Wa also sought alternative partnerships in the peninsula, which represented a precious route to reach South China (Woo Jae-Pyoung 2018: 196). The importation of iron and technology from Korea played a crucial role in Japanese state formation and economy, making it vital for them to ensure the continuity of trade relations with Korea. According to the Silla Annals, in the year 500, the final coastal raids from the archipelago took place, which had been a recurring issue for Silla almost since the kingdom's establishment, suggesting a decline in Japan's influence over the eastern regions of the peninsula (Best 2007: 111).

¹³ The Iwai Rebellion refers to a significant uprising that took place in Japan in 527 CE. It was led by Iwai, a provincial governor, against the central government's authority, reflecting regional discontent and political turmoil during that time. For more on this rebellion see *Nihon Shoki* (Aston 1896 xvii: 18).

Therefore, Im Yǒngjin proposes that those entombed in the keyhole-style tumuli were individuals of Wa origins, and who, with approval from the core powers in the Yǒngsan River basin, obtained land on the fringes, lived there, died, and, being unable to return home, were buried in the area (Im Yǒngjin 2012: 120). On the other hand, Pak Ch'ǒnsu suggests that these tombs may have belonged to powerful families coming from the Ariake Sea coastal region of northern Kyūshū (Pak Ch'ǒnsu 2011: 188). Pak bases this conclusion on the analysis of stone chambers and shell objects discovered in northern Kyūshū, the importation patterns of ceramics and Paekche artifacts from the Yǒngsan River basin in the Japanese archipelago, and those in the Eta Funayama Kofun in Kumamoto Prefecture, as well as the tumuli of the Yǒngsan River basin (Pak Ch'ǒnsu 2011: 188). Pak claims that these individuals were more than mere traders; rather the keyhole-shaped tumuli in the Yǒngsan River basin belonged to Wa individuals who were dispatched by Paekche as a temporary measure to govern the area since local chiefs could not rule over the southwestern part of the Korean peninsula directly, especially after the transferal of the Paekche capital to Kongju in 475 (Pak Ch'ǒnsu, 2002: 42-59). Notably, the *Nihon shoki* contains references to several Paekche officials of Wa-descent during the mandate of the ruler Kinmei (r. 539–571) corresponding to King Sǒng's reign (r. 523–554). Also, according to the *Nihon Shoki*, King Tongsǒng (r. 479-501) purportedly returned to Paekche escorted by five hundred Yamato soldiers. While the reliability of this information is uncertain, it suggests that various categories of people may have been cyclically sent from Yamato to the peninsula for economic or political purposes. Chu Podon (2000) and Yukihiisa Yamao (2001) also support the hypothesis that these people were Paekche officials with Japanese origins. This theory is supported by the presence of some artifacts from Paekche in the tombs. However, it is important to note that in Japan grave goods of the early keyhole tumuli included Chinese and Korean imports as well as indigenous products (Mizoguchi 2013: 214).

Despite the prevalence of tumulus culture in the Kinki region, there is no clear evidence to suggest that the Paekche people of Wa-descent or Japanese immigrants adopted expensive Japanese burial practices without specific motivation. The widespread distribution of tumulus culture doesn't appear to be forcibly imposed by specific groups from the Kinki Central Region. Instead, it was adopted and shared by the emerging elite of individual regions. This elite group sought to achieve dominance over others in their respective regions by participating in the “elite communication sphere” (Mizoguchi 2013: 241).

King Muryǒng, as per the *Nihon Shoki*, was born and raised in Japan and was buried in Korea in a brick-chamber tomb, a burial architecture largely utilized by the Liang Dynasty. This adoption could be viewed as a diplomatic strategy intended to highlight the amicable relations with the Southern Dynasties (Woo 2018: 203). The adoption of a foreign type of tomb may correspond to specific fashions

or personal tastes, but it was also a symbol of powerful international alliances to be used as a deterrent against new military threats from Koguryŏ (Woo 2018: 204). In the specific case of the Yŏngsan River basin, the adoption of a foreign tomb style may have represented the community's attempt to establish its political and cultural autonomy in contrast to the Paekche kingdom, which, in turn, sought control over these areas. I concur with Azuma Ushio's notion that a group of Wa immigrants endeavored to assert their dominance over the Yŏngsan River territories between the 5th and 6th centuries, following a power vacuum created by the fall of the first capital of Paekche. The tombs of this community were comparably smaller, but still among the largest in Korea's archaeological panorama. It is probable that this Wa community functioned as a 'corporation,' specializing in the trade of agricultural products or technology. The scatteredness of these tombs resulted from the community's nature and the ever-increasing influence of Paekche. In the following section, we will scrutinize the events that marked the end of the Wa community's attempt to control this territory. The following section will explore the events marking the end of the Wa community's attempt to control this territory.

4. Progressive loss of autonomy of the Yŏngsan River basin

The relocation of the Koguryŏ capital in 427 CE triggered significant shifts in the geopolitical dynamics of the Korean peninsula. Even before this event, as per the Koguryŏ stele inscription, in 400 CE, Kwanggaet'o dispatched a force of fifty thousand soldiers southward, successfully displacing the Yamato forces from Silla (Best 2007: 87). In response to the changing landscape, Paekche sought to secure its survival by strengthening its influence in the territories of the southern peninsula and consolidating diplomatic relations with potential allies. According to the *Samguk Sagi*, Paekche invested in its alliance with the Silla royal family in 493 CE, aiming to jointly respond to Koguryŏ's advance. Additionally, in 498 CE, Paekche dispatched an army to the Noryŏng Mountains to enhance its control over the Mahan remnants who lived in the area of present-day South Chŏlla province. As part of its military efforts, Paekche made the country of T'amna its tributary (No T'aedon 2014: 125). King Tongsŏng's reign (479-501 CE), marked a significant period for Paekche's diplomatic endeavors and consolidation of power. In 490 CE he sent envoys to Qi seeking recognition of his control over vassals, including territories in the Chŏlla region (*pyŏkjung*, 辟中; Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 1987: 416). Paekche employed a strategic approach, acknowledging the power of local chiefs in these regions by sending them prestigious goods such as crowns, golden shoes, swords, and pottery. The distribution of mirrors, a crucial strategy for political alliance in the Early Kofun period, was also part of this diplomatic effort (Barnes 2014: 18). Administratively, Paekche implemented the *tamno* system,' a

tributary relationship with local chiefs who were still able to maintain their local identity to some extent (No T'aedon 2014: 133).¹⁴ The nature of Paekche's relationship with the Yǒngsan River basin is a subject of debate. Some argue that the area was already indirectly under the control or influence of Paekche, while others argue that the area was a distinct political entity until the early 6th century (Taehan munhwa yusan yǒn'gu sent'o 2011: 315). Culturally, the Yǒngsan River basin maintained a strong cultural tradition distinct from that of Paekche and Japan. The preservation of this identity was, in part, facilitated by the considerable local wealth driven by substantial agricultural productivity. The affluence of the region ensured a more prosperous labor force compared to other areas, contributing to the preservation of its unique cultural heritage.

Understanding the Yǒngsan River basin's history during the late 5th to 6th centuries is challenging due to the lack of specific documentation. The absence of records or accounts of this region during keyhole tumuli construction in the late Kofun period hampers reconstruction efforts. The historical records on Paekche found in the *Samguk Sagi* are often problematic. Official record-keeping in Paekche did not commence until the late-fourth-century reign of King Kūnch'ogo (trad. r. 346–375). Consequently, prior accounts are laden with legends, portents, and historically unverifiable material (Best 2007: 3-4). The paucity of references to the political situation in the Yǒngsan River basin in surviving documents, such as the stele of King Kwanggaet'o, further complicates historical reconstruction. Additionally, the fate of the small Mahan countries remains uncertain, with Chinese sources eclipsing Mahan-related records after the ascendancy of Paekche in the 4th century. The Paekche Annals of the *Samguk Sagi* mention King Onjo's annexation of Mahan in 8 CE, 26 years after the founding of Paekche. However, the Records of the Three Kingdoms claims that Mahan had 54 countries in the 3rd century and Paekche was only one of them (Kuksa p'yōnch'an wiwōnhoe 1987: 191).

The “Paekche Annals” of the *Samguk sagi*, while a crucial historical source, does not provide detailed information on Paekche's relations with the Japanese archipelago during this period. It may exhibit a partial portrayal influenced by stereotypes about Japanese pirates from the later Koryō period (Best 2007: 64).

The *Nihon Shoki* stands out as a rich source for understanding interactions between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago. Consequently, its storyline has significantly influenced the

¹⁴ It is reasonable to assume that this system had been abandoned by the middle of the sixth century when, according to the evidence of both the Book of Liang and the Paekche Annals, the dynasty had regained its political and military stability. The tamno system's particularistic ordering of authority in the kingdom was abandoned in favor of the more centralized, and Sinitic, structure of the five circuits. This change was accompanied by a reorganization of Paekche's government along more Chinese lines (Best 2006: 131).

comprehension of early relations between Korea and Japan from the 4th to the 7th centuries (Lee 2014: 73).

The *Book of Song*, authored by Shen Yue from the Southern Qi dynasty in 492–493 CE, is another relevant source. It offers limited details on Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Wa (Japan) but is reticent on other regions which provides few details on Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Wa, but, again, is reticent on other regions. Within the *Book of Song*, there is a reference to the toponym ‘Mohan’ (慕韓), interpreted by scholars such as Sakamoto Yoshitane as the remaining forces of Mahan. This interpretation suggests that Mahan retained an independent political identity and was not yet under the control of Paekche (Sakamoto Yoshitane 1978: 474-5). While the information in the *Book of Song* may not be exhaustive, it suggests that Japan cast a strong influence on the region to the point that the Wa demanded that their king should have been called “Wa, Paekche, Silla, Imna, Kaya, Chinhan, Mohan.”¹⁵

The loss of Paekche’s first capital led to a prolonged crisis that persisted until approximately 538 CE when King Sŏng (r. 523–554 CE) moved the capital to Sabi (present-day Puyŏ) and renamed the state Nam Puyŏ. This relocation marked the end of the crisis and a significant turning point for Paekche's military strength and international standing. King Muryŏng’s reign, during which the majority of the keyhole-shaped tumuli were constructed, saw Paekche gradually recovering from the trauma of its earlier defeat by Koguryŏ. In the Portraits of Periodical Offering of Liang (梁職貢圖) tributary documentative paintings painted by the future Emperor Yuan of Liang, Xiao Yi (r. 552–555 CE) in 521 some kingdoms like Sara (Silla) and Panp’a (Tae Kaya) are referred to as ‘small neighbor countries of Paekche,’ indicating Paekche's restored pride.

The early 6th century witnessed a strengthening connection between Paekche and the Wa.¹⁶ Archaeological evidence reveals a decline in artifacts from the Kaya region in the Japanese archipelago and an increase in Paekche-made artifacts, some of which were found in the Eta Funayama Kofun (located in the Kumamoto prefecture, on the island of Kyūshū).¹⁷ According to Woo Jae-Pyoung, an

¹⁵ 弟武立，自稱使持節、都督倭百濟新羅任那加羅秦韓慕韓七國諸軍事、安東大將軍、倭國王。

¹⁶ While living in Japan for sixteen years, Lord Konji could promote a pro-Paekche policy in the Yamato court. His son King Tongsŏng was born during his stay in Japan and had access to the Yamato Court. During this period, bilateral exchanges peaked as Paekche artifacts flowed into the Yamato kingdom. This relationship is the foundation for proposing that the keyhole-shaped tumuli in the Yŏngsan River basin could have been dedicated to Wa families who had connections with Paekche, or to individuals of Paekche origin raised in Japan and culturally influenced by Wa traditions.

¹⁷ Considering the characteristics of the relationship between Paekche and Yamato from the end of Hansŏng to the beginning of the mandate of King Sŏng, the royal family in Paekche was directly in charge of diplomacy with Yamato and some of its members spent a lot of time in the archipelago. In particular, King Tongsŏng and King Muryŏng were enthroned as kings of Paekche, but both of them were probably born in the Yamato territory. In 451 CE King Kaero sent his brother Konji to the

interesting archaeological find supporting the Paekche-Wa alliance comes from the maritime ritual site of Puan Chungmak-tong in the North Chŏlla region. Dating from the 4th to the 7th century, this site, associated with Paekche, houses an altar likely used for performing rituals to sea deities. Alongside artifacts originating from Kaya and the Southern Dynasties of China dating to the 5th and 6th centuries, a series of stone implements imitative of those widely used in ancestor-worship rituals in Wa were discovered (Woo 2018: 188). Additionally, a passage in the Book of Song quotes a letter from King Bu of Wa to the Emperor Song in 478, condemning Koguryŏ's threats and expressing gratitude for Paekche's assistance in sailing back to the archipelago. These historical and archaeological pieces contribute to understanding the dynamics of political and maritime relationships in the region during this period. The relocation of Paekche's political center southward, coupled with a stronger alliance with Yamato, provided a natural opportunity for Paekche to expand its influence in the Yŏngsan River basin. Paradoxically, the construction of keyhole-shaped tumuli in this region began in the Yŏngsan River region during a period when Paekche was regaining prominence and overcoming a prolonged crisis. This would rather suggest that despite Paekche's growth, this area still enjoyed a degree of economic and political autonomy during this time. The ongoing cultural contact between the Yŏngsan River region and Kyūshū, which was ongoing in the 5th century, became notably more pronounced in the early 6th century. This interaction involved military, political, and technological aspects which, however, lack explicit references in official sources. Lee characterizes the relationship between the Yŏngsan River basin and the Ariake Sea areas in Kyūshū as an active "third space," facilitating connections across the Korea Strait through interactions with the polities of Paekche and Yamato (Lee D. 2014: 71-2).

The Paekche kingdom's definitive control of these territories appears to be associated with the introduction of a new administrative system known as the 'five regions system' (*obangje*), as referenced in the *Book of Zhou*, completed in 636 CE. This system likely represented a more sophisticated

Yamato and this passage is reported in the *Nihon Shoki* "Summer, 4th month. Lord Kaero of Paekche, having learned by rumor that Iketsu hime had been put to death by burning, held counsel, saying: 'The ancient custom of sending tribute of women to be made Uneme is contrary to decorum, and is injurious to our country's reputation. Henceforward it is unmeet that women be sent as tribute.' Accordingly, he intimated to his younger brother, Lord Konji, saying: 'Do thou go to Japan, and serve the Emperor.' Lord Konji answered and said: 'My Lord's commands must not be disobeyed. I pray thee give me one of thy consorts, and then I will undertake this mission.' Lord Kaero accordingly took one of his consorts who was pregnant and having given her in marriage to Lord Konji, said: 'The month for the delivery of this pregnant consort of mine has already arrived. If she should be delivered on the journey, I pray thee place (the child) on board a ship, and whatever place thou mayest have arrived at, cause it to be at once sent back to this country.' So, at last, he took his leave, and went on his mission to the Yamato Court" (Aston 1896: xiv, 17).

reformulation of the previous *tamno* system, allowing for increased centralization of power and stricter control of other areas in the southwest of the peninsula (No T'aedon 2014: 132). This effective control of the Yǒngsan River area began in the second half of the 6th century. During this period, the characteristic brick-chamber tombs in the central region and keyhole-shaped tumuli in the southwestern borderland disappeared. They were replaced by the Nūngsal-li type tombs featuring stone chambers containing Paekche pottery and prestigious objects like crown flower decoration (Han'guk Kokohak'oe 2007: 326). This archeological evidence suggests that, by this time, the territory was completely under the influence and control of the Paekche kingdom.

5. Conclusions

In summary, the examination of key-hole tumuli in South Korea offers significant insights into the socio-political dynamics and cultural interactions prevailing during the 5th and 6th centuries. These megalithic tombs, akin to dolmens, suggest the emergence of an elite group that intentionally distanced themselves from commoners socially, economically, and politically (Yi Yǒngch'ŏl – Kim Yǒnghŭi 2011: 150). They showcased their elevated social status through monumental structures and prestigious artifacts. Until recently, scholarly perspectives on early Korea-Japan relations from the 4th–7th centuries largely adhered to the notion that the interactions between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago were confined to the historical kingdoms of Koguryŏ, Paekje, Silla, and the Kaya polities on the Korean side, with Wa (i.e. Yamato) representing Japan (Best 2007: 71-2). However, the discovery of these tombs challenges this perspective, illustrating a more intricate web of relationships that extended beyond the traditionally recognized entities. The existence of these tombs suggests diversified connections involving various communities on the Korean peninsula. Thus, in the 5th century, cultural contact persisted between Kyūshū and the Yǒngsan River region, potentially indicating a region that retained either complete or a certain degree of autonomy from Paekche.

The debate regarding the origins and the identity of those interred in the keyhole tumuli continues, primarily due to the absence of epigraphs or region-specific sources that could provide a definitive resolution. The enigmatic 'burying group' likely lacked a capital that could naturally evolve into a necropolis, akin to Ji'an for Koguryŏ or Kyōngju for Silla. The scattered distribution of these tombs may be attributed to the community's presence being confined to a brief chronological period, particularly around the second half of the 6th century. An alternative explanation could be that this community was not entirely sedentary and derived its prosperity from maritime routes, thereby accumulating economic wealth. However, if we entertain this hypothesis, the question arises as to how such a community could assert political dominance in an area renowned for agricultural richness.

Paradoxically, the construction of tombs in the Yöngsan River region began during Paekche's resurgence, suggesting that despite Paekche's growth, the area maintained economic and political autonomy.

The absence of documentary sources on this region and the scarcity of archeological evidence pose challenges to the formulation of definitive hypotheses regarding the origins and evolution of the keyhole tumuli. While a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon may remain elusive, I argue against the notion that the deceased were Wa individuals who accidentally perished in this region and were unable to return to their own territory. Instead, I propose that the construction of these tombs was a deliberate act preceding Paekche's increased influence, capitalizing on a political vacuum. Originating from northern Kyūshū, this community sought to legitimize its presence and assert control over local economic resources through these monumental structures. In contrast to Koguryō's mural-painted tombs with concealed magnificence, the keyhole tumuli aimed to display the power and grandeur of the burying community. In a short-lived and unsuccessful attempt this emergent 'burying group' of Wa origins, or linked to the Wa, endeavored to monumentalize their presence in the territory with dispendious funerary buildings. These lavish megalithic tombs, serving as artificial landmarks, held a deliberate ideological, political, and economic significance, acting as symbols intended to legitimize the burying group's claim to authority over the Yöngsan River Basin area.

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Legal fictions in East Asia

Recovering a forgotten mode of judge-centered jurisprudence

Jason Morgan

In much of Western legal historical scholarship, legal fictions are understood to be devices for maintaining the integrity of text-based legal codes in the face of social change. However, while legal fictions as such were not a topic of scholarly inquiry in East Asia prior to the introduction of the concept from the West, East Asia is nevertheless rich in examples of another kind of legal fiction: jurisprudential legal fictions, or legal fictions effected by judges and rooted in culture (often including religion). The mythical, moral *xiezhi* beast in ancient China, and judge-centered moral reasoning in pre-modern Japan, point to legal fictions beyond the traditional categories of such in much of Western scholarship, as well as to legal fictions within the West now largely forgotten after the advent of Enlightenment thinking on textual law.

Keywords: *xiezhi* (*kaichi*); legal fictions; jurisprudence; China; Japan.

1. Introduction¹

Many people, and certainly everyone who has studied law, will have heard the term “legal fiction” before. For example, a common legal fiction is the age of majority. In many countries, legislatures have passed laws declaring that those who reach their eighteenth, or twentieth, or twenty-first, or some other, birthday, are adults, while those who have not are still minors. There is of course no magic change that happens on a particular birthday. But legal frameworks need to make distinctions between those who can, for example, be trusted to drive automobiles, or be punished for serious crimes, and those who cannot. The need to make that distinction in turn necessitates that a line be drawn where

¹ I am grateful to reference librarian Kogure Keiko at the Moralogy Foundation in Kashiwa, who helped enormously in tracking down information on the *xiezhi*. I thank also Prof. J. Mark Ramseyer, whose extensive comments saved me from many errors. Those that remain are mine alone—there would have been plenty more without Prof. Ramseyer’s help. In addition, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who read a draft of this paper and provided very many helpful comments and suggestions for improvement. Their careful reading and critical eye have improved this essay enormously.

no line really exists. Hence the legal fiction, meant to satisfy the interior logic of the law, as to the age of majority. There are many other examples, such as when a missing person is declared legally deceased after a legislatively-defined length of time has elapsed. Whether the person is alive or dead, nobody knows. But there are wills to sort through, remarriages to consider, and property to divide, so the law allows that a death may be acknowledged at some point, even if that may not be the case in real life.

A legal fiction, in short, is a convenient falsehood that must be treated as true, in the context of the law, in order for the law to function as society expects. The law in books is incapable of reason, after all. It cannot think and is blind and inanimate. It can work only when certain kinds of information are fed into it by the law's authors and subjects: people. Human beings of course know that there is no real difference between someone who was seventeen until yesterday but has turned eighteen today. We also know that, sometimes, people disappear without a trace, and we must live with the uncertainty surrounding their fate. Whether we say a missing person is dead or alive does not really make it so. But the law, being a circumscribed epistemological space, cannot live with that kind of ambiguity. It must have some kind of hard information in order to produce the kinds of results which societies need in order to maintain order, and so we human beings sometimes need to use placeholder-type information—legal fictions—to satisfy legal logic and let the machinery of law go on working as we have designed it to, and as it must if, as many of us believe, we are to have any kind of civilization.

And yet, while legal fictions are so commonplace in Western legal systems that we hardly notice them, legal fictions, at least as they are understood in the context of Western law, are not so readily apparent in legal histories of East Asia. The term “legal fiction” has no equivalent in either Chinese or Japanese, for example, other than phrases imported from other languages and epistemes. It is possible to write “legal fiction” in various ways using Chinese characters, but such renderings are translations of the Western concept. In fact, the idea of a “legal fiction” does not find explicit expression in Chinese or Japanese prior to the introduction of Western legal ideas at all. More to the point, the Japanese term *rīgaru fuikushon* (リーガル・フィクション) is a straight transliteration into the Japanese syllabary of the English “legal fiction.”² Before East Asia's exposure, largely through the conduit of Japanese scholars, to Western jurisprudence, philosophy, science, and other fields from the middle of the nineteenth

² Other terms include *hō(ritsu) ni okeru gisei* (“fictive models occurring in law”) and the German *Rechtsfiktion*. See Sasakura (2015) and, generally, Sasakura (2021).

century, there was no way to express overtly the insertion of some measure of openly-admitted falsehood into a legal regime in order to preserve its functioning in some way.³

The conscious practice of legal fictions in the West, by contrast, is almost as old as codified law itself. A good working definition of legal fictions comes from legal historian Sir Henry Maine (1822-1888), who wrote in *Ancient Law* (1861), “I [...] employ the expression ‘Legal Fiction’ to signify any assumption which conceals, or affects to conceal, the fact that a rule of law has undergone alteration, its letter remaining unchanged, its operation being modified” (Maine 1917: 16). Maine began his study with ancient Roman law and continued through to his day, seeing in legal fictions a way in which a legal system might accommodate social change. This gap, as Maine saw it, between the law in books and the law in the streets was the heart of Maine’s legal fiction thinking. Maine’s work deals expressly with “ancient law,” but his premise is that legal fictions are an inescapable aspect of law. Maine also thought that legal fictions were becoming more necessary as time went on. On Maine’s view, modern Europeans have been, and will continue to be, moving away from whatever is written in lawbooks, because society is always progressing, and so whatever was written down and thereby condemned no longer to change had already fallen behind the dynamic law reflected in the social mores of the hour. Hence the need to blur reality a bit when presenting that reality for digestion within legal frameworks, because society and the law were always diverging. “Social necessities and social opinion [in progressive societies] are always more or less in advance of Law,” Maine writes. Maine then lists legal fictions, along with legislation and equity, as ways in which “Law is brought into harmony with society” (Maine 1917: 15). Maine understood this tension between law and society to be constant, and legal fictions, therefore, to be a necessary concomitant to the written law.

To read Maine is to puzzle anew at how differently the law has been thought of in East Asia. Whether Maine would have characterized East Asian societies as progressive under his legal-fictions rubric seems secondary to the fact that there is nothing approaching Maine’s definition of legal fictions in pre-modern East Asian legal texts. As far as I know, in pre-modern East Asia there is no term approximating “legal fiction” at all. This silence presents us with a choice to make. The absence of a term for a concept can mean one of two things: either the concept did not exist prior to contact with a

³ There are various definitions of “legal fiction” available in English. Lehman and Phelps (2005, vol 6: 421) give “An assumption that something occurred or someone or something exists which, in fact, is not the case, but that is made in the law to enable a court to equitably resolve a matter before it. In order to do justice, the law will permit or create a legal fiction. For example, if a person undertakes a renunciation of a legacy which is a gift by will the person will be deemed to have predeceased the testator—one who makes a will—for the purpose of distributing the estate.” Stewart (2006) gives: “something assumed to be true for the sake of convenience whether true or false.” <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/legal+fiction>

foreign episteme, or the concept was so much a part of deep-seated common experience as not to require naming at all. “Special relativity” is an example of the former. Prior to the work of Albert Einstein and other physicists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the notion of a “space-time continuum” was part of no cultural fabric anywhere in the world (Kumar 2009). “Legal fiction,” however, is an example of the latter. Legal fictions were articulated explicitly by Western legal theorists due mainly to the Western emphasis on codified law, as well as to Maine’s and other thinkers’ essentially Hegelian assumption that society progresses, meaning that texts do not keep pace with social change. However, the Western nature of much legal fiction discourse does not change the necessity of fudging the law in order to match the vagueness of real life. This practice has been apparent in every mature legal system around the world. Legal fictions may be nominally new in East Asia, but they are actually of very ancient vintage.

In this paper, I will track the history of some legal fictions—of a kind different from those envisioned by Maine—in East Asia, specifically in ancient China and early modern and modern Japan.⁴ On one reading, a comparison with legal ideas of the West could be taken to signify that the organic incorporation of legal fictions and *synderesis*-oriented jurisprudence as a corrective to mathematico-logical legal processes, while as common in China and Japan as in much of the Western world, is fundamentally different in key ways from place to place and age to age. However, my finding is that examples from East Asia confirm an insight which Henry Maine had in his own study of legal fictions, namely that some legal fictions are circumstance-driven workarounds adapted to the legal particularities which judges face in real time (Maine 1917: 15-16). I don’t think legal fictions hinge on progress, or textualism, or any other particularity. I think, at a much more basic level, they are just functions of how human beings make decisions in court settings. East Asian legal fictions are therefore expansions of the definition of the term, and should be viewed as part of the same kind of moral and ethical reasoning that judges use in courtrooms in the West. The difference is that, in East Asia, legal fictions do not get taken back up into positive law, but remain as performative acts, or as positions adopted in light of myths about how the law functions. In other words, contrary to many who see legal fictions as products of ancient Roman law or by-products of what might best be called a Whig interpretation of history—ways to keep the machinery of law working when the gears between law codes and social practices slip as society modernizes—I see legal fictions in East Asia as fundamentally jurisprudential, or judge-enacted and judge-made, arising from the kind of thing a court is and the

⁴ Cf. Sasakura (2015: 41-74). Sasakura (2015: 41, fn. 1) cites Suehiro’s definition of “legal fiction” (*Rechtsfiktion*) as *hōritsu ni okeru gisei*.

limitations of judges as fallible human beings (Butterfield 1965).⁵ To be sure, there is judge-based legal reasoning in the West. The English Common Law, for instance, and its descendant in the United States, take the cumulative effect of reasoning in individual cases to be formative of the body of law itself.⁶ In East Asia, by contrast, judicial reasoning has tended to be restricted to courtrooms, and not to be incorporated back into any body of textual law. The kinds of performative, ad hoc bridges in logic which some judges in East Asia have deployed to effect justice at a level below that of the abstractions envisioned in positive law are legal fictions, I argue, of a different kind than those typically emphasized in Western law—but they are still, for all that, legal fictions, and should be seen as complementary to those which Western scholars usually stress.

In all, legal fictions in the context of East Asian legal history reaffirm what Maine knew about ancient Rome, namely that legal fictions can be performative, undertaken by judges, as well as text-based and used to maintain the intellectual integrity of legal systems. What I do here is simply change the emphasis, away from codified law and toward judicial reasoning and performance. I do not see East Asian legal fictions as circling back to codified law as a kind of alternative mode of legislation, as Maine and others have asserted. I see East Asian legal fictions as beginning and ending in courts, and as incorporating cultural and even mythico-religious logics through the person of the judge, who embodies and enacts them in real time. While legal fictions are almost always traced by Western scholars through Western legal history, I argue that turning one's attention to non-Western, particularly East Asian, legal-historical contexts can help show that legal fictions are not always legal, as in law-textual, but are often jurisprudential, that is, useful for judges in the kind of work that they do, and performed by judges to effect justice outside the context of the written law. By this I mean that legal fictions in East Asia do not often work the way Maine describes, or the way legal fictions work in everyday legal practice—namely, to act as stop-gaps in legal machinery, placeholders of untrue “facts” which allow the law to carry on as an epistemological whole. In East Asia, legal fictions are often performative, done by judges in courtrooms, or in some way meant to influence how judges think or act. Those kinds of legal fictions usually have nothing to do with the written law, except to provide some pretense for skirting it.

The examples below from China and Japan demonstrate that legal fictions should be broken into two broad but interworking categories: classical or Maineian legal fictions, rooted in legal codes (as with the Roman law), and jurisprudential legal fictions, which are performative courtroom acts often

⁵ On “jurisprudence,” see Ross (1958: 24-28).

⁶ See, for example, “III. The Application of Law,” in Pound (1922).

rooted, perhaps by nature necessarily so, more in culture (including religion) than in documentary law.⁷ “Legal fiction” may be a concept which the West has made explicit, in other words, but it is, by the same measure, a practice which has been a part of East Asian legal history from antiquity.

2. Legal fictions: A comparative overview

There is a long legal-historical tail to the contemporary discourse, sketched above, surrounding legal fictions. Although Sir Henry Maine’s locus classicus discussion of legal fictions points to their origin in what Roman judges once did, almost all examples of legal fictions in the West are, in some way, grounded either in codified or common law, or in precedents in turn based on those. Consider another classic example of an ancient legal fiction in the West, again from ancient Rome. As legal scholar Paul Vinogradoff (1854-1925) related, possessors of estates in ancient Rome, constrained by law and tradition to leave an estate to someone “from the class of so-called ‘own-heirs’, or members of the family under the immediate ‘power’ of the father,” found a way of working around those constraints by “developing the doctrine of ‘possession of the estate’ (*bonorum possessio*),” thus placing “‘in the position of heir’ a person whom [the owner] considered to have a natural claim” (Vinodograff 1949: 155; emphases in original). This is a technical kind of fiction, a legal fiction rooted in the textual nature of much Western law, especially of the codified ancient Roman variety. By expanding the definitions involved in law and tradition (in this case, moving from *agnation* (“relationship based either on kinship through the male stock, or on artificial adoption into the family according to prescribed legal forms”) to *cognation* (“blood kinship in the modern sense, including, of course, relationship on the female side”), a legal fiction was effected, and the possessor of an estate gained more legal leeway, allowing him more latitude in the disposal of his property (Vinodograff 1949: 154-155; emphases in original). One can see the legal fiction at work plainly in the definitional stretching employed to allow parties to get away with practices which, *prima facie*, codified law seems to disallow. What was needed for legal fictions such as Vinogradoff describes was simply to fiddle with terms until the realities of a given case matched up with the wording in lawbooks. Legal fictions of this kind abound in Western legal history. Consider that today, as well, noted legal scholars Robert P. George and John Finnis argue, in the context of a discussion of how legal fictions are presented in the work of Blackstone, that “legal fictions are found on a spectrum ranging from legally stipulated definitions close to ordinary-language conceptions of

⁷ “Religion is a complex system, usually a combination of theology, dogma, ceremony and ritual, closely interconnected, in [Émile] Durkheim’s words, as ‘a sort of indivisible entity’” (Wang 2007: 305, quoting Durkheim 1976: 36).

natural or other realities, through more or less technical and artificial terms of art, to outright contrafactual (fictive) propositions of law such as [the English maxim] ‘[I]n contemplation of law, [the King] is always present in court’.⁸ Consider also that the “spectrum” which George and Finnis posit is coterminous with the black-and-white, textual basis of the law, and is meant to help the law’s logic to function *qua* written law.

But text-based, logic-driven legal fictions, which seem to be an inescapable part of any codified legal regime (because no code is ever complete, and no definition can ever capture reality in its infinite variation), are not the only kinds of fiction which find a life in law. Recall from above that East Asian legal fictions, especially from a time before Western legal modes held sway in East Asia, point to a jurisprudential kind of legal fiction, more performative than textual and deeply rooted in culture, including myths and religion.⁹ To be sure, the term “jurisprudential fictions” is not new in the West. Legal philosopher Lon Fuller (1902-1978) and other scholars have used the term before.¹⁰ Fuller used “jurisprudential fictions” to denote “fictions that attempt to describe the ‘nature of law in general’,” and understood such fictions to “represent a precise parallel to the methods of the physical scientist[, being] attempts to reduce a complex reality to a simple formula, and thus render it tractable to calculation” (Fuller 1967: 127-128). My use of “jurisprudential fiction” is closer to what Fuller calls “procedural fictions,” which “serv[e ...] exclusively procedural ends” (Fuller 1967: 89). I would amend this to argue that “procedural fictions” are as concerned with arriving at justice as are other kinds of legal fictions. I would also amend “procedural fictions” to mean jurisprudential fictions steeped in— inseparable from—culture, especially religion. In making these amendments, though, I slide from legal fictions as Maine understood them, and as Fuller did as well, to legal fictions as they have often been practiced outside of societies with which Maine, or Fuller, would have been familiar. I am hewing closer here to philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’ (1646-1716) distinction between “presumptions that are laid down in positive law (such as the presumption that someone missing for several years is dead) [and] presumptions that consist in a particular kind of belief. While presumptions of the first kind belong to the realm of legal fictions, presumptions of the second kind are genuinely cognitive” (Blank 2006/2007: 209). Additionally, however, what I mean by “legal fictions” and “jurisprudential legal fictions” in the East Asian context sees myths, religion, and culture as part of the “cognitive” use of

⁸ Finnis and George (2022: 939, fn 19), citing Blackstone (1765: 270).

⁹ The ancient Romans certainly understood that there were different kinds of legal fictions. See, e.g., de Zulueta (1953: 249-250, 255-258, 261-263).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Del Mar (2013: 444), citing Fuller (1930-1931) and Quinn (2013).

performative falsehoods in courts of law, and also takes in conscience and what might be called natural law or moral reasoning as complements to the work that judges do in using falsehoods or other fictive postures to effect justice in courts.¹¹

It should be noted again on this score that there is no dichotomy between East and West in legal fictions, only differences of emphasis. Take the ancient Greeks for example. J. Walter Jones posits that while the Greeks were not known to use legal fictions, they may have helped derive legal fictions, perhaps unwittingly, through the

substitution, by a more enlightened and human generation, of a beast or bloodless offering for a human sacrifice to the gods. At Sparta something of the same sort may account for the annual flogging of the *epheboi*, youths who had just attained the age of manhood, before the altar of Artemis Orthia. The use of *φάρμακοὶ* or scapegoats at Athens served the same purpose of propitiating the gods without inflicting harm on human beings. In these days of daylight saving by adjusting the hands of the clock it is easy for us to understand the mental processes of the Greeks when seeking by patent pretences to advance or postpone the time of religious festivals during which it was as impious to begin hostilities against the enemy as it was to execute a condemned criminal (Jones 1956: 305-306).

I take exception to Jones' rhetorical device of linking the delaying of war and executions to the modern practice of daylight savings time. The reason is that for moderns, the world has been disenchanting. For the Greeks, the gods were real, as real as the Copernican solar system is for us. What Jones sees, rightly I think, as the conceptual origins of later legal fictions were not, at first, attempts to make manmade things (like laws, or clock-time) comport internally, but were rather attempts to fit the messiness of human life in with the higher-order world of spirits beyond man's control. In short, Greek legal fictions were part of Greek culture, including religion. This was true in China and Japan as well. But it began to disappear in the West with the Enlightenment, during which time the idea of "legal fictions" as attempts to make social progress jive with outdated legal codes—Maine's thesis—came to hold sway.

The old nature of the legal fiction both East and West, which is to say the deliberate turning of a blind eye to the slippages between the reasons that men give for doing things and the compulsion that men feel to live lives worthy of the gods, may be brought forward by examining some of the ways in which legal fictions have been attacked in more recent centuries, as belief in the enchantedness of the world was crumbling. English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), for example, reacted violently to the ideas of jurist William Blackstone (1723-1780). To those who have read him, Blackstone

¹¹ On conscience in law, see, e.g., Agnew (2018).

is, probably, eminently clear. Blackstone had a subtle and firm grasp on what the law was, how it was to be thought about, and how it was to be applied in courtroom settings. Blackstone's works on the English law continue to be consulted today.¹² Bentham, though, was unimpressed. Bentham, who is virtually synonymous with Enlightenment thinking, saw in Blackstone's legal philosophy "at all points a direct antithesis to the orthological clarity which his [Bentham's] early horror of darkness made imperative" (Ogden 1932: xvii). That there could be "clarity" in the law, or any other field of human inquiry, was an Enlightenment ideal, and Bentham did not like, at all, the human element in Blackstone, the admission that those who work in the law must work at times with imperfect knowledge (Gaukroger 1992). Here we see what I take to be a very typical post-Enlightenment Western approach to law, namely that law and society must resemble one another as closely as possible, and ideally be mirror images of one another. In any event, Bentham's view was that law must change to fit society, and not that judges must do the work of interpretation and balancing to arrive at conclusions to difficult cases.

Ironically, such insistence on clarity obscured the way in which law (especially law in the hands of judges, which Blackstone was at pains to document) had operated in the past. The Common Law of England arose in just this way, through the accumulation of wisdom over time as judges applied their moral sense and reasoning to whatever case that was before them in court. For Bentham, though, the laws should be laid out by legislatures, and not left for judges to decide willy-nilly (as he saw it) on a case-by-case basis. Blackstone's methods were particularly abhorrent to Bentham because of their use of fictions. "A fiction of law may be defined a wilful falsehood," wrote Bentham, "having for its object the stealing legislative power, by and for hands which durst not, or could not, openly claim it; and, but for the delusion thus produced, could not exercise it" (quoted in Ogden 1932: xvii). Judge-made law, or using fictions to effect workarounds to stuck legal logic, with consequences for future cases in *stare decisis* legal environments, is indeed a classic example of legal fictions as Maine and others have understood them. Bentham seeks clarity without fiction, but in doing so Bentham, in his violent attacks on legal fictions, merely affirms their hazy origins in a distant past very much lacking in "orthological clarity."¹³ "In knowledge in general," says Bentham,

and in knowledge belonging to the physical department in particular, will the vast mass of mischief, of which perverted religion is the source, find its preventive remedy. It is from physical science

¹² See, e.g., *Dobbs, State Health Officer of the Mississippi Department of Health et al. vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization et al.*, 597 U.S. (2022), 3, 17, 19 and elsewhere.

¹³ The aggressive nature of Bentham's attacks has elsewhere been noted. See, e.g., Stolzenberg (1999) and Stone (1985).

alone that a man is capable of deriving that mental strength and that well-grounded confidence which renders him proof against so many groundless terrors flowing from that prolific source, which, by enabling him to see how prone to error the mind is on this ground, and thence how free from such error is all moral blame, disposes him to that forbearance towards supposed error, which men are so ready to preach and so reluctant to practise (quoted in Ogden 1932: xix).

Bentham sought to apply the strictures of physics to the practice of law, and attacked Blackstone for insisting on a hazier legal philosophy highly tolerant of performative bridgings of gaps in what the law, and human understanding more generally, could make clear.

These performative maneuvers—the reasoning of judges using *synderesis* to guide them in their attempt to effect justice in an imperfect world—would have been perfectly intelligible to many judges in East Asia. What they would not have expected, however, was for the fictions, the performances, that they deployed to have had an effect on the law itself or on future cases. The focus for them was not so much on the law, oftentimes, as on the case, and the best way to handle it, without regard for what other judges might have to do in their own courtrooms in the future. In understanding Bentham’s very different approach to fictions, we must remember that Bentham was from an emerging, Western Enlightenment modernity in which many, swooning with capitalized Reason, insisted on having things made perfectly clear. The principles which had guided the development of the Common Law, including the very important fact that it is impossible to make codified law complete because cases will always be unpredictable, contrast with the kind of legal idealism in which the justice which a judge sought was not to be worked out in the midst of human experience, but was to be approached by legislation (within the context of the general will) such as Bentham had envisioned (Gardner 1964).¹⁴ And as the West moved out into the world and gained dominion over much of it, so, too, did the ways in which many Westerners had come to understand law. The tension between the written law and social norms, as Maine had laid it out in the middle of the nineteenth century in his theory of legal fictions, continued into the twentieth century, and extended its reach beyond the West. Austro-Hungarian legal scholar Eugen Ehrlich (1862-1922), for example, advanced a notion of the *Lebendes Recht* (“living law”) as a way to skirt the idealistic pronouncements of the written statutes. Ehrlich’s “living law” idea was taken up by enthusiastic legal realists in America (such as Harvard scholar Roscoe Pound (1870-1964)) and Japan

¹⁴ Bentham’s legal clarity paradigm gained traction in the West as the very material basis for that clarity, as Bentham supposed, began to quaver. The publication of German Kantian Hans Vaihinger’s (1852-1933) *The Philosophy of As-If*, for example, came in 1913, by which time a new kind of physics had completely undermined the solid certainty of the physical universe. See Ogden (1932: xxxi-xxxii), Smythe (2005) and Kurusu (1983).

(such as legal philosopher Suehiro Izutarō (1888-1951)).¹⁵ Although it may not be readily apparent, however, there is much more of Blackstone in East Asia than of Bentham, and, before the West arrived in East Asia, there was virtually nothing of Bentham at all. Legal fictions were not directed at the written law, however, as in the Blackstonian understanding, but were simply part of a judge's repertoire in a courtroom.

3. Legal fiction in ancient China

Sir Henry Maine's conception is that the law lags behind society, which always moves forward. In ancient China, however, there was precisely the opposite assumption. In the Warring States-period (ca. 350 BC) Legalist text *Han Feizi*, for example, we find that "men of high antiquity strove for moral virtue; men of middle times sought out wise schemes; men of today vie to be known for strength and spirit" (quoted in Winston 2005: 346). The law was for re-humanizing fallen men, in other words, for in ancient China there was a kind of anti-Hegelianism, in which things got worse the farther away one moved from a golden age in the distant past. There is another big difference: judges in ancient China relied much more on culture, myths, and religion than did judges in the West in Maine's day. While it is true that justice in China did not achieve "cosmic importance" until much later in history, after the rise of Zhu Xi (1130-1200) thought and metaphysical Confucianism, this does not mean that early Chinese jurists did not have supernatural conceptions of what justice was and what judges, in their limited human capacities, could do (Ocko 1988: 291). This gesturing beyond the human judge to something much bigger and more powerful than he is a kind of jurisprudential fiction which one found, by definition, in many ancient Chinese law courts.

In courtrooms in modern-day Hong Kong, hearings are conducted and trials are carried out under the direction of a judge who presides over a room in which prosecutors, attorneys, experts, witnesses, and defendants present statements and evidence. These statements and evidence are weighed by juries and the judge before a decision or verdict is reached in a given matter (MacNaughton and Wong 2014: 150-174). The language is Cantonese, but the proceedings would be recognizable to anyone who has been in a courtroom in London, New York, or Buenos Aires. Sometimes witnesses are sworn in in Hong Kong courts using a Bible, but apart from this a courtroom is a place of strictly this-worldly deliberation. This may be standard legal practice in Hong Kong today, but in the Sinosphere of, say, two thousand years ago such secularism would have been unthinkable. In the past, Chinese justice was

¹⁵ See, e.g., Watanabe (1986: 85-100), Morgan (2019), and Suehiro (2007).

not predicated on the Enlightenment subject, the “unencumbered self” in philosopher Michael Sandel’s phrase (Sandel and D’Ambrosio 2018; see also Sandel 2006: 162). Rather, justice was pursued along what historian Paul R. Katz calls a “judicial continuum,” a “continuous series of elements often viewed as indistinguishable” and involving not just judges and hearings but also rituals, appeals to myths, religious interpretations, and interpersonal mediation (Katz 2019: 11). There was no strict separation in ancient China between the human courtroom and the justice of Heaven, and human beings conducted trials, if not *sub specie aeternitatis*, then at least in the shadow of the intervention of forces beyond human control or even understanding.

The very Chinese character for “law,” 法 (*fǎ*; J. *hō*) intimates the original understanding of law in China as a thing invested with otherworldliness. 法 is the standard ideograph used in both Chinese and Japanese to denote the body of rules, regulations, and practices taken as binding on a society and enforceable by the state’s agents to preserve public order—in other words, more or less the way that “law” is conventionally and colloquially used in English-speaking countries today. (法 also corresponds broadly to both *lex* and *ius*, *loi* and *droit*.) However, the character 法 hints at a much more complex and rather mysterious understanding of law that prevailed in the past. The ideograph is written today using two elements, three strokes on the left representing “water” (氵) and six on the right representing “to leave” (去). This does not make much sense. How does the combination of “water” and “to leave” result in the idea of “the law”? There is a folk etymology that “water leaves” is a reference to the alluvial plains left behind after floodwaters recede, flatlands somehow being indicative of the level justice expected under the law. But this is less an etymology of 法 than an explanation of how 法 ideally functions under a modern, Western-style legal regime. In fact, however, 法 does not mean “water leaves” at all. The original meaning is impossible to discern from 法 alone, though, because the ideograph has been simplified and key parts have been removed.¹⁶

The origin of 法 is actually 灋, also pronounced *fǎ* in Chinese and *hō* in Japanese (Takikawa 1927: 43; 1932: 73-76). The older version of 法, 灋, is, as readers can see for themselves, a very complex ideograph. It still contains the two elements of 法, namely, the three dots representing “water” on the left and the element 去, “to leave,” at the bottom. Above 去 and to the right of 氵, though, is the character 廌, which is unlikely to be familiar to most educated speakers of Japanese today, and would also probably be unfamiliar to native speakers of Chinese, whether from a simplified or traditional character milieu (i.e., whether from mainland China or Hong Kong/Taiwan). 廌 is the key to

¹⁶ On the ancient Chinese origins of familiar terms and expressions, see, e.g., Katō (1986).

understanding 灋. It is not that “water leaves,” as the pared-down modern ideograph 法 suggests, but rather that a mythical creature, a 麤, enters and judges as evenly as water seeks its own level, leaving the punishment to be carried out by the human actors. (In this character, 去 is not Chinese *qu*, Japanese *saru*, “to leave,” but rather a visual contraction of ideographs meaning “to punish”).¹⁷ Law (and here the focus is on criminal law) in ancient China was not just a question of statutes and codes. It was also an encounter with the divine. Or, at least that was the story—the legal fiction to which judges appealed. A fantastic beast, a 麤, entered the courtroom, the story went, and judged the accused with an impartiality inaccessible to human beings. It was a terrible and swift judgment. If the accused was guilty of the charge brought against him, then the 麤 would burst into court, butt him with his horned head, and kill him, thus rendering both verdict and sentence in one fell swoop. The judgments that resulted from this kind of “trial” were therefore understood, whether truthfully or not, to be beyond reproach, unquestionable, above appeal, final, and fair (Katz 2009: 7, 11-14). The ideal of Chinese law was not that the law in books be satisfied, but that Heaven be satisfied.

But what was this thing, this 麤? Herein lies the rub of the legal fiction in ancient China. The character 麤 is pronounced *zhi* in modern Chinese and *chi* in Japanese. It refers to a creature most commonly known today in China as a *xiezhi*.¹⁸ The *xiezhi* was a premodern legal fiction, an irruption of the inexplicable into the pursuit of justice which preserved the law while radically contravening it.¹⁹ But of course no one had actually seen a *xiezhi*. The threat of its barging into court and butting a guilty party to death was never really realized. The *xiezhi* was thus a kind of mythmaking about what judges did. It was a legal fiction. Not a fiction that healed the wounded logic of textual law, but a fiction that a judge used in court in a dynamic, performative way. It was necessarily a jurisprudential legal fiction, as I am using the term, because the only medium which could stand as understudy for the *xiezhi* was

¹⁷ See, e.g., Vasilyeva (2019: 71-75), Shirakawa (1948: 785-786), and Shirakawa (1996: 1446-1447).

¹⁸ The *xiezhi* is better known in South Korea as *haetae* 해태 and in Japan as *kaichi*, or more commonly *komainu*, denoting the pair of lion-dogs, often made of stone, guarding the entrances to temples. For a marvelously wild depiction of a *xiezhi*, see Tachibana (1720: vol. 9a, approx. page 10).

¹⁹ There are various theories as to when the *xiezhi* became prevalent in Chinese jurisprudence and cultural understanding, with some scholars putting the date as early as the seventh century BC. On the *xiezhi*, including works of visual representation of the *xiezhi* and other mythical beasts, see, e.g., Takafuji (2009: 49-71), Yamada (1976, esp. 1-13), Yamada (1979, esp. 1120-1140), Terajima (1970: 437), Yoshida (1973: 29-72), Yamada (1975: 336-351), Maeno (1975: 68-70, 444-445, 736-737), and *Han Wei cong shu* (1970: 8-9). For a reception history of the *xiezhi* in the Tokugawa Period, see Kumazawa (2016: 21-37). See also Ishimoda (1971), Mishina (1973), Mishina (1970), Takahashi (1994: esp. 88-89, 100-103), Imamura (1981: 138-139), Iwaki (1998: 20-21), Mozume (1916: 490-491), Uesugi (2001: 22-29, 110-111), Suzuki (1993), Chang (2002: 18-23, 54-63), Ozaki (1986: 208-210, 719, 729-733, 738-739), Ozaki (1993: 508-510, 620-25), Shirakawa (1999: 259 and “Chitsujo no genri,” 84-113), and Shirakawa (2000: 34-37, 262-263).

the judge in the courtroom. The process of deliberating about a given case was carried out by people. The *xiezhi* was a token of the acknowledgement by those in Chinese antiquity that the reality of the law was ultimately beyond human reach. Shang divination may help explain the origins of the *xiezhi* (Wang 2007: 338-339). Renowned China scholar Victor Mair suggests that the *xiezhi* may be related conceptually to “trial by animal ordeal among Eurasian peoples” (Mair 2012: 91, fn. 8). In any event, the *xiezhi*, which has long been embroidered on the robes which Chinese magistrates wear, is a testament to the ultimately superhuman, supernatural character of law (Morgan 2021). Judges perform an impossibility in effecting justice, or bringing the world closer to it, and the otherworldly character of what judges in courtrooms purport to do is attested to by a mythical beast with a perfect penchant for dividing, with perfect accuracy, the righteous from the guilty.

This conception of the intervention of the supernatural in the life of the law was common in ancient China.²⁰ In the ambitions of the *Han Feizi* previously mentioned, the rituals of the Shang, and the divination-jurisprudence of the *xiezhi*, we can see a connection to the gods, or at least to religious sensibility. However, the Chinese case is not unique. It is just that, in the West, much of the enchanted nature of jurisprudence has been forgotten—perhaps, as Bentham’s example suggests, willfully so. For example, many appeals in pre-modern Europe to a justice inaccessible to human reason took the form of what in medieval England was called an “ordeal” (cf. German *Gottesurteil* and *Gottesgericht* and French *épreuve*; Shoemaker 2011; Hirakawa 2008). As in Europe, the ordeal in China involved trying a person, in the sense of “trying” meaning “to test,” by means of a fetish of physical objects, or an interaction between some physical object or objects and the accused’s body. There was no judicial reasoning here, only a surrender to how a certain kind of ritual unfolded in a courtroom setting.

Perhaps the most notorious example of the ordeal from Western legal history is the witch trial, during which those accused of practicing witchcraft were dunked in water and sometimes drowned. Witches sank, and non-witches floated. Either way, the case was closed once the ordeal was finished. There were many other kinds of ordeal, often involving the application of hot metal rods or hot stones to the hands or other parts of the body. Those who survived the grievous injuries incurred during such an ordeal were found innocent. Those who were guilty were dispatched by a power higher than the court alone could muster.²¹ In this way, the divine was invited into the legal process, and guilt or innocence was determined by something other than human understanding. Western jurisprudence

²⁰ It was also the foundation of Chinese writing (Keightley 1978, 2000, 2014).

²¹ The ordeal in Europe was not always as straightforwardly an expression of God’s will as we may think today. See, e.g., Mäkinen and Pihlajamäki (2004), Bloomfield (1969), Radding (1979), Freedman and Spiegel (1998) and Cheyette (1963).

does not feature a *xiezhi*, but there are many similar ways in the West in which the judging powers of Heaven made themselves known in the world of men.

There are many more examples of performative legal fictions in both East and West. A principle of augury prevailed in both places, for instance, according to which there was a strange, but somehow discernible, symmetry between the behavior of bodies or physical objects and the desires of Heaven or the metaphysical workings of the cosmos. In the West, the flight patterns of birds were examined, or the entrails of sacrificial animals were scrutinized. These are irruptions of myth, religion, and culture into the workings of what we in the modern West would today understand as the proper purview of law. Things were not so different in the East. In ancient China, for instance, this general appeal to the gods, or to Heaven, in deciding cases was known as *shenpan*, 神判, literally “the judgment of the gods.” In one example from the Chinese courts of antiquity, a man who caught his wife and her lover *in flagrante delicto* and killed them both on the spot was subjected to a kind of final dialogue with the deceased adulterous pair. The faithless wife and cuckold were decapitated *post mortem* and their heads placed inside a large bucket filled with water. The bucket was spun around so that the heads also swam about inside it in a circular pattern. The bucket was then set down and the bobbing heads allowed to spin on until finally the heads and the water came fully to rest. If the heads were facing one another in the end, then it was affirmed that the decedents had indeed committed adultery with one another and their murderer was acquitted. If not—if the heads came to rest not facing one another—then the husband was punished for having killed two innocent people. The gods had spoken through the seemingly random movements of bodiless heads (Nakata 1943: 929).²² This kind of practice is very far removed from the textual legal fictions emphasized by Maine and known to us from examples from Western law. It is not a “fiction” as Maine would have used the term, or even Blackstone. Far from it. But it is still, for all that, a kind of legal fiction, and one not foreign to Western legal history in the slightest. It is only that the way that we think of legal fictions in the West today has been so heavily influenced by Maine, and by the Hegelian assumptions which lie behind his thought, that we don’t think of legal fictions as once having been much less about texts, and much more about jurisprudential practice. But the business with the heads in the bucket, and the ordeal by hot metal, and so forth, should serve to remind us moderns that there are more kinds of legal fictions in human experience than those we call to mind today.

²² Such practices were not confined to China. See, e.g., Im, Lee and Lou (1971) and Kendall (1988). On the Ryūkyūs and China, see, e.g., Harada (2003).

4. Legal fiction in China in the *Longue Durée*

The widespread reliance upon supernatural or extra-judicial modes of jurisprudence does not comport with the great edifice of scholarship predicated upon China's being a bureaucratic society. China is said to be bureaucratic even in the afterlife. As Paul Katz reminds us, for example, the semi-legendary magistrate Judge Bao was held to have been an irreproachably upright man in life, and even more inflexible as a bureaucratic shade:

A popular saying from the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng 開封 effectively embod[ies] local faith in the chthonic bureaucracy: 'Bribery will get you nowhere, for Old Bao (Judge Bao), the king of the underworld, is here' (Katz 2009: 180, citing Hayden 1978: 18).

But an undue emphasis on the bureaucratization of Chinese justice can obscure Katz' insistence on seeing Chinese justice and legal history as a continuum. I would emphasize that the continuum is not just thematic, but also diachronic. There have been changes in Chinese legal practice over the millennia, without any possible doubt or argument. But change does not necessarily mean epistemic rupture. To continue the quote from Katz immediately above:

Such sentiments [i.e., of faith in Judge Bao] persist in China, as may be seen in an article published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* dated November 25, 1994 which vividly describes the popularity of a revived Judge Bao temple in Hefei 合肥 (Anhui). According to the article, over 250 people visit the temple each day, most of whom seek the god's aid in their dealings with corrupt officials: 'With no one to turn to for recourse, dozens of Chinese come here [to the temple] each day to light incense and pray to Judge Bao, the Sung (Song) dynasty judge with a reputation for incorruptibility and the power to right almost any wrong' (Katz 2009: 180).

Judge Bao is an old idea, almost a legal fiction in his own right, but he maintains a great deal of currency even today. What is salient for our purposes is that Judge Bao is as otherworldly as a *xiezhi*. His status as a bureaucrat is of secondary importance at best.

There are more complications than these to be made to the understanding of China as a bureaucratic society. While the vaunted Chinese bureaucracy is held to be a rational organization, being rational-seeming on the surface and being rational all the way down to the logical roots are two different things. There are two senses in which the Chinese bureaucracy of, say, the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) concealed a very big and very much operative legal fiction within the recondite structures of its

departments and sections and ranks.²³ First, consider that magistrates even in early bureaucratic China used to wear robes when judging cases upon which were embroidered *xiezhi*, and judges wore headgear modeled on the mythical beast.²⁴ The magistrate was endowed with the extralegal. He bore in the very uniform of his office the pedigree of his task. His job was to effect justice, but in the final analysis justice was not really proprietary to the bureaucrat. There was always a vicarious nature to the jurisprudential art. The magistrate acted in the stead of the *xiezhi*, and against the background of countless trials in the past carried out by ordeal. The Chinese magistrate of the early bureaucratic era retained the *mysterium* of his predecessors' role while seeming to play a different role in the present. But in the end, it worked out the same way.

The reason that trials under the *xiezhi* and trials under the bureaucracy worked out essentially the same way is that, second, the bureaucracy itself, over time, took on the contours of the original legal fiction of the *xiezhi*, or the ordeal, or some other kind of appeal to the extra-rational in the course of a criminal or even civil trial. What I am calling jurisprudential legal fiction is nothing if not an admission, tacit or overt as the case may be, that the statutory law is not complete, or else is *too* complete to allow for the endless variety of real life to match up with the bureaucratic attempt to contain it. The kaleidoscopic nature of reality pushes bureaucracies to expand indefinitely in the futile attempt to compartmentalize the contingency of human affairs. Each new *sui generis* problem requires one more department, or bureaucrat, or budget line, or report. When crime threatens to upend the bureaucratic order—and what is crime if not chaos let loose in the cosmos?—the bureaucracy intervenes. Bureaucrats assign the crime a name in the form of an arraignment and indictment, categorize the criminal acts into processable charges, and thereby distill disorder down into statements, affidavits, testimonies, and, finally, a judgment and a sentence (intelligible words to tame the chaos of bad deeds). The jurisprudential legal fiction under the bureaucratic mode of justice is that there is an all-purpose legal order in the first place. The bureaucracy becomes a permanent *xiezhi* on retainer, and the ordeals it dispenses in the form of torture do not so much indicate innocence or guilt as impress upon the people that the bureaucracy will have order or else.

²³ On the development of law as function of bureaucracy in China, see, e.g., Langlois (1988) and Mote (1988). For a history of the much older Western Zhou period, see Creel (1970, esp. ch. 8, "The Royal Government: Justice," 161-193). On symbolism, representation, and culture, see Hibino (1975). See also Weber (1946, 1951) and Sprenkel (1964, 348-370), all cited in Creel (1970). See also Mizuno (1966) and Shimada (1954).

²⁴ Katz (2009: 77). See also Yang, Yue and Wang (2021) and Shirakawa (2010, esp. "Kami no sabaki," 233-244, which contains an excellent explication of the etymology of 法). The *xiezhi* also appeared on the roofs of some Chinese buildings; see Li and Liu (2017: 5).

What was true in the Shang seems true in the present. It has often been remarked that the Chinese Communist Party is a recapitulation of the imperial system of the past (Salisbury 1992). In ordering the persecution of the intellectuals and the destruction of the Confucian works of morality, it is argued, Mao Zedong (1893-1976) was emulating the first Qin emperor, who did likewise. Moving from the personal to the institutional, the legal fiction of Han Feizi and the Legalists was that the law was absolute.²⁵ The legal fiction of the Party, by the same token, is that the Party is supreme and justified in dispensing brutal punishment to anyone who would question Party legitimacy.

But this seeming absolutism is also fragile. In this scenario, the *tianming* 天命, or mandate of Heaven, becomes a kind of higher order *xiezhi*, intermittently intervening to overturn the head of the bureaucracy itself and reset the legal order on solid epistemological and moral ground again. At one end and the other, bottom and top, the structure of state is open. The affairs of men are radically subject to contingency, to the intervention of Heaven to set right what has gone awry. The “mandate of Heaven” logic, according to which dynasties rise and fall as they pass into and out of favor with Heaven, continues to be the logic by which the rule of the Party is judged, the possibility of falling from Heaven’s esteem always hanging over the Party leader’s head. As with trials subject to intervention by the *xiezhi*, one never knows when Heaven, in the form of natural disasters, will intervene to rectify disorder in the Sinosphere. “Bureaucratic” Chinese justice and even supernaturalism are as non-bureaucratic as their Western counterparts. Legal fictions are as complex and varied in China as anywhere else.

5. Legal fiction in Japan

The history of legal fictions in Japan compliments that of China, in that Japanese judges, like judges in ancient China, made use of performative acts of falsehood to effect justice in court. From the earliest implantation of a Chinese-style bureaucracy and stable statecraft system among the restless courts of the Yamato kings, the Chinese bureaucracy provided a model which the Japanese statesmen formally copied. The transplantation was largely stylistic, to be sure (Seki 2014). The ranks and accoutrements from Chinese statecraft were imported into proto-Japan, but not the underlying philosophy. Still, the performative nature of justice, the jurisprudential nature of legal fictions, makes Japanese practices very close to those of China in that regard. The Japanese mode of jurisprudence tended to favor the pragmatic over the didactic, and to eschew mythical legal fictions while embracing the *synderesis* of a

²⁵ See Kanaya (1994, esp. “Kaisetsu,” 9-18).

courtroom judge.²⁶ In the end it is the incomplete, radically contingent nature of courtroom proceedings that makes Japan and China part of a tradition of legal fictions which should remind scholars today that legal fiction is not a Western, and not a mainly text-based, part of legal history.

A few words of disclaimer are in order. There *are* records of trials by ordeal in Japan, although they are exceedingly rare.²⁷ We must also decide how to define “Japan.” The contentious issue of how to categorize the Ryukyus and Ainu enters into view here. While the categorization of the Ainu and Ryukyu cultures as Japanese or not Japanese is far beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that the legal practices of the far north and far west of the Japanese archipelago exerted little to no influence on the jurisprudence of the political center of Yamatai, Yamato, Izumo, or, thereafter, Nara, Heian, Kamakura, or Edo (Tokyo).²⁸ Lastly, there is the harsh justice used by samurai among one another and against the population of commoners to consider. Performative justice and jurisprudential legal fictions, which sometimes involved resorting to ritual suicide in order to restore honor (raising the question of whether *seppuku* might not be a legal fiction in its own right), were not always carried out solely by judges.

But it is in the work of judges in Japan that one finds perhaps the most excellent examples of legal fictions in East Asia. One of the main reasons for this is the cultural expectation of fairness which influenced judges’ reasoning. This expectation of fairness could be expressed as *dōri* 道理, which might be defined as a practicable natural law. It is often expressed in Japanese with the phrase *yūzū ga kiku* 融通が効く, or “there is some bend in the law,” “there is some leeway in the rules.” *Dōri* is the moral force in man’s innermost being pairing with his reason and his feeling, his mind and his sentiments, to arrive at the best kind of justice available to human beings in a fallen world. Performative legal fictions in Japan indicate that the law in the lawbooks is optional, that not all disputes need filter through legislators’ brains in order for justice, or something close to it, to be achieved.

Scholar of Japanese legal history J. Mark Ramseyer calls this “second-best justice” in the context of Japanese private law. “In some classes of cases the cost of trying to get it ‘exactly right’ can be particularly pernicious,” Ramseyer writes. The Japanese system has adapted, via a highly regulated bureaucracy, a practice of getting dispute resolution “about right.” “Japanese courts do well by making do,” argues Ramseyer, and settlements are often made out-of-court “in the ‘shadow’ of the litigated

²⁶ On the early Japanese state see Kishi (1986a, 1986b), Miwa (1981) and Tokoro (2009).

²⁷ Nakata Kaoru says that the practice was completely missing from the times of the earliest Japanese state until it was rediscovered during the Ashikaga and Warring States periods. Nakata (1943: 930.) See also Bock and Hirai (1990: 55-57). On interactions between Japan and China in antiquity, see, e.g., Noguchi (1996-1997). See also Mishina (1971, 1973) and Hou (1997).

²⁸ See also Nakata (1943: 933, 937 ff.), and Batchelor (1901: 286 ff.; 1905: 211, 212).

outcome” that is averted by opting for an equitable arrangement instead of a contentious trial (Ramseyer 2015: 5, 6). This “second-best justice” has often been the touchstone of Japanese jurisprudence. Even the Tokugawa laws, for example the Kujikata Ōsadamegaki promulgated in 1742 by the eighth shogun, Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684-1751), were predicated on their being overturnable if adhering to the black letter of the law would bring about an injustice. There was a kind of built-in *xiezhi* in the later Tokugawa laws. The words of the law went only so far; after that, something higher would have to intervene. Likewise, while Kujikata Ōsadamegaki criminal trial guidelines applied to the domains directly affiliated with the Tokugawa house, the daimyo had latitude in how to keep order in their respective domains. The metaphysical predilection for a perfect law code gave way, by temperament and long custom, to a “second-best justice” for the parties in a given dispute.

Second-best justice was effected in Japan by a person, as in China, although not a person wearing an image of a mythical beast. Jurisprudential legal fictions were judge-performed, just as in Japan’s continental neighbor. In Japan, the task of adjudicating law cases during the Edo Period (1600-1868) fell to a shogunal official known as the *machi-bugyō* 町奉行, or domanical magistrate.²⁹ The most famous *machi-bugyō*, Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami (titular lord of the province of Echizen) (1677-1752), was exemplary of *yūzū ga kiku* jurisprudence.³⁰ His verdicts are legendary in Japan for their creative justice. Arriving at a just verdict often required Ōoka to bend the law, or to bend the putative facts to fit the law, or to skirt the shogunal decrees, or to close his eyes to what the black letters on white paper in the books demanded of him and to look directly at the people in his courtroom and ask himself how human lives upset by crime and tragedy could be made right again. It was not the exaltation of the law for which Ōoka aimed. For him, the groping for justice—*dōri*, a form of equity—was separate, or at least conceptually separable, from the laws of the central government.³¹

To give some idea of the centrality and primacy of the human person (what I am calling jurisprudential legal fictions) in the judgments of Ōoka Tadasuke, and of the non-ideological, case-by-case style of jurisprudence in the Edo Period in Japan (which, in turn, largely typifies the jurisprudential style of much of Japanese history), it is helpful to introduce one of Ōoka’s more representative court decisions.³² In one court case brought before Magistrate Ōoka, a woman had

²⁹ I am grateful to Professor J. Mark Ramseyer for explaining the Kujikata Ōsadamegaki to me.

³⁰ For an episode from Ōoka’s tenure as *machi-bugyō* illustrating his people-centric style of administration, see Hatano (1993) and Uno (1967, esp. part 2, “Machi-bugyō jidai,” 39-215).

³¹ On Ōoka and the fictions that arose later in his name, see entry for オオオカタダスケ in *Banyū hyakka daijiten: encyclopedia genre Japonica* (1973).

³² On Tokugawa justice, see, e.g., Nakata (1943: 866). See also Asada (2019) and Andō (2007).

plotted to murder a bandit in revenge for his having murdered her husband. Mistakenly, though, she killed the bandit's partner in crime, and only wounded the man actually guilty of her husband's murder. Ōoka, instead of condemning her to death (as the law strictly prescribed, since the woman had not, in fact, been able to avenge her husband's death, which would have been legal, but had instead killed an unrelated party), found that the woman had actually performed a great service to the state. The man the woman killed was guilty of a host of other capital crimes, while the wounded man—the one really guilty of killing the woman's husband—was able to be tried by the state instead of being murdered for blood guilt. This, Ōoka pointed out, was the far more just course of action all around.³³ A *xiezhi* could not have done better. The law was treated a bit roughly, but, to my mind, in sparing the woman's life Ōoka acted much more justly than the law would have allowed. A fiction, a kind of legal lie, saved a woman's life. This is not as Maine would have used the term legal fiction, but surely it is a fiction, and is used in the context of law, and, as such, and insofar as a judge used it without expectation of legislating from the bench, it was a jurisprudential legal fiction.

It should be remembered that Ōoka was a product of his time, and so not only used torture to extract confessions from suspects but also had to tailor his judgments to suit the likes and dislikes of the shogun, at the time the aforementioned promulgator of the Kujikata Ōsadamegaki, Tokugawa Yoshimune (Uno 1967: 196). Ōoka was no Pollyanna. He did not let those who were really guilty of crimes go free. Also, many of the famous cases associated with Ōoka are apocryphal. There was a famous stage act based loosely on Ōoka's career which has come to be conflated with the historical Ōoka and his well-documented case log.³⁴ On top of all this, Ōoka was not trained as a judge. He was an amateur, largely winging it in court. But in many ways this is all precisely the point. The fact that Ōoka was not a legal scholar and did not equate the preservation of a systematic corpus of law with the advancement of his own career left him free to decide cases in concert with a higher law, the natural law, *dōri*.³⁵ Ōoka's attainment of legendary status among the populace also attests, where historical facts do not, to the felt need by common people for judgments responsive to the exigencies of their lives. It was for these reasons that later Japanese legal scholars rehabilitated the old Tokugawa figure. He was a layman, and not an expert in law, and so could bring his human reason to bear on cases instead

³³ See "Keisei Segawa ikken," in Nishino (1989: 205-218). This paragraph very closely follows paragraph in Morgan (2020: 19).

³⁴ See Sasakura (2015) and JapanKnowledge database entry, 大岡忠相.

³⁵ On the non-judicial nature of sources of law in the Edo (Tokugawa) Period, see, e.g., Nakata (1984, esp. "Shogen," 15-16). For an intellectual background of the Tokugawa Period, see Ooms (1985, esp. ch. 4, "Disseminators of Ruling Ideas: Monks, Laws, Bestsellers," and "Legislation," 143-151).

of trying to shoehorn events in the real world into boxes made of words of laws in lawbooks (Suehiro 1923: 4 ff.).

6. Legal fiction lost and found in modern Japan

This abiding current of the judge-performed legal fiction in Japan was dammed up and sent underground when Japan was suddenly faced with a potentially existential challenge in the form of Western contact and the looming shadow of imperialism in East Asia beginning in earnest with the Opium Wars in 1839. The centralized Edo state, although militarily highly centripetal, was administratively, and especially jurisprudentially, surprisingly centrifugal. Domain lords continued to take responsibility for quelling disturbances and adjudicating disputes in their respective domains even as the Edo bureaucratic apparatus began to intervene more and more in the workings of the emerging national economy and other affairs of centralized government. This process accelerated rapidly as the threat from outside Japan seemed, to many, to necessitate a strong state to mount an effective response, and a comprehensive defense of the archipelago. The sinews of government thickened and hardened. The suppleness of the law was increasingly lost as the Westphalian paradigm of “shell-hard” states reinforced with systematic regulations and laws intruded into a Japan which had largely been kept at peace by what one scholar has called the “performance” of order.³⁶ But performance of order is often the opposite of performance of justice. In the former, the state is prioritized, while in the latter, individuals are. People want a legal order that provides both “fairness” and “hard-and-fast rules” (*shakushi jōgi* 杓子定規; Suehiro 1923: 33). But in the Edo Period there was also a great deal of “turning a blind eye” (Suehiro 1923: 12 and elsewhere) to inconvenient facts for the sake of maintaining a harmonious social order. This flexibility was eroded by an overbearing state (Wagatsuma 1987).

In the rush to “modernize” and “Westernize” at the close of the Edo period, the vicissitudes of geopolitics caused many in Japan to forget the wisdom of their own past and to rush to put on the armor of their potential enemies in order to protect themselves from what was clearly a more advanced material culture. Beset by gunboats, the Japanese rapidly took up the study of the countries that had sent the big ships to menace their shores. The end result of this was a sweeping away of many old practices and the setting up of new and largely foreign (in both senses of the term) legal mores. It was

³⁶ The term “iron cage” is Talcott Parsons’ from his 1930 translation of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and differs from the literal translation of “steel-hard case/shell.” See Baehr (2001), Morgan (2020: 57-58), Rheinstein (1954) and Roberts (2012).

decided by the Meiji authorities, for example, that the Ōsadamegaki, although fully functional and highly sophisticated, would be scrapped, and a legal code on the Napoleonic model drawn up.³⁷ As part of this, Gustave Emile Boissonade (1825-1910), a French legal scholar of tremendous reputation in his own country and abroad, was hired by the Japanese government to help write a legal code for Japan.³⁸

The inherent problem in this was that French law was very different from the law that had developed in Japan. The French Code was the product of a very long history in Europe, stretching back to the late Roman empire (and even earlier, when the incorporation of even pre-imperial cultural practices such as the *paterfamilias* is taken into account), of the codification of various laws into one Pandect, in German *Pandekten*, by which an entire territory would be ruled.³⁹ If there were any disputes arising, then henceforth they would be decided, not by a person relying on *dōri*, *synderesis*, natural wisdom, and the working of the natural law, but by connecting various strands of a given case to a gigantic apparatus of law, much like a switchboard operator would plug wires into holes to complete a circuit. Everything fed into the central board, the Code. The law became a creature of the state, and *dōri* was taken out of the hands of the judges.⁴⁰ It wasn't that the Code decided all cases, of course. No code, no document, no matter how detailed, could ever predict the future in all its complexity. The law is never complete. The point was that cases were decided *through* the Code. Judicial reasoning was fed into the Code and the Code became the locus of how the law worked. As in the West, and under the influence of Western, Enlightenment-era jurisprudence, judge-performed legal fictions moved into the background, and in many ways were almost lost.

This process continued in the realm of constitutional law, as well. There had never been a full-fledged constitution in Japan as the term “constitution” is generally understood today. To be sure, Prince Shōtoku (574-622) had issued a famous seventeen-point “constitution” in 604. But this was a short admonition to act uprightly and respect the government of the realm, as well as a procedural maneuver to strengthen Shōtoku's clan and their standing at court while paving a way for the adoption of Shōtoku's preferred religion, Buddhism, in Japan.⁴¹ Prince Shōtoku was not acting as a legislator and

³⁷ On the civil code, see Suehiro (1954a, esp. “Furoku: minpō wo manabu hitobito no tame ni,” 802-849). On the reception of foreign legal orders with a consideration of the Japanese case, see Jean-Louis Halpérin (2014) and Seiichi (1962).

³⁸ For an overview of early foreign specialists in Japan see Ida (2008). On early thinking in Japan about civil codes, see Hozumi *et al.* (1997). On Boissonade, see Boissonade and Mori (2012), Namura (1999), and Boissonade (2002, 2003a, 2003b).

³⁹ See Sasakura (2007, esp. ch. 11, “Kindaihō,” 135-177). For a good overview of the development of Western law, see Johnson (1976, 133 ff.), and Berman (1983).

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Sasakura (2007, esp. ch. 2, “Kodai Rōma,” 66-93).

⁴¹ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for clarifying Shōtoku's position for me.

was certainly not trying to found a new legal order, as the men at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 in Philadelphia were. It was not until the late nineteenth century that the Japanese government set about writing a formal, internally coherent, adventitious constitution intended to be the unmoved mover of the civil code. The Meiji constitution of 1889 was modeled largely on the Prussian constitution, because the imperial household, as the new and putative custodian of the emerging constitutional order, was being rejiggered along Prussian lines, with a strong-willed emperor at the pinnacle of a battle-ready state. This hardening of tradition into a high-modern reprisal, such as occurred in many other places around the world in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, elevated former contingencies to absolute necessities.⁴² The typically loose diachronic *ie*, or household, became the *ie seidō*, or household system, touted by ultramodernist “conservatives” as the heart of the constitutional order.

But once this big wave of Westernization was over, some in Japan began revisiting the old ways and finding them to be surprisingly fresh, even radical. One of these was Suehiro Izutarō, a legal scholar who grew disillusioned with the *Pandekten* system and hearkened back to the “*menschlich* trials” (*ningenmi no aru saiban*) that Suehiro saw Ōoka as having carried out.⁴³ The Japanese state had become very strong, but the individual Japanese people had often not benefitted from rapid economic growth and increasing military might, and the courts had lost much of their empirical grounding in the facts of individual cases, a grounding that was said to have prevailed under the wise magistrate, Ōoka Tadasuke. In his return to Ōoka, Suehiro Izutarō, and the law-and-society movement that blossomed worldwide and in Japan in the years following World War I, recognized what had been lost with the adoption of the abstract *Pandekten* system, the species of jurisprudential idealism especially ascendant in Japan during Suehiro’s time. For Suehiro and other law-and-society thinkers, judges in Japan were too focused on law, and not at all focused enough on people in courtrooms. Instead of trying to solve social problems by effecting justice in courtrooms, Suehiro and his colleagues thought, judges sought to solve legal problems as abstract puzzles, using cases as so many approaches to the intellectual question of what the law meant. The Civil Code was a triumph of *Pandekten*-style thought, but it was, in the end, not Japanese, and did not keep faith with the prevalence of legal fictions and the willingness to bend the law in the service of justice that had characterized the Edo past. (Maybe judges in Germany or France bent the law as much as, or more than, Edo judges did. I would like to think that this must be true, but more research must be done to find out). Suehiro looked back to a native legal philosophy

⁴² On the development of the Meiji state, see Haraguchi (1968).

⁴³ This phrase is taken from the title of Ch. 2 of Suehiro (1923). See also, e.g., Suehiro (1930).

that was much more sensitive, he thought, to the needs of average people. It was in Ōoka that Suehiro found a model for the re-harmonization of a society out of joint, a re-harmonization that he thought could work in the shadow of the edifice of modern law and help right some of the social wrongs bedeviling Japan.⁴⁴

Suehiro thought that the way to save Japan from collapse was through the re-introduction of the legal fiction. His manifesto for rejecting the architectonics of the code-based legal system in favor of a looser arrangement more in tune with the realities of life was titled *Uso no kōyō* (嘘の効用 “On the efficacy of lies”), published in the progressive journal *Kaizō* in 1922. Suehiro’s essay, and the work that followed it (both Suehiro’s and others’), changed the jurisprudential landscape of modern Japan. Suehiro’s contention in *Uso no kōyō* is that the lie (*uso* 嘘), which he broadly equates with legal fictions, has not just a legal function, but a much broader social one as well (Suehiro 1923: 28 ff.). Without the lie, Suehiro says—such as the lie deployed in ancient Rome that a deformed child was not really a child but a “monstrum,” and so therefore abandoning the child to die was not murder, because murder applies only to human beings—society gets stuck in its own rules. One other example that Suehiro gave was the age of majority, the example mentioned at the beginning of this essay. There is little if any qualitative difference, Suehiro argued, between someone who will be, say, twenty tomorrow and the same person’s turning twenty today, but it is necessary for the functioning of the law, and for social order overall, that there be such fictions at work in the world as dividing lines between adolescence and adulthood (Suehiro 1925: 198 ff.). What is striking about *Uso no kōyō* is that Suehiro, who admired what I am calling the jurisprudential legal fictions of Ōoka Tadasuke, presents legal fictions in a way almost synonymous with the work of Henry Sumner Maine. Suehiro sought the radical, pre-Western world of Ōoka of the lost Edo times, but he still could not think past the conceptual constructs by which even the most progressive—and perhaps here was the problem—legal thinkers in Japan understood twentieth-century Japanese law and society.

As with post-Enlightenment thinkers in the West, Suehiro appears to have forgotten a time before the written law overpowered performative courtroom expressions of higher justice. Suehiro wanted some leeway in the law, not necessarily for things as extreme as infanticide, but in general some space for judgments to be rendered without the law’s bearing down and distorting the various nuances of the facts on the ground.⁴⁵ Legal fictions on the Suehiro-Maine reading are not the same as the Ōoka-style

⁴⁴ Paragraph closely follows Morgan (2020: 4-5).

⁴⁵ In this, Suehiro was greatly influenced by the legal realism he had imbibed at such places as Harvard Law School, under Roscoe Pound, and at the University of Chicago. See Hayashida (1992-1993).

jurisprudence of the Edo Period, or the general “turning a blind eye” to unpleasant things of the past. Suehiro’s legal fiction, unlike those earlier modes, takes into account the existence of a big legal system, and is predicated upon the operation of a code and constitution set such as prevails in most countries today. The legal fiction as expounded by Suehiro was that the law, even the *Pandekten*-style Civil Code, had, as it were, trap doors in it through which hard-to-categorize facts could pass so that the law could still stand despite being bent in actual practice. Suehiro was still thinking of legal fictions in terms of law as written down in books.

And yet, there is something very performative after all—something of the flourish of the *xiezhi* even—about Suehiro’s legal fictionalism. The Suehirian approach to law is rooted, ultimately, in the person. This concern for the person led Suehiro to pioneer labor law in Japan, as a way to preserve societal harmony by allowing workers to negotiate with managers without resorting to violent insurrection.⁴⁶ However, the key person in the Suehirian arrangement was not the manager but the judge (Suehiro 1953). Suehiro saw the judge as the person capable of cutting through specious logic and tendentious codified law in order to arrive at fuller justice—a continuation of sorts of the very old Japanese practice of eschewing abstract legal reasoning and seeking justice over didactic legalism (*Han Feizi* has no counterpart in Japanese history, so perhaps a judge in Japan could get by without appealing to a mythical creature to override a law that was supposed to be absolute).⁴⁷ In a kind of prolegomenon to the work of Nobel Prize recipient Ronald Coase (1910-2013), the courts under Suehiro’s legal fiction view are venues for increasing social order by avoiding the transaction costs involved with working within the complex network of the law itself (Coase 1937, 1960).⁴⁸ This is different in overarching concept from what Ōoka or *xiezhi* did, but remove the modern theorizing and the jurisprudential legal fiction element remains.

7. East Asian legal fictions and the American constitutional order

Suehiro spent much of his time abroad studying law in the United States. Suehiro’s conceptions of how law worked were thus not, strictly speaking, Western so much as American. In this sense, as well as in the broader context of the big changes taking place in the world in which Suehiro lived, the history of

⁴⁶ See Suehiro (1954b). The first two sentences of Suehiro’s introduction read, “All human beings have individuality. Not just individual human beings, but races, ethnicities, societies, and states also all each have their own individuality.”¹ See also Suehiro (1947; 1926, esp. 122-134, 447-511; 1954a, esp. ch. 12, “Rōdō no hōritsu,” 517-582).

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Ramseyer (2015: 8), and Minjihō Hanrei Kenkyūkai (1935).

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Professor J. Mark Ramseyer for pointing out the relevance of Coase’s work to this paper.

the legal fiction in East Asia can highlight the changing nature of legal systems both inside and outside of that region, such as by accentuating the vicissitudes of the constitutional order in the United States.⁴⁹ For example, the first three words of the United States Constitution, “We the people,” conceal a “formation of the people,” a concept absolutely central to the United States as it is constituted in both law and political-cultural terms. “The people,” reflection will show, is a fiction, deployed by the framers to set up a bigger fiction of a document purporting to actuate and regulate the enormous array of laws and regulations pendant therefrom (Morgan 1988).⁵⁰

The ways in which the American constitution has been interpreted are also largely fictions. Consider, for instance, the originalist school—hardly at the top of many lists of those who would rank schools of legal thought in terms of affinity with legal fiction. And yet, originalists tend to assert that the correct interpretation of a given question is to be arrived at by returning to the time period when a given law was passed and divine, by means of documents from that time, what was the general cultural and legal milieu in which the law was written and what the writers of the law intended by their words (Whittington 2006). Most scholars will surely argue the opposite, but I find that this mode of legal interpretation is not substantially different from that of those who, beginning around the time of Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841-1935), Louis Brandeis (1856-1941), and Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924)—the age of “the living constitution” and the Progressivist abandonment of interpretive guidelines beyond the tautology of Progressivism—have argued that the constitution is malleable within the hands of people alive today. Whether the reference point is people now or people then—whether one likes, in other words, the Maineian notion that society changes while law does not, or tries to overcome the notion by anchoring legal interpretation to the moment at which legislatures wrote laws—it is still a fiction that law comes from people at all.⁵¹ Those who interpret laws in light of natural law, by contrast, might argue that the separation of the positive law from the natural law has produced a creature that grows virtually exponentially in a quest for ever more control over the contingencies of human life. There have been as many attempts to reform this split as there have been scholars who have lamented it, from Friedrich Hayek’s (1899-1992) “constitution of liberty” to Bruno Leoni’s (1913-1967) judge-centered freedom precedents to Bruce Benson’s “enterprise of law”.⁵² But originalist or natural legalist,

⁴⁹ On East Asian law in a comparative perspective, see, e.g., Kure (2016).

⁵⁰ But for a different argument see Arcioni (2014).

⁵¹ See Rommen (1998) and St. Thomas Aquinas, “On Law and Natural Law. *Summa theologiae*, I-2, 90-94 (1271),” in McNerny (1998: 611-652).

⁵² Hayek (1960, esp. part II, “Freedom and the Law”), and Barry (1979, esp. ch. 4, “Liberty and Coercion,” and ch. 5, “The Theory of Law”). See also Nishiyama and Leube (1984), Leoni (1961), and Benson (1990).

or whatever other strain of American law one might like to consider, there is a great deal of affinity between *procedural* attempts to bind the divide between legal theory and legal practice, on the one hand, and the appeal to *dōri*, or even to a mythical beast with a flair for interrupting trials with dramatic entrances, on the other. In East or West, that it to say, jurisprudential legal fictions are overlain by text-centric ones of the Maineian variety. Suehiro's conundrum, in other words, is, on this reading, an American one as well.

When Western scholars discover a natural law at work behind the positive law and the myriad of changes in any given legal order and social and cultural background to that order, they are taking part in a way of thinking very much like the judges in courtrooms in China and Japan in the past. And the heart of it all is jurisprudential legal fictions, or performative judge-centered law. The ancient Chinese mythology of the *xiezhi* is thus not just a hoary tale, but a real commentary on how the law works. In the end, judgments are made, not by the machinery of the legal system, but by people acting in the roles of judge. It is of course a fiction to say that an imaginary animal storms into a courtroom and headbutts the guilty party in a dispute. But, as with legal fictions in text-heavy legal orders, the fiction is as necessary as it is transparently untrue. The psychology of deferring the responsibility of judgment to a figment of the cultural imagination is a function of the legal fiction, a by-product of the human element countenanced, paradoxically, by the supernatural irruption of the *xiezhi*.

The Chinese examples point to their Japanese counterparts as well, because the ancient Chinese legal fictions, and the “continuum” Katz posits between old Chinese law and more systematic, bureaucratized law and institutions developed down the dynastic ages, were all in some way gestures towards the humanity of the legal process, of *synderesis* and the careful weighing of right and wrong, cause and effect, evidence and testimony, justice and mercy, that must go into any court decision. If the law is strictly a human institution, then it is odd that so many civilizations should find need to resort to fictions to humanize it. The history of the legal fiction in East Asia is a reminder that there has always been more to the law, East and West, than what is written in books, and that the human person in all of his or her depth and complexity, and not the intellectual edifices that he or she creates, has historically been the real life of any legal culture. This nearly-lost history of jurisprudential legal fictions, of judge-centered moral reasoning, can be found in East Asia—and in the West, if one looks for it. That rediscovery ought to remind people in the West that jurisprudential legal fictions were once how the law worked everywhere.

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Notes and squibs

Colour nomenclatures across African languages

A study review with a focus on Hausa and Swahili

Tatjana Chirichella

This review article aims to provide an overview of the works published in the last decades on colour terminology and categorisation in some African languages¹, and Hausa and Swahili in particular. It gives information about different African languages (Ndebele, Setswana, Xhosa, Chichewa, Egyptian-Coptic, Himba and Chakali), then it traces the main works covering the area of Hausa and Swahili language, from the earliest papers until now. Even though these languages have a rich tradition of studies, the amount of works devoted to colour naming is fairly limited. The theoretical approaches of the studies that have appeared in the last few decades are rather heterogeneous, and include perspectives from lexical semantics, cognitive semantics and sociolinguistics.

Keywords: colour terms; colour categorisation; African languages; Hausa; Swahili

1. Introduction

Over the years many scholars have been trying to explain the way in which colours are named in different languages. The theoretical approaches underlying the research conducted hitherto can be traced back to two approaches: the relativist and the universalist. Relativism is usually associated with the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (henceforth SWH) developed by Edward Sapir (1929) and his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1950; 1956). While the universalistic view is associated with the theory developed by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay (1969), the Basic Colour Terms Theory (henceforth BCTT). Several linguists added new elements to these two positions by criticising or supporting one of them and others attempted to reconcile them with alternative theories.

The aim of this article is to provide an overview of the works that have appeared in recent decades focusing on semantic colour categorisation in African languages, outlining the main linguistic areas

¹ These languages are just a small sampling chosen on the availability of studies related only to colour nomenclature and categorization.

concerned and the theoretical approaches adopted². A section will be devoted to the analysis of this area of studies in the fields of Hausa and Swahili language.

To better understand the theoretical approaches it is necessary to introduce some notions. When we talk about African languages, very often we mention ‘ideophones’ that are “marked words that depict sensory imagery. To say that ideophones are MARKED means that they stand out from ordinary words. To say that they are WORDS means that they are subject to conventionalization. To say that ideophones are DEPICTIVE means that they employ a depictive mode of representation which invites people to experience them as performances and which lends them their imagistic semantics. Finally, to say that ideophones depict SENSORY IMAGERY means that they draw on perceptual knowledge derived from events of sensory perception” (Dingemanse 2011: 25, 29; emphasis in the original). We also refer to ‘reduplication,’ i.e. “systematic repetition of phonological material within a word for semantic or grammatical purposes” (Rubino 2005: 11).

2. Main theories on colour categorisation

In order to understand the relativist point of view and the “Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis,” it is useful to introduce the basic ideas of Sapir and Whorf’s vision. Their theories started to circulate in the first half of the 20th century.

In “The Status of Linguistics as a Science,” Sapir (1929) suggested that language is a guide to the scientific studies of a culture, a guide to ‘social reality’ because there aren’t two languages so similar that can be representative of the same social reality. Language, therefore, is considered as an access point for a deeper understanding. Actually, it was one of Sapir’s students, Benjamin Lee Whorf, who introduced the pivotal concept of linguistic relativity (Whorf 1950).

The main features of SWH are:

- Linguistic determinism: shapes the thought, i.e. the way we talk determines the way we think;
- Linguistic relativity: differences among languages are representative of different world-views;
- Linguistic relativism: there are no superior or inferior languages, as they are all equal.

On the other hand, universalism in the field of colour terminology is linked to the Basic Colour Terms Theory developed by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay in 1969. They carried out a research based on the

² The author of the present review took into account all the theories and papers published in the last decades. Still, it doesn’t mean she agrees with all of them. In some instances, she does not even consider a theory as such; however, the author firmly thinks necessary to include any opinion in this paper in order to outline the path of studies so far.

analysis of 20 languages. First of all they defined the concept of *basic colour term*. Each basic colour term, to be considered as such, should have some characteristics (it must be mono-lexemic; its signification must not be included in that of any other colour term; its applicability must not be restricted to a narrow class of objects; and it must be salient for informants).

Thanks to their results, they were able to provide some evidences:

- colour categorization is not random and the centers of basic colour terms are very similar in all languages;
- variability in the location of colour foci appears to be greater among the speakers of a given language than between languages (1969: 8)
- there appears to be a fixed sequence of evolutionary stages through which a language must pass as its basic colour vocabulary becomes enriched over times (1969: 11);
- there appears to be a positive correlation between general cultural complexity (and/or level of technological development) and complexity of colour vocabulary (1969: 13).

Rosch (1973) added a new perspective to the BCTT and universal categories. She claimed that colour categories develop around perceptually salient ‘natural prototypes.’ In support of this thesis, she showed that subjects can learn natural prototypes faster than other stimuli and that they can learn hue concepts more easily when the presumed natural prototypes are the central members of categories.

She also tagged colours of greatest salience and verbal definitiveness within a colour category, *focal colours*, that have the capacity to semantically “attract” adjacent colours of the colour continuum (Maclaury, Paramei and Dedrick 2007: 56).

Wierzbicka (1990) proposed a new evolutionary sequence of colour categories divided up in seven stages. She stated that all the categories were presented in terms of certain prototypes which relate colour perception to universals of human existence (1990: 145). She therefore solved one of the factors that critics considered ambiguous in Berlin and Kay’s sequence. Actually, while Berlin and Kay used the same term, for example *BLACK*, in different stages with different meanings, in her model, she presented each category, for example *MACRO-BLACK*, in different ways for every single level.

Besides, in Wierzbicka’s model the development of new basic colour terms is presented in terms of differentiation of complex concepts rather than in terms of an emergence of new foci (Wierzbicka 1990: 145).

In the last years these two hypotheses seem to have lost their strength in favour of an approach aiming at reconciling both. Recent studies tend to consider them as two sides of a coin, as they can co-exist.

3. Colour terminology in some African languages

The issue of colour nomenclature and its categorisation in African languages has been taken into account by several scholars (Wescott 1970; van Beek 1977; Maffi 1990; Prasse 1999; Tosco 1999; Roulon-Doko 2019). In the last decades, as regards Bantu languages, Ian Davies and Greville G. Corbett provided informations about colour categories in Ndebele [nde; nort2795]³ (Davies, Davies and Corbett 1994), Setswana [tsn; tswa1253] (Davies, Corbett, McGurk and Jerrett 1994b), Xhosa [xho; xhos1239] (Davies and Corbett 1994c), and Chichewa [nya; nyan1308] (Davies, Corbett, Mtenje and Sowden 1995).

Ndebele (Davies *et al.* 1994) is the main language of southern Zimbabwe and it is at the III stage of Berlin and Kay's sequence. Actually, it has four basic colour terms for *BLACK*, *WHITE*, *RED* and *GRUE*, but people start to separate *BLUE* from *GREEN* more and more often and children employ a new word for *YELLOW*, so it seems that Ndebele is likely to become a language of the IV or the V stage. The researchers, in this case, proposed three tasks to a group of children (34 for the first task and 30 for the second one) and a group of adult people (39). In the first exercise it was asked to children to attend a lesson about colours in Ndebele in which they had to say the name of the colour of some objects and then copy the right terms. The second exercise was about listing colour terms. Children had to write down as many words for colours as they knew, while adults had to do the same orally. In the final task both groups had to establish the boundaries between colours by mapping them.

Setswana (Davies *et al.* 1994b) is an official language in Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe and it is also spoken in Namibia. This language has the same basic colour terms of Ndebele but, unlike the latter, there is no separation between *BLUE* and *GREEN*. The subjects of this work were all children. Each child performed four tasks: colour-term listing, colour naming, animal term listing and body part term listing.

Xhosa (Davies *et al.* 1994c), a southern Bantu language spoken in South Africa and Zimbabwe, displays four basic color terms: *BLACK*, *WHITE*, *RED* and *YELLOW* and it also has a term for *GRUE* but the focus of this term is primarily in the green region. This is due to the fact that there is a new borrowed term to identify the blue region but it is not used enough to be accorded the basic status. The other

³ ISO-639-3 and Glottocode by Glottolog.org (<https://glottolog.org/glottolog/language>)

term that is going to become ‘basic’ is *BROWN*. This term first referred to the noun *dirt* but now people are starting to use it to label brown chips of Munsell colour chart. In this case there were 44 adult subjects who had to accomplish four tasks: order: lists, City University Colour Vision Test⁴, colour grouping and colour naming. In the list task, they were asked “Please, tell me as many colour terms as you know;” in the City University test they were shown one plate at a time and asked to point to the color most like the one in the middle; in the colour naming task they were shown 63 tiles, one at a time, and they were asked “What do you call this colour?” (1994: 182).

Finally, Chichewa (Davies *et al.* 1995), a language spoken in Malawi, presents five basic colour terms but it is important to highlight that three of them (*BLACK*, *RED* and *GRUE*) are composite categories that are in a process of decomposition. *BLACK* traditionally denotes all the shades of dark-grey, brown and blue-purples but the emergence of new terms denoting specifically grey and brown are leading *BLACK* to a decomposition. It is the same for *RED* that is used also for orange, pink and purple. With regards to *GRUE*, it has been pointed out that there are two terms for *BLUE*, employed especially among students⁵ that are going to create a category of their own. As anticipated, two further terms are gaining the status of basic colour terms (*BROWN* and *GREY*). This is very interesting, since in Berlin and Kay’s BCTT usually the term denoting *brown* should emerge only after *blue* and *green* had become basic. For this research 83 adult people were selected and they had to perform three tasks: lists, colour naming and the City University Colour Vision test.

Davies *et al.* (1995) made a comparison of the results on the Bantu languages they took into account. Even though these languages present all four basic colour terms and tend to have composite categories (e.g. *GRUE*), it would be useful to have similar subjects and the same tasks in order to compare the results and showcase differences and similarities in the Bantu area of studies.

With reference to other African languages, one must further mention “Anthropology of Colour” (MacLaury, Paramei and Don Dedrick 2007). The volume offers a broad spectrum of analytical approaches applied to a significant number of languages, including Egyptian Coptic, old Ethiopic and Arabic. All the contributors of this text classified the languages of their studies on the basis of BCTT, even if most of them did not consider universal categories in the same way Berlin and Kay did.

⁴ A quick and simple test of color vision, which requires no literacy and produces a preliminary indication of any colour vision anomalies. The test consists of ten plates, each consisting of a colour spot and four surrounding spots. The task is to point to the surrounding spot that is most like the center spot (Davies *et al.* 1994c: 181)

⁵ Students offered many more combinations of terms and qualified colour terms; they offered non-basic traditional terms and, finally, they offered more borrowed terms (Davies *et al.* 1995: 267)

One of the contributors, Schenkel (2007), conducted a research about ancient Egyptian [egy; egyp1246] and Coptic [cop; copt1239] colour terms. He focused his attention on three issues: the general and particular usage of colour terms; their general meaning and the determination of their focus; and the etymology of colour terms in Afroasiatic languages. He began his paper by asserting that he depends on the content-related linguistics approach. As reported by Schenkel, “this approach perceives the world as linguistically divided. Colours are not natural, but determined by language, and this steers the behaviour of humanity with regard to reality” (Schenkel 2007: 212). According to Schenkel, there are four basic colour terms, all verbs (black, white, red and green) so Egyptian-Coptic is at the IIIa stage of Berlin and Kay’s evolutionary sequence; the focus of *RED* is in the red range, as well as the focus of *GREEN* is in the green range; the traditional written language presented more verbal colour terms but these were not preserved in Coptic so they did not enter the colloquial language.

A new research on Himba [sbw; simb1254] is found in “Colour studies: A broad spectrum” (Grandison *et al.* 2014). The authors, Alexandra Grandison, Ian R.L. Davies and Paul T. Sowden, discovered the emergence of a new colour term and suggested that these new findings have implications for future research on colour categories. They found that there is a new term referring to *GREEN*. This is very interesting, since a decade before, Davidoff *et al.* (2005) stated that Himba had only five colour terms, including *BUROU*, that was used to identify both *blue* and *green*. The new term, *girine*, is not used by all the informants; they therefore hypothesised that the emergence of this new term could be related to different factors: the recent increase in the availability of schooling within the Kaokoveld region of Namibia thanks to the efforts of NAMAS, the Norway’s Namibia Association, that is investing in mobile schools for Himba children since 2001 (Grandison *et al.* 2014: 64), with an inevitable contact with the Western culture and the English language; another explanation is that Himba has actually been less isolated than previous researchers thought, considering that the language present older borrowed terms. Even though *girine* does not meet all of the criteria of BCTT to be considered a basic colour term, it is important to map the evolution of this term and explore if and how this change in colour language affects the colour perception of its speakers (Grandison *et al.* 2014: 64).

Another study on Chakali [cli; chak1271] (Brindle 2016) attempted to reconstruct the way in which Chakali categorises colour terms and how colour basicness should be evaluated. Chakali is a language spoken in the Wa East District, in the Upper West Region of Ghana (Brindle 2017: 3). The author proposed four tasks to the participants and the results showed that Chakali can be considered a language of the II or the IV stage of Kay and Maffi’s (1999) typology, having a triad of basic colour terms for *black*, *white* and *red* and two more terms used to refer to *yellow* (*sosav*) and *grue* (*buluu*). Nevertheless, the focal task indicated that the foci of *sosav* and *buluu* is not as narrow as the terms of the triad.

Available evidences also showed that only the triad is used in folk taxonomies and that the consultants primarily used these three colours as standards, so the triad seems to be in a category of its own.

4. Studies on Hausa and Swahili colour terms

In this section, the main works dealing with colour naming in Hausa and Swahili will be presented and briefly discussed. Despite the rich tradition of studies on the two languages, the amount of studies devoted to colour naming is fairly limited. The theoretical approaches of the studies that have appeared in the last few decades are rather heterogeneous, and include perspectives from lexical semantics, cognitive semantics and sociolinguistics.

Hausa [hau; haus1257] belongs to the West Chadic languages of the Chadic languages group, which is in turn part of the Afro-Asiatic language family. It is spoken mostly in northern Nigeria and southern Niger but it is used as *lingua franca* in many parts of western and central Africa.

One of the first attempts to study Hausa colour terminology and its symbolism dates back to Pauline M. Ryan's *Colour symbolism in Hausa literature* (Ryan 1962). She made a distinction between primary and secondary colour terms: *fari* (white), *baki* (black), *ja* (red) and *kore* (green) belong to the first group; while *kili* (grigio), *shudi* (blue), *rawaya* (yellow) and *shunayya* (purple) belong to the second one. The primary group consists of terms that are mono-lexemic, non-derivative and non-restrictive in usage, whereas the secondary group is made up of terms that are derivative and tend to be restrictive in their usage. Shades of hue and degrees of brightness within a colour category is expressed by means of analogy, e.g. *ja mai farin ruwa* (lit. 'red owner of white water') meaning 'pink;' reduplication, e.g. *kore-kore* (lit. greenish) that means 'light green' or the addition of ideophones, e.g. *fari fa'* (lit. 'very white') meaning 'snow white' (1962: 141-142).

Ryan decided to focus her attention on three of the basic colour terms, *fari*, *baki* and *ja*. According to her analysis, *fari* (white) has a positive connotation and is representative of socially desirable qualities; *baki* (black) represents negative and socially undesirable features; and *ja* (red) is ambiguous because usually it is associated with black but it does not have a negative connotation. It often reflects the idea of power, either personal or spiritual. This notion of power is due to a mythic allocation of spirits in a red town, Jangari.

She further provided a list of expressions with colour terms taken from Abraham (1962); a list of proverbs taken by Whitting (1940) and Abraham (1962); some poems from Hiskett's (1969) collection and three myths. In the first myth we can see how colour terms are used with respect to spirits; in the second one, there is an emphasis on colour red symbolism; and, in the last one, colour terms are combined or opposed to highlight changes in the story.

In conclusion she asserts that the triad of *fari*, *baki* and *ja* reflects human organism, its functions and the human condition. The fact that *ja* is often used it is a sign of the uncertainty of human existence. Moreover, she found peculiar to notice that the triad of colours seem to have a connection with the words *fari* meaning ‘beginning,’ *baki* that means ‘conclusion’ and *ja* ‘pull.’ They are written in the same way but have a different tonal scheme and vowel length. Similarly, in the mythology white represents the origin in time and space, black displays the ending and red represents everything that is between the origin and the end.

Ryan based her work on dictionaries available at that time, lists of expressions and proverbs, some poems and three myths, therefore it was a good starting point for a research about colour terminology and its symbolism, notwithstanding she had a limited corpus of samples. Furthermore the theory that the triad of basic colour terms is connected to the words meaning ‘beginning,’ ‘conclusion’ and ‘pull’ is just a mere supposition unsupported by additional data or subsequent studies.

Among the earliest studies we mention also Zarruk (1978), Bature (2004) and Dogondaji (2010). Zarruk explored the different colour terms used in Hausa, their association with specific objects and some categories. He provided a list of colour terms that did not conform to the criteria of Berlin and Kay. Similarly, Bature (2004) asserts that Hausa has at least twenty-five colour terms and just five of them can be considered ‘basic colour terms.’

In recent years, three articles by Rabi Abdulsalam Ibrahim (2014; 2016; 2019) have appeared, all of them focusing on the comparison between Hausa and other languages in the area of colour terminology, to identify the loanwords and to compare the way in which these languages make use of colour terms.

Batic (2006) compiled a list of expressions where colour terms are used in association with body parts with a metaphorical meaning, such as *jan-kashi*, lit. ‘endurance’ (lit. ‘red bone’).

Gian Claudio Batic and Sergio Baldi (2015) showed how ideophones⁶ are used as modifiers of colour terms in Hausa language, for example in *fari sal* ‘(snow-white)’ where *sal* is used to emphasise whiteness. They also showed how colour terms are used to express experiences, features and attitudes. The basic colour terms ‘white’ and ‘black’ are employed to encode the emotional states of happiness and sadness (2015: 224) as we can see in expressions like *Shi mai bakin ciki ne* that means ‘he is sad’ (lit.

⁶ Ideophones in Hausa do not constitute a distinct part of speech, but some of them function to modify verbal actions or adjectives. Others modify nouns, and further constitute nouns. They are a large group of very specialised particles varying widely from each other and, very often, from all other words in the language (Batic and Baldi 2015: 214).

'he is the owner of a black belly'). The association of colours to body parts characterises the phraseological inventory of emotion and emotion-related events (Batic 2017: 494).

In 2014 Ibrahim wanted to reveal the influence of English on some indigenous languages of Nigeria, with particular emphasis on Hausa. With this study he noticed that some English terms have been incorporated and adapted to indigenous languages of Nigeria. For example, in Hausa we have the word *bulu* that refers to the blue region and it was adapted to Hausa language by adding a vowel between the consonants. In Hausa we also have other loanwords: *yalo* (yellow), *silba* (silver) and *gwaldin* (golden). Even the word for the category of colour is a borrowed term, many Hausa people prefer to use the word *kala* (eng. *colour*) instead of *launi*.

Besides, young Nigerian people tend to use English words even when there is an indigenous one to express something (Ibrahim 2014: 321), but it is important taking into account that English is one of the official languages of Nigeria.

On the contrary, even though Swahili [swh; swah1253] is well documented and has a long tradition of studies, we observe a paucity of data about colour terminology. Swahili is a *lingua franca* of eastern Africa and a Bantu language (Niger-Congo family). It is the official language of Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda and it is widely spread also in Congo, Burundi, Malawi and Mozambique. The only available notions are provided by grammars (among others Bertoncini 2009; Mpiranya 2015) where, given the theoretical-practical purpose of the work, lists of colour terms are usually provided, but without specification on the symbolic value and the evolution of the single terms.

Just a few examples on the use of colours are relative to ideophones. Lusekelo (2013) claims that ideophones in Swahili have specific applications to the sensory world. They describe emotional experiences in degrees of intensity, e.g. *mweupe pe* (very white) and *mweupe pee* (excessive whiteness) (2013: 18).

Another example on the use of colour terms in Swahili is associated with body metaphors studied by Tramutoli (2020). In her article, Tramutoli discussed the relationship between body metaphors and Swahili traditions and beliefs. As for Hausa language, in Swahili 'white' is associated with positivity and 'black' is the negative counterpart. *Moyo mweupe* (lit. 'white heart') refers to various positive emotions; *roho nyeusi* (lit. 'black soul') is a bad and selfish person.

Both Lusekelo (2013) and Tramutoli (2020) just mentioned the role of colour terms in reference to some cognitive linguistic phenomena limiting themselves to consider BLACK, WHITE and RED.

Tatjana Chirichella (2021) supplied an analysis of colour terms in Swahili, highlighting the existence of three basic colour terms, *-eupe* (white), *-eusi* (black) and *-ekundu* (red), therefore positing Swahili as a II stage language. Nevertheless, the terms referring to green, yellow and blue are likely to

become basic, even if they do not meet all the criteria of BCTT. She based her studies on lists of colour terms provided by grammars and dictionaries and she conducted her research analyzing the occurrence of each term of the list in two *corpora*. One of the *corpus* was composed of literary texts, whilst the other one consisted of journalistic texts. She made use of the tools provided by computational linguistics and specifically of a platform called “Sketch Engine.” At the end of her analysis she was able to furnish statistics about the usage of each colour term and their semantic value. Nevertheless it was a limited research that had the specific purpose of outlining a new lists of colour terms that could include the words coined by new generations and also the purpose of clarifying the way in which colour terminology had changed over the years and the reason why it happened.

5. Conclusions

The issue of colour nomenclature has been addressed in a large variety of languages, including African languages. As we saw, until now almost every scholar who decided to commit to this investigation, limited himself or herself to defining the range of colour terms of a specific language. In this way they completely neglected a deeper analysis that could have given details about the symbolic meaning and the concept related to each colour in a given linguistic community. They also proposed almost the same tasks to their informants, that is, listing as many terms as they knew; matching these terms with a colour sample; and establishing boundaries among colour categories.

The scholarly literature on two languages with a rich tradition of studies like Hausa and Swahili has only considered a few fundamental aspects of colour nomenclature. The context of use, the symbolism and evolution of colours, as well as their precise collocation within a relevant theoretical frame of reference, represent some of the challenges to which linguistic research is called.

Studying colour terminology is a way to increase our knowledge in regard to the thinking system of a society. A clear overall picture on colour nomenclature in some african languages and, in this case, in Hausa and Swahili would be functional to a comparison with other languages. It would allow us to have a different point of view and a profound understanding of some subjects, such as metaphors using words related to the lexical field of the body. It could give us the tools to compare the standard variant to dialects, considering that Hausa and Swahili are both vehicular languages with a huge number of native speakers coming from different countries and with different socio-political backgrounds.

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Bat symbolism in Idrīs Bidlīsī’s *Hašt Bihišt* VI

Mustafa Dehqan

Cultural and social set of beliefs of all communities have normally been closely related to animals, which are symbolized in literature and history. Cultural and social definitions of animals as ‘good’ or ‘evil’ have persisted throughout the history of humankind. In the Iranian environment, bats are mostly perceived as symbols of darkness and ignorance. Here, we briefly review the role that bats play in Idrīs Bidlīsī’s unpublished *Hašt Bihišt* (Book VI) and its symbolisms associated with bats. We present shortly Idrīs’ highlighted Arabic verse in reference to the symbolized darkness and ignorance of bats.

Keywords: Idrīs Bidlīsī, *Hašt Bihišt* VI, Murād II, Ottoman, Persian, Arabic.

To Gökçe Mızraklı
kardeşliği ve dostluğu için

1. Introduction¹

The symbolism of the bat is so vast that it cannot be sketched within the limits of this short article. It goes back to Medieval Islamic centuries and had, there, a complex history which has not, I suspect, been traced adequately (apart from the Persian short article by Ğūyā Ğahānbaĥš’s “Šabpara va Šabpara Čašm,” published in 2018).²

What I want to discuss is something much more specific: not even a general overview of bat symbolism in Persian and Arabic literature, but the concept of the bat in *Hašt Bihišt* (“The Eight Paradises”) VI which Idrīs Bidlīsī (1457-1520) devoted to the reign of Murād II (1421-1444; 1446-1451).

¹ I thank Huda J. Fakhreddine for generously sharing with me her vast repository of information on Arabic literature. I am also grateful to Mauro Tosco and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and support. Of course, any omission and error is my sole responsibility.

² It is only based on the bat symbolism in Sa’dī’s *Gulistan*. See Ğahānbaĥš (2018: 5-16). For a quick review of the basic issues of animal symbolism in Middle Eastern literature cf. Daneshvari (1986).

It can, I suggest, be conveniently used as a primary step for further critical editions or translations of the unpublished *Hašt Bihišt VI*.³

In Islamic literature, the bat was considered a bird, called in Arabic and Persian *ḥuffāš*, *šabpara*, *mūš-i kūr*, *ḍaʿif al-bašar*, *šabkūr*, and *ḥašāf* (the last is the result of metathesis). Muslim law is almost uniform regarding its treatment. Not only Muslims forbid its flesh, but it is even prohibited to use its feces (cf. e.g., al-Ṭūsī 2008: i, 39).

Although consuming bat flesh is forbidden by Islamic schools of law, medicinal use of various parts of the bat's body is allowed for treatment of variety of conditions (al-Marwazī 2020: ii, 546-549).

Despite the fact that most types of Arabic and Persian folk tales in which the bat appears portray the animal as the symbol of several concepts, it mainly figures as the symbol of darkness, ignorance, and blindness in Islamic literature. These characteristics of the bat have been also reflected in folklore and philosophy (cf. e.g., al-Marwazī 2020: ii, 442 and Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawzīyya 2010: 79-80).

2. Bat and Chameleon: A specific sample of a general symbolism

This study of the use of one of the most important symbols in *Hašt Bihišt VI* is prompted by a desire to have a clearer understanding of the relation of Idrīs' language to symbolism. Idrīs' insight into the nature of darkness and ignorance is characterized by a frequent use of bat symbolism. In his references to the Christians and other enemies of Murād II, the ideal method of Idrīs is dialectic, which proceeds without the aid of symbols; but sometimes when direct reference is repetitive he proceeds with the aid of bats. To him, the opponents of Murād II, Christians and Muslims included, were unable to see and understand his brightness and awareness. Bats only live in darkness, in 'the depth of night,' in their caves, but what Murād II really seeks is to get sight and knowledge of those realities that can be seen only by those who are not 'the followers of darkness.' As Idrīs puts it, if unable to see the sun, it is wise for one to accept the limitations of ignorance and sultan's superiority.⁴

The extraordinary sample of the Persian *Hašt Bihišt VI* which Idrīs displays in his *bawāʿit-i muḥāraba-yi Isfandiyār* ('Reasons for the Isfendiyar War'), may be an Arabic verse. Certainly, it plays a

³ On Idrīs Bidlīsī and his *Hašt Bihišt*, see Genç (2019: chapters i-ii); Markiewicz (2014: 127-145). Idrīs Bidlīsī was a late 15th and early 16th century scholar and historian; his Ottoman chronicle, written in the early 16th century, mainly covers the reign and times of earlier Ottoman sultans.

⁴ Other examples of the bat symbolism can be found in other works of the same author. In *the Hašt Bihišt VI*, Idrīs several times refers to the bat symbolism. See for instance Bidlīsī, *Hašt Bihišt*, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 2199, fol.306v. (...va Muştafā mağ'ül-i ḥuffāš şifat az muqābila-yi āftāb-i ḥilāfat va iğlāl rüy gardān va mustaqar şud...) and fol.318r. (...zirā ka mağāl-i ğilvagarī-yi ḥuffāš vaqtī ast ka ḥurşid-i tābān rā dar ḥiğāb-i zulmat-i şām mutivārī va pinhān bibīnad...).

vital role in Idrīs' framing of his bat symbolism. It is mentioned in the context of the dispute over the question of whether the followers of darkness (i.e. the Anatolian Turcoman *bey*, Isfendiyar of Kastamonu (*Qaştamunī*, d.1440) were able to defeat the followers of brightness (i.e. Murād II) or not:

*wa dağat dukā'un fa-aqbalat ħirbā'uhā
taškū l-aḏā bi-šamātati l-ħuffāšī⁵*

The sun⁶ set and the chameleon complained while the bat gloated

aqbalat taškū does not imply that the chameleon came to sun and complained—it means that as a result of the sun setting the chameleon now has reason to complain. This supports Idrīs' reading of the chameleon as a follower of light or brightness and the bat as a follower of darkness. The bat here is rejoicing at or taking pleasure in the chameleon's misfortune (and hence the phrase *bi šamātati l-ħuffāšī*).

One expects the verse to be gleaned from an earlier poetry collection. Idrīs was a very talented poet as well (both in Persian and Arabic) but he almost always designated his own verses used in the *Hašt Bihišt* VI by the term *li-mu'allifihi* 'by its author.'

Outside of the above-mentioned bat symbolism, Idrīs here made a more specific reference to the same Arabic-Persian symbolism in which the bat as a symbol of darkness and ignorance mentioned against the chameleon. Also known as *ābid al-šams*, *mušammis*, and *āftāb parast*, the chameleon is used in Islamic literature as a generic term to cover brightness, awareness, and mystical knowledge (al-Ġāḥiḡ 1983: i, 145 and al-Marwazī 2020: ii, 613).

The use of chameleon in Islamic symbolism is limited. Though it is used as an indication to reinforce positive emotions against those who like "night, darkness, and ignorance," the chameleon is a perception, not a mere symbolism; it exists as a function of our vision and cerebral function. Hence, a chameleon as 'the animal who likes sun/light' can symbolize anything we want it to symbolize (al-Ġāḥiḡ 1983: vi, 367; Sam'ānī 1989: 19).

⁵ For this, see the manuscript Nuruosmaniye 3209, fol.284v., Hazine 1655, fol.320r., and Tabriz 1874, fol.243v. Interestingly, the earliest autograph manuscript, Esad Efendi 2199, fol.319v., mentions a Persian verse in the same context and in the same place: *yakī guft ān dam ba Isfandiyār / ka bā šāh mikunī kārzār*. This verse is intended here to focus on Idrīs' wondering why Isfandiyār rebelled against the brightness, not to provide a bat symbolism, although it is mentioned in prose.

⁶ The proper noun (*al-ismu l-'alam*) *dukā'* was used by the poet in order to refer to 'sun.' It should not be rendered as 'cleverness, intelligence' here. For *dukā'* 'sun,' see Maluf (1996: 236).

The story of the bat's darkness or ignorance is an episode in the troubled relationship between the bat and the chameleon. Reading it as a straightforward literary record is out of question, both because of the context and because of the theological question of God's preservation of the Sultan Murād II in his conflicts against Isfendiyar of Kastamonu which is involved here. In any case, we can probably employ the above evidence as an indication of the forms of bat symbolism practiced by later Islamic authors.

Unfortunately, I could not find an attribution for this verse. My first hunch was to look in *dīwān Dū l-Rumma* (d.735) who is known for his images of the chameleon as a worshipper with different inclinations.⁷

The use of the present Arabic verse also brings to mind a detail from the works of Šihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d.1191), the Iranian philosopher who several generations before the time of Idrīs Bidlīsī composed a Persian treatise, entitled *Luġat-i Mūrān* ('The Language of Termites'), in which he presented an eminently symbolic story of the bats and the chameleon. Accordingly, enmity arose between some bats and a chameleon. The bats decided to take a harsh revenge on the chameleon. After they took him to their cave, they decided that the worst punishment for a chameleon was to put him in the sun (...*hīč ta'dīb batar az mušāhidat-i āftāb nīst...*). They compared him to themselves, who hate the sun, and did not know that for the chameleon the sun is not a punishment but a blessing (...*va ān ta'dīb ihyā'-i ū būd...*).⁸

With this symbolic story Suhrawardī was referring to the dramatic killing of al-Ḥallāğ (d.922). He is remembered to have endured brightness and 'knowledge of God.' In a sense, Idrīs had put Isfendiyar of Kastamonu on trial, for Murād II was marked by divine wisdom, truth, and morality.

Concerning this specific sample of bat symbolism we have another Arabic verse from the poet Amīn al-Dawla ibn al-Tilmīd which deals, from the same peculiar angle, with ignorance and the bat. The reference to this verse is gleaned from Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a (d.1270).⁹

3. Conclusion

The *Hašt Bihišt* VI is first and foremost a panegyric understanding of the Ottoman Empire, mediated by the concepts of the unity of God and the sultanate of Murād II. The Islamic sense of the Empire and of the role Murād II plays in it is bound up with the readers who accept this sense as part of Murād II's

⁷ Obviously, a play on its epithet *'ābid al-šams*, as is the case here: *yazallu bihā l-ḥirbāu li-l-šams mātilan / 'ala l-ğadli ilā annahu lā yukabbiru / idā ḥawwala l-dilla l-ʿašiyu raʿaytahu / ḥaniyfā wa fī qarni l-ḍuḥay yatanaşşaru*. See *Dū l-Rumma* (1994: 74).

⁸ For this story, see Suhrawardī (2001: iii, 301-302).

⁹ See Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a (2009: i, 161): *wa naqīşatan li-l-aḥmaqi l-tayyāşi / nūran wa yağşā aʿyuna l-ḥuffāşa*.

divine legitimacy. The divine legitimacy that Idrīs Bidlīsī granted to the Sultan Murād II is to be sought not only in his panegyric descriptions but also in his pure historical accounts. With his extra-sophisticated language, Idrīs used several terms, symbols, and concepts to stress on the knowledge, superiority, and morality of Murād II. The symbolism of light and darkness, which Idrīs mostly uses the term *bat* to express it, is one of the ways to indicate Murād II's superhuman power and acceptance.

It is necessary to give due emphasis here to the point that what Idrīs wrote is not only symbolism. Nor is it simply a matter of putting Persian words and phrases into the Arabic language. The bats establish a theme that runs parallel to the story and may have served as a key to the understanding of the text. In *Hašt Bihišt* VI, Idrīs' use of bat symbolisms also has a decidedly Ottoman legitimacy to them. One cannot list them all here, a notable instance will suffice to make the point. For example, in the early chapters Idrīs speaks of the *Muṣṭafā maǧ'ūl-i ḥuffāš šifat*, using the negative aspect of symbolism for Düzme Mustafa, an Ottoman illegitimate prince who struggled to gain the throne of the Ottoman Empire, when he refers to the Ottoman Sultan Murād II as *āftāb-i ḥilāfat* 'the sun of the caliphate' (EE 2199, fol.318r.).

Many aspects of the vocabulary of the *Hašt Bihišt* are complex, but traditional philological inquiry is of some use in considering it. The general sense of the term *bat* is, for example, clear, but there is good reason to consider it in a broader sense. Arabic and Persian concepts used by Idrīs are of great importance in understanding the *Hašt Bihišt*, and especially in producing a translation of the text. It is of great importance whether the terms and symbols utilized by Idrīs do or do not occur in the literature of the pre-Ottoman period. Admittedly, these seemingly small and unimportant points will help scholars to prepare a critical text of the *Hašt Bihišt*. Regardless of the fact that the translation of such a problematic text without a critical edition is completely wrong, it is not possible either. Any translation not only requires a critical edition, but also needs something beyond that. The translator must pay serious attention to understanding symbolisms such as the one discussed here. Many words and terms in the book of *Hašt Bihišt* have a history. Reading them or translating them without considering their background will lead the reader or translator astray.

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Texts and translations

Eight texts in Šrūgi Arabic

Qasim Hassan

1. Introduction

The eight texts in the charts below have been recorded in 2022 in parts of the Šrūgi area,¹ namely in an-Nāšrīya (Text 1) and north Bašra (Text 2) on the Tigris, and in an-Nağaf (Text 3), ad-Dīwānīya (Text 4), Karbala (Text 5), and three further texts in as-Samāwa (Texts 6, 7, and 8) on the Euphrates, to provide further evidence for the linguistic tendencies of Šrūgi Arabic that have been already discussed in earlier works (cf. Hassan 2023, 2021a, 2021b, 2020, 2016, 2015, among others). Remarkable linguistic tendencies of Šrūgi Arabic that appear in the texts are thoroughly discussed in appropriate footnotes.

Text (1) was recorded in ar-Rifā'i, a district in an-Nāšrīya, about 360 kilometers southeast of Baghdad. The speaker, a fifty-year-old man, hails from the large tribe of Zbēd. As will be seen, the speaker spent long years with his family in Kuwait and returned later to his village in ar-Rifā'i. It seems that for this reason his speech is somewhat contaminated with some Bedouin elements, which are duly discussed below. Text (2) has been recorded in the district of ʿil-iHwēr in north Bašra.² The speaker is uneducated sixty-year-old elderly who spent most of his life dwelling in the nearby marshes.

Text (3) is in the speech of a forty-year-old teacher from the rural area on the outskirts of an-Nağaf, a city approximately 160 kilometers southeast of Baghdad. Text (4) is a dialogue between two men from aš-Šāmīya, a district located on the outskirts of ad-Dīwānīya, about 147 kilometers south of Baghdad. The speakers are a fifty-five-year-old teacher of Arabic language [A] and his eighty-year-old maternal cousin [B]. Text (5) has been delivered in the speech of three male informants [A, B, and C] belonging to the sedentary Bedouin clan of il-Mas'ūd. The clan is a part of the tribal confederation of Šammar in the rural district of al-Ḥussaynīya in Karbala governorate, about 100 kilometers southwest of Baghdad.

Texts (6, 7, and 8) were recorded in some parts of as-Samāwa, a city about 300 kilometers southwest of Baghdad. In Text (6), a thirty-five-year-old teacher [A], talks to a seventy-year-old man

¹ For a thorough discussion of this area, cf. Hassan (2023a, 2021a, 2021b, 2020a, 2020b).

² For more details on the historical development of the town of ʿil-iHwēr, cf. (Westphal-Hellbusch and Westphal 1962: 129–36).

[B]. Both are members of *āl-bu-Ḥassān*, a clan of the tribal confederation of Bani Ḥčēm.³ Text (7) is reported by three men, who used to have meetings in a Divan belonging to a chieftain of the large tribe of Bani Ḥčēm. They are close in age with only a couple of years dividing them and are labelled here [A], [B] and [C]. Text (8) was recorded in a Divan of Sayyids⁴ in *as-Samāwa*. The speakers [A, B, C] are in the age range of 65 to 70.

Text 1

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. <i>waḷḷa ḥna činna ‘āyšīn bil-ikwēt, wil-ikwēt tidri nta činna ḥna nās ‘iṛāgiyīn,⁵ riḥna minnā ib-zimān ubūy, aḷḷa yruḥma,⁶ šarad imniḍ-ḍuruf il-bil-‘iṛāg.</i></p> | <p>1. By Allah we lived in Kuwait, and Kuwait you know we are Iraqis, we went from here in the time of my father, may God have mercy on him, he left [to Kuwait] due to the bad conditions in Iraq.</p> |
| <p>2. <i>‘il-‘iṛāg kānat ḍurūfa ta‘bāna, šuḡuḷ māku, w-ta‘bāna lu-mūr, hāy l-ḥači bis-sittīnāt, min rāḥ ubūy lil-ikwēt ḡād,⁷ nās ta‘arraf ‘alēha aṣuḷḷa badu, w-aku nās ikwētiyīn w-aku mnīl-baḥrēn, ‘anwā‘ w-aškāl in-nās.</i></p> | <p>2. The conditions in Iraq were bad. There was no work, and the conditions were bad. This was in the sixties, when my father went to Kuwait. He knew people from a Bedouin origin, and there were Kuwaiti people and Bahrainis, all kinds and types of people.</p> |
| <p>3. <i>fa-šūḡla šinu, aḷḷa yruḥma, čān šūḡla bil-ḥalāl, ybī‘ w-yištiri bil-aḡnām, sayyārāt, mā-‘rif šini štaḡal, ‘ib-šarika māl qasil.⁸ ‘il-muḥim ḥaḅḅō li-kwētyīn li-‘annu yištiḡil w-šixi,⁹ yištiḡil ib-ṛāḥa w-nās ithibba, ‘ištīmā‘i, miṭil mā-tḡūl, ba‘dēn</i></p> | <p>3. So, what was his work? May God have mercy on him, he was working with livestock, he would buy and sell sheep, cars, I do not know what work he did, in a car wash. Anyway, the Kuwaitis loved him because he worked [honestly] and being generous, he worked</p> |

³ Cf. Meissner (1903b: 286) on this tribe.

⁴ Descendants of the prophet Mohammad (cf. Thesiger 1967: 222, Meissner 1903a: 127).

⁵ The voiced uvular plosive /q/ is changed to /ḡ/ here, which is a characteristic feature of the majority of Šrūqi speakers.

⁶ The phrase *‘aḷḷa yruḥma* is a form of polite address when referring to a deceased.

⁷ The locative demonstrative *ḡād* is found in most Iraqi Arabic dialects, be they of *qəltu* or *ḡəlat* type, cf. (Hassan 2022a: 616, 2022b: 89, 2020a: 187) and Ingham (2007: 127, 2000: 128, 1973: 538).

⁸ The voiceless uvular plosive /ḡ/ of LA *ḡasl* is shifted to /q/.

⁹ The /s/ in LA *saxi* is replaced by the voiceless velarized dental sibilant /š/.

tizawwağ wālitti,¹⁰ *min*¹¹ -*tizawwağha hamm*¹²
rāhat la-hnāk wyāhum.

4. *gi'idaw, gaḅuḷ ga'dāthum ṁū miṭil hassa byūt w-hāy, ga'dāthum ibyūt ša'ar, mā-tṭōhum iğ-ğinsīya, iṭṭōhum 'aqid zawāğ, w-iṭṭōhum kammīya*¹³ *w-iṭḥīn*.
5. *čān ubūy čān yištuḡuḷ ib-ṛa'i l-ağnām, 'aku čān 'inda 'māl ihwāy minha ib-ṛa'i l-ağnām, 'awwal bidāya ylimmūn ḥaṣu min-il-ḅarṛ, mā-čānat āliyāt, bass krāka, ylimmūn talit tayyām*¹⁴ *aṛḅa' tayyām, minnā lammā*¹⁵ *yṣīr kōd*,¹⁶ *yṣīr lōrī*,¹⁷ *daruḅ lōrī*.
6. *yiğī abu l-lōrī*¹⁸ *yğībilhum akil wīyā w- māy bāriḍ li'an māku saḥrā*,¹⁹ *saḥrā*,²⁰ *kišši*²¹ *māku, fa-čānaw yi'tamdūn 'ala bu-s-sayyāra, yğībilhum*

quietly and the people loved him, a social man, one can say. After that he married my mother, when he married her, she went there with them.

4. They settled [in a house], in the past they did not settle in houses like now and the like, they settled in goat-hair tents. They did not give them nationality, they gave them a marriage certificate, and they gave them a food voucher and flour.
5. My father worked in sheep grazing, he had many jobs, among these is sheep grazing. In the beginning they collected gravel in the desert, there were no vehicles, only spades, they collected [gravel] for three or four days, until it becomes a heap, it becomes a lory, a lory load.
6. The truck driver comes, and he brings with him food and cold water because there is nothing; it is a desert, a desert, there is nothing in it. So, they would rely on the

¹⁰ The /d/ is assimilated to /t/ in the form *wālitti* 'my mother.'

¹¹ The form *min* is used here as a subordinating conjunction expressing time.

¹² The particle *hamm* is characteristic of almost all Iraqi Arabic dialects (cf. Jastrow 2006: 423); cf. also Ingham (2006: 575) for its uses in Khuzestan Arabic.

¹³ This lexical item has gained over time a new meaning without losing its original identity.

¹⁴ After numerals from three to ten, the glottal of a following noun is usually replaced by a *t-* prefix.

¹⁵ The subordinator *minnā lammā* is a combination of the simple conjunctions *minnā* 'hereon' and *lammā* 'when'.

¹⁶ For this form in Gulf Arabic, cf. Holes (2001: 468).

¹⁷ Eng. *lory*.

¹⁸ The teknonym *abu l-lōrī* is used here to express possession, cf. Sadok (1998) for the different uses of *abu* and *umm* in Iraqi Arabic.

¹⁹ The sibilant /s/ is devoiceless to /s/ in the LA form *saḥrā*?

²⁰ The form *saḥrā* is repeated twice to add intensiveness to the story.

²¹ The /l/ in *kill* is assimilated to the first consonant of the noun *ši*, giving *kišši*.

*māy w-taliḡ id-ḡuhur, w-yḡamlūla humma bil-ikrāka yḡisbūn ‘alēh lōriyyāt ib-bakitha.*²²

truck driver. He would bring them water and ice at noon, and they would load [the truck] for him with the spades. They would pay him according the number of trucks [he loaded].

7. *ba‘dēn*²³ *intahat hāy iš-šaḡla, wēn riḡ‘aw, riḡ‘aw gāḡaw*²⁴ *yīštaḡlūn bil-ḡasīl ḡāl is-sayyārāt, hadēl*²⁵ *ištaḡal yir‘a ḡnām, yirḡuḡha, yxallīha fatra, lō šārat ribī‘ yintiḡil ihnā ‘aku ḡantaḡa isimha ṡ-ṡaḡḡiyye.*²⁶

7. After that, this work was completed, where did they return to? They started working in car wash, after that he started working in sheep grazing, he raised them, he let them roam for some time. When spring came, he moved here to a location called *‘iš-ṡaḡḡiyye*.

8. *‘išna biha fatra ḡilwa, ṡaḡ‘an*²⁷ *il-maskan bēt ša‘ar, qisim lin-niswān w-qisim liz-zilim, ydigūn ḡahwa čānaw, ‘idna čāy, ‘iša ḡaṡṡa bass ḡilwa, lā-niški min ta‘ab lā-nḡis ib-ta‘ab.*

8. We lived a nice time in it. Of course, the house was goat-hair tent, a part of it is for women and the other part for men. They would grind coffee beans, we’d have tea. A simple life but beautiful. We did not complain of being tired, and we did not feel tired.

9. *ya‘ni*²⁸ *ḡilwa ḡilwa,*²⁹ *ma‘a l-‘ilim lā kaḡraḡā lā māy, bass xazān ḡar ytirsa t-tankar*³⁰ *w-yimši,*

9. It was beautiful, beautiful. Mind you, there was neither electricity nor [drinking] water, only a hot tank which is filled [with water] by a tanker. It would last for three or two

²² The sound /q/ may change to /k/ in some forms, such as in the LA form *waqt* ‘time; cf. Al-Ani (1976, 55) for more instances from Iraqi Arabic.

²³ On this temporal adverb, cf. Prochazka (2000: 102ff.).

²⁴ A postural verb indicating the time contour of the following phrase.

²⁵ This form is an unusual feature for Šrūqi Arabic and seems to be a loanword from the Bedouin dialects in the area.

²⁶ The raising of the feminine ending /a/ to /e/ in the form *‘iš-ṡaḡḡiyye* is not a feature of Šrūqi Arabic. Within Iraq, such raising is only found in the urban dialect of Kbēse (cf. Hassan 2022b: 81), maybe under the influence of the Shawi dialects, and among some other tribes of Bedouin origin.

²⁷ This item is one of many classicisms that became an integral part of all Iraqi Arabic dialects.

²⁸ A pan-Iraqi continuative that usually introduces an assertion.

²⁹ The adjective *ḡilwa* is repeated twice in order to make the narrative more extensive.

³⁰ Eng. *tanker*.

- ʔinḏuḷ bī tlat tiṣur haḏa l-māy šahrēn, w-nās
baṣiṭa, ḥatta akilna.
10. laḥad it-tisʕin riḡaʕ ubūy l-ʕarab ḥamīd, yḥib
ʕarab ḥamīd, tidri ʕarabna³¹ w-hāy, fa-l-ʕinda
xiṭiya³² šaraḥhin huwwa, šaraḥhin ib-dāk iz-
zimān dibāyih w-kaṛāmāt, tidri b-hāy is-suwālif.
11. taqrīban šubih šaffar³³ gaḅuḷ lā yitwaffa bil-
wāḥid w-tisʕin, tuwaffa bil-wāḥid w-tisʕin
huwwa, ʔin-nōb³⁴ iḡāna l-ḥiṣār, ³⁵ ʔil-ḥiṣār
taʕabna.
12. w-iḥna bil-ʕarab w-mā-naʕarif baʕadna zḡār,³⁶
ʔaxūy xatiyya ʕ-ʕibīr tibarraʕ bil-ʕamal, gām
yiṣtuḡul ib-siyyārt abūi, ʕidda bīkam³⁷ ʕānat.
13. wil-ḥizib³⁸ taʕabna waqitha, suḡra mā-ṣuxra,³⁹
ʔilā-an bāʕ is-sayyāra w-iṣṭarēnā-n-na⁴⁰ bēt bil-
- months, this water. We are simple people,
even our food.
10. Until the nineties, my father returned to
ʕArab Ḥamīd, he likes ʕArab Ḥamīd, you
know they are our relatives, he spent what
he had, poor man, he spent it at that time for
[slaughtering] animals and [giving] gifts,
you know such things.
11. He almost spent all his money before he
died in ninety-one, he died in ninety-one.
Then the embargo came. The embargo
exhausted us.
12. When we were in the village we did not
know [about things]. We were still small. My
older brother took it upon himself to work
with the car of my father. He had a pick-up
truck.
13. And the [ruling] party exhausted us at the
time, forced labor and the like, until he sold
the car and bought a house for us in the city.

³¹ The idiomatic use of the form ʕarab ‘Arabs’ is very common and it usually refers to acquaintances or relatives who lives in the country, cf. Ingham (1973: 533) on the dichotomy ʕarab and ḥaḏar.

³² An invariable expression of sympathy.

³³ The form šaffar is derived from LA šifr ‘zero’ and is used here in the sense ‘to go broke.’

³⁴ A temporal adverb derived from the LA noun nawba ‘time’ and seems to be grammaticalized for time in most Iraqi Arabic dialects. Note that in non-Šrūḡi dialects the definite article al- remains as it is in LA, while in Šrūḡi Arabic the /a/ is usually raised to /i/, giving then ʔan-nōb instead of ʔin-nōb.

³⁵ The US-led embargo against Iraq in the nineties.

³⁶ In general, the /s/ in LA šijār is changed to the voiced dental sibilant /z/ in both ḡalāt and ḡaltu Arabic.

³⁷ Eng. pick-up truck.

³⁸ The ḥizib il-baʕat ‘the Baʕath party,’ which ruled Iraq until it was overthrown in 2003.

³⁹ The particle mā is inserted between two identical words to give the meaning ‘like that’. For similar phrases in Gulf Arabic, cf. Holes (2016: 102).

⁴⁰ The lateral /l/ is assimilated to nasal /n/.

iwlāya, ʿil-muhim čānat ḥayātna muṭʿiba, bit-tisʿināt muṭʿiba.

14. *ʿišna fatra bil-yizīra, waṛa l-ḥiṣār iṣṭarēna ḥalāl w-ḡanam, w-tikram⁴¹ hōš, ʿilā-an iḡāna ḡēš ṣaddām,⁴² ʿāna činit ṭālib, dāwamit bil-mūṣil fatra, hamm istaḥabbatni nās, ḍalēt biha sana w-nuṣṣ.*

15. *hassa āna šārat ʿiddi muškila wayy ʿaširt iṛ-rufē,⁴³ iṣṭarēt minhum sayyāra, ba-smāhum, w-min iṣṭarētha b-asmāhum ḥiḡzōha w-istawlaw ʿalēha, li-ḥad ilān mašākil wyāhum ṭalāyib, ʿil-ʿašāyir mā- nistaḡni ʿanha, muškila mā-nistaḡni ʿanha, yōm ilak w-yōm ʿalēk.*

Anyway, our life was difficult, difficult in the nineties.

14. We lived for some time in the Ḡazīra, after the embargo. We bought livestock and sheep, ... and cows, until the army of Saddam came to us, I was a student, I was in Mosul for some time. I stayed there one and a half years.

15. I now have a problem with the tribe of ʿir-rufē. I bought a car from them. It is registered in their name, and when I bought it, they impounded it and seized it. There are problems with them until now. We cannot dispense with the tribes; the problem is that we cannot dispense with the tribes. A day for you and a day against you.

Text 2

1. **A:** *manṭaqat iṣ-šōra⁴⁴ manṭaqa rīfiya, yaʿni tiḡmaʿ in-nās il-biha, nās ʿidha ḥalāl⁴⁵ ʿāyšīn, nās il-yiṣṭiḡul ʿammāla, illi ʿinda waḍīfa, yaʿni min hāy in-namādiḡ. B:* *naʿam.*

1. **A:** Iṣ-šōra is a rural area, that is there are many kinds of people in it. [Some] people have cattle [from which] they live, [and some] are daily workers, [and some] have jobs, and the like. **B:** Yes.

⁴¹ A polite expression which is usually used by the speaker as a sign of respect to the hearer when referring to animals or something impure, cf. Holes (2016: 465) for its uses in Gulf Arabic.

⁴² The former president of Iraq who was overthrown by the US-led coalition in 2003.

⁴³ ʿir-Rufē is a large Bedouin tribe found in many parts of Iraq and beyond, cf. Ingham (2009) for more details on the life cycle of this tribe.

⁴⁴ An agricultural area in the far north of Basra, bordering the marshland of ič-Čibāyiš (cf. Salim 1955 on the marshland of ič-Čibāyiš).

⁴⁵ The form ḥalāl ‘cattle’ refers only to animals that are farmed for meat and milk such as sheep, cows and goats.

2. **A:** *‘ala ḥadd iš-šōra hamm kaḍālik⁴⁶ hamm nās ahal muwāši, ‘idha ḥalāl. B:* *šinu ḥalāl yraḥḥūna? A:* *ḥalāl ḡimas hōš. B:* *na‘am. A:* *w-illi-yištīgīl miṭīl mā-ygūl ydawwirla zūrīyāt simčāt ‘alaḥūd ydabbir nafsa.⁴⁷ B:* *na‘am.*
3. **A:** *w-uḅu waḍīfa ib-waḍīfa, ‘in-nās ‘ala hāy ‘āyša wēn trūḥ? B:* *‘aktar šī mi‘tamdīn ihnā ‘al-hōr. A:* *bil-hōr ‘ida ‘aku māy w-‘aku simač A:* *ē. ‘as-simač ni‘timid. B:* *na‘am. A:* *‘in-nās wēn trūḥ, ‘il-aḡlabīya ḥaṭṭāla, wiḍāyif māku. B:* *ṣaḥīḥ.*
4. **A:** *‘idā xirriḡ tilgā wāšīl ‘ila-ḥarḥala w-waḍīfa māku šī-l-fāyda ya‘ni, š- rāḥ yākīl ‘idā mā-yištīgīl, lō ‘aḥḥāla lō yiṭla‘ ydawwirla zūrīyāt. B:* *hamm yraḥḥūn ḥalāl šī? A:* *ē yraḥḥūn. B:* *šī- yraḥḥūn? A:* *yraḥḥūn duwāb yraḥḥūn hōš.*
5. **B:** *xōš ḥači, mnēn yḡībūn il-‘alaf, mištara ynizlūn imnil-hōr? A:* *na‘am mištara ‘il-‘alaf mištara, w-aku nās tiḡma‘ daḡaḷ ‘aḥḥa ḥašīš bardi čōlān,⁴⁸ hāda l-yākīla l-ḥalāl min*
2. **A:** On the outskirts of ‘Iš-Šōra [there are] also people, who have cattle, they have cattle. **B:** What cattle do they breed? **A:** Cattle, [such as] buffaloes, cows. **B:** Yes. **A:** [And some] work, say, he searches for small fish, fish, to manage oneself. **B:** Yes.
3. **A:** [And those] who have jobs do their job. People live from these [works], where should they go? **B:** [You] mostly rely on the marshland here. **A:** [We mostly rely on the] marshland when there is water and there is fish. **A:** Yes, we rely on the fish. **B:** Yes. **A:** Where should people go? The majority are jobless, there are no jobs. **B:** Right.
4. **A:** [Imagine] that you find a graduate without a job, so what is the point of this? What should he eat when he does not work? He either be a daily worker or he goes fishing small fish. **B:** Do they breed cattle also? **A:** Yes, they breed [cattle]. **B:** What do they breed? **A:** They breed buffaloes, they breed cows.
5. **B:** Good. Where do you get the food [for your cattle]? Do they buy it, [or] they go to the marshland? **A:** Yes, they buy the food. There are also people [who] collect

⁴⁶ The use of the LA form *kaḍālik* is not to elevate one’s own stylistic level, but is still relatively common in the speech of the general population.

⁴⁷ A variety of *mdabbir rūḥa* (cf. fn. 98).

⁴⁸ Cf. Edzard (1967: 308) on this kind of marshland plants.

*māl il-hōr, w-ilbaqīya lā yištīrū mnīl-wlāyāt,
yištīrūn tibin yištīrūn nxāla yištīrūn ḥiḥīn, fī
sabīl ydabbir maḥṣat ḥalāla.*

6. **B:** *naḥam.* **A:** *ē.* **B:** *zēn hamm aku nās ḥāyša
ḥaz-zaḥaḥ hnāna?* **A:** *lēš māku, ḥaku manāṭiq
bīha zirāḥa.* **B:** *naḥam, šī-zirḥūn maṭalan?* **A:**
*qisim tizraḥ ḥinṭa šīr, nās tizraḥ maḥāḍīr,
miṭīl mā-ygūl ṭamāṭa xyār haḍa il-ḥaṭṭūzi,
min dīratna hāy mā il-baṣra.*

7. **B:** *naḥam.* **A:** *ē, yzirḥūn bāmīya, kill wāḥid
ḥala l-yigdar ḥalī.* **B:** *ḡayyid.* **A:** *ḥil-ḡālibīya
nās ḍuḥafā, mā-ḥidha ḍāk il-mādda w-yigdar
ysawwi zaḥaḥ ḥamali.* **B:** *ṣaḥīḥ.* **A:** *ē, māku šī
rixīš, ḥil-bazuḥ ḡāli il-kaḥaḥ ḡāli il-kīmyāwi⁴⁹
ḡāli, kilha ḥala ḥsābak, hamm māku wāḥid
yḥīnak, id-dawla mā-tsāḥdak.* **B:** *hā.*

8. **A:** *naḥam.* **B:** *zēn hamm aku hnā ḡamāḥa
bisātīn ḥidhuḥ naxal.* **A:** *naḥam.* **B:** *šīnu n-
naxal šīnu waḍiḥuḥ.* **A:** *ḥin-nxal qadīm mā-
zirḥō l-yōm, ḥil-ḥaḥuḍ ḥidhuḥ ašḡār nabīḡ
mā-nabīḡ ruḥmān, ḥil-ḥaḥuḍ ḥidhuḥ ḥāmuḍ
haḍa l-laymūn ḥurṭuqāl, yaḥni ḥaḥuḍ mū-*

bush or grass, papyrus, Ḥōlān. These are the products of the marshland on which the cattle are living. The rest [of food] is bought in the towns. They buy hay, they buy wheat bran, they buy flour, to manage the life of his cattle.

6. **B:** Yes. **A:** Yes. **B:** Are there also people who live from crops here? **A:** Why [there is] not? There are areas in which crops are [planted]. **B:** Yes. What do they plant, for example? **A:** Some plant wheat [and] barely. Some plant vegetables, as you say, tomatoes [and] cucumber. This is in our area in Baṣra.

7. **B:** Yes. **A:** Yes, they plant okra. Everyone [plants] what he can. **B:** Good. **A:** The majority [of people] are poor. They do not have the wherewithal to plant [crops]. **B:** Right. **A:** Yes, there is nothing cheap. The seeds are expensive, the ploughing is expensive, the chemical [fertilizer] is expensive. You must pay everything, no one helps you, the state does not help you. **A:** Aha.

8. **A:** Yes. **B:** Okay, are there also people who have date palm fields? **A:** Yes. **B:** What for date palms, what about their situation? **A:** The date palms are old; they did not plant them today. Some [people] have jujube trees and the like, pomegranates; some have citrus fruits

⁴⁹ The form *kīmyāwi* ‘chemical’ usually refers to ‘fertilizer.’

hwāy, ʾilli ʿidhum hāda qilla nās qilla mū-hwāy.

9. **B:** hā. **A:** ē, wil-baqīya lō zaṛʿāt⁵⁰ lō ydawwirla simčāt lō ʿidda žāṁūsa žāṁūstēn ydabbir nafsa ʿalēhin yʿayyišhin w-yʿiš minhin, haš-šakil. **B:** yaʿni ḥatta illi ʿinda ḥalāl ihnā hamm mū ḥalāl hwāy, lō ʾaku biha nās ʿidha ḥalāl hwāy. **A:** ʾaku nās ḥalāl hwāy. **B:** zēn hāda ʾuḅu ḥalāl hwāy yibqa ḡawwa⁵¹ yinzil lil-hōr? **A:** lā bil-hōr.

like lemon, oranges; some of them, not many of them. A few people have these [crops], not many [of them].

9. **B:** Aha. **A:** Yes. And the other [people have] either crop, or he searches fish [in the marshland], or he may have one or two buffalos through which he manages himself. He keeps them on live and he lives from them, that it is. **B:** That is, even those who have cattle, they have only few cattle; some people have a large number of cattle. **A:** There are people who have a large number of cattle. **B:** Okay. Do [people] who have a large number of cattle stay inside [the village] or they go to the marshland? **A:** No, they stay in the marshland.

Text 3

1. *ḏiḥ is-sina*⁵² ʿidna ḡamāʿa ḏaḷḷaw yxuṁṁūn⁵³ bil-ḥimād, tuwāli š-šita, yaʿni hēč b-ēdār,⁵⁴ labālum yḥašlūlum ḡidṛān māy lal-ḥalāl, tāli ayyisaw ḡālaw māku ḡēr intiḥ lad-dīra.

1. One year there was a group [of our relatives] looking around in the desert, at the end of the winter, in about March. They thought they would find creeks to the livestock. Eventually they gave up and they said there is nothing better than to drive [the livestock] to our village.

⁵⁰ A diminutive collective of the form zaṛaʿ ‘crops.’

⁵¹ Cf. Fox (1998: 20) and Prochazka (1993: 221-224) for an etymology of the form ḡawwa.

⁵² The expression *ḏiḥ is-sina* is usually used to initiate a narrative.

⁵³ An exception to this is the transitional dialect of Zubair, west of Basra, in which the verb *xuṁṁ* is used in the sense ‘to sweep,’ just like in Gulf Arabic (cf. Holes 2001: 160).

⁵⁴ A very unusual raising of long /ā/ to /ē/.

2. *walla šaffat hāy l-‘araḅ w-kilha gōṭarat, gōṭarat kilha lid-dīra mišat taḥḥat hāy l-‘urbān taḥḥat ib-ḡanamha, tāli min titnawwa⁵⁵ māy māku ḡidrān māku, w-gāmatlak il-ḡanam titwāga⁵⁶, titwāga⁵⁶ imnil-‘iṭaš.*
2. By Allāh, the Arabs gathered and all of them walked, all of them walked towards [their] village, they drove their sheep. After that, when you look around, so there is no water, no creeks. The sheep started to fallen over, to fallen over because of thirst.
3. *‘iddōṛ hāy l-wādīm xāfat, xāfat ‘ala- ṛwāḥatha, ‘il-bašar mū l-ḡanam, xāfat ‘ala-ṛwāḥatha tmawwit, ‘idhum wāḥid ṛažžāl čibīr hāda šwayya ‘idda baxat,⁵⁶ ‘ižō gālōla ḥažži ‘ihna ṛaḥ inmūt, ‘ūf il-ḥalāl, il-ḥalāl gām yitxazzal.*
3. After that, the people were afraid, they feared for their own live, the people, not the sheep, they were afraid that they would die. There was an old man with them, he had a little luck, they came to him and said to him: Hažži, we will die, let the livestock be gone, the livestock started to disperse.
4. *‘ihna ṛaḥ inmawwit māku māy, hāda l-ḥažži ṭalla⁵⁷ giššita w-da‘a gāl yā-baxt umm sa‘īd, ygūlūn subḥāna lla māku bil-aṭnā⁵⁷ ‘amar ‘allā subḥāna wa-ta‘ālā hāy is-sima titnawwa‘ilha wa-lā ḡēma biha.*
4. We will die, there is no water, the Hažži exposed his forehead and asked [Allāh], and he said by the luck of Umm Sa‘īd. It is said that, praise be to Allāh, immediately Allāh’s command, the Almighty, when you look up into the sky, [you see] no cloud in it.
5. *waṛa šwayya wil-ḡēm iltam, iltam il-ḡēm, killa ltam,⁵⁸ subḥānak ya-ṛaḅḅī, w-hīya muṭarat mū muṭar⁵⁹ ḥatta l-wādīm ḥatta ḡirigat ib-dāk il-ḥimād w-ḡirigat min kiṭr il-muṭar.*
5. A little later, and the clouds gathered, the clouds gathered, all of them gathered, praise be to my God. And it rained, not [normal] rain, so that people sunk, because of the rainfall amounts.
6. *‘il-ḥamdililāh wiš-šukur ṛawwaw lal-ḥalāl w-šib⁵⁹ w-taḥḥaw itwāšalaw lamman wuṣalaw lad-dīra, hāy yōsōlfūnna gaḅuḷ.*
6. Thank Allāh, they quenched the thirst of the cattle and they were full. They drove

⁵⁵ This verb for seeing is peculiar of Šrūgi Arabic (cf. Hassan 2020b: 171).

⁵⁶ A Persian loanword (cf. Boyle 1949: 29).

⁵⁷ A complex adverb which is derived through the grammaticalization of the phrase *ib-hāy l-aṭnā*.

⁵⁸ The threefold repetition of the verb *iltam* is to indicate emphasis to the action; cf. Holes (2016: 450) for similar phrases in Gulf Arabic.

⁵⁹ The negative morpheme *mū* is used here to express intensiveness of the noun *muṭar* ‘rain.’

7. *w-sālfa gaḅuḷ yḡūlūn aku ʿažža žāyya qawīya b-sana ysammūnha sant iṣ-ṣifir, ʿižat biha ʿažžāt w-bardāt qawīya, w-aku wāḥid min sādāt bani ḥisan, ysammūna sayyid iʿbēd.*
7. And [another] story, it is said that a strong wind came, it was in a year called ‘the Zero year’. There came strong winds and cold [waves]. And there was a person, a Sayyid from Bani Ḥisan, called Sayyid Iʿbēd.
8. *hāda sayyid iʿbēd yḡūlūn il-ʿažža ž-žāyya, žāyya ʿažža ḍaḷma ibḥēt idak guwwa ššūfha, w-hāy il-ʿažža min quwwatha māxḍa bēt iṣ-šaʿar mālta w-iḡnima⁶⁰ rāyḥa.*
8. It said that this Sayyid Iʿbēd, the wind was coming, it is so dark that you hardly see your hand. And because this wind is so strong, it took his goat-hair tent and he lost his sheep.
9. *rāḥat ḡnima, yaʿni ḡnima biha ḡdar aḡūl ḡaliṭ mīya aḡtar min ḡaliṭ mīya, ʿiža yṣayyih ya-flān ya-sālim ya-sālim taʿāl itlāḡagna ḡālla hā⁶¹ š-ʿiddak, ḡālla hič w-hič is-sālfa, mā-hiyya ḡnimi.*
9. His sheep were lost, I can say they were three hundred or more than three hundred. He came and screamed: Oh so-and-so, oh Sālim oh Sālim, come help us, he said to him: What is the matter? He said to him: so and so, my sheep are not there.
10. *rāḥ wīyā, guwwa guwwa⁶² yšūfūn,⁶³ ʿilwaytāt⁶⁴ hič ʿidhum w-guwwa yšūfūn, tāliha mišaw yxuṡmūn, mišaw yxuṡmūn bil-ḡimād w-ydawrūn, kilman rikab firisa, ligaw ḡanam bidarub ʿala-hal-luwaytāt, bass hā ḡaḷām biha.*
10. He went with him, they can hardly see, they had torches and they could only hardly see. At last, they went to look around in the desert, everyone has ridden his own horse. They found sheep on the way while they used the torches, but it was somewhat dark.

⁶⁰ The form *ḡnima* is resyllabified by deletion of /a/ in C1.

⁶¹ An interjection with a cautionary content (cf. Hassan 2016: 46).

⁶² The adverb *guwwa* is repeated twice to indicate emphasis.

⁶³ For this verb for seeing, cf. Hassan (2020b) and Grigore (2014).

⁶⁴ A diminutive collective of the English loanword ‘light’ (intended meaning here is the noun ‘torch’).

11. *wēn ylizmūn ġanam yšiddūn maṭalan wāhid min-ʿidhin, ḥatta l-baqīya yḍallan suwa b-biḥān⁶⁵ wāhid, yḍallan suwa, yšiddūn wāhid maṭalan ib-šīzara, yšiddūn riḥl in-naʿaža biha w-yḍallan ʿaxawātha yamha.*
11. Each time when they catch sheep, they tie one of them, so that the others remain together at one place. They, for example, tie one of them to a tree, they tie the foot of the sheep to it [the tree], so that the other sheep remain near it.
12. *w-baʿdēn il-wakit gām yitkaššaf, yitkaššaf il-ḥad-ḡā gāmaw yšūfūn ʿurbān w-ynišdūnhum⁶⁶ ʿan il-ġanam, bihum ḡalaw la-tarḥūn aku maṛkūs, il-markaz māl is-siʿūdiya ysamḡūna maṛkūs.*
12. After that, it became clear, it became [gradually] clear until they could see villagers whom they asked about the sheep. Some of them said to them: do not go [because] there is a Markūs. The Saudi border post is called Markūs.
13. *tarḥūn lil-maṛkūs tilgūn ġanamkum, šidig⁶⁷ ḥāda s-sayyid w-ili-wyāh ṛāḥaw iʿla kitr il-maṛkūs, ʿil-maṛkūs is-siʿūdi, w-ižāhum širṭi yirkuḍ, ḡāl arid il-ibšāra, ḡalaw ḡā-maʿāna⁶⁸ šī ḥatta niṭṭik ibšāra, ḡāl ḡā-ʿarif ānī, āna aʿarif ibšārṭi.*
13. You go to the Markūs and you will find your sheep. The Sayyid and his companions went toward the Markūs, the Saudi Markūs. A policeman came running to them, he said I want my gift, they said we have nothing to give, he said: I do not know, I know my gift.
14. *ḡālla ya-walad⁶⁹ ḥāk ilak dīnar, ḡālla waš⁷⁰ id-dīnar waš id-dīnar, ʿāna arid ibšārṭi, ḡālla ili wyāh sālim ḥāda s-sayyid ḡā-ʿidda w-ḡalāla killa ṛāḡ, ḡāl ʿana ḡā-ʿarif sayyid ʿana ʿabi⁷¹ b-ibšārṭi.*
14. He said to him: take this Dīnar for you, what Dīnar what Dīnar, I want my gift, the man with him, Sālim, said to him: this Sayyid owns nothing and he lost his

⁶⁵The /k/ of LA *makān* is palatalized to /č/.

⁶⁶ For a geographic distribution of this verb, cf. (Hassan 2020a: 185); cf. also Ingham (2000: 127, 1976: 73, 1973: 538) for its uses in the southern part of the Šrūgi area.

⁶⁷ The form *šidig*, sometimes also the metathesized *šigid*, is fossilized to express inchoative meaning.

⁶⁸ The preposition *maʿa* ‘with’ seems to be a loanword from neighboring Bedouin dialects.

⁶⁹ It is customary in the Šrūgi area to add the form *walad* to the particle *ya-* to express the vocative mood. Note that this form is usually used among friends or acquaintances of the same age.

⁷⁰ It seems to be a loanword from Bedouin dialects.

⁷¹ A loanword from Bedouin dialects, cf. Holes (2016: 302-303) for its uses in Gulf Arabic.

- animals, he said I do not know Sayyid, I want my gift.
15. *gālla ya-xūy⁷² ta⁷³-xid w-tara⁷⁴ štiki ʿlēk, ʿida mā-tirḍa aṛūḥ aštiki ʿlēk, hāda min sima^c biš-šičīya w-hāy čanna hāda rād il-ibšāra miṭl il-barṭil,⁷⁵ min sima^c biha šičīya ḥaṭṭal, yaḷla hāy-hīya qibalit.*
15. He said to him: Oh brother, take it or I will report you, when you do not agree I will report you. When he heard of the report, he agreed to take the gift as a bribe. When he heard of the report, he stopped [talking about the bribe], [and said] come on, I agree.

Text 4

1. **A:** *hā bu-ḥmayyid,⁷⁶ hā bin xālti.* **B:** *ʿahlan⁷⁷* **A:** *šlōnak?* **B:** *ʿigʿid ihnā, ihnā.* **A:** *hāy hīya⁷⁸ gaʿadit gaʿadit.* **B:** *ʿigʿid ʿigʿid ihnā.* **A:** *ʿaḷḷā bul-xēr.⁷⁹* **B:** *ʿaḷḷā bul-xēr.*
1. **A:** Hey, father of Ḥmayyid. Hey, my [maternal] cousin. **B:** Welcome doctor. **A:** How are you doing? **B:** Sit down here, here. **B:** That set, I sat down. **B:** Sit down, sit down here. **A:** ʿAḷḷā bul-xēr **B:** ʿAḷḷā bul-xēr.
2. **A:** *taʿāl sōlifli s-sawwēt mā-sawwēt.* **B:** *ʿalamūd-man?* **A:** *šini ʿala mūd-man? čā⁸⁰ ġēr⁸¹ gitt la-bu-yūnis, hāda bnak hamm čanna ḡā-yiftihim.* **B:**
2. **A:** Come and tell me what you did do. **B:** What about? What "what about"? I did tell Abu Yūnis, it looks like your son doesn't

⁷² A common pattern of addressing males of the same age to show intimacy and politeness to the addressee.

⁷³ A variety of the exhortative *da-*.

⁷⁴ An invariable particle which is derived from the LA verb for seeing *raʿa*. Within Iraq, this verb for seeing is restricted to the *qaltu* Arabic in Bəḥzāni and Mērgī, cf. (Hassan 2023b: 21, fn. 57) and Jastrow (1981: 412); cf. also Jastrow (1990, 10) for ʿAqra Arabic.

⁷⁵ A Persian loanword (cf. Steingass 1892: 150)

⁷⁶ A widespread strategy of addressing a man or a woman, wherein the second part of the teknonym is the firstborn son/daughter, cf. Sadok (1998) for more examples.

⁷⁷ The term *ʿahlan* or alternatively the paronomastic phrase *ʿahlan wa-sahlan* is a pan-Iraqi greeting formula.

⁷⁸ Sometimes also *hād huwwa* (lit. that is he/it) is a fixed expression which is said when two or more persons agree on a certain matter.

⁷⁹ A phrase said by the host to a guest, when the later has sat down (cf. Woodhead 1967: 150).

⁸⁰ A multifunctional discourse particle in the Šrūgi area, cf. Ingham (1973: 550, fn. 38).

⁸¹ This is a good example of conditioned serialization of the discourse particles *čā* and *ġēr* in Šrūgi Arabic, cf. Hassan (2016: 48) for a thorough discussion of these particles.

walla wa-lā wāhid gālli. **A:** būya⁸² bassām. **B:** lā-bassām w-lā ḥsēn.⁸³

3. **A:** ha? **B:** lā w-rūḥ ubūk,⁸⁴ ʾinta gitt iṭṭini muhla yōmēn. **A:** ē ṭṭēni muhla yōmēn, ʾāni wēn riḥit ib-danni il-yōmēn, xābart id-dīwānīya. **B:** ē. **A:** da⁸⁵-dallila hāda xall niftihim [the TV], xābart id-dīwānīya, gittilhum hāda š-šāriʿ māl il-..., ʾagillak dallila hāda šū tʿallī! **B:** hā hā nisēta, ē.

4. **A:** gittilhum hāda š-šāriʿ māl ālbu-ʿzēb mašmūl yō⁸⁶ mā-mašmūl. **B:** riḥit lid-dīwānīya? **A:** xābarit hāda il-walad il-bid-dīwānīya, taʿarfa. **B:** ē, ē. gāl ē mašmūl, gittla bin xālṭi rāḥ lil-baladīya. **B:** mašmūl, ē.

5. **A:** w-gāylatla l-baladīya ʾḥna nsawwī bass uruḥu t-taḡāwizāt māl il-kahṛabā. **B:** ʾil-kahṛabā mū niḏāmīya. **A:** mū niḏāmīya. **B:** ē. **A:** ē, fa-gālli āni xābṛak, lal-lēl xābaṛni, gālli xalli baladīyat iš-šāmīya tiktibinna. **B:** tiktib mū-niḏāmīya ḡēr?⁸⁷

understand anything. **B:** By Allāh, no one told me. **A:** Oh father, Bassām. **B:** Either Bassām nor Ḥsēn.

3. **A:** Really? **B:** No, by the soul of your father, you asked me to grant you two days delay. **A:** Yes, grant me two days delay, where did I go in these two days? I called in id-Dīwānīya. **B:** Yes. **A:** Would you turn down this [TV] so we understand? I called in id-Dīwānīya, I said to them: this street of... I asked you to turn down it, but you turn it up instead. **B:** Oh, oh, I forget it, yes.

4. **A:** I asked them whether the street of Ālbu-ʿzēb is included. **B:** Did you go to id-Dīwānīya? **A:** I called the man, who is in id-Dīwānīya, you know him. **B:** Yes, yes, he said yes, it is included. I told him that my maternal cousin went to the municipality. **B:** It is included, yes.

5. **A:** The municipality said to him: we will do it but you have to get rid of the encroachments upon the electricity. **B:** The electricity is irregular. **A:** irregular. **B:** Yes. **A:** Yes, so he said that he will call me. He called me at night, he said to me: Let the municipality of

⁸² The form būya is used here to show endearment to the addressee.

⁸³ Such compound negative sentences are regular in both *gəlat* and *qəltu* Arabic.

⁸⁴ On the LA form ʾabb in oath-taking phrases, cf. Sadok (1998: 122).

⁸⁵ The prefix *da-* functions as an exhortative in imperatives.

⁸⁶ The conjunction *yō*, sometimes realized as *yā*, is a Persian loanword, which is used along with the pan-Iraqi *lō*, cf. Hassan (2023b: 20, fn. 53).

⁸⁷ This form must not be confused with LA *ḡēr*; it is actually a grammaticalized item with multiple colloquial functions, depending on text (cf. Hassan 2016).

6. **A:** *ē, kahṛabāt iš-šāmīya tiktib kahṛabāt id-dīwānīya tgūl ṁū-niḍāmīya.* **B:** *ē.* **A:** *w-žibha w-hāda w-ba‘dēn huṁma ysawwūn iš-šabaka.* **B:** *huṁma yxāṭḃūnhuṁ ygūlūluṁ ṁū-niḍāmīya.* **A:** *ē.* **B:** *ygūlūluṁ yardūn yšaḡlūha.* **A:** *ē.* **B:** *ḡēr hiči?* **A:** *ē.*
7. **B:** *ē, maḥḥad iżāni w-gālli.* **A:** *‘āni gitt il-bassām.* **B:** *bil-‘aḃḃās čifilak.*⁸⁸ **A:** *čā huwwa bassām čān yimši huwwa w-ibin tāyih.* **B:** *yamta gittilhuṁ inta?* **A:** *qabil yōmēn.* **B:** *čā rūḥ bāčir idā hāy, ‘irṛūḥ lil-mudīr.*
8. **A:** *ē, huwwa l-mudīr min-xawānna?* **B:** *waḷḷa mā-‘arfa.* **A:** *ē.* **B:** *‘aṛūḥla gilla id-dīwānīya riḥit gāl xall yxāṭibna bu š-šāmīya* **A:** *‘abu*⁸⁹ *š-šāmīya, ‘aḥsanit.*⁹⁰ **B:** *yxāṭibna ygillinna ḡālaw yšaḡlūnha.* **A:** *ē.*
- iš-šāmīya write to us. **B:** It should write that the electricity is irregular, right?
6. **A:** Yes, the electricity administration in iš-šāmīya should write to the electricity administration in id-Dīwānīya and says it is irregular. **B:** Yes. **A:** And bring it, and after that they will manage the electrical grid. **B:** They write to them and say it is irregular. **A:** Yes. **B:** They tell them that they want to turn it on. **A:** Yes. **B:** Isn't it? **A:** Yes.
7. **B:** Yes, nobody came and told me. **A:** I told Bassām. **B:** By il-‘Aḃḃās is your guarantor. **A:** Bassām was walking with the son of Tāyih. **B:** When did you tell them? **A:** Two days ago. **B:** So, go tomorrow, we go to the manager.
8. **A:** Yes, is the manager one of our maternal uncles? **B:** By Aḷḷah, I do not know him. **A:** Yes. **B:** I will go to him and tell him that id-Dīwānīya says let iš-šāmīya write to us. **A:** ‘Abu š-šāmīya, right. **B:** He writes to us that they said they turn it on. **A:** Yes.

Text 5

1. **A:** *zar‘ātak ib‘adhin*⁹¹ *sawwēthin?* **B:** *wa-ḷḷa ā-tamṛāt*⁹² *ḡaḷḷan.* **A:** *ḡaḷḷan.* **B:** *‘arīd is-‘ir yzūd.*
1. **A:** Are your plants still there or did you do them? **B:** By Aḷḷah, the dates are still there. **A:**

⁸⁸ The form *čifil* (< LA *kafil* ‘guarantor’) is occasionally used in oaths involving Aḷḷah, Mohammad, or Imams (cf. Sadok 1999: 92).

⁸⁹ The form *‘abu* is followed by a city name to indicate a place.

⁹⁰ The final consonant cluster /nt/ of LA *‘aḥsant* is dissolved by a prosthetic vowel, giving /nit/.

⁹¹ An initial consonant cluster /b‘/ is created by a-deletion, which seems to be characteristic of this Bedouin dialect.

⁹² A characteristic feature of this dialect is that the LA definite article *al-* is either assimilated to a next sun letter as in LA, or rendered as long /ā/ in the vicinity of moon letters. As will be shown in this text, some speakers do not follow this rule due to contact-induced influence by other neighboring dialects.

- A:** *šī-zūd ba‘ad aqtar min hāy z-ziyāda ba‘ad? lā-ššīr taṣṣmā‘ iṭ-ṭuṣma‘ mū-zēn, bī‘hin w-ixlaṣ.*
- 2. B:** *ḍiĉ is-sina ‘iya wāḥid ‘alēna. A: ē. B: gāl ‘ammi⁹³ mā-tiṭīna ṛ-ṛadyōn.⁹⁴ A: ē. B: ĉān išyū‘i wya būy gaḅuḷ, w-hāda mallāču ibin ‘aṣṣu. A: mallāču. B: ḍāguṭ ‘alē w-māxiḍ gā‘a, māxiḍ gā‘a, gām wēn yrūḥ yam aṣḍiqā‘u ā-qidāma. B: wēn yrūḥ? A: ybāt yamḥuṣ ysōlif wyāḥuṣ, gāl ‘ammi ṣā-tiṭīna ā-ṛadyōn, gittla šī-sawwi bu, gāl ‘ammi balki⁹⁵ aḥaṣlilkum iṣbi‘ ib-hāy ā-ḥukūma, ‘ib-yā-zaman ib-ḍāk is-sitta w-iṭmānīn sab‘a w-iṭmānīn ib-zaman āmōn.⁹⁶ B: ē.*
- 3. A:** *w-hassa ‘angas, ‘ilkum iṣbi‘ ib-hāy l-ḥukūma. B: hassa ḥna lā-b-ḍiĉ wa-lā-b-hāy ā-ḥukūma, ‘aflasna flasna.*
- 4. A:** *hāda gaḅuḷ ahalna yiṣ‘adūn an-naxal, yitfaninūn ib-takrību w-tanḍīfu, ‘āni hamm ĉint aṣ‘ad naxal, ‘inxala⁹⁷ ysawwūnha mṛāya. B: tanḍīf. A: tanḍīf, ywaxrūn is-silla ‘anna.*
- Still there. **B:** I want the price to rise. **A:** What should the price rise more than it be now? **B:** Don’t be so greedy. Greed is not good. Sell them and get rid from them.
- 2. B:** One year someone came to us. **A:** Yes. **B:** He said: my uncle, would you give us the radio? **A:** Yes. **B:** He was a communist with my father in the past, and the land owner of this [communist] is his paternal cousin. **A:** The land owner. **B:** Where should he go? He spent the night with them, he chatted with them, he said: uncle, would you give me the radio? I said to him what do you want to do with it? He said: my uncle, I hope I get a finger for you in this government. In which time? In the sixties, in the time of Amun. **B:** Yes.
- 3. A:** And now it is worse, you have a finger in this government. **B:** We now are neither in this nor in that government. We bankrupted, we bankrupted.
- 4. A:** Our family used to climb on the palm tree. They are talented in trimming the nodules from the palm tree and cleaning it. I also used to climb on palm trees. They make the palm tree as clear as a mirror. **B:** Cleaning. **A:** Cleaning, they remove the thorns from it.

⁹³ The form ‘ammi is used here as an address form.

⁹⁴ English *radio*.

⁹⁵ Turkish *belki* ‘perhaps’ (cf. Jastrow 2011: 95).

⁹⁶ The speaker uses the name of the pharaoh Amun to symbolize the former Iraqi president Saddam Husein.

⁹⁷ This is an example of *gahawa*-syndrome (cf. de Jong 2016), which is characteristic of this Bedouin dialect.

5. **C:** *tačrib*. **A:** *li-³annahu xāf⁹⁸ ydīḅḅūn ā-silla bā-zaṛa^c w-xāf ā-fallāḥ yiḥsid w-y^cawṛa s-silla, w-yṭuḅḅūn lan-nahar yikṛūn, ya^cni ³abūy čān alla yirḥamu bas-sina martēn yṭuḅḅ lan-nahar, yikṛa n-nahar, ygūl hāda mā^cūn hāda šlōn nākil minnu ³idā mū niḏif? ā-falālīḥ⁹⁹ ṭaḅ^can anwā^c qisim ḥariš ^cala šuḡlu w-niḏif ya^cni mā-yḡiš min ybī^c fākiha mā-yḡiš, ya^cni min niḡsil at-taṃur abūy šī-gūl ygūl at-tākla huṭṭa, at-tištahya tākla huṭṭa al-mā-tištahya tākla ḍuḅḅa, ḥikma ba-ixlāš, at-tištahya huṭṭa al-mā-tištahya ḍuḅḅa.*
5. **C:** Trimming [the nodules]. **A:** Because they fear that when they throw the thorns in the field, it may injure the farmer when he harvests. They also enter into the river to dredge it. My father, may God have mercy on him, used to enter the river twice a year to dredge it. He says this [river] is like a dish, so how can we eat in it when it is unclean? The farmers are of many kinds, some of them are careful in their work and clean, that is he does not cheat when he sells the fruits. When we wash the dates, my father says put [in the fruit box] what you eat. Put what you crave to eat, and throw away what you do not crave to eat. It is a wisdom full of faithfulness, put in what you crave to eat, and throw away what you do not crave to eat.
6. **B:** ³allā. **A:** *aku qisim ši-ysawwūn yxallūn ṭabaqat rumṃān zēna ḡawwa, yḥuṭṭūna hāda l-mū-zēn ban-nuṣṣṣ w-ba^cdēn yxallūn, haḏōl at-tiḡḡār yištīrūn ba-^calwa ši-ysawwūn, yigulḅūna yigulbūn aš-šālīy, w-min yigluḅ aš-šālīy y^cātbak ygūllak mū-fašla mū-^cēb ^calēk, ³inta fallāḥ, ši-tgūlūn la-lla?*
6. **B:** Oh God. **A:** There are people who make some layers of good pomegranates underneath in the boxes and they put then bad pomegranates in the middle of the boxes. When the traders buy in a farmer's market, they turn over the bag, and when he turns the bag over, he will blame you and says shame on you! You are a farmer, what would say to Allāh?
7. **C:** *liḥad il³ān min abī^c yit^cārūkūn ^cala z-zaṛa^c mālti.* **A:** *naḏif.* **C:** *yišhad alla il-ḥad hāy l-laḥḍa w-mā-yxumṃūn zaṛ^ci il-ḥad hāy l-laḥḍa w-bass*
7. **C:** Until now, when I happen to sell [my crops], [the traders] compete to get my crops. **A:** Clean. **C:** God bears witness, until

⁹⁸ The adverb *xāf* 'maybe' or sometimes also ³axāf, is the result of the grammaticalization of the LA verb *xāf* 'to fear'.

⁹⁹ In the speech of the general population, the plural pattern *CaCāCīC* is occasionally used for singulars of the form *CaCCāC*, e.g., *ḡiṣāšīb* 'butchers', *niḡḡāḡīr* 'carpenters', *ḥimāmīl* 'porters.'

yaʿarfūn sayyārṭi yčillūn ʿalīha w-yitʿārḱūn
 ʿalamūd yaxdūn iz-zaṛaʿ iz-zēn, lēš liʿan
 taʿallamit min qabil ʿannahu mā-ʿaḡiš wa-li-ḡad
 hāy l-laḡḡa.

now they never check my crops. As soon as
 they know my car, they gather around it and
 they compete to get the good crops. That is
 because I never cheated in the past, and I
 never cheat now.

Text 6

1. **A:** ʿas-salām ʿalaykum¹⁰⁰ ḡažži. **B:** šōlnak¹⁰¹ š-
 axbāṛak. **B:** wa-ʿalaykum is-salām.¹⁰² **A:** ḡažži
 ʿidna suʿāl. **B:** ē. **A:** hāy il-ʿišāyir šlōn titkawwan
 ʿidkum ihnā w-asmāʿha. **B:** ʿasmāʿha maṭalan
 hassa nrīd nigūl ʿišīrat āl-bu-ḡassān.
2. **A:** ē. **B:** yigūlūn ʿidhum ḡadd isma ḡassān. **A:** 2.
 xōḡ.¹⁰³ **B:** min ḡassān ṭibat wāḡid min wāḡid min
 wāḡid ʿilā ʿan šāṛat ʿašīra kabīra,¹⁰⁴ ši-simha?
 ʿašīrat āl-bu-ḡassān. **A:** ʿašīrat āl-bu-ḡassān. **B:** ē.
3. **B:** bini ḡčēm mitkawna min fadd¹⁰⁵ ʿišrīn ʿašīra, 3.
 ʿil-isim bini ḡčēm. **A:** ʿil-isim ʿil-ʿām. **B:** ʿil-isim
 ʿil-ʿām bini ḡčēm, bass ʿihī¹⁰⁶ mitfarḡa il-ʿišāyir.
A: hā. **B:** āl-bu-ḡassān, ḡuwālim, šinābra kaḡā,
 hāḡa ysamūna bini ḡčēm. **A:** hāy bini ḡčēm.
1. **A:** Peace be upon you, how are you ḡažži?
 What is your news? **B:** And upon you be
 peace. **A:** ḡažži, we have a question. **B:** Yes. **A:**
 What is the makeup of your clans and what
 are their names? **B:** Their names for example,
 say, the tribe of āl-bu-ḡassān.
2. **A:** Yes. **B:** They say they have a grandfather
 called ḡassān. **A:** Good. **B:** One after another
 descended from ḡassān until it became a big
 clan, what is its name? the clan of āl-bu-
 ḡassān. **A:** the tribe of āl-bu-ḡassān. **B:** Yes.
3. **B:** Bini ḡčēm consists of about twenty clans,
 the name is Bini ḡčēm. **A:** The general name.
B: The general name is Bani ḡčēm, but it is
 segmented into several clans. **A:** hmmm. **B:**

¹⁰⁰ Although it has an Islamic coloring, this greeting formula is used by almost all religious communities throughout the country, cf. (Hassan 2017a and 2017b) on greetings in Šrūḡi Arabic; cf. also Ferguson (1997: 198) for this formula in other Arabic dialects.

¹⁰¹ A typical greeting question in Iraqi Arabic, cf. Hassan (2017a).

¹⁰² A response to the greeting *as-salām ʿalaykum*.

¹⁰³ A Persian loanword (cf. Boyle 1949: 64).

¹⁰⁴ The form *kabīra* is unusual in this area and seems to be an attempt to elevate one's own stylistic level.

¹⁰⁵ With the exception of the urban dialect of Kbēse (cf. Hassan 2022b), using the lexeme *farid* or its syncopated form *fadd* are the basic way of expressing indefiniteness in almost all Iraqi Arabic dialects, including *qaltu* Arabic (cf. Hassan 2023b: 14, fn. 37, 2022a: 617); cf. also Leitner and Prochazka (2021) on the uses of this lexeme in Iraqi Arabic.

¹⁰⁶ The third person pronoun *ʿihī* seems to be a trace of Bedouin influence.

4. **B:** *fa*¹⁰⁷-*hādi dāk il-wakit* ‘āyša l-‘ālam, *hāda l-‘idda ḥalāl*. **A:** *mi‘išathum?* **B:** *mi‘išathum hāda l-‘idda ḥalāl, fallāḥ ḥunṭāt š‘īrāt*¹⁰⁸ *madri šini, fa-hāy mi‘išathum, mi‘iša qalīla ya‘ni mū mi‘iša kabīra mi‘išathum, fa-qūt qalīl ya‘ni, mdabbir rūḥa*.¹⁰⁹
4. **B:** So, this is how people lived back then, this applies for those who owns livestock. **A:** Their live style? **B:** Their live style, this applies for those who owns livestock, [or] a farmer [who has] some wheat and barley and the like, so this was their people lifestyle, a constrained life, that is, it was not an abundant life. That is, there was little food, [but] one managed.
5. **A:** *ē*. **B:** *maṭalan wāḥid yiḥtāz, hāda yāxiḍ min hāda qurḍāt, šini ṭariqat il-qurḍāt ya‘ni? qurḍa ya‘ni flūs yāxiḍ mina ya‘ni miḥtāz hāda*. **A:** *ē*. **B:** *‘axaḍ minna maṭal ‘ašur xamis danānīr gaḅuḷ māku malāyīn*. **A:** *ē*. **B:** *dīnār w-dīnārēn w-ṭaliṭ danānīr, ṭaliṭ danānīr čān yimlik bihin, ‘ala mā-yšīran ‘idda čam filis*.
5. **B:** Yes. **B:** for example, if someone is in need so that one borrows from another, how do people borrow from each other? Borrowing means lending money, one takes money when in need. **A:** Yes. **B:** He borrows from him, for example, ten or five dinars; there were no millions of dinars in the past. **A:** Yes. **B:** One dinar, two dinars, three dinars. One would have [a lot] with three dinars, so that he may have a bit of [some money].
6. **A:** *šārat ‘iddak hāy il-ḥāla ‘inta, ḥažži?* **B:** *ē, šārat*. **A:** *šlōn sawwētha w-išlōn ḥallētha?* **B:** *‘iddayanit min wāḥid min gaṛāybi ‘inda flūs, xadēt minna, ‘āna ‘indi zaṛa‘, miṭil mē-tfallāḥit miṭil mē-hāy žibit xalli nigūl ba-xaḍar, axaḍar šinu l-axaḍar?*
6. **A:** Have you ever experienced such a case, Hažži? **B:** Yes, it happened. **A:** How did it happen and how did you manage it? **B:** I borrowed money from a relative of mine, who has money, I took [money] from him, I have crops, because I had planted. We could say that I got money through *axaḍar*. What is *axaḍar*?

¹⁰⁷ A widespread Iraqi Arabic continuative conjunction.

¹⁰⁸ The forms *ḥunṭāt* and *š‘īrāt* are the diminutive collectives of the forms *ḥunṭa* and *š‘īr*, respectively.

¹⁰⁹ The phrase *mdabbir rūḥa*, also alternatively *mdabbir nafsa*, is a common idiomatic expression.

7. **A:** *na'am*. **B:** *nižīb flūs w-niṭṭi bidāla ṭa'ām¹¹⁰ lil-mūsīm, hičči*. **A:** *hičči*. **B:** *hāda tāğir āxiḍ minna āna flūs*. **A:** *ē*. **B:** *w-ağilla ṭṭīni ḥimil maṭal mītēn kēlo*. **A:** *xōš*. **B:** *ʔiṭṭīni ḥimlēn, bēš yiḥsibhin, ʔiš-šī'ir maṭalan ib-dinārēn, ʔaxadit minna rḥa' danānīr, hāda ḥimlēn, ʔiža l-mūsīm iṭṭēthin ila*. **A:** Yes. **B:** We get money and give wheat and barley instead when next harvest comes, that's how it is. **A:** That's how it is. **B:** He is a trader and I take the money from him. **A:** Yes. **B:** And I ask him to give me the price of a load, for example, two hundred kilos. **A:** Good. **B:** He gives me two loads, for how much would he give them to me? The barely would, for example, cost two dinars, so I take four dinars from him, this is [the value] of two loads, when the harvest time comes, I give them to him.
8. **A:** *saddadthin ila*. **B:** *saddadithin ila huwwa*. **A:** *yibī'hin yiḥbah bīhin, yḥaššilla dinār nušš dinār kaḍā*. **A:** *dāk it-tāğir*. **B:** *dāk it-tāğir*. **A:** *hāda t-tāğir dāxil il-madīna*. **B:** *dāxil il-madīna*. **A:** You paid them off. **B:** I paid them off. He sells them on and profits from them. He gets a half dinar or one dinar and the like. **A:** This is as far as the dealer is concerned. **B:** This is as far as the dealer is concerned. **A:** This trader is in the city. **B:** In the city.
9. **A:** *ti'tamdūn tarbiyat ḥaywānāt šī?* **B:** *ē, ʔidna tarbiyat hōš ibā'ir ḡanam maṭalan, ʔirrabbi bī, ʔiḍā mā-ʔidna wārid ziṛā'a nibī' imnil-ḥalāl w-insaddid id-dēn*. **A:** Did you practice animal husbandry or the like? **A:** Yes, we breed cows, camels, sheep, we raise them. When we do not have income from the agriculture, we sell some and pay off the debts.
10. **A:** *ʔil-marʔa šini dōrha b-dāk il-wakit?* **B:** *ʔil-marʔa dōrha miltazma wīya r-ṛažil, ʔiḍā čānat mizzawğa ḥīya wīya zawiğha, yiḥšid timši tiḥšid wīyā*. **A:** *hā*. **B:** *tištiğil wīyā, tilim zaṛa' wīyā, tisraḥ bil...* **A:** *ʔit'āwna ya'ni*. **B:** *ʔit'āwna*. **A:** *ē*. **A:** What role had a woman at that time? **B:** A woman's role is she stands by the man. If she is married, she stands by her husband, when he goes harvest, she goes also harvest with him. **A:** hmmm. **B:** She works with him, she collects crops with him, herding... **A:** She helps him, that is. **B:** She helps him. **A:** Yes.

¹¹⁰ In rural Šrūgi Arabic this form refers to wheat and barley.

- 11.B:** *ē, ʾiddōr¹¹¹ tiži tiṭhanilha xubza, gaḅuḷ māku tāḥūnāt miṭil hassa. A: ē. B: biž-žāwan w-iddigha w-tiṭhanha w-itsawīha w-itʿayyiš nafīsha, hāy dōr il-maṛa. A: hāy il-maṛa. B: ē, hāy gaḅuḷ dōr il-maṛa.*
- 11. B:** Yes, after that she comes and mills [wheat or barely] to [to prepare] bread, there were no [electric flour] mills like now. **A:** Yes. **B:** She grinds it with a mortar and pestle, she lives from that, this is the roll of the woman. **A:** this is [the roll of] the woman. **B:** Yes, this is the roll of the woman in the past.
- 12.A:** *ṭarīqat iz-zawwāḡ? B: ṭarīqat iz-zawwāḡ qabil māku lā ʿaqid maḥkama lā... yirūḥ yižbilha mūman¹¹² yimliḥa ʿādi w-yirham wīya halha ʾidā gaṛābatha maṭalan. A: hāda l-ḥači b-yā sina mnis-sinīn yaʿni? B: bis-sittīnāt. A: hā, bis-sittīnāt. B: bis-sittīnāt. A: yaʿni bil-arbiʿīnāt ... B: bil-arbiʿīnāt nafs il-ḥāla. A: hā. B: ʾimnil-xamsīn w-žāy, ʾāni waʿēt hāda mawḡūd ʿiddi.*
- 12. A:** What about marriage? **B:** There was no marriage contract nor at that time, no... He goes and brings a Mūman to her in order to marry them and gets on well with her family in case they are relatives. **A:** On what year was this so? **B:** In the sixties. **A:** Aha, in the sixties. **B:** In the sixties. **A:** In the forties. **B:** The same is in the forties. **A:** Aha. **B:** From the fifties on, I still remember, it was like this.
- 13.A:** *hā. B: ē, min-ʿuḡri santēn tlāṭa ftahamit wil-hāda t-tārīx, hassa ʿuḡri bis-sabʿīn. A: zawāḡha nafs il-ʿašīra lō ibīn ʿamha? B: ʾaku biḥum nafs il-ʿašīra w-ʾaku yizawzūn min ḡēr ʿašīra, w-yixtārūn maṭal hāda l-bēt xōš ražžāl abu l-maṛa yižūn yixiṭbūnha yāxdūnha.*
- 13. A:** Aha. **B:** Yes, from when I was two or three years until this date, I have understood it; now I am seventy. **A:** Is her marriage within the clan or with her cousin? **B:** There are [those] among them [who marry] within the clan and there are [those who] marry from another clan. They choose [the future wife], for example, the family, [when he is] a good [person], the father of a young woman one knows that the father of the girl is a good person, they come ask for her hand and then take her.
- 14.A:** *yaʿni ṭarīqat il-ixtīyār ʿala š-šaxuṣ? B: ʿala š-šaxuṣ ʿala l-bēt ʿala l-maṭaqa ʿal-ʿašīra. A: hā. B:*
- 14. A:** Does this mean that choosing [a wife] is according to [the reputation] of the person?

¹¹¹ A widespread adverb of time in Šrūgi Arabic.

¹¹² A marriage officiant who presides over the wedding.

hāda mawǧūd. A: hāy b-dāk il-wakit. B: ē, hāda mawǧūd b-dāk il-wakit ʿidna.

A: According to the person, the house, the area, the tribe. **A:** Aha. **B:** That is how it was. **A:** That is how it was at that time. **B:** Yes, that is how it was for us at that time.

15.A: *zēn, ʿidā šārat muškila bēn ʿišīra w- ʿišīra. B: ʿidā šārat bēn ʿišīra w-ʿišīra muškila ʾaku ʿidna sāda yṭuḃḃūn maṭal sār biha ramī kaḏā. A: hāda wēn dāxil il-ʿišīra lō bēn ʿišīra w-ʿišīra? B: dāxil il-ʿišīra il-wiḥda. A: ʾil-ʿišīra il-wiḥda. B: il-wiḥda, ṭaḃḃathum ʿašāyir sāda w-biha šaṛākīl¹¹³ ikbār, yṭuḃḃha maṭal qānūn dawla tiḥtal il-muškala trūḥ, yšūfūn šini l-asbāb.*

15. A: Good, [what] if a problem occurs between [one] clan and [another] clan? **B:** If [there] occurs a problem between [one] clan and [another] clan, there are Sayyids among us who intervene, when, for example, there is a shooting, or the like. **A:** Does this apply within one [and the same] clan or between [two different] clans? **B:** Within one clan. **A:** Within one clan. **B:** The one [clan], the Sayyids tribes and notable Šaṛākīl intervene. Sometimes the state law may intervene. The problem will be solved. They see what the reasons are.

16.A: *yaʿni qānūn id-dawla ḏaṛūri lō maṛṛāt yḥillūnha il-ʿašāyir? B: lā, ʾakṭar šī yḥillūnha il-ʿašāyir. A: hā. B: ē, ʾakṭar šī, ʾil-qānūn id-dawla tōgaf bin-nuṣṣ. A: hā. B: wis-sāda waḷḷa huwwa l-ḥall.*

16. A: Does this mean that the state law is necessary or sometimes can problems be solved by the clans? **B:** No, problems are mostly solved by the clans. **A:** Aha. **A:** Yes, in most cases, the state law stands in the middle. **A:** Aha. **B:** And the Sayyids and Aḷḷah are the solution.

17.B: *yḏibbūn mablaǧ. A: šini hāda l-mablaǧ iḥčīliyāh. B: flūs yaʿni. A: š-ysamḡūna ʿidkum?*

17. B: They pay an amount of money. **A:** What is this amount of money? Tell me. **B:** Money, that is. **A:** What do you call it? **A:** Blood money. **B:** Ḥišam. **A:** Ḥišam. **B:** Yes, someone is injured. **A:** For example, somebody kills a person intentionally. **B:** The one who kills a person intentionally must pay, for example,

¹¹³ Plural form of Persian *sri kār* ‘chief, supervisor’.

B: *ysamṣmūna yaʿni faṣuḷ*¹¹⁴ *ḥišam*.¹¹⁵ **A:** *faṣuḷ*. **B:** *ḥišam*. **A:** *ḥišam*. **B:** *ē, wāḥid tiṣawwaḅ*. **A:** *maṭal wāḥid kital wāḥid ṣutaʿammid*. **B:** *hāda l-mitʿammid maṭalan ʿlē niḡul ib-ḡāk il-wakit* **18. A:** *Aha*. **B:** This [who kills intentionally] has to pay fifty dinars. **A:** [And what] if unintentionally? **B:** If unintentionally one must pay a blood money of twenty-five or fifteen dinars. **A:** This means either you pay *faṣuḷ* or you prepare a *Mašya*. **B:** You prepare a *Mašya* and send somebody called ʿIhda to take a ʿIhda for ten or five days, you send people and they call you, they also take *Sayyids* and *sheikhs* and meet to set the blood money, they make a *sānya* with each other, a [sheet] of paper.

18.A: *hā*. **B:** *hāda yḡibbūn ʿlē xamsīn dīnār*. **A:** *ʿidā ḡēr mitʿammid?* **B:** *ʿidā ḡēr mitʿammid yinfiṣil xamsa w-ʿiṣrīn xaṣuṣṭaʿaṣ maṭal*. **A:** *yaʿni trūḥ tiṣṣil lō ṭḥaḡir mašya*. **B:** *ʿiṭḥaḡir mašya*¹¹⁶ *w-itwaddi wāḥid ysaṣṣmū ʿihda*¹¹⁷ *yāxid ʿihda ʿašir tayyām xamis tayyām, w-itwaddi wādim*¹¹⁸ *w-yiḡulūlak taʿāl w-yāxdūn sāda w-išyūx w-yiḡiḡdūn yfiṣlūn w-ysawwūn sānya*¹¹⁹ *ḅaʿuḡḥum mā*¹²⁰ *-ḅaʿuḡ, warqa*.

19.A: *hāy šī-samṣmūnha l-warqa?* **B:** *sānya* **19. A:** What do they call of this paper? **B:** It is called *sānya* by the clans. **A:** *Aha, sānya*. **B:** *A sānya, signed by the sheikhs*. **A:** *Good*. **B:** *And the notables of the area*.

¹¹⁴ The notion *faṣuḷ* refers to the entire dispute settlement procedure between warring tribes, but in its narrow sense, it can be defined as the amount of money that is paid by an accused or the accused's tribe to the victim's tribe (cf. Edzard 1967: 308, Thesiger 1967: 221, Hassan forthcoming and Meißner 1903: 137 for more details).

¹¹⁵ In some circumstances, the notion *faṣuḷ* can be replaced by the notions *ḥišam* and *ḡāb*. The former refers to abusive behaviors towards a member of another tribe such as pulling the headscarf of a woman or the headband of a man, while the latter includes intentionally or recklessly assaults occasioning grievous bodily harm (cf. Hassan forthcoming).

¹¹⁶ The commissioners who come together to begin the mediation session between the warring tribes.

¹¹⁷ A temporary truce that must be immediately negotiated after committing a crime. It is an important precautionary measure to contain conflict and suppress violence, before initiating any forging of a settlement between the disputing parties. Cf. also Hassan (forthcoming).

¹¹⁸ This is the plural form of *ʿādami*, in which the glottal /ʔ/ is changed to /w/. It is used interchangeably with the forms *nās* and *ʿālam* in this area of dialects.

¹¹⁹ A specific set of tribal laws that must be followed in order to settle disputes.

¹²⁰ The pharyngeal /ʕ/ of the LA preposition *maʿa* 'with' is elided and short /a/ is lengthened, cf. (Abu Haidar 2004: 6) for a similar case in *Rabīʿa*.

20. **A:** *na'am*. **B:** *ē, w-miṭil mā-fašļa xamsīn ʿidā ʿtida* **A:** Yes. **B:** Yes, and after paying a blood money of fifty dinars, so he will be forced to pay two hundreds in case he aggresses again.
- baʿad yšir mītēn. A: šī-samḡmūn hāda. B: ʿimṛaḃḃaʿa. A: hā mṛaḃḃaʿ, hāy šini fāʿidatha? B: fāʿidatha ḥatta yurḃuṭ ēda¹²¹ baʿad ma-yiḥtidi.¹²²* **A:** What is this [procedure] called? **B:** ʿImṛaḃḃaʿa. **A:** What is this ʿimṛaḃḃaʿa useful for? **B:** Its usefulness is to restrain him and he cannot aggress anybody.
21. **A:** *ḥatta mā-ššīr¹²³ xilāf?* **B:** *ḥatta mā-ššīr xilāf* **A:** To avoid any dispute. **B:** To avoid any dispute between this and that. **A:** The bēn hāda w-bēn hāda. **A:** ʿil-mitʿārkin? **B:** ʿil-mitʿārkin. **A:** hāy dāxil il-ʿašīra l-wiḥda. **B:** hāy dāxil il-ʿašīra l-wiḥda, ʿašīra ib-ʿašīra? **A:** *na'am*. **B:** *tiḏāṛubat ʿašīra ib-ʿašīra, ʿaku ʿašīra mitwaxra tiži tifzaʿ itšīr ʿihda maṭal.* **A:** The fighters? **B:** The fighters. **A:** This applies within the same clan. **B:** This applies within the same clan. What about aggression between two different clans? **A:** Yes. In case of an aggression between two different clans, an outsider clan intervenes and becomes an ʿIhda.
22. **A:** *xoš*. **B:** *bēn hāda w-hāda tōgaf bin-nuṣṣ bēn il-ʿašīrtēn. A: ḥīlu. B: wugaf iṛ-ṛami baʿad min dōlāk w-min-dōla, ʿiža hāda masʿul¹²⁴ il-ʿašīra, yāba¹²⁵ ʿintum š-tardūn imnil-ʿašīra hāy? ʿiṭūna ʿihda ysamḡmūnha ʿihda, ʿiṭūna xamis tayyām isbūʿ ʿašīr tayyām ʿilā-ʿan nifuḏ il-mušila, giʿdaw maṭalan iš-šiyūx w-hal-ʿašāyir illi tiḏāṛuban taḥāčaw w-gālaw ʿalēman il-xilāf maṭal ʿala-ṛaḃa ʿala gāʿ ʿamḡma ʿala ṭifil inḃuṣaṭ ʿala sayyāra, gaḃuḷ māku sayyārāt.* **A:** Good. **B:** [The outsider clan] stands between the two warring clans. **A:** Nice. **B:** Shooting stops from those and those, the chieftain comes [and asks] what do you want from this clan? [They say] give us an ʿIhda, give us an ʿIhda for five days, they call it ʿIhda, one week, or ten days, until we solve the problem. The sheikhs and the warring clans meet, discuss and determine what the dispute is about. Is it, for example, because of a woman, agricultural land, child, who has

¹²¹ The phrase 'yurḃuṭ ēda' (lit. to tie one's hand) is an idiomatic expression for 'to restrain him'.

¹²² The /ʿ/ of LA *muʿtadi* is changed to /ḥ/.

¹²³ The /t/ is assimilated to next /š/.

¹²⁴ The word-medial glottal is shifted to the voiced pharyngeal /ʿ/.

¹²⁵ An affectionate kinship term that is usually used as a vocative when addressing people.

been beaten by somebody, or a car. There were no cars in the past.

Text 7

1. **A:** *ʔihna wiṣanna b-ʕumur hariġ. B: ē bi-llā hariġ. C: huwwa l-ʕumur waṛa l-arbiʕin... A: ʔihna ḥayātna killha nākil laḥam. C: ʔuḅu aḥmad gaḅuḷ il-wādim ib-ʕizāyimha... A: ḥatta lō tākil tištiġil. B: tištiġil il-wādim, tiḥrig. A: tiḥrig. hassa wēn bil-bāb sayyāra, ḥatta ḥaraka māku. B: tākil w-itnām.*
1. **A:** We are in a critical age. **B:** Yes, by Allāh, critical. **C:** The age after forty... **A:** We have been eating meat during our lifetime. **C:** Abu Aḥmad! What about people's banquet in the past... **A:** Even when they eat [too much], they work. **B:** The people work, they burn [the food]. **A:** They burn. Nowadays, [every one] has a car in front of his house, there is no movement. **B:** [The people] eat and sleep.
2. **C:** *ʔakl w-nōm, zēn, gaḅuḷ aku mufāṭih¹²⁶ w-hāy is-suwālif lō-lā. A: māku, laḥam qalil. B: bass āna gillak iṣ-šiyūx, ʔib-fāṭhat salmān ān-nāṣir ṣidig sawwaw imfaṭṭaḥ, w-aku čam fāṭha bay-yām iṣ-šahadā¹²⁷ biṭ-ṭimānināt aku mfaṭṭaḥ. C: ʔiṣ-šahadā... B: ē bay-yām il-qādisiya b-ḥarḅ iṛān. A: čānat il-fāṭha talit tayyām. B: talit tayyām.*
2. **C:** Eating and sleeping, good. Was there big meat cuts and the like, or not? **A:** There was nothing [like this], little meat. **B:** But I can say that the sheikhs [serve meat]. In the commemorative service of Salmān Ān-nāṣir they cooked meat cuts, and also there were meat cuts in some commemorative services in the days of the martyrs in the eighties. **C:** The martyrs. **B:** Yes, in the days of Al-Qādisiya during the war with Iran. **A:** A commemorative service lasted three days at the time. **B:** Three days.
3. **A:** *ē. C: w-il-iʕzūbīya gaḅuḷ? B: lā māku, dbayḥa zġayrūna¹²⁸ w-biṣ-žimāʕa b-maʕzāna wi-yhiṭla ʕla xubza. C: hā. B: waḷḷa. A: wādim qalila čānat*
3. **A:** Yes. **C:** What about hospitality in the past? **B:** No, there was not, a small slaughtered animal, they put it in a bowl and each person get a piece on a bread. **C:** Aha. **B:** By Allāh. **A:**

¹²⁶ A primal meat cut which is usually cooked and served as it is, that is without dividing it in subprimal cuts.

¹²⁷ LA word-final /ʔ/ is usually lost in Šrūgi Arabic and the pre-pausal long vowel is shortened.

¹²⁸ The suffix -ūn is added to LA *ṣaġīr* 'small' to create the diminutive form, cf. (Sadok 1997: 27) for more similar examples.

- māku, lā sayyārāt lā telefōnāt.*¹²⁹ **B:** *ē.* **A:** *ē,*
māku wādīm, nās iglayla.
4. **C:** *huṣṣa yā sana ta‘ārikaw āl-bu-ḥassān wayy l-a‘āǧīb?* **A:** *ṭmānya w-sittīn.* **B:** *ṭmānya w-sittīn.* **C:** *ṣawǧūd intā?* **A:** *lā mā-ṣāyir.* **C:** *‘alamūd*¹³⁰ *ṣara ṣa-dri šini hīya.* **A:** *lā ya-xūy yā-ṣara, ‘alamūd...* **C:** *gā‘? hwāy āl-bu-ḥassān hwāy mit‘ārkin, wayy bani ‘āriḍ.* **B:** *ta‘ārikat nahawīya*¹³¹ *bīha yaṣamṣūnha.* **C:** *šiniya.* **B:** *nahawīya.* **C:** *ṣara lō hičči?* **B:** *ē ṣara.* **A:** *nihbat?*¹³²
4. **C:** In which year did the war broke out between āl-bu-Ḥassān and ‘il-A‘āǧīb? **A:** In the eighties. **B:** In the eighties. **C:** Were you there? **A:** No, I wasn’t born yet. **C:** It was because of a woman or the like. **A:** No, my brother, what for a woman. It is because of... **C:** Agricultural land? āl-bu-Ḥassān were often involved in fighting with Bani ‘Āriḍ. **B:** They fought because of an opposition; they call it. **C:** What? **B:** Opposition. **C:** A woman or the like? **B:** Yes, a woman. **A:** Eloped?
5. **B:** *ṣū nihbat, miṣat la-xawālha l-ṣara w-bitha wyāha nahawīya, ‘ibin xālha gāṣ yitwannas wayyāha w-ma-dri šlōn.* **C:** *‘axaḍ bitha.*¹³³ **B:** *ē bil-ḥarām, ṭarša*¹³⁴ *la-xawālha.* **A:** *ṭarša la-xawālha.* **B:** *w-gāṣ yista‘milha.*¹³⁵ **C:** *hā hā.*
5. She did not elope. The woman went to her maternal uncles with her daughter. The son of her maternal uncle has had sex intercourse with her, and the like. **C:** He took her daughter. **B:** Yes, in an illegal way, she went as a guest to her maternal uncles. **A:** A guest to her maternal uncles. **B:** And he started to use her. **C:** Aha, Aha.

¹²⁹ English *telephone*.

¹³⁰ This conjunction is common in Iraqi Arabic, including some *qeltu* dialects, where usually the conjunctions *mbōǧar* or *mbōr* predominates (cf. Hassan 2023b: 20, 2022a: 619).

¹³¹ This is to oppose a stranger to marry of *bint il-‘amm* ‘the father’s brother’s daughter’ (cf. Khuri 1970: 597, Salim 1955: 473).

¹³² To flee with the lover against the family’s will and without its knowledge.

¹³³ In this context, the verb *‘axaḍ* is used in the sense ‘to get married with, to have sex intercourse with.’ This use of the verb *‘axaḍ* is common, especially among the elderly.

¹³⁴ This form is nowadays restricted to the elderly in rural areas; cf. Woodhead (1967: 288) for its uses in Iraqi Arabic; for Gulf Arabic, cf. Holes (2001: 321).

¹³⁵ The form *yista‘milha* ‘to use her’ is a euphemism for ‘to have sex intercourse with her’.

6. **C:** *gaḥḥat*.¹³⁶ **B:** *bini ḥčēm killha*. **A:** *humma kṭar šī ‘ārikaw āl-bu-ḥassān, humma kṭar šī āl-bu-ḥassān w-ilbu-‘ili*. **C:** *wayy bini zrēḡ*¹³⁷ *hamm*. **B:** *w-hamm wayy bini zrēḡ hammāt*¹³⁸ *hāda ysamṃūna ubu-ghūf šārat ‘arka*. **C:** *nahar lō manṭaḡa*.¹³⁹ **B:** *nahar*. **C:** *‘ubu-ghūf?* **B:** *ē*.
6. **C:** [A dispute] broke out. **B:** All Bini Ḥčēm. **A:** Most people who fought were from āl-bu-Ḥassān, āl-bu-Ḥassān and ‘ilbu-‘Ili. **C:** Against Bini Zrēḡ, too. **B:** There was also a dispute with Bini Zrēḡ [near] ‘Ubu-Gḥūf. **C:** [Is that] a river or an area? **B:** River. **C:** ‘Uḇu-Gḥūf? **B:** Yes.
7. **A:** *‘abd ār-ṛāhi arbi‘īn wāḥid čātil*,¹⁴⁰ *hāda ḡāsīm tišawwaḥ biha l-‘arka*. **C:** *ba‘ad mā-‘idna ‘arīk?* **A:** *lā māku*. **C:** *tidri liš*¹⁴¹ *āl-bu-ḥassān ymuṛrūn ib-hič ma‘ārik, il-mawqi‘ iḡ-ḡiḡrāfi*. **A:** *ē*. **B:** *ē, ṭaḥ‘an ila dōr*.
7. **A:** ‘Abd ār-Rāhi killed forty persons. ḡāsīm was injured in the dispute. **C:** Any other disputes? **A:** No, there isn’t. **C:** Do you know why āl-bu-Ḥassān experience such disputes? It is because of the geographic location. **A:** Yes. **B:** Yes, it plays a roll.
8. **A:** *bass hīya ṃūš*¹⁴² *i‘la ḡī‘ān*¹⁴³ *killha ṃū i‘la ḡī‘ān il-‘arkāt, ‘arkatna wayya d-ḡuḡwālim*¹⁴⁴ *dāčir*¹⁴⁵ *āl-iḥsēn tīfal i‘la čyād āl-ša‘lān, ‘iḡ-ḡēš iddaxxal ḡām yiḡrub dān*,¹⁴⁶ *il-midāfi‘ gaḇuḷ ysaṃṃūha dān*. **C:** *šīnuwwa, il-midāfi‘ ysaṃṃūha dān?* **A:** *ē ē*.
8. **A:** But disputes aren’t necessarily due to agricultural lands, our dispute with ‘iḡ-ḡuḡwālim because Dāčir āl-iḤsēn spit in the face of Čyād āl-Ša‘lān. The army intervened and used cannons. A cannon is called *dān* in the past. **C:** What? Cannons are called *dān*? **A:** Yes, yes.
9. **C:** *bass ygillak hāda ibin xawwām yiṭḡax w-ywaddi lāl-bu-ḥassān*. **A:** *ē hāda karīm, ḡatta*
9. **C:** But they say that the son of Khawwām was cooking and sending [food] to āl-bu-

¹³⁶ The verb *gaḥḥ* ‘to come up, spring up’ is used here idiomatically to mean ‘a tribal dispute is broken out.’

¹³⁷ A clan of the tribal confederation of *ič-Čabša* in as-Samāwa.

¹³⁸ A variety of the Persian loanword *hamm*.

¹³⁹ The /q/ of LA *minṭaqa* is changed to /ḡ/.

¹⁴⁰ The /k/ is affricated to /č/.

¹⁴¹ The colloquial /ē/ is raised to long /ī/; for more details on such raising among the marsh Arabs, cf. Hassan (2023a: 673) and Ingham (2000: 128); note that raising /ē/ > /ī/ in the form ‘ališ, which Ingham (2000: 128) cited as a marshland characteristic, is also found in the *qaltu* Arabic of al-Dōr (cf. Hassan 2022a: 617).

¹⁴² For this negative morpheme, cf. Hassan (2016: 303) and Ingham (1976: 70, fn. 27).

¹⁴³ The velar stop /g/ is fronted and affricated to /ḡ/, cf. Blanc (1969: 23, fn. 76) for a historical overview of /g/ > /ḡ/ in Iraqi Arabic.

¹⁴⁴ A clan of the tribal confederation of Bini Ḥčēm with land and members in as-Samāwa.

¹⁴⁵ The interdental fricative /d/ in LA *dākir* is shifted to /ḡ/.

¹⁴⁶ A Persian loanword into Iraqi Arabic, cf. Boyle (1949: 46).

‘iduwwa yihtarma, bass ygūlūn hīya l-gā^c lil-xizā‘il li-ḥad il-ān bini ḥċēm. **B:** il-xizā‘il ċānaw yḥikmūnha. **C:** ‘iqṭā‘iyīn ċānaw wayya l-barīṭāniyīn, huṃṃa l-waḥīdīn.

10. **A:** ba^cdēn bini zrēġ hamm istaqwaw, hāy kilha xaḍḍōha. **C:** xaḍḍōha guwwa, bass abu ḥmad il-xizā‘il il-‘iṣīra l-waḥīda lli huṃṃa ḥilif wīya l-barīṭāniyīn. **A:** ē. **C:** mā ḥāṛuḃaw wa-lā tārāw i‘la l-barīṭāniyīn dōṃ.¹⁴⁷

Hassān. **A:** Yes, he is generous, even his enemy respects him. It is said that the land belongs to the Khizā‘il, Bini Ḥċēm say. **B:** The Khizā‘il controlled it. **C:** They were feudalists with the British, they were the only [ones with the British].

10. **A:** After that, Bini Zrēġ became stronger, they took all these [lands]. **C:** They took it with force. But, ‘Ubu Aḥmad, the Khizā‘il is the only tribe that allied with the British. **A:** Yes. **C:** They never fought or rose up against the British.

Text 8

1. **A:** ‘āzaw iṭnēn. **B:** ē. **A:** ba^cad nāyif mā yišraḃ¹⁴⁸ ġigāyir w-ygilla ṭni, yidri b-nāyif gāṭi^c iġ-ġigāyir. **B:** w-āna gilitla ṭni l-bākēt.¹⁴⁹ **A:** lā bil-llā gilit la¹⁵⁰-fāliḥ.

2. **A:** fāliḥ fāliḥ xūya¹⁵¹ iġ-ġigāyir, gālla šini iġ-ġigāyir, gālla šini iġ-ġigāyir, gālla ġigāyri xiṣan

1. **A:** They needed two [cigarettes]. **B:** Yes. **A:** Nāyif does not smoke cigarettes, but he still asks him [for cigarettes], he knows that Nāyif stopped smoking. **B:** I asked him to give me the cigarettes casket. **A:** No, by Aḷlāh you said that to Fāliḥ.

2. **A:** Fāliḥ Fāliḥ, brother [give me] the cigarettes, he said to him what cigarettes? He said to him my cigarettes are finished, he said to him, Hey! I have only five cigarettes, so what should I smoke when I give you them?

¹⁴⁷ This form seems to be a development of the LA adverb of time *dawman* ‘always’, which underwent phonological and semantic changes. Phonologically, the diphthong /aw/ is monophthongized to /ō/ and the nunation *-an* is lost. Semantically, on the other hand, it has lost its adverbial value and gained a new negative meaning, ‘never’, in negative constructions.

¹⁴⁸ In addition to its regular meaning ‘to drink’, the form *yišraḃ* is usually used in the sense ‘to smoke cigarettes’ too.

¹⁴⁹ Eng. *packet*.

¹⁵⁰ A characteristic feature of this dialect is to use the preposition *la-* instead of *il-*, e.g., **il-baġdād* > *la-baġdād*.

¹⁵¹ The kindship term serving here as an address form to peers.

- ġigāyri, gālla wilak*¹⁵² ‘*indi xamis ġigāyir čā aṭṭikiyāhin wa-ḍall š-ašraḅ.*
3. **A:** *hassa nta yāhu š-šāriḥ i’lēk itwazzi’ ġigāyir, gālla ’aku wāḥid šarah i’lēk itwazzi’ ġigāyir, gālla kāfi ḍōla li-ṭēthum kāfi.*
4. **A:** *xūya w-ṭrida*¹⁵³ *fāliḥ mā-ṭṭā.* **B:** *’iṭāni l-bākēt fāliḥ.* **A:** *lā walla mā-ṭṭāk, gāllak ‘indi xamis ġigāyir, yiṭṭikiyāhin šlōn, yāhu š-šāriḥ i’lēk itrīd itwazzi’?*
5. **C:** *ḥatta dikān bil- maṇṭaqa māku.* **A:** *māku, xūya ḥna gā’dīn w-il-gāruṣ mōt.* **B:** *il-gāruṣ mōt.* **A:** *mōt. yaḷla ziffu xēri ziffū, waddu xēri waddō.*
6. **A:** *’ihna nšūf itlaṣṣaš iftaylatha mni-ruwēzīna.*¹⁵⁴ **B:** *šam’a ġēr.* **A:** *’aku šam’a ’aku ṣxām? yāhu il-ya’arif šam’a. laḅḅa*¹⁵⁵ *ḥāṭṭilha fitīla mni-č-māġ*¹⁵⁶ *w-naftāt, ḥāṭṭilha min ṭarf ičmāġ il-’irris.*
3. **A:** Who asked you now to distribute cigarettes? He said to him who asked you to distribute cigarettes? He said to him it is enough what you gave.
4. **A:** Oh brother, Fāliḥ has kicked him out, he did not give him [the cigarettes]. **B:** Fāliḥ gave me the cigarettes casket. **A:** No, by Allāh, he did not give it to you. He said to you he had only five cigarettes, how would he then give them to you? Who asked you now to distribute cigarettes?
5. **C:** There was even no shop in the area. **A:** There was not. We were sitting and the bug was killing [us]. **B:** The bug was [us]. **A:** Killing [us]. Komm on, bring Khēri the to the bride’s room, they sent him.
6. **A:** We would see the small wick glowing through a small window. **B:** A candle, isn’t it? **A:** Is there a candle, is there a soot? Who knows what a candle is at that time? A kerosine lamp whose wick is made of the head dress of the bridegroom.
7. **A:** And the kids came and started to play flute. We had dinner and we sent the bridegroom and we look at him every now and then. ‘Ādil

¹⁵² The vocative particle *wilak* seems to be a variety of LA *wayk* ‘woe to you’ and is found in almost all *galat* dialects, while *warak* is peculiar of some *qaltu* dialects such as Mosul and Tikrit and its varieties (own material). However, Ingham (1982: 87) considers it a Mesopotamian expletive. Cf. Abu Haidar (1991: 120) for its use in the Christian Arabic of Baghdad.

¹⁵³ The form *ṭrida* is resyllabified by deletion of the vowel in the initial open syllable.

¹⁵⁴ A diminutive form of the Persian loanword *rāzūna* (cf. Hassan 2020a: 187).

¹⁵⁵ Eng. *lamp* ‘Kerosine lamp’. The nasal /m/ is assimilated to next /b/.

¹⁵⁶ Türkisch *yaşmak* ‘veil’ (cf. Devllioglu 2007: 617), man’s head dress or kerchief of white cloth with red or black diamond-shaped embroidery (cf. Woodhead & Beene 1967: 508).

7. **A:** *w-il-ifrūx iżōhum gāṃaw ymōšlūn, w-it‘ašēna ḥna w-il-‘irris w-waddēnā w-nitnawwa‘la kissā‘, w-‘ādil waddō la-ḥlām w-hāda la ḡamīla.*
8. **B:** *‘illi ymōšil yāhū. A:* *‘il-ifrūx ymōšlūn, āl-fahad ma-dri yāhum. C:* *hā ya-walad, intam wēn riḥtu? A:* *‘iḥna wēn riḥna? gitla ḡāsīm xalli nṛūḥ bidūn tīmāllā.¹⁵⁷*
9. **A:** *ṛūḥ šaḡl is-sayyāra w-niṭla‘ awwal fāl¹⁵⁸ ib-ḡēr duwwa, guḃaḷ šila‘na, w-inxalli l-‘arārīs ba‘ad mā-darēna bihum. B:* *mā-bittu yamm fāliḥ? A:* *guḃaḷ šila‘na.*
10. **A:** *yāsir w-‘abid āl-‘alwān māšīn ma-dri š-ysawwūn lil-hōṛ, yō...B:* *‘ahalhum hnāk, yitnēsīnūn¹⁵⁹ walla l-‘aḏīm¹⁶⁰ ‘ahalhum hnāk. A:* *lō māšīn ywačdūn šī, bass ib-xēlhum ṛāyḥīn. B:* *‘ubūy ysōlifha dōm yḡūl il-na ‘ahal hnāk, yḥašdūn šilib,¹⁶¹ w-žaddak,¹⁶² tamur ylimmūn.*
- has been sent to ‘Aḥlām and this one to ḡamīla.
- 8. B:** Who played flute? **A:** The kids played flute. [They belong to] ‘Āl fahad or the like. **C:** Hey man, where did you go. **A:** Where did we go? I said to ḡāsīm let us leave without [saying] Goodbye.
- 9. A:** Go and start the car and we first drive it without switching on the lights. We immediately drove. And we left the grooms and we did not know [anything] about them. **B:** Did not you spend the night with Fāliḥ? **A:** We immediately drove.
- 10. A:** Yāsir and ‘Abid Āl-‘Alwān were on their way to the marsh, I did not know what they want to do, or... **B:** Their families are there, they spend the harvest time there, by the Almighty, their families are there. **A:** Or they were on their way to check something. But they were riding their horses. **B:** My father always says that we have families there, they harvest rice crops, by your grandfather, they collect dates.

¹⁵⁷ A valedictory phrase common to all Iraqi Arabic dialects, cf. Krotkoff (1964: 74, fn. 28).

¹⁵⁸ This expression is usually used interchanged with ‘awwal hēl ‘first of all’ (cf. Prochazka 2018: 189 for its uses in the Arabic dialects in eastern Anatolia and WAD III for other Arabic dialects).

¹⁵⁹ This verb is derived from the month name *nīsān* ‘April’, the harvest season, and refers to the act of working in someone else’s wheat and barley fields to get some crops.

¹⁶⁰ It is customary in almost all Iraqi Arabic dialects to swear on one’s life or by Allāh.

¹⁶¹ Rice before processing for food (cf. Woodhead 1967: 247).

¹⁶² Swearing by close persons such as grandfathers is a shared feature in almost all Iraqi Arabic dialects (cf. Sadok 1999: 85).

11. **A:** *ē, yǧūz, ʔil-muhim xūya ygūl yōmēn maḥḥad iža, haḍōla b-ǧēr ačīl.*¹⁶³ **C:** *yōmēn maḥku.* **A:** *wilak inwayyir, hāy il-ifrūx gām ittinōni win-niswān intahat, šū žīb wāḥid immil-xirfān.*
11. **A:** Yes, maybe. Anyway, brother, he said no one came for two days. They did not have food. **C:** There is none for two days. **A:** Hey Nwayyir, the children became weak and the women are exhausted. Bring one of the sheep.
12. **D:** *ši-yīb.* **A:** *wilak nwayyir žīb il-xuḥūf, žība.* **D:** *ʔidibḥa.* **A:** *ʔidibḥa, xalli li-ʕyāl tišbaʕ, rāḥ itfaṭṭis itmawwit.*¹⁶⁴ **B:** *ʔayyabḥā.*¹⁶⁵ **A:** *ē wallā w-ḥūḥ žaddak, ygillak w-ḍibaḥa lhum, w-hīya kilman žābat židirha hīya wi-frūxha, istiwa w-žadditi kil wiḥda min čināyinha tiži tiṭiha hīya w-ifrūxha.*
12. **D:** What does he bring? **A:** Hey Nwayyir bring the sheep, bring it. **D:** He slaughtered it. **A:** He slaughtered it, let the family get full. They will die. **B:** Oh Gott. **A:** Yes, by Allāh and by the soul of your grandfather. It is said he has slaughtered it to them. And each woman came together with her children and pot. The food was ready and my grandmother gave [food] to each one of her daughters-in-law and her children.

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¹⁶³ The /k/ is affricated to /č/.

¹⁶⁴ The two synonymous verbs *itfaṭṭis* and *itmawwit* are used to add emphasis to the action.

¹⁶⁵ An exclamation expressing surprise.

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“Le spose della città non leggono i giornali”

(*Nagarvadhuem akhbār nahīm paḍhtīm*)

Translated into Italian by Edoardo Elia Avio

Introduction

The translation project of the short story *Nagarvadhuem akhbār nahīm paḍhtīm* (literally *City Brides Don't Read the Papers*, in Italian translation *Le spose della città non leggono i giornali*) started soon after a meeting with the author, Anil Yadav, in occasion of the Hindi Literature Festival held in Delhi in 2013. This is the eponymous story of Anil Yadav's first short story collection, published by Antika Prakashan in 2011, that appears here for the first time in translation in a European language.

Yadav is considered one of the most original voices in contemporary Hindi literature. His genuine and vibrant writings touch sensitive themes and focus on some dark aspects of the Indian society. Indeed, Yadav takes into account social fragmentation and inequalities, gender, class and cast related issues, such as untouchability, destitution and sex work. The latter topic, perfectly embedded in the urban and cultural landscape of the “sacred city” of Banaras—also known as Varanasi or Kashi, situated in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh—is the *fil rouge* through which the author sheds light on the life stories of female sex-workers based in the red-light district of Shivdaspur, the “infamous ghetto” of Banaras. Here, prostitution is intertwined with different aspects of the cultural life in the city, such as the religious morality and the medias, the local administration and the police, the political agenda and its impact on the sex-workers' experiences. The author's ability lies in offering the reader a kaleidoscopic portrait of Banaras, where the boundaries between pure and impure, centre and peripheral, legal and illegal, institutional and informal, moral and immoral often seem to be blurred.

Translation notes

In this translation all the formal, stylistic, linguistic and cultural characteristics of the original text have been adapted to the Italian language, so that the translation appears as a dynamic form of interpretation and reformulation of the Hindi text that “continues to live unalterable in its original culture and language while acquiring a new guise in the target language” (Rega 2001: 58). Thus, each subtle meaning and rhetorical device have been accurately translated into Italian while maintaining the style, the narrative rhythm, atmosphere and feelings expressed in Hindi. Furthermore, the colours and sounds, the description of the marginal ghetto of Shivdaspur and of other places represented in

this short story, are the result of a cognitive and sensorial process personally experienced in Banaras thanks to a long-term stay during my doctoral research conducted in the field from 2017 to 2021. Immersing myself in the daily practices of the sex-workers and their siblings, listening to their stories and silences, participating in the various moments of feast and mourning, and escaping police riots during the night—all this was crucial, on the one hand, to better understand the historical and spatial-temporal context within which the narration occurs, and on the other, to overcome linguistic difficulties related to vernacular terms and idioms. Considering all the aspects of the project, I have decided to transliterate into Roman script (italics with diacritics) those Hindi terms whose translation into Italian would deviate from the original meaning, adding a final glossary in order to help the reader. Footnotes have been reduced to a minimum to facilitate reading. For editorial reasons names of places and persons appear in the more common version without diacritical marks.

Last but not least, following Anil Yadav’s wish, I dedicate this work to “all the sex workers” of Shivdaspur, who still fight in their everyday lives against urban politics of displacement and segregation.

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Chavi credeva fosse una foto, in realtà era un incubo: camminando per la strada spesso le appariva un viso tra le mani di Prakash e, dietro di lui, una ragazza senza testa si sforzava di dire qualcosa portandosi le mani al petto...

Prakash pensava fosse un sogno, ma era una foto che in qualsiasi momento, nel sonno profondo, scompariva luccicando: il *ghāt*¹ sveglia e intorpidito dopo il sonnellino notturno, il fiume ammantato di rosso e il cielo terso del mattino. Sotto un'altissima torretta reticolata e coronata da un pinnacolo, centinaia di donne nude dai corpi malati e scheletrici si contorcono. Sopra di loro un'enorme panca di legno. Seduto su quella tavola tremolante e scricchiolante, un uomo robusto con entrambe le braccia rivolte al cielo in segno di penitenza indossa uno scialle giallo. Sulla sua testa un *pujārī* versa del latte da una grande brocca di rame. Ad un angolo della panca, dalle mani di un baffuto poliziotto in piedi sull'attenti, sventola appesa ad una grucciona una divisa inamidata. Poco lontano, degli allegri giovani iniziati mormorando dei mantra, gettano chicchi di riso da cerimonia in direzione della panca.

Questa foto e questo sogno erano destinati a scontrarsi un giorno con tutta l'energia, e forse ogni cosa si sarebbe distrutta. La morte resta sempre a due passi dalla vita, pronta a tenderle un'imboscata eppure, rispetto al fuoco della vita stessa, ci sembra molto lontana. Anche quel giorno si preannunciava così vicino e così lontano rispetto ad entrambe.

Il fotoreporter Prakash sapeva che quella foto apparteneva al mondo dei sogni e non era reale, ma in quei giorni migliaia di immagini simili si sostanziano disseminandosi fra i vicoli, i *ghāt*, le stradine e i templi, eppure lui non riuscì ad immortalare bene nemmeno una. Tutto stava cambiando così velocemente che la macchina fotografica non faceva in tempo a mettere a fuoco: quello che era nitido si perdeva sullo sfondo, mentre quello che era fuori campo veniva in primo piano. Sembrava che l'intera città fosse avvolta in un vortice che la risucchiava per poi farla riemergere.

Il suicidio di Lovely Tripathi

A Benares, l'antica città della religione, della cultura e dell'impostura era il primo inverno davvero insolito del millennio. La gente rabbriviva nelle folate di vento gelido che scuotevano le ossa, ma tra i vicoli tortuosi, stretti e bui e per le strade inghiottite dalla folla, montava una calda ondata di moralità. A causa delle raffiche di calore, la ruota del tempo girava stridendo in direzione contraria.

¹ Si è deciso di lasciare traslitterati alcuni termini hindi (corsivo con diacritici) la cui traduzione in italiano si sarebbe allontanata dal significato originale, ma di adottare la grafia più comune (senza segni diacritici) per toponimi e nomi propri.

In quella calda ventata di moralità, tutto cominciò con una foglia avvizzita che staccandosi cadde a terra.

Quel giorno, alla dodicesima pagina del giornale fu pubblicata in bianco e nero su doppia colonna una foto di un’abitazione del quartiere di Manduadih, dove viveva C. Antaratma. Accanto alla porta di una baracca di mattoni ricoperta di tegole, una lunga freccia tracciata con del catrame accompagnava la scritta:

QUESTO NON È UN BORDELLO, È LA CASA DI GENTE PEBBENE

Mentre avanzava verso la porta aperta, sembrava che la freccia avesse avuto un singhiozzo che aveva fatto chiudere la gambetta della “r”.

Davanti alla casa era legata una bufala che fissava la scritta in modo irrequieto. Sotto la foto compariva una didascalia in grassetto corsivo:

Per salvare l’onore: gli scellerati che vanno nel ghetto malfamato ora hanno cominciato a intrufolarsi persino nelle case dei quartieri circostanti. La gente si è inventata questa soluzione per salvare le donne più giovani. Oggi giorno a Manduadih vivono all’incirca trecentocinquanta “spose della città”.

C. Antaratma in persona era andato in quel luogo insieme a Prakash. Entrambi erano rammaricati per il fatto che una così bella foto fosse stata assassinata stampandola in bianco e nero nelle pagine interne del giornale.

I pettegoli della cultura di Kashi non cessavano di sottolineare come i quotidiani locali ancor oggi non parlassero mai delle puttane senza ricorrere a eufemismi. Ciò era rimasta una immonda scoria linguistica dell’era del noto scrittore Acharya Chatursen². I giornali chiamavano i rapimenti “usi impropri della forza”, gli stupri “deflorazioni”, le ronde della polizia “pattugliamenti”, i festini alcolici “simposi”. Non solo i caporedattori in *dhotī*, ma anche i correttori di bozze, i tipografi, le macchine da scrivere e persino le telescriventi erano ormai svaniti, ma questi termini restavano celati nella personalità dei gazzettini proprio come il cordone brahmanico portato sotto gli abiti moderni. Insieme a qualche altro segno e anche da questa tipologia di linguaggio si misurava il sentimento più intimo dei giornali.

² Acharya Chatursen (1891-1960): scrittore di spicco all’interno del panorama letterario hindi del XX secolo. Autore, tra le altre, dell’opera “*Vaishālī kī Nagarvadhū*” (*La sposa della città di Vaishali*) basata sulla figura storica di Amrapali, cortigiana collegata ai racconti della vita del Buddha. L’opera è sintomatica del ruolo sociale dei romanzi dell’epoca rispetto alle questioni legate alla moralità e alle dicotomie corpo-anima e desiderio-rinuncia.

Come d'abitudine, anche quella sera il reporter quarantaduenne, C. Antaratma, si recò all'obitorio con il suo scooter sgangherato sulla cui targa anteriore e posteriore, e come se non bastasse anche sulla ruota di scorta, compariva la scritta "STAMPA". Il resoconto dei cadaveri era la routine del suo incarico quotidiano.

Al guardiano offrì un *cāy* e un involtino di *pān* da masticare, ne preparò uno per sé e tirando fuori carta e penna cominciò a scribacchiare. Dopo aver annotato i nomi, le informazioni, la causa della morte e qualche appunto sui cadaveri arrivati quel giorno in obitorio, rientrò in ufficio. Raccolse dalla scrivania i comunicati stampa delle nomine e delle elezioni, i messaggi di congratulazioni e i procedimenti di condanna all'interno del faldone del bollettino criminale inviato dalla polizia e, dopo aver raggiunto l'angolo più negletto della redazione, vi si sedette.

Fino alle dieci e mezzo di sera continuò a scrivere articoli in colonna singola annotando le risse, gli scippi di catenine, i sequestri di eroina, i furti con scasso e le denunce. Dopo aver consegnato queste notizie al reporter di cronaca nera e, proprio quando stava per uscire, durante l'ossequiosa cerimonia quotidiana che consiste nel prestare omaggio ai più anziani, quello gli chiese: "Chi è questa Lovely Tripathi? La conosci?".

"Si è uccisa mangiando veleno per topi. È la moglie di qualche funzionario. L'esame autoptico è stato fatto immediatamente. Il suo corpo sarà già stato cremato", rispose.

"E questo Ramashankar Tripathi della Polizia di Stato, sai chi è?".

Lui si grattò la testa, come per dire: "Me lo dica lei, per l'appunto, chi mai potrebbe essere".

Il reporter di cronaca nera sbottò con arroganza: "Ehi vecchio, si son fatte le undici di sera. Sei lì seduto da quattro ore con la notizia del suicidio della moglie dell'Ispettore Capo nascosta sotto le chiappe e mi stai dando un'unica notizia da stampare. Ma quando miglierai? Adesso come si potrà mai lavorare questa notizia, mandarla in redazione, pubblicarla?".

Gli occhi del dimesso C. Antaratma lampeggiarono. Rispondendogli un po' più a tono disse: "E noi che c'entriamo, credevamo che lei già lo sapesse. Anche Prakash l'aveva informata di aver scattato persino la foto della cremazione. Si è svolta alle tre a Manikarnika ghat³".

Anziché ribattere, il reporter si avventò su un telefono libero e lo prese in braccio. Lusingando per tre quarti d'ora il poliziotto, il viceispettore, l'autista e la receptionist dell'infermeria, raccolse tutti i particolari.

³ Il principale *ghāṭ* crematorio di Benares, dove vengono cremati gli hindu.

Abbozzata l'introduzione della notizia al computer, mandò a chiamare C. Antaratma che nel frattempo al baracchino del *pān* si stava vantando della sua prontezza, enfatizzando la sbadataggine del reporter di cronaca nera. Egli gli affidò l'incarico di restare fuori dalla villa dell'Ispettore Capo di Polizia fino all'una e mezza di notte.

Antaratma sapeva che a quell'ora fuori dalla villa dell'Ispettore non avrebbe trovato un bel niente, perciò gli rispose cordialmente di sì e rincasò.

La moglie dell'Ispettore era bella e inserita nella città che conta, una persona importante in città.

Perché mai avrebbe dovuto suicidarsi alla sua giovanissima età? A tal proposito circolavano solo illazioni.

Una diceria era che l'Ispettore avesse una relazione illecita con una qualche funzionaria di polizia, e che sua moglie si era tolta la vita proprio a causa sua. Ma questa chiacchiera nessuno osava metterla per iscritto, nemmeno nella sezione dedicata al gossip.

Il timore era che una disgrazia avrebbe potuto abbattersi su quelle Jeep che di notte correvano alla velocità della luce per distribuire il giornale nelle altre circoscrizioni. A quel punto la polizia li avrebbe multati con l'accusa di aver caricato illegalmente dei passeggeri all'interno della vettura e li avrebbe trattiene alla centrale. Sarebbe bastata soltanto un'ora di ritardo e, una volta raggiunto il centro di smistamento, il quotidiano sarebbe diventato carta straccia. Sarebbe stata una manna dal cielo per le testate concorrenti. Di conseguenza, il reporter di cronaca nera non avrebbe avuto altra opzione se non quella di implorare gli ufficiali di alto rango della polizia per far rilasciare le Jeep. Nessun manager di società per azioni, per quanto potesse guadagnare, avrebbe potuto risolvere questo intrigo locale.

Lovely Tripathi era una cliente di Chavi e le piaceva chiamarla amica.

Chavi, dopo aver frequentato un corso da estetista all'università, gestiva un salone di bellezza all'interno di una stanza di casa sua, nonostante l'opposizione del padre anziano e malato. Aveva incontrato la moglie dell'Ispettore in occasione di una competizione di trattamenti facciali e di henné organizzata dall'università, nella quale la donna era l'ospite d'onore.

Andando spesso a casa di Lovely Tripathi, Chavi sapeva che la donna soffriva a causa della trascuratezza del marito, e che avere una ricca vita sociale diveniva un rimedio indispensabile per trascorrere le giornate. Perché l'ispettore le ribadiva che lei poteva andare con chiunque volesse, ma anche morire in qualsiasi momento.

Fra le cose che essere amica di Lovely implicava, Chavi si era dovuta inventare un nuovo trattamento facciale che mascherasse con grazia i segni blu dei pugni e dei ceffoni. Continuava a

ribadire a Prakash che era stato proprio l'ispettore, abile nel creare fittizie ricostruzioni del caso, ad aver ucciso Lovely e che la giusta condanna avrebbe dovuto essere l'impiccagione.

Nella relazione amorosa tra Prakash e Chavi che durava ormai da tre anni, Lovely era spesso motivo di tensione, e il loro amore riusciva a crescere grazie ai suoi scossoni. A Prakash sembrava che Chavi insistesse affinché lui lasciasse il lavoro da fotocronista per dedicarsi alle modelle, diventando così fotografo di moda, proprio perché influenzata da donne ricche e indolenti come Lovely. Solo a quel punto la sua arte sarebbe stata apprezzata e lui avrebbe inoltre guadagnato bene.

Chavi sapeva che il giornalista che si celava nel profondo del suo animo, alias cane da guardia, sarebbe andato in bestia al solo sentire queste cose. Lui ribatteva allora rilanciandole il consiglio di brevettare la sua maestria con il trucco nel nascondere i segni delle percosse: milioni di donne sarebbero diventate sue clienti e, grazie alla sua abilità nel far apparire belle e felici famiglie distrutte, sarebbe diventata immortale. Il patto era che tutti quegli amorevoli consigli dovevano esser serbati per quei bambini che sarebbero nati in futuro, e che per il momento si dovevano amare come se quelli non avessero potuto veder la luce... perché per sposarsi era ancora presto.

Prakash aveva dunque a disposizione un'amica di Lovely Tripathi che era testimone oculare delle violenze dell'ispettore e ne poteva addirittura chiedere pubblicamente la condanna all'impiccagione. Ma non la voleva mettere nei guai. Anche lui, come altri giornalisti, aveva imparato a tener ben separati l'ambito della vita privata da quello professionale, poiché la commistione di entrambi, in questa situazione delicata, avrebbe potuto rovinare il loro rapporto. Tuttavia, vedendo Chavi depressa e in preda all'ansia promise che in questa vicenda avrebbe fatto tutto il necessario per portare a galla la verità.

Senza una prova certa metterci la firma diventava pericoloso. Ma nemmeno poteva far finta di niente lasciando irrisolto quel giallo. Perciò invitò i giornalisti a precipitarsi a casa dei genitori di Lovely, esortò le sue amiche a condividere dei ricordi, interpellò i servizi sociali per gettar luce sulla sua personalità e sulle sue inclinazioni. Con uno stratagemma, Prakash riuscì a farsi dare da uno studio fotografico qualche foto dell'album di famiglia dell'ispettore. Mise insieme i dettagli di qualche noto suicidio e con stile ingegnoso sgorgò dalle pagine una fonte di racconti molto commoventi. La notizia stava raggiungendo anche i canali televisivi con toni ancor più piccanti.

Ma che razza di *masālā* mangiava, Signora mia?

Dopo una settimana, arrivò la dichiarazione dell'ispettore con la testa rasata in segno di lutto che non si trattava di suicidio, ma di un semplice incidente. Sua moglie era una patita del *pān masālā*. Rimasta a casa al buio senza elettricità, aveva ingerito delle pillole di fosforo di zinco scambiandole per *pān masālā*.

Ma nel frattempo si venne a sapere che il padre di Lovely Tripathi aveva denunciato l’Ispettore per i maltrattamenti nei confronti di sua figlia e per istigazione al suicidio, e che stava per andare in tribunale.

Il giornalista di cronaca nera stava battendo questa notizia e C. Antaratma, con l’involto di *pān* in mano, se ne stava in piedi alle sue spalle quando un fattorino che scrutava lo schermo del computer prese a dire tra sé: “Signora, ma lei che razza di *masālā* mangiava? I grani del veleno per topi sono grandi quanto un dito, il *pān masālā* non è altro che polvere. È incredibile come si faccia passare un cammello per la cruna di un ago”.

All’improvviso i suoceri dell’Ispettore, dopo aver meditato su tutte le circostanze del caso e attenuato lo shock della perdita, decisero di ritirare la loro denuncia. Anch’essi si arresero alla versione dell’incidente domestico avvenuto al buio. La polizia chiuse il caso e l’Ispettore prese un lungo periodo di congedo. Si era dovuto ingoiare il rospo.

Arrivò anche il direttore che mai si era visto alle normali riunioni della redazione. I redattori locali, condirettori e i curatori editoriali a lui subordinati rimproverarono i giornalisti di cronaca di essere oziosi, scansafatiche e negligenti. Erano più preoccupati dei rapporti che intrattenevano con gli ufficiali che del giornale. Per questo, anziché dimostrare la verità con prove di fatto e precisi riferimenti, si accontentavano di prestare fede alla versione della polizia. Capacità eccezionale dei giornalisti è ascoltare le sfuriate dei direttori e inventare delle false spiegazioni. Queste notizie false si diffondono rapidamente attraverso i giornali. Si sa che l’indomani, insieme alle fake news tutto diventa stantio, scaduto e inutile. Tutto entra da un orecchio ed esce dall’altro. Ogni giorno c’erano fatti e notizie nuovi. Chi mai avrebbe ricordato Lovely Tripathi?

Quando dopo un mese l’Ispettore Ramashankar Tripathi rientrò dalle ferie sembrava totalmente trasformato. Cominciò a sedersi in ufficio cospargendosi la fronte di cenere sacra davanti alla foto di Sharda Devi di Maihar incorniciata da lucine elettriche. Le sue visite ai templi e centri monastici della città aumentarono, e i santoni cominciarono a girovagare ogni giorno intorno alla sua casa e al suo ufficio. Il suo luogo di lavoro anonimo e di color cachi divenne improvvisamente colorato e profumato. In memoria di sua moglie fece installare a Godoliya, l’incrocio più importante della città, un chiosco di ristoro che offriva acqua ai pellegrini. Inoltre, in sua memoria, erano già state istituite in città due o tre associazioni per donne e bambini bisognosi, il cui patrono e garante morale era Ramshankar Tripathi. Il titolo di garante della pubblica morale gli era stato attribuito dai presidenti di queste associazioni. Durante le vacanze aveva scritto un libro di cultura generale per gli studenti che stavano preparando l’esame per entrare nel corpo della Polizia di Stato.

Nel libro, intitolato ‘Il primo uso del computer’, si sosteneva che tale strumento è utile alle relazioni matrimoniali di successo poiché è d’aiuto nel calcolo del tempo, della congiunzione astrale e dell’oroscopo precedente il matrimonio. Tutti i commissari di polizia, dopo aver concordato la percentuale di pizzo con i venditori ai chioschetti, avevano organizzato la vendita del libro in ogni rispettiva zona di competenza.

Per le notizie di tutti i giorni che permettono di sbarcare il lunario si sudano sette camicie, mentre quelle esplosive corrono sulle proprie gambe fino a raggiungere giornali e canali televisivi. Quest’ultime, a causa del conflitto d’interessi, continuano a levarsi in aria e divampare come faville impazzite, per poi un giorno spegnersi del tutto.

Una sera, un impiegato incartapecorito di un’agenzia assicurativa documentò con fatti e testimonianze la notizia che, sebbene la polizia avesse insabbiato il caso, la sua agenzia non era disposta a credere a quella versione.

Le indagini sulle cause della morte di Lovely Tripathi erano andate avanti per mano di un’agenzia di investigazione privata. L’Ispettore Ramashankar Tripathi, con una dichiarazione giurata dei suoceri, aveva rivendicato una somma di venti *lākh* sull’assicurazione di sua moglie, motivo per cui era partita questa inchiesta lampo.

Prakash a volte incontrava questo vecchietto in una bettola e, dopo un paio di cicchetti, l’anziano gli si appiccicava per convincerlo a sottoscrivere una polizza assicurativa, in modo tale che suo figlio, agente di assicurazioni, potesse raggiungere l’obiettivo delle vendite. Prakash gli ripeteva sempre che i giornalisti come lui bevevano alcolici da battaglia e non guadagnavano tanto da poter pagare un premio assicurativo. Nonostante gli anni passassero, il vecchio non aveva abbandonato la sua litania.

Si confermò che quella notizia era assolutamente esatta. Purtroppo nessun impiegato dell’agenzia assicurativa era pronto a metterci la faccia. Quel vecchietto raggrinzito aveva procurato uno scoop davvero sensazionale. Dopo due giorni di investigazioni e intenso lavoro si decise di pubblicarlo. Ma, nel giorno in cui il pezzo fu pronto, le onde elettromagnetiche dei telefoni cellulari si avvinghiarono al collo dell’articolo a causa di una misteriosa fuga di notizie giunta sino all’Ispettore.

L’Ispettore contattò, salutandoli con deferenza, un ministro e il capo della polizia della capitale. I tre fecero una telefonata a Mumbai ai due direttori responsabili del giornale. I direttori si consultarono, poi misero al corrente il caporedattore che a sua volta informò l’editore locale. Questi si rivolse all’assistente, che di seguito chiamò il curatore che successivamente ragguagliò il corrispondente principale. Infine, l’ordine di placare la notizia arrivò sino al redattore della cronaca cittadina. Nel ruzzolar giù da così tanti gradini, venne il sospetto che qualche agenzia assicurativa con un conflitto

d’interessi avesse tramato un complotto per infangare il nome dell’agenzia rivale, tanto quanto bastava a far calmare le acque e svolgere delle indagini indipendenti.

Prakash aveva addirittura una foto dell’Ispettore mentre, seduto al campo crematorio di Manikarnika ghat, si faceva radere la testa in segno di lutto. Per essa aveva scelto già da tempo la didascalia “Proprio mentre lo radono... cade la grandine”, ma ora quei chicchi, distaccandosi dalla foto, stavano precipitando altrove.

Quella stessa sera una donna di mezza età, con il volto coperto da un burqa, masticando *pān* senza tregua, sostava da tre ore davanti all’ufficio stampa in compagnia di un giovanotto. Ripeteva come una cantilena di voler incontrare il capo della “fabbrica del giornale”. Il custode le spiegò a più riprese che quella non era una fabbrica e che in quel luogo non c’era nessun capo, ma che avrebbe trovato gli editori al lavoro e se avesse voluto li avrebbe potuti incontrare. La donna cominciò a polemizzare sull’assenza del principale. Perché lei era venuta per vedere proprio lui. Nell’andirivieni, qualche giornalista le chiese quale fosse il problema, ma lei imperterrita non aprì bocca. Continuava a ribadire che avrebbe parlato soltanto con il superiore. Non doveva far altro che salutarlo ed andarsene. Quando lo sguardo di C. Antaratma cadde su di lei, tuonò: “Cosa ci fai qui? Con quale coraggio ti presenti davanti l’ufficio stampa! Vattene via. Ora è davvero troppo, perfino qui...”.

Spaventata, la donna afferrò il braccio del giovanotto e se ne andò di fretta. Era una residente del quartiere di C. Antaratma e lui l’aveva riconosciuta senza ombra di dubbio.

Prakash era avvezzo al gioco del trasformare in sconforto la fortuna che gli arrivava spontaneamente tra le mani. Aveva iniziato a tracciare il ritratto di quel sorvegliato speciale i cui scandali, affari e segreti galoppanti erano tali da esser noti a chiunque, eppure venivano taciuti. A pensarci tutto quel tempo si sentiva un ragazzino, ma in quel momento non riusciva a trovare le parole per spiegarlo a Chavi.

In risposta a: “Scusa, non sono riuscito a fare nulla per la tua amica”, Chavi disse con la voce strozzata dalle lacrime: “Perché questi giornali e i canali televisivi si autoproclamano ‘i detentori della verità’ quando sono loro stessi ad addomesticarla? Perché mai non dicono chiaramente di esser pilotati proprio da gente come l’Ispettore Capo?”.

Prakash deglutì a più riprese, insieme alla saliva, quel “detentore di verità”, in mezzo a un lungo silenzio.

Stava pensando che fosse davvero arrivato il momento di diventare fotografo di moda. A quel punto avrebbe trovato per lo meno sollievo da quei sospetti che, dimostrandosi sin troppo reali, a volte lo mettevano in difficoltà. All’improvviso, Chavi gli disse: “Ok, ti sei liberato del fastidio della buona

Lovely nello stesso istante in cui se ne è andata, però adesso, guai a te se provi a fare il Krishna⁴ della situazione tra le modelle con la scusa delle foto!”.

Prakash rimase letteralmente sbigottito dall’esattezza con cui lei gli aveva letto nel pensiero.

Maṭh, ballerine batticoda, Miss Lahura Bir⁵

Lo splendido, fotogenico padre dell’ispettore Ramashankar Tripathi, funzionario in pensione della pubblica amministrazione, in preda ad attacchi di ansia per la carriera del figlio e per il prestigio della famiglia cominciò a pellegrinare per *maṭh*, *āśram* ed altri luoghi di culto.

A Benares, ancor prima del periodo coloniale britannico, il legame tra gli ufficiali e i luoghi di culto era stabile, fecondo e bizzarro. I Commissari, i Funzionari dirigenti e i Capi di Polizia, il primo giorno d’incarico, chinando il capo davanti all’effigie di Kalabhairava⁶, guardiano supremo di Kashi, lo consacrano con abluzioni di alcolici. La gente navigata e astuta appena può ormeggia la propria fede in uno o nell’altro *śaktipīṭh*. È lì che continua ad avvenire un costante e reciproco scambio di energie.

In questi *śaktipīṭh* giunge, sotto forma di discepoli o devoti, l’intero repertorio di leader politici, industriali, commercianti, mafiosi e ministri di tutto il paese ansiosi di far qualsiasi cosa per i propri guru.

La promozione, il trasferimento degli Ufficiali di Stato, lo sbaragliare i concorrenti, la fine dei rapporti investigativi, tutte queste cose accadono con un singolo gesto dei guru. Come contropartita, essi osservano gli ordini prescrittivi dei superiori dei monasteri, di astrologi e tantrici, architetti olistici, studiosi dell’antico sapere, perché quella è opera pia svolta per la prosperità e il benessere di tutto il creato.

Questo rapporto tra burocrazia e religione è tanto simbiotico quanto quello delle piante leguminose con i microorganismi. Entrambe si proteggono, si arricchiscono e danno la vita l’una per l’altra. Un commissario di polizia dell’epoca, ottenuto il beneplacito di un modesto santone, aveva trasformato un *maṭh* in un dipartimento amministrativo e, in obbedienza ai dettami governativi, aveva depositato la richiesta per candidare Benares a patrimonio mondiale dell’Unesco, per la cui pratica ogni mese si recava in America. Incoraggiando i turisti stranieri, i pellegrini indiani e gli industriali che giungevano al centro a fare offerte di denaro per lo sviluppo di Kashi, era riuscito ad accumulare più di

⁴ Il Dio Krishna, incarnazione di Vishnu. Note sono le sue danze e gli amoreggiamenti con le vacche della regione del Braj.

⁵ Nome di una divinità femminile da cui prende il nome uno dei principali crocevia della città di Benares.

⁶ Una delle forme terrifiche di Shiva, venerato a Benares come il guardiano supremo della città santa.

cento milioni di rupie. Fino ad allora nessun funzionario amministrativo era riuscito in una tale impresa.

Gli *śaktipīṭh* chiamano sempre più vicino a sé le persone da cui ottengono riconoscimenti, prestigio e potere. Proprio in questi luoghi, sotto l’ombrello della religione, modernità e tradizione, ascetismo e mondanità, business e spiritualità, onestà e furbizia, riescono a fondersi in presenza del Signore in modo tale da non lasciar apparire alcun segno di sutura. Quanto più ci si mostra ricchi e potenti, tanto più nel profondo dell’animo si continua ad essere vuoti ed insicuri. Tale città, Benares, attrae come una calamita questo genere di individui garantendo supporto morale a base di tranquillità e rassicurazione. La gente mediocre angosciata dalla bramosia di ricchezze materiali deposita la propria fede in tali *śaktipīṭh* per ottenere in cambio una sterile benedizione.

Ciò si configura come un vero e proprio business spirituale. Ma, una volta che offrono la loro devozione ai potenti, questo diventa un affare materiale, ed essi diventano partner paritari nell’occultare i segreti più intimi di questi luoghi di potere, o *śaktipīṭh*.

In un giorno di tempo libero, il Signore udì le implorazioni del magnifico, fotogenico ed anziano padre dell’Ispettore. Nel mese di ottobre, le ballerine bianche e nere d’improvviso iniziarono a zampettare sui tetti e l’inchiesta a puntate ‘La storia del ghetto malfamato’ cominciò a danzare sulle pagine screziate del giornale.

Affondando e riemergendo in un delirio di moralità, due inviati, seguendo passo passo C. Antaratma calatosi nelle vesti di guida, cominciarono a sondare i villaggi e i quartieri di Manduadih e Shivdaspur.

Si mandò in stampa che:

Per via delle ‘spose della città’, le fanciulle dei quartieri del vicinato non possono maritarsi, qualcuna ha già divorziato, altre smaniano di tornare alle loro case materne, disadorni i polsi dei loro fratelli e sgombre le altalene nel mese di *sāvan*⁷. La gente cerca di accalappiare sposi con furbizia tenendo segreto il nome del villaggio e del quartiere, ma la verità viene sempre a galla. Di conseguenza si smantellano i tendoni matrimoniali e i cortei nuziali indietreggiano. La trentaduenne laureata Sarla ha cominciato a detestare la parola matrimonio e ora non appena sente i canti nuziali della cerimonia di arrivo dello sposo, viene colta da attacchi isterici. Il matrimonio di Rajesh Bardwaj, gestore di un negozio di *pān* a Shivdaspur, è andato in fumo per cinque volte. La sesta ha deciso di organizzare le nozze in segreto al tempio di Shiva Trilochan⁸ nella città di Jaunpur, ma sono state subito scoperte le sue intenzioni. La ragazza è stata fermata al momento del

⁷ Cfr. la voce *rākhi* nel glossario.

⁸ Shiva dai tre occhi. Il terzo occhio rappresenta il potere e la saggezza onnisciente. Shiva è la principale divinità del pantheon hindu, associato con l’ascetismo, l’antinomismo e la distruzione ri-generativa.

commiato e fatta sposare altrove. I familiari non possono recarsi al villaggio per i convenevoli: i protettori li trascinano con violenza nelle stamberghe, prostitute-mariti-magnaccia e teppisti strappano loro via gli effetti personali. Scampati al peggio fuggendo, ecco che la polizia sequestra loro orologi, anelli e portafogli. Non riescono nemmeno a controbattere per la vergogna. Al calar della sera, gli ubriaconi si intrufolano nelle abitazioni e, afferrandole per le braccia prendono a molestare le giovani spose.

Per salvarsi da questo degrado, la gente scappa dopo aver venduto le proprie case a prezzi stracciati. Altri, invece, dopo aver abbandonato di punto in bianco la propria abitazione, si sono trasferiti in appartamenti presi in affitto in altre zone della città.

Nelle lettere nere delle pagine del giornale vi era il dolore di queste persone indifese, e negli spazi bianchi l'odio galoppante verso le prostitute. Per rendere credibili le notizie, Prakash dovette scattare le foto di quelle mura spettrali coperte da ammassi di tettoie, che in ogni caso non erano degne di essere abitate.

Ora, sorelle, al bando la prostituzione!

Dai villaggi e dai quartieri nei dintorni di Manduadih cominciarono a giungere le dichiarazioni dei leader politici locali con tanto di esposti agli ufficiali della pubblica amministrazione: se le prostitute non fossero state immediatamente cacciate da lì, avrebbero organizzato un movimento di protesta. E, se l'amministrazione non avesse preso dei provvedimenti nemmeno in seguito all'agitazione popolare, le avrebbero costrette essi stessi ad andarsene. Di giorno in giorno germogliarono nuove organizzazioni. Dalla melma della politica d'improvviso spuntò fuori come un fiore di loto rampicante una donna bella e vitale, Snehalta Dvivedi, una donna in politica che propagandava consapevolezza tra tutte le donne del vicinato. Diceva di essere pronta a dar la vita pur di eliminare l'infamia della prostituzione dalla testa di Kashi. Un dì, dopo diverse nottate di riunioni ed assemblee, organizzò un sit-in di protesta con delle donne di alcuni villaggi davanti al Tribunale. La preparazione fu lunga. Questa forma di protesta, inizialmente graduale, si sarebbe in seguito tramutata in uno sciopero della fame ad oltranza fino alla morte.

Il giorno in cui tutti i nodi dell'Ispettore Capo di Polizia Ramashankar Tripathi sarebbero venuti al pettine non era ancora arrivato, eppure quel momento inaspettato non era poi così lontano. Era giunta l'ora di soddisfare il desiderio del suo devoto padre e di ripulire la sua immagine macchiata. All'improvviso, un pomeriggio l'Ispettore, insieme ad un drappello di seguaci, raggiunse i bassifondi di Manduadih e, dopo aver adunato tutta la gente del posto ordinò: "Da oggi la prostituzione è al bando". Annunciò solenne per conto del governo che Kashi, la capitale della religione e della cultura, non avrebbe più tollerato l'onta della prostituzione. "Che le prostitute lascino la città!".

Non appena se ne andarono, fu istituito un posto di blocco di polizia ad entrambi i lati della strada che attraversa lo scellerato suburbio di Manduadih. Di sera, gli agenti presero a randellate chi si avventava verso quello slum. Ai lati delle strade si incominciarono a vedere i clienti abituali accovacciati come polli.

I poliziotti, che quotidianamente andavano nelle case-bordello, avevano i musci lunghi. Per il vecchio *divān* della stazione di polizia era finito il tempo di tingersi i capelli. Il tintinnio delle cavigliere, le civetterie, lo schiamazzo degli ubriacconi, il compenso dei protettori, la mazzetta settimanale della polizia, tutto andò in fumo. Nell’atmosfera da coprifuoco che si respirava a Manduadih, il giornale divenne cosa più necessaria del *kājal* e del rossetto.

Ci fu un leggero aumento nella tiratura del quotidiano. Quella settimana, in una riunione del direttivo del giornale, il caposervizio cronaca presentò il suo rapporto, secondo il quale questa vicenda aveva generato effetti a cascata sull’amministrazione e sulle persone. Il flusso delle inserzioni pubblicitarie delle associazioni religiose era cresciuto. Bisognava cavalcare l’onda.

C. Antaratma fu trasferito dall’angolo trascurato del giornale a una scrivania più grande e, facendo sparire d’improvviso la sua umile personalità, cominciò a comportarsi da uomo arrogante e spocchioso. In un flusso ininterrotto prese a raccontare con un filo di orgoglio la quotidianità, le organizzazioni, le zuffe e i trattati di finanza ed estetica di tutto il suo vicinato. E i migliori scrittori veterani della stampa lo mettevano per iscritto. Prakash gli aveva attribuito il titolo di specialista delle prostitute, ma in quell’istante pensò che il docile Antaratma stesse foraggiando tori affamati, che non appena sazi lo avrebbero scacciato ciondolando la testa. Tutto ciò che questi scrittori fin dall’infanzia avevano sentito, conosciuto e associato nella loro immaginazione alle prostitute venne incluso nelle conoscenze di Antaratma.

Si approntò un variopinto reportage a puntate sulle case-bordello: il succo era che la maggior parte delle prostitute fossero benestanti, eccentriche e di buona famiglia. Avevano i loro palazzi, i giardini, le automobili e le case coloniche in varie città, in banca le loro casseforti. Se solo avessero voluto, una volta accantonata questa professione avrebbero potuto vivere in grande agiatezza per diverse generazioni. Tuttavia, avevano preso un tale vizio di avere un nuovo amore ogni sera da non riuscire a lasciare quel lavoro. Da un lato questo periodico illustrato era pittoresco, decorato da vignette, illustrazioni e ghirigori ornamentali, dall’altro dava voce ai crudi resoconti della realtà quotidiana che riportavano testualmente:

La campagna dell’Ispettore Ramshankar Tripathi per liberare la città santa di Kashi dall’ignominia della prostituzione sta dando i suoi frutti. Anche oggi, per il quarto giorno consecutivo, prostituzione e *mujrā* restano al bando. Finora fermati quarantasei uomini che cercavano di

imbucarsi nello slum malfamato. La maggior parte di loro non era a conoscenza della proibizione all'esercizio. Sono stati rilasciati con l'ammonizione di non tornare più in futuro.

Per quest'opera virtuosa, l'Ispettore stava ricevendo lodi da ogni parte. Nelle redazioni dei giornali, al coro di 'santo-santo', cominciarono a piovere comunicati ridondanti di elogi da parte di una cinquantina di associazioni dai nomi armoniosi ed enciclopedici quali: il *Comitato pan-culturale della melarosa*, l'*Associazione filantropica*, il *Comitato per la vita*, il *Circolo per il benessere dell'umanità*, l'*Organizzazione 'fior di loto' per il risveglio delle donne* e ancora il *Comitato in difesa del prestigio di Kashi*, la *Fondazione della giusta condotta morale*, il *Centro studi di cosmologia Vedica*, e via dicendo. Ogni giorno giungeva un coro di plausi e ovazioni da questa o quella parte. C. Antaratma si sedeva allora nel tardo pomeriggio per sintetizzare il faldone trasudante tanta gratitudine e, dopo averlo spremuto fino a notte fonda, rincasava. A ciascuno di essi si dovette dedicare mezza pagina separatamente, poiché la linea editoriale voleva che si pubblicassero a ogni costo tutti i comunicati stampa corredati dai nomi delle diverse personalità. Va da sé che chi vede il proprio nome stampato sul giornale poi lo compra.

La storia si stava ripetendo a trent'anni di distanza. A quell'epoca il quartiere malfamato sorgeva nel centro della città, a Dalmandi. Era tutt'altro che uno slum, all'epoca là c'erano i salotti delle *tawā'if*. In quei luoghi si respirava una cultura raffinata, le donne si esibivano nella danza *mujrā*, le loro canzoni venivano registrate con il grammofono, a volte una sola *bāījī* faceva nascere amori che progredivano segretamente per diverse generazioni all'interno di una stessa famiglia. E, proprio da quel luogo sono venute alla ribalta attrici di vari celebri film e cantanti di musica classica, delle quali il deprecabile passato era oramai sfumato gentilmente nel prosperoso presente. Possidenti terrieri, mercanti facoltosi e sovrani giunti fin da lontano si recavano in quella zona. Il latifondismo e i principati indiani erano ormai storia passata, tuttavia quella 'cultura dei salotti delle cortigiane', tra alti e bassi si trascinò per molti giorni ancora, insieme ad alcuni aspetti violenti. Negli anni Settanta, a causa di una povertà spaventosa e del commercio clandestino di giovani ragazze, il luogo divenne sovraffollato. In quegli stessi vicoli in cui un tempo sostavano le carrozze degli aristocratici, i malavitosi cominciarono a far sventolare le famose lame di Hadha Sarai⁹. A causa del crescente dissenso dell'opinione pubblica, le cortigiane furono costrette a stabilirsi a Manduadih, un sobborgo ai margini della città.

Dopo il trasferimento delle cortigiane, in quell'area ebbe inizio un mercato nero di merce di contrabbando proveniente dalla Cina e dal Bangladesh. Al momento vi si trova il più grande bazar di CD taroccati. È lì che oggi giorno si incontrano dei bizzarri ingegneri elettronici locali, i quali non sanno

⁹ Un quartiere di Benares situato nella zona di Dalmandi, all'epoca noto per criminalità e prostituzione.

distinguere una lettera dell’alfabeto da uno scarabocchio, ma sono in grado di riparare con rottami e rivendere telefoni, lettori cd, macchine fotografiche e impianti musicali di qualsivoglia compagnia multinazionale e di qualunque paese.

La prostituzione era ormai diventata un solido ed enorme commercio del malaffare. A Manduadih non si trovava neppure un petalo di fiore di calendula, figuriamoci ascoltare *gazal*, *dādrā* e *ṭappā*.

In quel luogo esisteva soltanto un mestiere disumano la cui clientela variava dagli operai delle fabbriche sino ai conduttori di riscìò. Ora, per i nababbi dai soldi di plastica dell’era globale, non vi era alcuna necessità di recarsi nel suburbio di cattiva fama, ricettacolo di immondizia, umidità e polvere, tenendo in mano ghirlande di fiori. Essi potevano infatti trovare a proprio piacimento ragazze squillo di ogni colore, misura e lingua direttamente negli hotel, nelle case e nei salotti. Alcune di loro erano reginette di competizioni di bellezza del proprio villaggio, città o stato d’appartenenza. A partire da Miss Lahura Bir sino a Miss India del Nord, tutte imbellettate erano costantemente in attesa, a distanza di un semplice squillo.

Cavigliere e bulldozer

La settimana successiva la chiusura dell’esercizio della prostituzione, l’esercito dell’Ispettore Rama Sankar Tripathi raggiunse nuovamente Manduadih. In testa c’era la sua Maruti Suzuki “Gipsy” verde nuova di zecca. Dietro, nelle camionette chiassose, c’erano guardie di diverse stazioni di polizia e agenti delle forze dell’ordine armati di bastoni e fucili. In ultimo, su un riscìò erano stati legati un microfono e due altoparlanti. Di sera, quando il drappello di uomini giunse sul luogo, gli stoppini delle lampade a olio delle case erano già accesi. Sotto il cielo del crepuscolo, avvolto da una leggera foschia, le ruspe stavano avanzando furtivi oltre le pozze ricolme d’acqua che avevano sommerso ambo i margini dello slum malfamato. Una ditta di costruzioni edili stava facendo livellare quel terreno depresso. Nella caligine i bulldozer, che fremendo e sobbalzando si addentravano nel suburbio, sembravano elefanti imbizzarriti.

Un poliziotto panciuto arrampicatosi goffamente sul cofano della jeep, annunciò al microfono:

“Tutti i residenti di Manav Mandi, il mercato della carne umana, vengano subito qui. L’Ispettore Capo parlerà con loro, ascolterà i loro problemi e ne farà una diagnosi”. Alla stazione di polizia di Manduadih, il mercato della carne umana era la merda quotidiana. In un registro venivano schedati i nomi e gli indirizzi di tutte le persone residenti in quel luogo, il loro passato e persino quelli delle donne che arrivavano come novelle ed entravano e uscivano per la prima volta. Quanto ci calzava a pennello quel nome, mantenuto sulla falsariga di Sabzi Mandi, Galla Mandi, Bakra Mandi, ovvero il mercato delle verdure, del grano e delle capre, come alternativa locale della zona a luci rosse. In effetti, da quelle parti

i corpi si vendevano davvero. Non si era mai vista una luce rossa accesa come avvertimento. Un gruppo di poliziotti si intrufolò nel quartiere per avvertire le “spose della città”. Erano gli agenti della stazione di polizia locale, che conoscevano ogni singolo mattone di quelle case.

Le prostitute credevano che il fatto di far chiudere le attività fosse la solita manovra della polizia per ricevere un aumento della commissione. Di solito gli sbirri facevano irruzione in una, massimo due case-bordello e, prendevano a ceffoni un paio di protettori malcapitati. Portavano qualche ragazza in centrale, le facevano sedere e trovavano un compromesso. Ma l’Ispettore era tornato una seconda volta di persona. Capirono che questa volta la faccenda era seria.

Prima di tutti si avvicinarono i bambini. Insieme a loro giunse un ragazzo che due anni prima aveva aperto una scuola nel quartiere per istruirli. I bambini lo chiamavano Signor Maestro. Nelle retrovie i negozianti, i musicanti e i mariti-magnaccia del quartiere. Infine arrivarono le prostitute. C’era una folla tale che, per scattare la foto all’Ispettore d’improvviso scomparso tra la folla, Prakash dovette salire sul tetto di una casa. In un piccolo cerchio tra la ressa, un manipolo di signore anziane si stava gettando ai piedi dell’Ispettore con fare teatrale, accompagnate da bambini che le scimmiettavano, piagnucolando e augurandogli ogni tipo di maledizione. I poliziotti avanzavano rimproverandoli e i piccoli, giocando d’anticipo, con gran prontezza tornavano al loro posto.

Quando, impugnando il microfono, l’Ispettore salì su una panca portata dal baracchino del tè, su quel luogo calò il silenzio assoluto. Si tornò a udire l’echeggiante rombo dei bulldozer che si agitavano ai lati dello slum. Disse “Fratelli e sorelle!”—e fu come se quella parola, “sorelle”, fosse una barzelletta che provocò l’ilarità della folla. Scompisciandosi dalle risate, le prostitute rotolarono l’una sull’altra. Schiarendosi la voce e volgendo lo sguardo altrove cominciò: “L’amministrazione è seriamente impegnata ad affrontare i problemi dei residenti di Manav Mandi. La prostituzione è illegale, perciò ad essa è stato imposto un duro veto. Presso la stazione di polizia di Manduadih è stata aperta una cellula separata. Recatevi lì e fate richiesta per un prestito governativo. Insieme allo sconto e con un basso tasso d’interesse, vi verranno fornite una bufala, una macchina da cucire e cibarie varie. Date il via ad una vostra attività. Quelle che non sono in grado di lavorare verranno mandate in un centro di protezione femminile affinché una volta lasciata questa professione vergognosa, con dignità...”. Sentendo il “centro governativo di protezione per le donne” le prostitute ripresero a sghignazzare.

L’Ispettore si rivolse al suo braccio destro, intimandogli di raccogliere informazioni su quanto stessero dicendo. Lui si mescolò tra le prostitute, scherzò e rise con loro, poi tornò sui suoi passi e in un lampo, il suo viso si fece serio come prima. Ritto sull’attenti, dichiarò: “Signore, dicono che non faranno servizio sociale gratuitamente”.

L’Ispettore non riusciva a capire. Le prostitute avevano dichiarato al poliziotto che preferivano il carcere al centro di protezione, poiché in quel luogo avrebbero dovuto prestare servizio gratuito. Qualche giorno prima, proprio in quel centro, era avvenuto uno scandalo eclatante. I soprintendenti del luogo procuravano ragazze ai politici, agli Ufficiali e a quelli che nel gergo giornalistico vengono chiamati i colletti bianchi.

Quando questa vicenda divenne di dominio pubblico, cinque ragazze, dopo esser state massacciate di botte una dopo l’altra, vennero fatte scomparire. Erano le ragazze che avevano parlato. In quei giorni il Central Bureau of Investigation aveva aperto un’inchiesta sul caso.

Dietro la folla, una signora anziana svenendo cadde a terra con un tonfo. Del suo volto ricoperto di rughe si vedeva soltanto la bocca, aperta e inerme. Una donna dall’aria malaticcia, sedendosi e sventolando il lembo della sari per farle aria, imprecava: “Impostore figlio di puttana... me l’hai fatta crepare ‘sta poraccia... Quando eravamo giovani, i poliziotti venivano qui ogni giorno a depredarci. Ora che siamo vecchie, la nostra casta dovrebbe condurre al pascolo le bufale... preparare dolcetti a base di latte? Qualcuno chieda a quel farabutto chi mangerà il *pāpaṛ* fatto dalle mani di una puttana, chi berrà il nostro latte, chi indosserà i nostri abiti. Tutto ciò, dopo averci portato via tutto, non è altro che un piano per ridurci a mendicare... lasciate la città e andatevene! Come se noi andassimo a chiamare le persone a casa loro afferrandoli per la mano. Perché allora non vietate ai clienti stessi di continuare a venire qui? Perché non sono quelli seduti in segno di protesta per cacciarci a trasferirsi altrove? Chi ci permetterà di stabilirci nel suo quartiere? Non contamineremo quel luogo proprio come questo?”.

Quella vecchietta viveva sola. Era a digiuno dall’alba. Faceva la spola sin dal mattino da un lato all’altro del villaggio inveendo a ruota libera contro i manifestanti del movimento di protesta. Aveva due figli che avevano trovato un impiego altrove. Venivano a trovarla di nascosto in media una volta all’anno. Non osavano nemmeno chiamarla mamma davanti a tutti.

Impedisca che arrivino altre ragazze, maggiore

Vedendo quel tumulto là dietro, gli agenti di polizia vi si avventarono. Proprio in quel momento, non si sa bene da dove, una donna nepalese di mezz’età, barcollando si parò dietro all’Ispettore. I capelli al vento, la sari che strusciava nella polvere e lei stordita dai fumi dall’alcool. Le donne attorno la sorreggevano. D’un tratto cominciò a sbraitare e sulle sue guance presero a scorrere torbide lacrime: “Non faccia così Signore, non faccia così maggiore... ai suoi ordini”.

Quando l’Ispettore si voltò sgomento, lei giunse le mani: “Signore, mio signore! Signore, prima impedisca alla gente di portare qui nuove ragazze! Noi stesse non siamo mica arrivate qui per conto nostro... ci sono dei pezzi grossi che ci portano. Dal Nepal, dal Bengala, dall’Orissa... per ogni nuova

ragazza che arriva, alla stazione di polizia qui dietro vengono offerte trentacinque mila rupie... È tanto che viviamo qua, ci sono i nostri bambini e, se non di vecchiaia, moriremo di qualche malattia. Ma se continueranno ad arrivare nuove ragazze, la popolazione continuerà a crescere. Dai luoghi di provenienza delle giovani e per tutto il tragitto, il governo incassa soldi a palate”.

Quando i poliziotti le piombarono addosso per farla tacere, lei con un pronto balzo in avanti sfilò il berretto ad uno di essi e, proprio con quello, cominciò a picchiarsi. Come se avesse voluto realizzare in prima persona quella sciagura senza precedenti, andava farfugliando nel suo delirio: “Ci ucciderà, ci ammazzerà... Ci manderà in rovina... e la giustizia che cosa farà? Da qui non se ne va nessuno... ci caccerranno ovunque andremo. Fin quando potremo scappare? Moriremo qui. Nessuna se ne andrà”.

L’Ispettore rimase attonito ad osservare la scena con il microfono in mano. Imbestialito, a più riprese fece appello al silenzio, ma nella baraonda nessuno se lo filò. Quando il poliziotto cercò di riappropriarsi del cappello, la donna fece per svignarsela. Allora lui tentò di afferrarla ma lei, con il berretto in testa, si immerse nel bagno di folla pavoneggiandosi. Lei in testa con passo vivace, lui inferocito alle sue calcagna. La gente cominciò a ridere dimentica di ogni cosa. Le prostitute si prendevano gioco in questo modo dei poliziotti che si recavano spesso da quelle parti. Ma quel giorno, quell’agente, gonfiando le narici e digrignando i denti, si andava dileguando mentre incespitava dietro quella donna. I bambini presero a battere le mani e ad esultare di gioia.

L’Ispettore, aggrottando la fronte guardò in direzione dei poliziotti in cerca di chi stesse ridendo. All’inizio, quelli furono presi alla sprovvista; poi, formando un cordone, in un baleno cominciarono a respingere con i bastoni la folla all’interno dello slum. Chi non era dell’insediamento cominciò a fuggire verso la strada principale facendosi largo tra i poliziotti. Gli agenti schierati in seconda fila iniziarono a far fioccare bastonate su quelli che tentavano la fuga. Proprio allora l’Ispettore se ne andò imbestialito insieme al suo braccio destro e all’autista.

Il ragazzo che gestiva la scuola dello slum era chinato sui manganelli come se quei legni fossero le sue ali e lui stesse spiccando il volo. Da lì gridò a una giornalista che gli chiedeva perché non si fossero rivolti alle organizzazioni femministe: “Lo chieda direttamente a loro, signora. Lo scoprirà... le donne per bene non parlano delle prostitute. Possono al massimo rilasciare dichiarazioni contro la violenza sulle bambine e sulle competizioni di bellezza. Se solo venissero qui, i loro mariti le caccerebbero di casa e l’intero femminismo si rivelerebbe un buco nell’acqua”.

Proprio in quell’attimo cominciarono a scrosciare randellate. A quel punto, la giornalista impaurita dietro il dispiegamento delle forze di polizia, osservò quel giovane scomparire nel buio dello slum, fra urla e manganellate.

Un ottimo addestramento, fino in fondo

Ben presto, quel posto tornò deserto come se nulla fosse davvero accaduto. L'indomani il giornale titolava:

Le prostitute oltraggiano la polizia; cariche; ventidue feriti.

Nel gergo giornalistico e televisivo questa vicenda era già stata etichettata come una ‘patata bollente’, e i media la stavano servendo e vendendo a proprio piacimento. I canali tv la presentarono come se fosse l'unico caso nel paese di prostitute che avessero cacciato a pesci in faccia un Ispettore di Polizia, trattandolo ancor peggio di un cliente.

Di conseguenza, da parte delle organizzazioni che si stavano congratulando con l'Ispettore, cominciarono a fiorire pesanti comunicati stampa che condannavano fermamente questa azione. Altre associazioni si unirono al sit-in andando davanti alla Corte di Giustizia e Snehalta Dvivedi decise di optare per lo sciopero della fame ad oltranza. A entrambi i lati di Manduadih erano stati stanziati anche due plotoni di poliziotti armati della UP-PAC. Per pareggiare i conti e demoralizzare le prostitute, i poliziotti violentarono brutalmente una ragazzina.

Era una ragazza di quattordici anni, che dopo l'incontro con l'Ispettore, aveva supplicato gli agenti delle forze dell'ordine che presidiavano la zona di concederle di attraversare la strada per comprare del cibo, ma dopo un paio di tentativi, essi la allontanarono ammonendola. Quando tornò l'indomani, i poliziotti si misero a chiacchierare con lei e a fare battutine. A lei sembrò che stavolta l'avrebbero lasciata passare, quindi restò tutto il giorno a conversare con tono civettuolo, distribuendo sorrisi.

Quando si fece buio, i poliziotti le lasciarono attraversare la strada, insieme con un bambino. Ma quando i due tornarono con i fagotti della spesa, gli sbirri gli intimarono di allontanarsi prendendoli a manganellate. Entrambi si spaventarono poiché non erano mai davvero usciti fuori da quello slum. Scoppiarono a piangere seduti sul ciglio della strada fino a tardi, dopo che i negozi avevano abbassato le saracinesche ormai da qualche ora. Di lì a poco un poliziotto chiamò la ragazzina e la condusse in una camionetta. Lì uno sbirro le tappò la bocca e altri due le afferrarono le gambe. I quattro la violentarono a turno e infine la spintonarono con il ragazzino e il fagottino della spesa sino allo slum.

Le prostitute radunatesi all'imbocco della strada restarono tutta la notte ad inveire contro i poliziotti che, dal canto loro, continuando a provarle, replicarono di aver dato alla ragazzina un ottimo addestramento e che da quel momento in poi non ci sarebbero più stati problemi.

Il ragazzo che gestiva la scuola si presentò alla redazione del giornale e raccontò l'intero accaduto. La ragazzina studiava nella sua scuola. I cronisti gli dissero di portare la copia della denuncia, senza la

quale non potevano pubblicare la notizia. Serviva almeno una prova. Cercò di spiegare in tutti i modi che era stupido pensare a un'autodenuncia della polizia, dal momento che erano stati gli sbirri stessi ad aver commesso lo stupro. Se lo credeva utile, avrebbe potuto portare la ragazza in ospedale oppure invitare un qualsiasi dottore ad andare nei bassifondi per farsi stilare un referto medico. Le condizioni della ragazzina restavano drammatiche. A causa della gravità dell'evento, i cronisti non volevano mettersi nei guai e sapevano che nessun dottore avrebbe mai accettato di andare in quel tugurio. Un giornalista disse con strafottenza: "Anche se qualcuno dovesse fare un'ispezione medica, cosa pensi che ne verrebbe fuori?".

"Nel senso che il referto medico non può certo riportare la rottura dell'imene, le lesioni plurime e le perdite di sangue". Un altro giornalista disse quasi soffocando per reprimere il riso: "Nel referto si direbbe che ce l'ha troppo larga e che anche andando fino in fondo non si riesce a trovare nulla".

Il giovane rimase senza parole, tra fragorose esplosioni di risa. Quando, poco dopo, un giornalista per confortarlo gli passò al telefono il soprintendente di polizia, anche quest'ultimo scoppiò a ridere: "Lo stupro di una prostituta! È proprio una cosa balzana. Senta, amico, oggi giorno quelle girano come le matite per cercare clienti, veda di non capitargli davanti altrimenti saranno loro a violentarla. Non è altro che un'astuta mossa delle puttane per infangare il nome della polizia... La notizia non è apparsa né sulla stampa, né in televisione". Certo, perché nessuno aveva le prove che si trattasse di stupro! Infatti, come il soprintendente, nemmeno i giornalisti riuscivano a capacitarsi di come fosse possibile in fin dei conti parlare di stupro rispetto a una prostituta.

Prakash all'improvviso piombò nella stessa condizione del ragazzo! Inutile dire che davanti ai suoi colleghi che se la ridevano di gusto, lui si trovasse con le spalle al muro nel poter dare la notizia, nonostante fosse convinto si trattasse di stupro. Inoltre, forse, qualcuno avrebbe potuto persino pensare con malizia che lui stesse complottando per entrare nelle grazie di una esperta modella porno del futuro.

Proprio in quell'istante squillò il telefono. Era Chavi che lo stava esortando ad imparare finalmente a fare le foto come si deve.

Forse per via del tremito della voce, Prakash ebbe il forte presentimento che fosse venuta a sapere di quella violenza. La prima volta che aveva cercato di fotografare Chavi, al tempo in cui lei frequentava il corso di estetista all'Università, era rimasto colpito da quel sorriso seducente che danzava sulle labbra carnose, dal suo sguardo voluttuoso e dai segni di due graffi sul braccio. Non solo si era dimenticato di prendere l'esposizione giusta, ma anche di levare il tappo che copriva l'obiettivo e, scattando a ripetizione, le diceva quasi balbettando di mettersi in pose diverse. Quando Chavi gli disse che aveva dimenticato il teleobiettivo ormai da qualche giorno proprio nel suo salone di bellezza, allora pensò

che non lo sapesse ancora. Parlando con lei al telefono ebbe l'impressione costante di appartenere anch'egli a quella categoria di persone che a questo mondo non riusciranno mai a dimostrare la fondatezza di quanto è accaduto loro. Non riusciva mai a dar voce a quelli che, a causa della loro impotenza, non potevano parlare. Poteva soltanto ribadire il pensiero o mostrare il volto di quelli che detengono il potere. Nella sua penna c'era l'inchiostro di qualcun altro, dietro la macchina fotografica l'occhio di qualcun altro. Per un bel po'di tempo, dopo aver messo giù il telefono, restò semplicemente seduto a chiudere ed aprire l'otturatore della macchina fotografica.

Click... lo sa. Click... non lo sa... lo sa o non lo sa ... Il suo cervello era ormai diventato un pendolo.

La compassione di Condom Baba

Condom Baba, venuto a sapere del bando imposto alla prostituzione, giunse a Benares da Delhi. L'anziano *bābā* di una sessantina d'anni chiamava le prostitute *sex worker* e distribuiva preservativi nei bordelli di tutto il paese per salvarle dal virus dell'HIV e dalle altre malattie infettive a trasmissione sessuale.

I preservativi gli venivano offerti dal Ministero della Salute e da qualche organizzazione straniera. Aveva portato alla ribalta internazionale le problematiche riguardanti il traffico di giovani ragazze e il tema del ricollocamento delle prostitute. Veniva descritto come attivista sociale impegnato e disinibito. Era stato addirittura insignito del prestigioso premio *Magsaysay* delle Filippine, il nobel dell'Asia.

Alloggiò alla Circuit House. Al sorgere dell'alba, fece le abluzioni di rito nel Gange e andò a visitare il tempio shivaita di Vishvanath¹⁰. Poi andò al mercato dei fiori. Lì stavano scaricando da un carretto un fascio di rose rosse fresche appena recise. Si fece impacchettare una ghirlanda di centosessantasei rose contandole a una a una e rientrò all'alloggio. Il suo seguito, partito insieme a stampa e televisioni, si fermò al lato della strada poco prima di Manduadih, dove lui si adornò dei suoi abiti. Seduto in automobile, anzitutto indossò una maglietta con varie stampe nazionali e internazionali, poi scartò due condom e se li appese ad entrambe le orecchie. Con il vento quelli cominciavano a rizzarsi come fossero delle corna, oppure penzolavano come le orecchie di una capra. Gonfiando appena dei preservativi e legandoli ad uno spago fece una collana e la indossò. Sembrava proprio il brigante Angulimala, che macellava le persone e tagliava loro le dita perché voleva avere una ghirlanda di mille dita umane! Nel suo caso, sembrava avesse mozzato le dita a un gigante trasparente e se le fosse appese al collo come

¹⁰ Il signore dell'universo. Un titolo di Shiva.

trofeo. Sul davanti e sul retro della macchina, fece legare alcuni ‘palloncini’ dall’autista. Aveva ottenuto già il permesso dal funzionario municipale e insieme a lui c’era anche un rappresentante del Dipartimento di Sanità. Non ebbe nessun problema a entrare nello slum malfamato.

Un silenzio tombale regnava sul quartiere. Qua e là pochi bambini giocavano sulla strada deserta. I piccoli circondarono la macchina elemosinando ‘i palloncini’. Mentre li allontanava, il *bābā* disse che dare i condom ai bambini sarebbe stato uno spreco di risorse. Fin quando gli impiegati governativi non avessero raggiunto ogni casa per rispondere alle curiosità legate alla questione dei suoi profilattici, i monelli avrebbero continuato a crederli dei palloncini. Poi, andando di porta in porta, cominciò a distribuire alle prostitute quelle rose rosse di un tono vivissimo. Il fatto di regalare tante rose quanti erano i giorni passati dall’ultima sua visita nel quartiere a luci rosse, era una peculiarità tutta sua. Era tornato in quel luogo all’incirca dopo sei mesi. Ma le prostitute gli impedirono di consegnare i preservativi. Un’anziana lo rimproverò: “Se non possiamo esercitare la nostra professione, cosa dovremmo farci coi palloncini, bollirli e mangiarli o indossarli come pendenti proprio come fai te?”. I protettori e i mariti-magnaccia agguantarono la maggior parte dei condom, per rivenderli in seguito ai clienti. Dopo aver distribuito i fiori, Condom Baba cercò di dare un profilattico a una ragazza di tredici anni e quella arrossì dalla vergogna. Poggiandole una mano sulla spalla e conducendola davanti le telecamere le chiese: “Piccola mia, usi il condom?”.

Lei restò a guardarlo smarrita. Allora le domandò di nuovo: “Lo prendi il legno o no?”.

La ragazzina impaurita scappò via.

Strofinandosi il lubrificante del preservativo appeso all’orecchio tra l’indice e il pollice e rivolgendosi alla stampa disse: “Infilare il legno è una tecnica che viene adottata per preparare le ragazze in tenera età a questo lavoro. In questa tecnica si usa il legno di una speciale pianta che nell’acqua si espande molto velocemente. Una volta che il legnetto è nelle parti intime della ragazza, essa ogni giorno viene fatta lavare in una tinozza d’acqua oppure nel laghetto. Quando non c’è altra via d’uscita da questo mestiere, allora che male c’è? Non provoca nessun dolore alle ragazze!”. Gli addetti stampa rimasero sbigottiti di fronte alle sue conoscenze sulla vita delle prostitute.

Esortate più volte ad uscire di casa, alcune prostitute si adunarono. Il *bābā* fece un breve sermone: “Qualche giorno fa il consiglio comunale della cittadina santa di Ujjain ha concesso la licenza alle prostitute. Noi abbiamo chiesto che ciò avvenga anche a Kashi. Ecco perché abbiamo parlato con il sindaco e il funzionario del Municipio... da che mondo è mondo, esistono le *sex worker*. Nessuno ha mai fermato la prostituzione con le manganellate. In centosettantasei paesi del mondo è stata data la licenza alle *sex worker* per esercitare la professione. In Europa, assieme alla licenza vengono garantite l’assicurazione e le ispezioni sanitarie, oltre a delle agevolazioni tali che qui da noi se le sognano persino

gli impiegati statali. Se si vuol mettere al bando la prostituzione, allora si dovrebbero rispettare i criteri internazionali di reinserimento sociale. Bisogna prima creare le condizioni affinché la società possa accettare le *sex worker* come normali cittadine, e solo in seguito si potrà dire loro di lasciare il mestiere, altrimenti non se ne viene a capo”. Lanciò lo slogan “Trasformate Kashi in Ujjain’ e si avviò.

Una donna attorniata da bambini, fermandolo per la strada, gli chiese perché mai, anziché distribuire condom non si fosse fatto inviare del cibo. “Da qui non possiamo né uscire, né tantomeno entrare. Abbiamo già finito i nostri risparmi. Se la situazione non cambia, moriremo per i morsi della fame prima che di malattia”—disse. Lui, porgendole una rosa, le rispose che stava andando dal funzionario del Municipio e avrebbe affrontato tale questione. Così fece. L’indomani avrebbe dovuto partecipare ad un convegno in Thailandia.

Proprio mentre Condom Baba stava allontanando i figli delle prostitute che lo facevano incespicare elemosinando i palloncini, Chavi telefonò a Prakash dicendogli di temere di essere rimasta incinta. Prakash, congratulandosi con lei, le disse che stava per incontrare l’uomo che all’indomani sarebbe finito sulla prima pagina del giornale e senza il quale, a quell’ora lei sarebbe stata la madre di una dozzina di figliuoli.

Ma un istante dopo si sentì mancare la terra sotto i piedi e gli sembrò di sprofondare in una voragine. Chavi con tono pacato gli disse di aver parlato con alcune donne secondo le quali erano già passate più di dodici settimane. La sua borsa a tracolla cadde a terra di colpo. Si trascinò sino allo sporto di un edificio e sedendovisi cominciò a fissare con occhi spiritati Condom Baba. In realtà non riusciva a vedere un bel niente, proprio davanti a lui si stava sollevando un nuvolo di polvere. Cercò a tutti i costi di alzarsi in piedi e, prima che qualcuno potesse notarlo, gli venne un cerchio alla testa. Passandosi la mano sulla fronte si accorse di esser zuppo di sudore nonostante l’aria fuori fosse gelida.

Di lì a poco, cominciò a pensare che Chavi sapeva del caso dello stupro di quella ragazzina. Riprese a oscillare come un pendolo: Lo sa... non lo sa... lo sa. Come se tutta la sua vita si fosse fermata giunta dinanzi a tale dilemma e lui avesse dovuto prendere una decisione all’istante. Era finito il tempo di affliggersi in un rimorso suicida per via dei dubbi che, mossi dalla vergogna, spesso bussavano alla sua porta per poi andarsene, perché dentro Chavi continuava a crescere un bambino che non avrebbe aspettato niente e nessuno.

La meraviglia di C. Antaratma

A C. Antaratma, Condom Baba era sembrato un uomo davvero interessante. Quella sera il suo scooter sterzò improvvisamente verso Circuit House e lui, con la scusa di fare interviste, andò a fargli visita. Voleva vedere ancora una volta quell’uomo stravagante e imprimerli alla perfezione la sua immagine

nella mente. “Già che ci sono, gli chiederò una decina di pacchetti di preservativi da tenere in casa. Una volta o l'altra verranno utili.”—pensò.

C. Antaratma era sempre talmente vigile da sapere in modo infallibile dove trovare qualsiasi cosa utile senza pagare o quanto meno a buon prezzo. Se non avesse avuto tale abilità, con lo stipendio da giornalista, non sarebbe stato in grado di assolvere ai doveri di capofamiglia.

Prendeva i campioni omaggio delle medicine da farmacisti e medici. Ordinava copie saggio di libri per i bambini direttamente dagli editori. Comprava vestiti rattoppati a prezzi stracciati. Alle conferenze stampa, raccoglieva con solerzia blocchetti e penne per darli ai bambini e i pacchetti omaggio ricevuti li vendeva ai negozianti per prendere in cambio soldi o cose che gli avrebbero fatto comodo. Aveva preso in prestito da un poliziotto della sua comunità lo scooter sgangherato che stava imputridendo, dopo un sequestro, nella recinzione della stazione di polizia. Dopo aver letto l'allegato del giornale che riceveva, lo rivendeva a metà prezzo al negozio di cāy davanti casa, e con quei soldi, di volta in volta, dava ai bambini biscotti e salatini.

Antaratma suonò il campanello del Circuit House e, non appena Condom Baba aprì la porta della camera, lui inginocchiandosi un po' per abitudine, un po' per via della sua personalità, con un sorriso devoto disse: “Nel caso vi siano dei problemi, me lo dica pure senza indugio. Lei è nostro ospite”. Condom Baba si sentì provocato: “Ma che posto è mai questo? Un ostello o un porto di mare? Mi venite a chiedere se ho dei problemi quando non siete nemmeno in grado di portarmi un asciugamano pulito!”. Antaratma restò atterrito, non riuscì a proferir parola. Si vide sbattere la porta in faccia. In tutto l'ostello di Circuit House vi era un unico asciugamano, lercio, che il cameriere aveva prontamente servito a Condom Baba. Quando gliene chiese uno pulito, quello rispose di non averne più perché se li erano portati via tutti gli ospiti come lui. A quel punto il *bābā* andò a redarguire il direttore dell'ostello sentendosi controbattere che quell'anno non avevano ancora proceduto all'ordine della biancheria. Nell'attimo in cui C. Antaratma si era presentato alla sua porta per incontrarlo, il *bābā*, mentre stava scrivendo una lettera di lamentele al funzionario municipale, paonazzo e furioso lo aveva scambiato per un cameriere.

Dopo esser tornato in ufficio Antaratma stava raccontando l'avvenuto, quando il redattore capo della cronaca cittadina lo rimproverò di starsene seduto a schiamazzare con una tale notizia in mano. L'indomani, la notizia dell'asciugamano fu pubblicata in colonna doppia mentre Condom Baba peregrinava nel ghetto malfamato. Il suo ritorno a Delhi era stato posticipato. La sera stessa, con una smentita scritta di tre pagine e mezza, raggiunse la redazione del giornale e, vedendo seduto C. Antaratma, vomitò un urlo. Cominciò a discutere animatamente con l'editore del fatto che il loro quotidiano stesse facendo del giornalismo spazzatura.

Nella smentita Condom Baba esprimeva la sua gratitudine per il rispetto, il trattamento e l'ospitalità ricevuti dall'amministrazione comunale e dagli impiegati dell'ostello. La storia dell'asciugamano era frutto di pura fantasia. Figurarsi averne discusso con dei reporter. Il giornale stava facendo di tutto per infangare l'operato dell'amministrazione comunale. Curiosamente fu convocato anche dal funzionario del Municipio che gli intimò di far pubblicare la smentita di quella notizia, altrimenti dalla volta successiva avrebbe dovuto cercare un'altra sistemazione. La rettifica di Condom Baba fu cestinata. Perché era noto che egli, quella sera, doveva per forza di cose far rientro a Delhi e nessuno sapeva quando avrebbe concesso una sua prossima apparizione.

Proprio durante un incarico di lavoro, Prakash si recò al salone di bellezza. Dirigendosi di corsa verso il bagno, quasi sospingendo Chavi e dandole in mano il kit del test di gravidanza *fai-da-te*, chiuse la porta di colpo. Un attimo dopo Chavi gli mostrò che le tacche dell'indicatore le davano perfettamente ragione. Le voleva domandare come fosse venuta a sapere dello stupro della ragazzina, ma dalla bocca le uscì: “Quando l’hai saputo?”.

Chavi lo sfiorò e lui impallidì. Lei disse: “Mi sembri caduto in quello stato tipico degli attori dei film d’epoca nell’esatto istante in cui si sentono dire la fatidica frase -Sto per diventare madre di tuo figlio-”.

Ora c’era da pensare al matrimonio. Bisognava fare qualcosa in fretta. Sentiva la bocca riarsa perché dentro di lui soffiava il vento del deserto.

Il *jal samādhi* attraverso Vitale Pirla

La situazione arrivò con l’acqua alla gola non a Manduadih, ma al centro della corrente del Gange. Un giovane hindu zelante aveva deciso che, se la città di Kashi non fosse stata liberata dall’onta della prostituzione entro la festività invernale del *Makar-Sankrānti*, allora al sorgere del sole avrebbe compiuto il sacrificio del *jal samādhi*, l’autoimmolazione in acqua. Testa rasata e filo sacro, questo giovane si era installato su una barchetta in mezzo al Gange con una pesante lastra di pietra legata al collo. Aveva già azzardato un tentativo simile in passato. Per questo motivo l’amministrazione era particolarmente all’erta. A prua e a poppa della sua imbarcazione erano stati legati due gommoni della polizia d’acqua equipaggiati con esperti subacquei. Dietro di essi, su una barca decorata con bandiere raffiguranti il Dio scimmia Hanuman¹¹, avanzavano sospinti dall’orgoglio i suoi sostenitori, che tra suoni di strumenti

¹¹ Nel poema epico sanscrito *Rāmāyaṇa* si narra che Hanuman con il suo esercito di scimmie aiutò il principe Rama contro il demone Ravana.

musicali quali *śāṅkh*, o conchiglie di strombo, campanelle e gong, tra un intervallo e l'altro, esultavano al grido di “Har Har Mahadev”¹².

A bordo delle ultime barche c'erano le truppe dei canali televisivi. Per scandire il turno delle interviste ad ognuna di esse toccò addirittura prendere un gettone dalla barca dei sostenitori che la precedeva. Venne adottato questo sistema sia per porre rimedio al disordine dei media precipitosi, sia per garantire al giovane un riposo adeguato poiché, a furia di parlare, aveva perso la voce. I principali canali televisivi di Delhi e Mumbai avevano preso in affitto delle imbarcazioni da parata e le avevano trasformate in navicelle spaziali stile *Guerre stellari*. Mandavano in onda senza sosta titoli ad effetto quali:

*Dal Gange della rettitudine lotta alle gaṇikā—il movimento di protesta raggiunge le acque sacre—
Autoimmolazione con jal samādhi.*

A destra, a sinistra e in mezzo sgomitavano senza tregua le barchette di legno dei turisti stranieri appostati con le macchine fotografiche. Erano sbalorditi dalla condotta morale, dalla determinazione e dalla bizzarra campagna di quel giovane. La studentessa svedese di filosofie orientali Magdalina Inken restò così impressionata da rilasciare una pubblica dichiarazione d'amore nei confronti del giovane hindu. Dicevano di rivedere in quel ragazzo l'immagine di Gesù Cristo e, tra i vari discorsi, mentre accarezzavano la bottiglia d'acqua *Bisleri* tenuta in grembo, cresceva in loro l'eccitazione per il fatto che le imprese degli ammaestratori di scimmie, degli incantatori di serpenti, dei *sādhu* e dei maghi lette nei libri e per le quali si erano recati in India, si stessero palesando d'improvviso davanti ai loro occhi. Non volevano perdere l'occasione di vendere gli istanti di quel raro momento una volta tornati al proprio paese.

Questa stravagante flotta di respiro internazionale navigava dall'alba fino a tarda sera tra il ponte di Rajghat e il forte di Ramnagar. Sui *ghāt* la ressa degli spettatori era continua. Quando la flotta cominciava a scomparire dalla loro vista, agitandosi e levando il grido di “Har Har Mahadev”, si mettevano a snocciolare imprecazioni. Poi, quando essa riappariva, dilettrandosi a salutarla con pomposi ossequi, intonavano nuovamente il motto di “Har Har Mahadev”. Questo grido era uno scrigno di emozioni con il quale la gente continuava da secoli a dar voce a beatitudine e rabbia, euforia e depressione, e anche follia.

¹² A Benares “Har Har Mahadev” è un grido che viene lanciato in diverse occasioni dai fedeli, sulle sponde del Gange altrove, per invocare o ringraziarsi Shiva, ma non solo.

Dare o non dare la licenza alle prostitute? Su questo argomento nei canali televisivi impazzavano i *talk show* nei quali esperti di prostituzione e di traffici di esseri umani, studiosi d’etica, storici, ufficiali di polizia che contrastavano il racket delle ragazze squillo, funzionari del welfare sociale, leader delle organizzazioni femminili e gente comune predicavano a ruota libera. Lungo il Gange, i reporter saliti a bordo delle imbarcazioni urlavano come fanno i bambini ritardati indifesi:

L’intera città di Kashi si è riversata sul fiume e sui *ghāt*. La gente in collera con la prostituzione leva il grido di ‘Har Har Mahadev’. La vita di un giovane è letteralmente appesa a un filo, tra l’acqua e una pietra. Dall’altra parte della città le prostitute non hanno sinora mostrato alcun interesse nel trovare alternative alla loro occupazione e sono tuttora piazzate a Manduadih. Ora bisogna vedere quali misure adotterà l’amministrazione di fronte a questa sfida... Per TV Eteera, da Varanasi, vi parla Vitale Pirla ...

A ridosso del *ghāt*, in un negozio di *cāy*, ritrovo degli intellettuali della zona di Assi, abulici professori universitari, avvocati falliti, attivisti politici frustrati, disoccupati, apatici, drogati di *bhaṅg* mezzi matti, poeti, giornalisti, scrittori e pettegoli dibattevano la questione.

In risposta ai casi delle *koṭhārin* dei *maṭh*, le *devadāsī* e le servitrici dei templi, sino alle pratiche rituali degli stregoni di villaggio con le donne intoccabili e dell’ultimo gradino della scala sociale, si raccontavano storie reali di fornicazioni e comuni adulteri. Quando qualcuno descriveva il matrimonio come “la più grande forma di prostituzione socialmente accettata—in cambio di cibo, vestiti, tetto e protezione”—allora qualcun altro faceva risalire l’origine di tale pensiero alla sua discendenza da mantenute.

Ma al di sopra di tutto c’era una ricetta ayurvedica che ognuno voleva stamparsi bene in mente. L’aveva consigliata un drogato di *bhaṅg* come rimedio per sradicare la prostituzione:

Zenzero secco, asparago e cardo piccante

Oppio, bhaṅg e radici di piante.

Il seme non esce, la mazza è rovente,

la zoccola fugge ma non se ne pente.

A suo dire, se i clienti avessero iniziato ad assumere questo preparato ayurvedico, le prostitute se la sarebbero data a gambe e Manduadih si sarebbe svuotata poco a poco. Gli intellettuali dai colli esili ingobbiti volevano imparare la ricetta a memoria. Forse inconsciamente credevano che potessero usarla non tanto con le prostitute, bensì con le loro mogli e amanti.

Lo striscione dell'amante e le marionette

Per assicurarsi che gli agenti delle forze dell'ordine non aggredissero di nuovo una ragazza, trascinandola via con violenza come l'ultima volta, nello slum malfamato di Manduadih si organizzarono piccoli gruppi di ronda notturna.

Il consiglio di villaggio si riunì per convincere a rimanere quelle donne che, terrorizzate, volevano scappare. Si era attivata una raccolta fondi per ricorrere alla Corte di Giustizia. I contatti con vecchi clienti e simpatizzanti stavano riprendendo regolarmente.

In mezzo a questo polverone sollevatosi in città, di nascosto nel quartiere si preparavano fogli di giornale sui quali, usando inchiostro e la lacca scarlatta che si usa di solito per decorare i piedi, si tracciavano con una grafia incerta slogan del tipo:

“CHI CI HA RESO PROSTITUTE?”;

“CHI CI HA PIAZZATO A KASHI?”;

“SFORTUNATE E INDIFESE, IN PIÙ STUPRATE E VILIPESE”;

“PRIMA RIDATECI UNA COLLOCAZIONE, POI PARLATE DI PROSTITUZIONE”

Sui falò di paglia, plastica e carta, nei grossi bollitori metallici di alluminio si preparava una pasta da pittura. Un vecchio cliente che faceva il pittore lasciò uno striscione decorato con così tanti ornamenti floreali che la scritta divenne quasi illeggibile. Abhijit, il ragazzo che gestiva la scuola, scrisse manifesti contro chiunque, dal Presidente della repubblica al magistrato distrettuale.

Una mattina, all'improvviso, le donne con i loro bambini, i cani rognosi, le gabbie dei pappagalli, il contenitore per le foglie di *betel*, i fagotti di cibarie e le bottiglie d'acqua, scesero in strada dietro lo striscione cosparso di petali, incorniciato da un broccato dorato cucito a mano.

In prima fila c'era proprio Abhijit e tutti reggevano in mano i cartelli con su scritti gli slogan. Era la prima volta nella storia che le prostitute organizzavano un corteo che sarebbe arrivato a manifestare fino al Tribunale, in un percorso di otto chilometri, presentando istanze scritte al magistrato. Era una fila lunga trecento donne. La maggior parte di loro non aveva mai oltrepassato i confini dello slum per andare in città. Il traffico si bloccò per vederle passare. Sui balconi degli edifici si accalcò una moltitudine di persone.

Puttane... le puttane... Guarda, le puttane...

Ma loro non guardavano nessuno! Nei loro sguardi c'era il riflesso di paura degli animali circondati dalla folla, e a intervalli divampava la rabbia. *'Lotteremo... Vinceremo, Lotteremo... Vinceremo!'*. Scandivano

quello slogan appreso chissà dove, che non aveva alcun legame né con la loro vita né con la loro fisicità. La maggior parte delle donne aveva un'aria malata, triste e stanca. I piedi poggiati sulle ciabatte di plastica che fuoriuscivano dalle sari ordinarie battevano qua e là tentennando, come se sulla strada vi fossero buche invisibili nelle quali c'era pericolo di sprofondare. Anche i bambini e i cani erano intimoriti. Persino nelle mani che si innalzavano a tempo di slogan non c'era ritmo, ma solo incertezza e confusione. Tuttavia, in quelle voci stridule e gracchianti c'era senza dubbio qualcosa di così straziante che di tanto in tanto lasciava turbati. Anche la gente ai lati delle strade cominciò a voltarsi verso di loro. I musicanti di harmonium e *ḍholak*, vedendole impaurite per via di quelle occhiate, cominciarono a suonare e loro, titubanti, a ballare agli incroci. Quando questo enorme e incerto corteo, danzando e cantando, entrò in Tribunale, si diffuse tutt'attorno una tensione elettrizzante.

Scendendo gli slogan, si sedettero in segno di protesta davanti alla veranda dell'ufficio della Cancelleria e in mezzo alla strada. Da ogni parte si erano formate cerchie di spettatori. In tutta fretta gli avvocati e i loro assistiti, i poliziotti e gli impiegati giudiziari, dopo aver scritto su dei foglietti di carta i titoli delle canzoni, cominciarono a lanciarglieli addosso mostrando loro delle banconote. Un avvocato dai modi insolenti, accennando con le mani il gesto della danza del pavone e del serpente, invitò a ballare le ragazzine più giovani sedute tra la folla. Le prostitute non gli diedero il minimo credito, rimasero lì scandendo gli slogan mentre accudivano i propri bambini.

Circa due ore più tardi arrivò un assistente socio-sanitario inviato dal funzionario municipale. Diceva che l'ente locale non aveva né fondi né progetti per il ricollocamento delle prostitute, quindi erano stati contattati la Regione e il Governo Centrale. Le loro richieste avrebbero raggiunto tutti gli addetti ai lavori, persino i partiti politici. Nel centro di protezione delle donne non c'era abbastanza spazio da ospitarle tutte. Il funzionario le rassicurò sul fatto di poter rimanere nelle loro case senza che venissero sfrattate, ma dovevano smettere di prostituirsi.

Egli, per conoscere la disponibilità dei fondi, aveva sollecitato il Ministro del Welfare, ma aveva appurato che in quei giorni si trovava in galera. Gli impiegati del Ministero, in combutta con i presidi delle scuole, dopo aver aperto un conto bancario fittizio a nome degli studenti *dalit*, si erano appropriati illecitamente delle loro borse di studio. Quando la vicenda venne a galla, il Ministero del welfare aveva chiuso i battenti per frode. Una vecchietta si rizzò in piedi dalla folla mostrando il lembo della sua *dhoti* sporca all'assistente socio-sanitario, e cominciò a scandire con voce rauca... “Finché ero giovane vi ho serviti tutti voialtri, vostra altezza... Ora, come ha voluto il Signore, è arrivata la vecchiaia. Non ci mandi in rovina! Vostra eccellenza! Dove andremo? Non abbiamo nessun posto!”. Le prostitute presero a sghignazzare: la vecchietta stava chiedendo giustizia all'assistente socio-sanitario che aveva scambiato per il Cancelliere.

La vecchia non se la piantava di ripetere: “Finché ero giovane vi ho servito, vostra altezza!”.

Anche il pubblico cominciò a ridere. L'assistente sociale impallidì. Cincischiando qualcosa di sfuggita, si voltò e scomparve dietro le enormi colonne di epoca coloniale della veranda del Tribunale.

Il sacrificio, la scuola bruciata e la richiesta agli editori

Il giorno successivo la marcia delle prostitute, su Man Mandir ghat, a fianco di Dasasvamedh ghat, i *brahmacārī*, i *sādhu* e i *baṭuk* diedero inizio ad un rito sacrificale per purificare l'ambiente sociale ed estirpare le *bāijī*. Vennero realizzati con la farina centinaia di fantocci di donne. Dopo averli annacquati, cosparsi di sandalo, cinabro, resine e unguenti vari e avvolti con uno spago, li decorarono sulle scalinate che scendono al fiume. Ogni giorno, davanti a una folla di migliaia di spettatori, in presenza delle telecamere dei canali televisivi, tra complesse e gravi formule magiche, quei fantocci venivano gettati nella fossa del fuoco sacrificale, o *havan kuṇḍ*. I *sādhu* e gli addetti alla recitazione dei mantra raccontavano con orgoglio che, grazie a quest'azione, le prostitute sarebbero state radicalmente annichilite e Kashi sarebbe tornata pura.

Quei *sādhu* e *baṭuk* non erano troppo credibili, motivo per cui non trovarono molto supporto. Tra di essi, la maggior parte dei *sādhu* erano *paṇḍa* che restavano seduti sui *ghāṭ* con gli album di foto in mano, mentre sciorinavano due parole di inglese, francese o spagnolo per abbindolare specialmente gli stranieri. Anche i giovani *baṭuk* facevano parte di coloro che, nel mese in cui vengono celebrati gli antenati, al momento dell'arrivo di pesanti calche di pellegrini venivano assunti alla giornata dai sacerdoti hindu. Venivano consegnati loro dei libricini con i versi, poi venivano fatti sedere tra i pellegrini dalle teste rasate. Quindi il sacerdote recitava i mantra al microfono e loro non facevano altro che ripeterli. Scimmiettando così le formule sacerdotali, elargivano sommi precetti ai parenti dei defunti. In un certo modo, all'interno del rituale del culto degli antenati, erano come operai pagati alla giornata.

Queste bamboline, dopo essersi cotte e rotte nel fuoco sacrificale, venivano ritualmente gettate nel Gange. Di notte, i mendicanti che dormivano sui *ghāṭ* andavano alla ricerca dei resti di quelle bambole cotte sul fuoco ed, estraendone la polpa, se la mangiavano. Per sfamarsi si stavano cibando delle prostitute nello stesso modo in cui chi aveva pochi soldi, per saziare la propria fame, faceva sesso con loro. Quando le bambole galleggianti, avvolte da collane e braccialetti sacri, iniziarono a fluttuare lungo le rive del fiume sacro e la polpa dei loro fianchi, seni e ventri, cosce e visi, gonfiandosi prese a disperdersi in acqua, allora le vere prostitute cinsero d'assedio le sedi dei partiti politici per chiedere aiuto.

Un mese e mezzo dopo, di notte, la scuola dei bambini del ghetto malfamato fu data alle fiamme. Questa scuola sorgeva fuori dallo slum, in un capanno di lamiera costruito su delle macerie. Abhijit, il ragazzo che mandava avanti la scuola, si fece in quattro ma non riuscì a denunciare il fatto. Tutti sapevano chi aveva appiccato il fuoco, ma secondo le indagini della polizia la colpa era da attribuire ai giocatori d'azzardo. Nella versione ufficiale, quella notte l'incendio era divampato dalle fiamme del falò che gli stessi avevano acceso per riscaldarsi. Questa versione venne riportata anche dalle agenzie di stampa, così che sulla sua base si potesse attribuire la responsabilità di questo evento a chi aveva appiccato il fuoco.

Il giovane Abhijit, dopo aver conseguito un master in filosofia all'Università di Delhi, aveva vissuto per qualche tempo in una comunità di danzatrici nomadi *Bediya* nel distretto di Sidhi, in Madhya Pradesh. Dopo il suo arrivo nello slum, aveva preso sotto la sua protezione alcuni dei figli delle prostitute e aveva iniziato a dar loro delle lezioni. Al momento dell'incendio, nella sua scuola studiavano più di cento bambini e lui era convinto di poterli salvare da quella vita infernale. In precedenza le prostitute non mandavano i piccoli a scuola, poiché non credevano affatto che qualcuno volesse davvero istruirli. Il giovane continuava a ribadire loro di mettere da parte i propri guadagni evitando di darli ai loro mariti, protettori e magnaccia al tempo stesso. Avrebbero dovuto spendere quei soldi per se stesse e per i loro piccoli. Quel ragazzo era come sabbia negli occhi per gli uomini che abitavano nel 'covo dell'amor venduto'. Costoro erano felici dell'incendio della scuola. Anche in quel luogo la maggior parte delle donne non riusciva a vivere sola senza i mariti. Avevano bisogno di essere protette da qualcuno. Erano proprio quei consorti, vale a dire i protettori, i mariti-magnaccia e i musicanti ad adescare e portare i clienti, intasandosi poi la maggior parte dei guadagni. Allo stesso modo delle mogli comuni, in loro nome le prostitute osservavano il digiuno e facevano dei voti. E così, proprio come gli altri mariti, quelli le picchiavano.

Abhijit, attaccato su tutti i fronti, recandosi quotidianamente nelle sedi delle testate giornalistiche, sollecitava tutto il personale, dal fattorino al direttore, affinché finalmente andassero a vedere con i propri occhi la situazione del suburbio di perduta fama. Da quel luogo di degrado e povertà e da quelle stamberghe se ne erano già andate sei donne per esercitare altrove lo stesso mestiere. Se la polizia non avesse cessato di presidiare la zona e loro non avessero potuto riprendere a lavorare, allora sarebbero morte di fame oppure si sarebbero disperse per ogni dove. Con ciò la prostituzione non sarebbe diminuita, anzi, sarebbe aumentata a vista d'occhio. Come il C. Antaratma, anche l'opinione degli altri giornalisti riguardo questa vicenda era che il giovane, dietro la copertura dell'insegnamento ai bambini, orchestrasse il traffico delle ragazze e partecipasse ai guadagni delle prostitute. Mostrandosi gentile con loro, era oramai diventato milionario.

Nonostante fosse trascorso un mese e mezzo, nessuna prostituta andò alla stazione di polizia a presentare la richiesta per il prestito governativo e nessun'altra si sentì pronta per andare al centro di protezione delle donne. La maggior parte di loro, dopo aver consultato i protettori e i musicanti, presero in considerazione la possibilità di trasferirsi velocemente altrove. Sarebbero restate soltanto le donne anziane e quelle malate. La polizia avrebbe sfrattato alcune di loro sbattendole nella casa di protezione delle donne. Le restanti sarebbero state allontanate e costrette così ad elemosinare. In ogni caso sarebbero state censite come mendicanti.

Se stai con noi te la spasserai

Un giorno Prakash confidò un segreto ad Abhijit: “Voglio venire lì insieme a te, ma dovremo organizzare uno spettacolo di *mujrā*, voglio scattare delle foto”. Era giunto il momento di esaudire un desiderio che covava da tempo, partecipare a un *mujrā* dal vivo. Un pensiero che lo assillava ancor di più era quello di ricomporre i tasselli di un puzzle. E, per riuscirci, forse era indispensabile recarsi a Manduadih.

Una sera, dopo aver salvato sul computer le foto come al solito, uscì in fretta e furia. Quando raggiunse lo slum di Manduadih, capì che l'elettricità era già stata staccata. Si sentivano i tonfi delle palate di terra fangosa e il fracasso dei bulldozer che avanzavano su ambo i lati del ghetto malfamato ricolmi d'acqua.

Era la prima volta che vedeva dal vivo quelle che, per uno strano caso del destino, venivano ancora chiamate “case di piacere”. Ai lati di una stradina dissestata sorgevano strutture in mattoni a un piano, altrove a due piani. La maggior parte delle facciate sul retro non era stata terminata. La luce fioca di lanterne e candele si allungava nei viottoli attraverso le finestre. L'acqua imputridita dalla pioggia aveva ricoperto entrambi i margini dello slum. C'era un odore nauseabondo dappertutto. L'area pullulava di zanzare. Lungo la strada, sui focolari da tè dei negozi rimasti vuoti e al riparo di alcune tettoie, si stavano consumando dei falò, intorno ai quali sedevano alcune donne e dei bambini deperiti dai capelli insecchiti. Sembrava un villaggio di *dalit* sul quale stava per calare la notte mestamente.

Per organizzare il *mujrā* in fretta e furia, si era corso ai ripari andando a chiedere in qualche abitazione *harmonium* e *dholak*. Un ragazzo dai capelli aggrovigliati, che sembrava sotto l'effetto di alcol e droghe, portò un banjo. Nel cortile di una casa erano state sistemate delle lanterne, oramai ricoperte sino alla cima da fitte ragnatele. Qua e là pigre lucertole si trascinarono a terra. Sui muri, tra le pagine dei calendari e nelle cornici, erano appesi ritratti di famiglia unti, logori e sfocati. Da una porta interna penzolava lurida una tenda ricavata strappando una sari di nylon. In poco tempo la stanza si riempì di donne, bambini e protettori. Prakash, cullando in grembo la sua macchina fotografica, fu

costretto ad accovacciarsi. Sbucò fuori dallo schermo della tenda una donna cicciottella dalla carnagione scura. Nonostante la cipria, sul suo viso scintillavano le cicatrici del vaiolo. Si sedette a terra e cominciò a prepararsi per la danza.

A Prakash sembrò che quella donna non si stesse stringendo le *ghumghrū* attorno alle caviglie, bensì stesse calzando degli scarponi prima di andare chissà dove. Dietro di lei spuntò, con un fascio di campanelle squillanti già ai piedi, una stupenda ragazza dagli occhi vitrei. Si posizionò nel mezzo con le labbra protese in avanti. Osservandola, Prakash ebbe come la sensazione di averla già vista altrove. Era così debole da sembrare anemica. All'improvviso, l'harmonium sgangherato cominciò ad ansimare per accordarsi, ed entrambe le donne iniziarono a danzare. Dimenavano mani e piedi come se volessero scrollarsi di dosso la polvere che vi si era accumulata. Entrambe cantarono senza alcun trasporto una famosa canzone di un film. Una vecchietta appisolata ordinò come se stesse sognando: “Fai ascoltare a *bābū* la musica punjabi. Che sia punjabi, eh!”.

Per un attimo la grassa signora, protendendo le labbra in avanti, lanciò un'occhiataccia stizzita a Prakash; poi, slegandosi dalla vita il lembo della sari, se lo legò alla testa. Saltellando a ritmo dei colpi del *dholak* incominciò a cantare:

Canta tara ra ra, canta tara ra ra!

Se stai con noi te la spasserai e del mondo avrai tutto ciò che vuoi...

Anche qualche bambino iniziò a ballare saltellando e si creò un parapiglia. Nella stanza la polvere prese a librarsi in aria diffondendosi come foschia davanti alle lanterne. Ora, in mezzo agli schiamazzi, erano le sagome delle figure in movimento a sfocarsi come spettri danzanti al crepuscolo. Quello era a tutti gli effetti un sabba di spiriti famelici e rabbiosi, circondati da acqua putrida e ronde di polizia. Per via del nuvolo di polvere, scattare una fotografia divenne quasi impossibile. Prakash, alzandosi, decise di uscir fuori. Abhijit, mentre si sforzava invano affinché la polvere non si disperdesse ovunque, esclamò: “Ecco, questa è la loro vita, signore”.

Prakash fece salire Abhijit a bordo della sua moto e, non appena raggiunsero la strada, dei poliziotti si avventarono su di loro imprecaando. Ancor prima che Prakash potesse dire qualcosa, per via di una bastonata, il faro della motocicletta si era già frantumato a terra in mille pezzi. Abhijit bisbigliò in fretta: “Gira, esci dall'altro lato! Ci stanno caricando di proposito, non ci lasceranno in pace nemmeno se gli diciamo che sei della stampa!”.

Mentre sterzavano, un'altra legnata piombò sulla schiena di Abhijit che lanciò un urlo di dolore. All'altra estremità del quartiere, i poliziotti di guardia lo minacciavano chiamando a distanza e agitando i bastoni, ricoprendoli di insulti. Abhijit capì che non li avrebbero fatti uscire. “Toccherà trascorrere

qui la notte”, pensò. Era da molto tempo che non provava davvero paura. Si sentì con l’acqua alla gola. Per qualche minuto, da ambo i confini dello slum continuarono a scrosciare insulti: “Bastardi. Figli di troia. Vengono a troie fingendosi della stampa”.

Prakash parcheggiò la moto e, dopo essersi calmato, si sedette davanti a un falò per riscaldarsi la mano dolorante.

Abhijit si sfilò il giubbotto per dar conforto alla schiena mentre due bambini, insultando gli sbirri, gliela stavano massaggiando. Entrambe le danzatrici Yasmine e Vimala lo stavano prendendo per i fondelli:

“Dai, suvvia! Organizzate un altro *mujrā* pubblico. Avete ricevuto il *prasād* delle divinità della società per bene, no?”.

Al vedere Prakash le donne ora sorridevano. Come se da quella lezione il caro giornalista avesse cominciato a capire come funzionasse il mondo. La cipria, in brillanti rivoli di sudore, aveva preso ad imperlare i volti di quelle ragazze. “Danzate bene tutte e due, accidenti come danzate”—disse a Yasmine. Lei ariccì il naso. “A stomaco vuoto, cosa vuoi ballare! La festa di *Dīvālī* l’abbiamo trascorsa al buio, ora ci impediscono anche di esibirci ai matrimoni. Per quanto tempo ancora dovremmo andare avanti con questa ridicola mascherata?” Rubando al falò una pagliuzza di fieno, Yasmine sbottò:

“Quando quelli a cui hai offerto da bere e da mangiare, dopo averli considerati come padri e fratelli diventano i tuoi nemici, che motivo c’è di cantare e danzare?”.

Prakash domandò ad Abhijit: “Chi diavolo sono i loro parenti serpenti?”.

Lui rise. “Guarda con i tuoi occhi. Ora che sei qui, ti diventerà tutto più chiaro”.

Su queste parole, Vimla andò a prendere in una casa un piccolo album fotografico. Di ritorno, alle sue spalle avanzava un gruppetto di persone. Cominciò a mostrare loro le foto.

“Guardi qui, è la foto della figlia di Savitri che parte per andare a casa dello sposo dopo il matrimonio”. Alcuni dei visi dei bambini e delle donne seduti lì accanto erano in quella foto. Tutti ritratti in piedi sotto un *maṇḍap* fatto di canne da zucchero. Un uomo chino stava lavando i piedi dello sposo.

“Questo è Maraiyam Patel, il papà di questa ragazza. Un anno e mezzo fa il corteo nuziale è partito proprio da qui. Oggi, per cacciarci via, quest’uomo è seduto in segno di protesta davanti al tribunale”.

“Ecco il consigliere di amministrazione Tirthraj Dubey, che sgozza un pollo nel giorno della circoncisione del figlio di Begum Asgari”. Dietro bottiglie, bicchieri e piatti avanzati, Tirthraj Dubey, sorretto da due donne, barcollava e stava per finire fuori dalla foto.

“Osservi i nostri fratelli che si fanno allacciare le *rākhi* da Salma”.

Alle mani del ragazzo del negozio di *pān* Rajesh Bardwajh erano legati così tanti braccialetti che i suoi polsi sembravano due manicotti.

“Guardi qua, il presidente del consiglio di amministrazione che va sulla luna con Suhani”.

Ram Vilas Yadav, amministratore di Shivdaspur, stava sorridendo guancia a guancia con una ragazza nello studio fotografico di qualche festa. Sullo sfondo la luna e le stelle, inquadrare in una cornice di legno decorata con pagliuzze glitterate.

“Guardi qui... guardi qua...”, venivano mostrate una a una quelle foto rare, scattate con comuni macchinette.

L' alcool è nostro, il pollo è nostro, il movimento...è il loro

Era come se all'album fotografico fosse attaccata una pompa. Ad ogni giro di pagina, il petto di Prakash si riempiva d'aria. Tutti gli uomini nelle foto erano dunque i capi politici che protestavano davanti alla Corte di Giustizia per sradicare il ghetto malfamato, e avevano addirittura aderito allo sciopero della fame ad oltranza. Sarebbe bastato il tempo necessario a stampare quelle fotografie che la loro ipocrisia sarebbe stata smascherata, e l'intera contestazione si sarebbe dissolta in poche ore. Dopo essersi calmato, Prakash, prendendo l'album in mano, disse: “Queste persone vanno dicendo invece di non riuscire a far sposare i loro figli, che la vita delle giovani spose è diventata impossibile!”.

Era caduta una pietra su un nido di vespe. Anche dalle fiamme del falò cominciarono a muoversi lingue veloci come serpi: “Sono dei veri e propri approfittatori, sono stati loro a rendere impossibile la vita delle loro spose e figlie. In quale loro matrimonio non abbiamo regalato fior fior di quattrini, in quale matrimonio non abbiamo cantato e danzato senza volere nulla in cambio. Che vengano pure davanti a noi, non apriranno bocca. Abbiamo persino partecipato al corteo nuziale di Rajesh Bardwaj. E' stata la matrona di questo posto ad aver organizzato le sue nozze. Di chi credi che sia l'edificio in cui vive se non della matrona? Lei ha persino i documenti del registro immobiliare, se le servono li prenda pure. Sono dei ciarlatani, dei farabutti. Quelli hanno visto i soldi e sono impazziti. Che possano morir fulminati, quei bastardi!”.

Abhijit rimase sconcertato davanti a quel frastuono. Aveva assistito impotente alla scena, ma ora si alzò in piedi di scatto e tuonò con tutta la sua forza: “Con le chiacchiere non si risolve niente! Che sia la matrona a parlare. Lei conosce tutti. Ce lo racconterà per filo e per segno”. Dopo il suo sfogo cadde il silenzio.

La matrona nepalese era proprietaria di tre edifici dello slum. Con ogni probabilità era lei la più abbiente e facoltosa. Se ne stava seduta in silenzio mentre attizzava il fuoco avvolta in uno scialle

fiammante. Quando gli altri fecero silenzio, alzò gli occhi lucidi e impiestrati di *kājal* sprofondati nelle rughe.

Con la voce tremolante per l'ebbrezza, interrompendosi a più riprese, cominciò:

“Guardi è iniziato tutto sei, otto mesi fa. Alcuni politici, oltre ad altri uomini distinti, venivano qui tutti i giorni. Bevevano il nostro alcool, trangugiavano i nostri polli e dormivano sui nostri stessi letti. Anche noi intrattenevamo con loro ogni tipo di rapporto. Lo sanno persino le loro famiglie. Ma la loro avidità non faceva che crescere. Si son mostrati più scaltri persino dei poliziotti. Ci chiedevano così tanti soldi ogni giorno che darglieli era diventato insostenibile. Su suggerimento del Signor Maestro, tutte le donne, dopo aver istituito un consiglio di villaggio, hanno deciso di metterci una pietra sopra. Ora basta con i soldi, l'alcool e i polli. Di certo resteranno le chiacchierate, i canti e le danze per il loro intrattenimento esattamente come prima, ma non saranno più concesse a nessuno elargizioni di denaro. E' questo il motivo della nostra rabbia. In realtà proprio queste persone e i loro stessi padri e nonni hanno permesso che ci stabilissimo qui. Hanno approfittato persino di questo! Affitti triplicati rispetto al prezzo del mercato, per non parlare della vendita dei terreni e degli edifici che ci son costati cinque volte tanto. Abbiamo messo in piedi le nostre dimore investendo tutti i nostri risparmi. Opponiamoci, sorelle! Non possiamo più sopportare che ciò avvenga!”.

A Prakash si stava svelando un nuovo mondo all'interno di quello slum.

La matrona, sollevando lo sguardo, disse: “Porta i documenti... Non solo degli edifici, ma anche di tutti i negozi del quartiere, tanto sono sempre i loro. Ora c'è conflitto ovunque perché per la loro cocciutaggine una cinquantina di famiglie faticano a mangiare il pane quotidiano”. Cominciò a far contare uno ad uno i nomi dei proprietari dei negozi, vale a dire i loro stessi concubini, fratelli, familiari o aiutanti. Se ci si scordava il nome di qualche negozio, i bambini balzando nel mezzo lo ricordavano. In mezz'ora Prakash aveva già raccolto i documenti originali corredati dal timbro del registro catastale di ventuno edifici. Una ventina di anni prima quegli appezzamenti di terra insalubri e marginali erano davvero stati venduti a prezzi arbitrari.

Venne il turno di Abhijit. “La verità non è così semplice come voi pensate. In realtà questo movimento di protesta è orchestrato da quelli che fanno lavorare i bulldozer. I terreni limitrofi all'avvallamento e quelli incolti sono stati comprati da un'impresa edile di Delhi. Influente politici, costruttori e mafiosi della zona sono soci commerciali dell'azienda. I loro occhi sono tutti puntati su questo sobborgo. I furbetti dei quartieri del vicinato e del villaggio, con la complicità dell'ispettore Capo, stanno soffiando sul fuoco affinché le prostitute scappino, dopo essersi fatti vendere da loro le case a prezzi stracciati. Poi, dopo aver lottizzato l'area, con l'aiuto dei palazzinari faranno costruire appartamenti e complessi commerciali e si arricchiranno giorno dopo giorno. Se non siete convinti,

chiedete a chi tra di loro ha una casa. I protettori e gli agenti immobiliari hanno cominciato a stabilire i prezzi degli edifici. Credono che dopo il bando all’attività, le prostitute non riusciranno a resistere a lungo. Guardate con attenzione quali organizzazioni a oggi si prodigano per elogiare l’Ispettore. L’uno o l’altro dirigente di ognuna di esse ha legami con società di costruzioni o imprese edili”.

Il petto di Prakash cominciò di nuovo a gonfiarsi d’aria. Avrebbe voluto volar via all’istante. Doveva soltanto confrontare i veri prezzi dei lotti di quella zona di trent’anni prima con quelli attuali del registro catastale che erano stati fatti alle prostitute, la destinazione d’uso del terreno e le planimetrie dell’impresa edile, le prove del sodalizio dei politici aderenti alla protesta e dell’Ispettore con i costruttori, e in ultimo le scritture contabili degli agenti immobiliari! Niente di impossibile.

Bastava contattare l’ufficio del catasto, l’ente per lo sviluppo, la divisione marketing dell’azienda edile e l’ufficio delle relazioni con il pubblico, poteva portare a termine tutto questo lavoro con un semplice schiocco delle dita. Aveva in pugno una sensazionale inchiesta da pubblicare a episodi. “Dovremmo riprovare ad uscire”, suggerì ad Abhijit. “Ora è troppo pericoloso, non pensare nemmeno di andar via di qui prima di domattina. In questo momento staranno fermando i camion per riscuotere le mazzette. Si incazzerebbero di brutto,” rispose lui.

Arrivò una ragazza dicendo che quella notte la cena era stata organizzata nel ‘vicolo delle *roṭī*’. La maggior parte delle donne aveva già mangiato. Se non avessero raggiunto anch’essi quel luogo sarebbero rimasti a digiuno. Quando una signora di mezza età vide Prakash esitare, afferrandogli il polso e trascinandolo con sé gli disse: “Lei ha visto dunque tutto, le nostre case, i bungalow e le macchine; ora, forza, venga a vedere anche il cibo. Lei mangia tutti i giorni quello della gente importante, per una volta assaggi anche il nostro”.

In un vicololetto, alla luce di una lampada a petrolio, si stava sedendo un piccolo gruppo di prostitute. I bambini erano stati i primi a essere sfamati. Quello forse era l’ultimo turno d’attesa. Quando *khicṛī* e *acār* piovvero sul piatto di foglie, Yasmin sorrise: “Signor giornalista! Di questi tempi questo è quello che si mangia. I nostri guadagni sono volati via in un mese e mezzo. Anche se avessimo dei soldi da parte, non potremmo uscire per comprare delle provviste. Qualcuno è riuscito a portare del riso di nascosto e ci siamo organizzate qui”.

Prakash voleva scrollarsi di dosso lo stupore, ma dalla sua bocca uscirono le seguenti parole: “Le *tawā’if* stanno mangiano *khicṛī* proprio come i *sādhu* e il luogo in cui lo stanno condividendo si chiama vicolo delle *roṭī*”.

Abhijit, rivolgendosi ad una donna dal viso di pietra scolpita che stava mangiando nel gruppetto di fronte, disse: “Lui è un giornalista, raccontagli chi ha esportato il vicolo delle *roṭī*”.

Dopo aver trangugiato in fretta e furia quattro, cinque bocconi, cominciò a parlare:

“Il vero vicolo delle *roṭī* non è qui ma a Kanpur. Anche lì un giorno arrivò una funzionaria di polizia folle. Si chiamava Mamta Vidhyarthi. Fece mettere al bando la prostituzione e ci fece picchiare, costringendoci a scappare tutte. Anche le persone del vicinato cominciarono a organizzare dei sit-in di protesta per farci allontanare. Per un anno e mezzo rimanemmo a girarci i pollici pensando di poter ricominciare a lavorare, ma non andò così. La situazione toccò un punto di non ritorno e fummo costrette a fuggire. Io avevo un bambino piccolo di un anno e mezzo e mia madre era anziana. Anche i bambini di Savitri, Janki e Reshmi erano davvero piccini. Ci siamo trasferite qui con qualche conoscente. Le altre donne sono andate a finire chissà dove. Da allora ci portiamo dietro il nome di “quelle del vicolo delle *roṭī*”.

Dopo essersi rifocillati, entrambi andarono a casa delle restanti donne del vicolo delle *roṭī*, dove a lume di candela, tra cenci appesi, i loro bambini dormivano un sonno profondo. Prakash ne aveva viste a centinaia di quelle catapecchie in cui povertà, fame e sofferenza si depositano sugli occhi dei bambini come una coltre sottile, e loro si abituanano a guardare per sempre il mondo con un velo di paura. In quel luogo i loro occhi erano chiusi. Dopo aver scattato qualche foto ai piccoli, tornarono vicino al falò. Lì una donna mutilata stava raccontando come ogni giorno la storia di quando, mentre danzava a un corteo nuziale, toccò una banconota da cento rupie poggiata sulla canna del fucile e chi lo impugnava, premette il grilletto. Riesce ancora a sentire il dolore di quella mano che ora non ha più. I bambini si misero a schiamazzare per azzittirla.

Negli occhi di Nihlani il ponte della moralità

La condizione di Prakash era diventata quella di un serpente che, dopo aver ingoiato inavvertitamente una preda troppo grande, non riesce né ad espellerla né tantomeno ad ingoiarla.

Di giorno si aggirava tra i capi politici seduti in segno di protesta davanti alla Corte di Giustizia e ne ascoltava le millanterie. Di sera, tornato a casa, cercava nelle fotografie un riscontro ai loro volti. Ogni giorno leggeva attentamente le loro dichiarazioni e di notte rovistava i documenti del registro in cerca degli atti notarili. Nel frattempo, Snehalta Dvivedi, dopo esser andata insieme al padre dell'ispettore a Lucknow, incontrò due volte il primo ministro e qualche legislatore. Di giorno le persone, che a più riprese scendevano dalle automobili cariche di catenine d'oro, scatole di *pān* e telefoni cellulari, presero l'abitudine di sincerarsi delle sue condizioni. Dopo aver ignorato ogni singolo appello dell'amministrazione, la donna proclamò con fermezza che quel *sit-in* di protesta si sarebbe concluso solo nel momento in cui tutte le prostitute di Manduadih avessero abbandonando la città.

Lo striscione “VIA LE PROSTITUTE! SALVIAMO KASHI!” attaccato davanti a un tendone imbrattato di polvere e ruggine era ormai diventato sudicio. La sporcizia aveva cominciato a depositarsi sopra le

trapunte bianche, i materassi e i cuscini distesi sulla paglia di riso. I festoni penzolanti di fiori di calendula che venivano indossati ogni giorno, erano ormai rinsecchiti e sciupati. Tuttavia i manifestanti, tra ceci sparsi sui materassi, foglie di *betel* e giornali stropicciati, continuavano a narrare senza sosta le molestie recate da prostitute, clienti e papponi. Gli interventi delle organizzazioni che sostenevano il movimento erano stati programmati il tardo pomeriggio. Il microfono si accendeva con l'arrivo dei loro rappresentanti politici. L'assemblea aveva così inizio e durava fino alla chiusura della Corte di Giustizia. La sera e la notte era il tempo dei cantanti di *bhajan* e di *kirtan*. Tutta quella gente stava collaborando anima e corpo a una giusta causa.

Proprio C. Antaratma avrebbe potuto rendere felice Chavi aiutando Prakash a mettere in esercizio quell'agognato spirito da cronista d'inchiesta. Egli, come l'astuto fotografo, riuscì ad esaudire un desiderio che lo accompagnava da anni. Da tempo immemore ripeteva a Prakash di scattare una bella foto ai suoi genitori. Andando a casa di Antaratma, egli non solo gli scattò delle foto di soppiatto, ma li fece anche ritrarre maestosamente da un pittore. Nemmeno il tempo di asciugarsi, che il dipinto arrotolato in un giornale gli venne dato in dono. Rimase incredulo per la felicità e la sorpresa. Non riusciva a capacitarsi di come quel suo sogno nel cassetto si fosse esaudito così facilmente.

Antaratma accompagnò Prakash da Hariram Agrawal, il più grande imprenditore edile della città e membro dell'alta camera del parlamento indiano, per lui un amico.

Prakash non riusciva a capacitarsi di come un giornalista male in arnese come Antaratma potesse essere così vicino ad Agrawal. Egli lo accolse con grande calore, come se l'Antaratma dagli abiti consumati fosse uno di quei capi politici dai grandi principi e valori morali di scarso successo, per il quale nutriva una sconfinata simpatia. Gli venne richiesto di eseguire un reportage per il giornale che fotografasse il prospetto di quella zona remota e degradata una volta terminati i lavori edilizi, oltre che rappresentare le conseguenti migliorie dell'aspetto urbano. Agrawal prese i due con sé senza indugio e insieme andarono da Sri Vilas Nilhani, amministratore generale della Nidhi Construction Company, che alloggiava in un hotel a cinque stelle della città. Fece convocare in quel luogo anche il direttore dei cantieri e l'addetto alle pubbliche relazioni.

Quella sera, sul letto della suite più lussuosa dell'hotel, beveva liquore circondato da un mucchio di computer, telefoni, valigette ventiquattrore e documenti. Davanti a lui, seduti in atteggiamento riverente su sedie di plastica, c'erano uomini d'affari, imprenditori edili, politici di poco conto, lestofanti e agenti di varia natura. La sua pancia era talmente grande da sembrare staccata dall'enorme corpo dalla pelle scura. In quello scenario i suoi occhi erano strani. Nella pupilla scintillante di quei bulbi straordinariamente grandi, dilatata da un infinito narcisismo, si muovevano marionette grigio opache frutti di promesse. Egli conosceva già tutti i segreti del mondo, perciò ignorava qualsiasi tipo di

discorso e i suoi occhi mancavano della minima traccia di un eventuale, seppur leggero, senso di stupore.

Non appena arrivò Agrawal, Nilhani fece un cenno all'architetto e all'addetto alle pubbliche relazioni e concluse il meeting in un battibaleno. Rivolgendosi alle persone sedutesi davanti disse: "Fate un'offerta a rialzo a quelli che hanno grandi appezzamenti di terra in quel villaggio affinché possano capire. Se tuttavia non dovessero capire, lasciate stare e dimenticatevi di loro. Abbiamo sei mesi di tempo. Tra due mesi renderemo pubblici i documenti della confisca di quella terra ad opera dello Stato. Sia la valutazione statale sia quella locale sono inferiori alle nostre. Non appena ci saranno un po' di tafferugli e arriveranno le manganellate della polizia, il buon senso verrà da sé. Verranno a consegnarci i loro terreni in mano".

L'addetto alle relazioni col pubblico li fece accomodare in un'altra stanza dove un cameriere stava servendo il rinfresco. L'onorevole Agrawal gli disse: "Man mano che la discussione va avanti continui a portare qualcosa. Sa, l'onorevole Nihlani è un uomo indaffarato".

C. Antaratma si alzò di scatto dalla sedia e sussurrò all'orecchio di Prakash: "Anche noi berremo quella bottiglia, quella che sta bevendo lui. Ora di mattina ci saremo ripuliti lo stomaco con il whisky!".

Nilhani non entrava nella sedia. Afferrando il suo bicchiere e sprofondando nel letto disse:

"In questa città stiamo sancendo l'inizio di una nuova era della pianificazione urbanistica in cui il nuovo insediamento sorgerà esattamente accanto a quello vecchio e ci saranno tutte le comodità delle metropoli moderne. Il mondo viene a vedere la Benares antica, ma la gente di qui è stanca di vivere senza uno spicchio in tasca in vicoli angusti larghi appena quanto basta da morirci soffocati. Noi li condurremo nella nuova città, aperta e moderna. Poi sorrise... "Ci dica onorevole Agarwal, cosa ne pensa di questo linguaggio paradossale alla Kabir?"¹³.

"Stupendo, eccezionale!"—rispose Agrawal reggendo in mano il bicchiere e con la voce bagnata dal whisky che gli aveva ostruito la gola. Schiarendosela disse: "Se Dio vuole, con il beneplacito dell'ispettore e del gentilissimo Antaratma *jī*, entro due mesi svanirà anche l'ultimo problema. Poi avremo la strada spianata".

Nihlani rise: "L'ispettore è un uomo pio e devoto, sta praticando l'ascesi. Se riusciamo ad entrare nelle grazie degli amici di Antaratma, allora la macchina si metterà in moto. Ho pensato di fare

¹³ Kabir (1398-1448) nacque a Varanasi in una famiglia di tessitori convertiti all'islam due generazioni prima della sua nascita. È l'esempio medioevale più elevato della sintesi indo-musulmana nel campo letterario. Caratteristica peculiare della sua poesia è l'uso di immagini crude e di un "linguaggio alla rovescia" utilizzati per scuotere l'opinione pubblica dall'autocompiacimento. Kabir condanna fermamente il sistema castale e la religione come ipocrita ritualità.

un’offerta conveniente ad ognuno di loro. In cambio di ogni edificio, prendetevi un negozio e un appartamento. Godetevi la vita! In ogni caso il nostro piano prevede che, quando ci saranno le prenotazioni, avremo un occhio di riguardo per la polizia, la stampa e gli avvocati. Abbiamo parlato con l’associazione dei giornalisti. Se raccolgono una bella cifra, allora gli diamo un isolato separato tutto per loro. Non ci sono problemi”.

Agrawal jī diede delle pacche affettuose sulla spalla di Antaratma. “Eccolo qui il nostro Ispettore! Anche lui non è stato da meno”. Un sorriso da scolareto intelligente irradiò la barba bianca di Antaratma.

Al cenno di Nihlani, l’architetto spiegò la mappa sul tavolo. Nella circoscrizione di Ardhaçandrakar erano stati predisposti tre complessi residenziali a decine di piani, in mezzo ai quali, tra la rete diffusa del sistema stradale, erano sparpagliati qua e là un complesso commerciale, un parcheggio, uno stadio, una multisala, un distributore di benzina, una piscina, un parco, un centro ricreativo e degli uffici addetti alla sicurezza.

Nella bozza invasa dai segni blu e rossi della matita, Prakash stava cercando di indovinare dove si trovasse il ghetto malfamato.

All’improvviso, quando l’architetto fece per ripiegare la mappa, Prakash chiese di botto: “Se le prostitute non se ne dovessero andare da Manduadih, che ne sarà del vostro progetto?”. Nihlani ribatté in modo rassicurante: “Se non se ne andranno, il progetto non si fermerà, ma diventerà ancor più sontuoso”.

Fece un cenno all’architetto: “Illustragli il ponte della moralità”.

L’architetto, spiegando un nuovo schizzo, lo dispose sul tavolo. I grattacieli costruiti ad entrambi i margini del quartiere Ardhaçandrakar erano stati collegati da un cavalcavia, sotto il quale, esattamente al centro, si trovava il bassofondo di perdita fama.

L’architetto cominciò a parlare come un bollettino: “Questo ponte di moralità avrà un’ampiezza di cinquecento metri. In mezzo ci sarà una lastra trasparente in fibra di vetro. Le macchine potranno raggiungere facilmente questo posto. Verranno predisposte delle luci alogene, sotto le quali sarà visibile anche di notte tutto ciò che si muove sulla terra. Ci sarà inoltre una piattaforma per il bungee-jumping e molto altro ancora. Questo ponte verrà usato per l’intrattenimento, a partire dai percorsi pedonali fino alla sorveglianza e proprio là...”.

Interrompendolo, Nihlani continuò il discorso: “Abbiamo contattato un’agenzia che ogni giorno provvederà ad affittare al pubblico dei telescopi e si occuperà dell’organizzazione della sicurezza.

L’idea è quella di convincere le persone che verranno a farsi un giro e a comprare un biglietto, così da poter monitorare le tutte le attività in corso, dai movimenti alle frequentazioni delle prostitute.

Come potersi divertire di più? Ci sarà un dispiegamento speciale di forze di polizia, di pattugliamenti e telecamere di sorveglianza. Da lì, le forze dell'ordine terranno d'occhio le attività illegali e potranno riconoscere i colpevoli. Ne trarrà indubbi vantaggi anche il controllo degli illeciti. Può anche darsi che, a causa della pressione psicologica dettata da questa situazione, i clienti smettano di recarsi nel quartiere per paura di essere riconosciuti e catturati. Quando la prostituzione toccherà un punto morto, per quanti giorni ancora resteranno quelle donne?”.

A Prakash sembrò uno scherzo. Antaratma stava ascoltando ammutolito col fiato sospeso, quando scoppiò in una risata fragorosa: “Ma questa è un'atrocità!... è come quando da bambini andavamo a sbirciare le donne che si lavavano al pozzo nascondendoci tra i canneti”.

Prakash esclamò stupito: “Se davvero non è uno scherzo, ditemi allora cosa succederebbe se le prostitute adottassero una nuova maniera di esercitare la professione e non si vedesse più nessuno per la strada? Se la mettiamo sul piano psicologico, la gente pensava lo stesso anche a proposito di quelli che pisciano sui muri delle case, ma che risultati abbiamo ottenuto...?”.

Nihlani, dopo aver mandato giù il terzo cicchetto, emanò un lungo barrito: “*Svāmī*, è a quel punto che comincerà a prender forma il marchingegno. Tra dieci anni la cultura del grande occhio avrà già preso il sopravvento. A quel punto le agenzie di intrattenimento, dopo aver portato qui le proprie ragazze, le piazzeranno nella tua Manduadih. Sopra quei tetti ci saranno bar all'aria aperta, cabaret, piscine, lettini da sole, jacuzzi, saune e giochi di ogni tipo. La gente verrà a vederli. Le prostitute sfigureranno davanti alle avvenenti e intelligenti fanciulle di queste agenzie, che compreranno da loro l'intera area, e la trasformeranno nella zona d'intrattenimento peep-show all'aperto più grande di tutta l'Asia, anzi, del mondo. Stiamo gettando le basi di questo progetto tenendo a mente il cospicuo flusso di stranieri, ma per il momento siamo solo alla definizione delle fasi”.

Prakash, paonazzo per i fumi dell'alcool, rimase a fissare con stupore quella statua marmorea dagli occhi scintillanti da megalomane che tanto somigliava a Sharda Devi di Maihar.

Per Nihlani era giunta l'ora di coricarsi. Quando Prakash si incamminò, portando via con sé la fotocopia del prospetto, la brossura del progetto e qualche foto, Antaratma rubò dal piatto un pugno di anacardi e se li intascò. Al momento del congedo, l'addetto alle relazioni col pubblico diede in regalo a tutti un *souvenir* e un orologio con l'ologramma della compagnia di costruzioni, oltre a un buono da due mila rupie. Dicendo ad Antaratma che avrebbero riservato particolare attenzione ai gusti dei loro amici, gli donò un pacchetto da due chili di anacardi. Antaratma se lo portò al petto come fosse un bambino.

Quando per strada si alzò il vento, Antaratma cominciò a borbottare singhiozzando: “Ne ho viste e ne ho passate di tutti i colori, fratello. Invoca tutti gli Dei affinché questi bastardi non costruiscano il loro fottutissimo ponte, altrimenti la nostra famiglia cadrà in rovina. L'edificio del quartiere ci è

sfuggito via di mano così. La mia speranza era di poter tirarci fuori dei soldi nel momento in cui lo avesse acquistato la ditta. Abbiamo tirato a campare in qualche modo con il mio stipendio da cronista di mille e duecento rupie. Ci sono cinque bambini, cinque. Se si facesse il ponte, dove andrebbero a finire quelle creature? Quando Prakash lo lasciò davanti casa singhiozzava: “Possa Shiva impedire che si faccia il ponte della moralità”.

Uno stormo di lucciole alate

Un tempo, nei bassifondi fatiscanti giungevano blatte affamate. Ora, dopo aver mangiato *khicrī* per tre mesi, delle lucciole fameliche, trattenendo il respiro, cominciarono a volare verso i fiori. Chiunque si fosse avventurato sulla scia delle loro ali misteriose, sarebbe diventato loro preda.

Al calar della sera, quando il fumo delle auto cominciava ad addensarsi sopra i bassifondi di Manduadih, le lucciole imbellettate uscivano una ad una dalle loro alcove senza esitazione. Rispondendo ai sorrisi di scherno dei poliziotti attraversavano la strada.

Al lavoro già da prima, i loro zii materni e paterni, gli amori fraterni, ossia i protettori, facevano loro un cenno e quelle, con fare furtivo, li seguivano passo passo. Dopo averle condotte dai clienti adescati in precedenza, tornavano indietro. Quelle rimaste senza clienti, cominciarono a girovagare per la strada e sui *ghāt* alla ricerca di spiriti frustrati e accecati dal desiderio.

A quelli che le pedinavano e le seguivano con lo sguardo voltandosi di continuo, le ragazze con freddezza e maestria lanciavano tali provocazioni da farli scappare con la coda tra le gambe, oppure cominciarono a contrattare. Quelle piuttosto focose e sicure di sé tendevano imboscate ai potenziali clienti agli angoli degli hotel e delle multisale.

A notte fonda, le donne di mezza età, considerate di seconda scelta, uscivano in gruppo dall'altra estremità dello slum e raggiungevano la statale passando per i campi retrostanti il villaggio. Là, dopo essersi riscaldate i piedi zuppi di rugiada e irrigiditi dal freddo, accendevano falò con cartacce, plastica e copertoni di pneumatici, per poi penetrare una ad una le file di autocarri fermi alle *dhābā*. Quando sarebbero rincasate all'alba, i poliziotti avvolti nei giubbotti sarebbero stati sprofondati in sonni tranquilli nelle camionette, sulle panche dei negozi di tè o sui basamenti degli edifici. Era stata fissata la mazzetta settimanale di quelli che facevano le ronde, e che i protettori e i mariti-magnaccia non avrebbero tardato a recapitargliela.

Un pomeriggio, vedendo Salma sul *ghāt*, Prakash si sentì mancare salvandosi dal cadere per miracolo. Lei premeva sul seno un libro spesso indossando una gonnellina blu e una camicetta bianca mentre, distesa sul ventre di Chavi, seduta sotto un ombrellone libero di un *paṇḍa*, stava ammirando il Gange. La pancia di Chavi era diventata ancor più prominente e il suo volto brillava di una lucentezza

nuova. Con la mano poggiata sul braccio di Salma, Chavi sembrava tanto calma e incantevole quanto erano lo spavento e lo scompiglio che si agitavano in Prakash, “...allora il mio presentimento era esatto. Sa dello stupro di quella ragazzina a Manduadih. Probabilmente ne sa molto più di me di quello che succede da quelle parti”, pensò. La sua mano accarezzò la macchina fotografica per scattare una foto ad entrambe ma, ripiombando in uno stato di sconcerto, Prakash si precipitò perdifiato verso un altro *ghāt*.

Di fronte a lui, a poppa e prua del giovane che avrebbe compiuto il *jal samādhi*, transitava una flotta internazionale senza eguali. Anche Salma, come le altre persone, stava salutandoli quelli che dall'imbarcazione suonavano le campane e intonavano slogan.

Circa due ore dopo, lei comparve di nuovo. Questa volta gironzolava da sola premendosi sempre quel libro contro il seno. Voleva chiederle tante di quelle cose che la raggiunse a grandi balzi. Tuttavia, indicando il libro le domandò: “Per caso, in questi giorni, nella tua scuola, vi stanno insegnando il Corano?”.

Lei capovolve il Corano e spostandosi la treccia sorrise irritata rispondendogli con un fil di voce:

“Chi mi prende, di certo non leggerà il libro... ora se ne vada. Non resti qui impalato, se vuole parlare venga di giorno. Di questi tempi la notte non troverà nessuno”.

In quel momento, Prakash scorse sulle scalinate sottostanti del *ghāt* in riva al fiume altre cinque o sei ragazze che proprio come lei si aggiravano in gonna, *salvār* e jeans economici. Lo sguardo ammiccante, i capelli arruffati, l'andatura sculettante e quel modo di afferrare il libro. Chiunque le avesse osservate attentamente avrebbe capito che non si trattava di collegiali. Stavano rimorchiando clienti passeggiando proprio tra quelle persone che in gran pompa stavano sputando contro di loro il proprio astio. Prakash rimase esterrefatto dalla loro audacia. Forse non avevano ben chiara in mente la situazione, perciò andavano saltellando come ranocchie tra ruggenti autocarri. Se la gente avesse saputo che erano prostitute, la folla avrebbe spezzato loro le gambe per poi gettarle nel fiume a penzoloni. Salma, voltandosi, vide Prakash ancora lì mentre regolava l'obiettivo della macchinetta. Gli chiese: “Perché sui giornali ci chiamate le spose della città?”.

Prakash, guardando nell'obiettivo, rispose: “Perché non siete di nessuno in particolare. Siete le spose di una città intera. Voi qui non state mica cercando un uomo speciale. Ve ne andate via proprio con il primo che trovate!”.

“Bene, allora perché oltre l'etichetta di primo cittadino non affibiate al signor sindaco anche quella di padre della città, dicendogli di trattarci come fosse nostro genitore?”.

Prakash guardò quella studentessa prostituta che rideva nervosamente. Di colpo, da un altro punto di vista, comprese la differenza tra il rosso dei lampeggianti sul tettuccio delle auto scortate dei

politici e quello dell’area malfamata. “Il sindaco è un maschio, è ricco e influente, ecco perché gira nelle auto dotate di sirena rossa. Tu sei una ragazza povera e indifesa, dunque per sfamarti vieni in cerca di clienti tra le fauci della morte”.

Infastidito dalle sue risa le domandò: “Non hai paura qui? Se la gente lo scoprisse?”.

Mentre continuava a sghignazzare indicando la distesa di sabbia desolata che si spandeva sino all’orizzonte sull’altra sponda del fiume, lei disse: “Quelli che lo sanno si sono imboscati con le ragazze in qualche anfratto su quella spiaggia e di certo non lo andranno a dire a nessuno... Ma una volta sfogatisi, grideranno ‘Har Har Mahadev’ con ancor più vigore per mandarci via. Ora vattene! Altrimenti le ragazze ti scambieranno per un cliente e ti pedineranno”.

La gratificazione della disonestà

La notizia che la prostituzione si andava diffondendo in città aveva già raggiunto l’Ispettore Capo di Polizia Rama Shankar Tripathi. Egli convocò gli ufficiali e persino le madri e le sorelle degli agenti delle forze dell’ordine. Fece una ramanzina ai sovrintendenti municipali, allertò le unità investigative locali, ordinò dei trasferimenti, ma non ci fu alcun risultato. Qualsiasi poliziotto venisse messo di ronda ad entrambi i lati del quartiere a luci rosse, diventava il fratellastro irascibile e borioso dei maritimagnaccia, pronti ad assecondare ogni richiesta giunta dall’alto con sfacciata sottomissione. Quando il comandante di polizia e il suo drappello di uomini effettuavano le consuete ispezioni, i poliziotti gli mostravano giusto quei tre/quattro tuguri rimasti vuoti. Rientrando, mettevano a rapporto che, grazie al bando imposto all’esercizio della prostituzione, quelle donne se ne erano andate altrove abbandonando le proprie dimore. L’Ispettore Capo avviò delle irruzioni a tappeto negli hotel e negli alloggi della città, dove vennero fermate delle ragazze squillo che provenivano da fuori e si stavano prostituendo, ma non fu trovata nemmeno una prostituta di Manduadih. Come sempre le agenzie di stampa scrissero che dai diari di quelli che gestivano il racket e dalle testimonianze delle ragazze squillo erano emersi i nomi, gli indirizzi e i numeri di telefono di qualche colletto bianco. Che la polizia le avrebbe interrogate in direttissima e fatte parlare affinché la verità venisse a galla. Come sempre non ci furono interrogatori, né cantate, né tantomeno il proseguo delle indagini. Le ragazze squillo, rilasciate su cauzione, se ne andarono in altri lidi e anche i gestori del racket cambiarono nome e indirizzo.

A Prakash venne affidato l’incarico di stare con i poliziotti che facevano le ronde notturne per scattare le foto delle ragazze che uscivano dai bassifondi a prostituirsi. Era la prima volta che disobbediva. Mentre le giovani donne varcavano i confini dello slum, andò a casa di Antaratma e si sedette a sorseggiare un cāy insieme a lui. Una volta che le ragazze furono lontane, uscì e scattò di getto

un intero rullino in cui tra la nebbia, salvo poliziotti fluorescenti ed erranti solitari, non si vedeva un bel niente. Due agenti, vedendolo scattare il flash tentarono di allontanarlo, quindi lui li confortò dicendo di restare tranquilli, perché quel giorno non avrebbe scattato foto compromettenti. Un poliziotto gli domandò: “Stai parlando come un *sādhu*, mica le *bājī* ti hanno fatto fumare qualcosa?”.

Quando si sentirono rassicurati, gli raccontarono che, grazie all’ottimo lavoro delle ragazze più giovani, ne stavano arrivando ancora delle altre. Non venivano più piazzate a Manduadih, ma in strutture prese in affitto in città. La parcella della stazione di polizia era aumentata da trentacinque a cinquantamila rupie. Prakash confidò ad Antaratma che il ponte della moralità di Nilhani sembrava davvero un’ipotesi concreta e che avrebbe portato denaro ai pezzi grossi. “A questo punto parla con le *bājī*, forse qualcuna di loro comprerà il tuo edificio”. Antaratma era rattristato dal fatto che la polizia si fosse ormai divisa in due fazioni.

Tornato all’ufficio stampa, spiegò al *photo editor* che la nebbia era così fitta da non vederci nulla. Quelle erano le uniche foto che era riuscito a scattare. Si sentì appagato dalla sua disonestà. Aveva salvato se stesso dallo sconforto. Grazie ai suoi scatti, il giornale acquistava credibilità, la tiratura aumentava, ma nulla cambiava riguardo al lavoro delle prostitute. Erano gli stessi poliziotti a non permetterne la fine. Non volevano in alcun modo che la prostituzione arrivasse a un punto morto. Desideravano, anzi, che prendesse un nuovo slancio.

L’impiegato incartapecorito, l’eccitazione e il vecchio puttaniere

All’incirca tre mesi dopo, comparve nuovamente sulle scale della redazione del quotidiano proprio l’impiegato incartapecorito della compagnia assicurativa, con indosso gli occhiali da sole. Ribadiva sicuro che le indagini della agenzia investigativa privata avevano stabilito che la causa della morte non fosse il *pān masālā*, e che il mandante morale del suicidio di sua moglie era l’Ispettore Capo Ramshankar Tripathi in persona. Aveva raccolto le dichiarazioni scritte e datate delle continue molestie e minacce, portando le fotocopie dei diari di Lovely Trypati. Inoltre spifferò che l’Ispettore, un mese e mezzo dopo, avrebbe sposato una sottoufficiale di polizia alquanto più giovane di lui. Si aprirono inchieste indipendenti per validare queste notizie.

In quei giorni, a Prakash il giornale cominciò a sembrare di una noia smisurata. Non appena lo apriva, ogni mattina, le lettere dell’alfabeto che dondolavano sulle righe gli apparivano confuse e gli provocavano un forte mal di testa, e lui scaraventava via il quotidiano. Una delle cause era proprio che gli eventi dei quali era testimone oculare e per i quali provava piacere o dolore, una volta andati in stampa, diventavano senza colore né anima. L’intima verità di quei fatti evaporava come per magia.

Non appena scrutava la prima riga, sapeva che la verità si sarebbe dileguata nella vanagloria delle parole.

Nelle riunioni quotidiane veniva sempre rimproverato di non degnarsi nemmeno di leggere il giornale, per questo continuava a non sapere cosa stesse accadendo in città e neppure con quali notizie le testate concorrenti stessero guadagnando punti.

In realtà, in quei giorni Prakash fremeva all’idea di dar forma a un suo vecchio desiderio latente. Voleva diventare un vero reporter, non un giornalista sprezzante ed egocentrico. Un reporter capace di far tremare il suolo con la verità intinta di inchiostro.

Aveva raccolto talmente tante prove documentate, esperienze, fotografie e descrizioni che ora diventava davvero difficile continuare a osservare il tutto, ancor più in silenzio. Ora, quando avesse voluto, avrebbe potuto svelare l’ipocrisia di quelli che intendevano scacciare le prostitute. L’eccitazione si agitava dentro di lui come un’onda impetuosa. Svegliandosi di notte, con parole schiette e ben amalgamate, compose di getto un articolo che denunciava i politici locali che avevano concesso alle prostitute i terreni dove stabilirsi schierandosi poi contro di esse. Scrisse di come la *Nidhi Construction Company* avesse sfruttato la loro rabbia a proprio vantaggio. Di come l’Ispettore Capo per darsi lustro avesse fatto bandire la prostituzione per poi diventare un agente della ditta di costruzioni insieme al Commissario di Polizia. Di come l’impresa edile avesse intenzione di aprire un bordello a cielo aperto ancor più grande e moderno. Di come la prostituzione non sarebbe scomparsa cacciando via quelle donne, ma sarebbe ricaduta altrove. Di come il padre dell’Ispettore e il Commissario di Polizia stessero strumentalizzando il fanatismo religioso e di come al grido di “Har Har Mahadev” rabbia e prostituzione stessero camminando fianco a fianco sui *ghāt*.

Prakash si aggrappò alla convinzione che, una volta pubblicati gli articoli, venisse ratificato il rapporto degli investigatori dell’agenzia assicurativa e tutta quell’ipocrisia si sarebbe volatilizzata. A quel punto forse si sarebbe davvero cominciato a parlare del tema della riabilitazione sociale delle prostitute.

Per due giorni tastò il terreno a modo suo con tutti gli editori, piccoli e grandi, e si convinse del fatto che l’ora del suo reportage fosse scoccata. Il terzo giorno, portando con sé tutti i rapporti, le foto, i documenti del registro, la pianta del progetto e tutte le prove, le sbatté sul tavolo dell’editore locale. Esso passò l’intero giorno a leggerli, verificarli e investigarli. Giunta la sera gli diede una pacca sulla schiena.

“Ebbene, amico mio, ti sei rivelato un vecchio puttaniere! È un reportage eccezionale, lo pubblichiamo!”.

Era davvero un complimento venuto dal cuore.

L'indomani ci fu la riunione del comitato direttivo del giornale, poiché su questa grana la vecchia linea editoriale stava per cambiare. La scelta del direttore era oramai stata presa, ora veniva il momento dell'adesione formale degli altri reparti. Dopo un'ora e mezza di discussione, il responsabile amministrativo del giornale chiese al direttore: "Quante prostitute ci sono in totale a Manduadih?"

"All'incirca trecentocinquanta".

"Quante di loro leggono il giornale?"

Nessuno aveva questo dato. Nel tentativo di azzardare una risposta, l'amministratore disse: "Ad oggi l'intera città è con il nostro giornale. In totale ci sono trecentocinquanta puttane di cui, tutto sommato, saranno tre e mezzo a leggere la carta stampata! Stando a ciò, che diavolo di senso ha pubblicare questa roba? Se avessimo calamitato l'attenzione di nuovi e cospicui gruppi di lettori, allora avremmo anche potuto prenderci il rischio".

Il direttore, che stava ascoltando con attenzione i suoi calcoli aritmetici, rise esclamando: "La domanda non è qual è il numero delle prostitute, signor direttore! Anche se fossero state tre, sarebbero state abbastanza. Su di loro se ne pubblicano di cotte e di crude. Le leggono anche i loro oppositori. È così che si aumenta l'attrattiva".

L'amministratore cambiò atteggiamento: "Ora, mi dica come è possibile fare il voltagabbana così in fretta? Fino a ieri lei stesso scriveva che, per colpa delle prostitute, è diventato difficile persino vivere a casa delle famiglie in cui vivono le giovani spose e che l'Ispezzore, facendo chiudere le attività, stava compiendo un'opera pia. Ora che la vicenda è in ebollizione, lei mi sta gettando acqua sul fuoco. Mi dica cosa ne sarà della credibilità del giornale?"

Il direttore tentò di fargli capire che la credibilità di un giornale non è una cosa che si costruisce e disfa in un giorno solo. "Nonostante la gente si lasci travolgere per un istante dalle emozioni, alla fine si fida di quelli che pubblicano la verità che le piace. Il primo giorno, chi poteva sapere quale fosse la situazione reale che si celava a Manduadih? Ora non faremo altro che stampare ciò di cui siamo a conoscenza. Può anche darsi che domani verremo a sapere qualcosa di nuovo. Stamperemo anche quello. Se non lo pubblichiamo, resteranno solo le briciole della nostra credibilità nel momento in cui la gente vedrà la ditta costruire dei palazzi a Manduadih".

Calcoli e finalmente la vita

La faccenda si complicò e non si riuscì a prendere alcuna decisione. L'amministratore parlò con i dirigenti. Questi convocarono il caporedattore, il quale indisse una nuova riunione. Il caporedattore spiegò al direttore locale ciò che lui di proposito non voleva capire: "I tanti palazzinari, politicanti, e commercianti sono con la *Nidhi Construction Company* e vogliono che lo slum venga smantellato il prima

possibile affinché possano cominciare i lavori. Hanno fatto scendere in strada a loro fianco anche la popolazione. Il giornale non può reggere l’opposizione di tante persone tutte insieme”.

Aggiunse: “La filiera commerciale dell’edizione del nostro stesso giornale, ossia i proprietari dell’edificio di cui siamo affittuari e quelli dei macchinari per la riproduzione delle copie, sono tutti partner della azienda. Anche qualche azionista del giornale ha investito nel progetto. Sono tutti sulla stessa barca, e tu cosa pensi di fare? La stessa dirigenza non vuole che le vengano messi i bastoni tra le ruote. Il lavoro è prezioso per noi, quindi tutti e due dovrete far finta di niente per un po’, poi si vedrà”.

La decisione di allontanare il direttore locale era dietro l’angolo. Per questo gli fu tutto chiaro in un attimo. Alla riunione del comitato direttivo il caporedattore esordì: “Sappiamo tutti che Allah non mette la firma sulle foglie di mostarda né sulle melanzane, che i bambini deformati a due teste non sono divinità, che Krishna non spunta fuori da un cetriolo e che Ganesh non beve mica il latte. Sono tutte palesi bugie, ma noi le pubblichiamo! Perché la gente venera ciò a cui crede... è così che facciamo la nostra fortuna. Non possiamo inimicarci due milioni di persone per trecentocinquanta prostitute... Non siamo mica un’agenzia che si occupa della loro ricollocazione. In democrazia il popolo è sovrano, perciò bisogna rispettare i suoi sentimenti”.

L’amministratore sorrise.

Il caporedattore fissò sorridendo il direttore locale. “Per chi facciamo uscire il nostro giornale?”.

“Per il popolo” rispose lui con un mesto sorriso di rassegnazione.

Il direttore locale sussurrò a Prakash: “In questo momento i superiori sono molto incazzati. Fai stemperare un po’ l’atmosfera, poi si vedrà”. Capì che la sua ambizione di far tremare il suolo era stata sepolta per sempre.

In quel momento accadde un fatto bizzarro. Il giovane che transitava lungo il Gange con l’intenzione di compiere il *jal samādhi*, un giorno, sotto effetto della marijuana, traballando dalla sua imbarcazione cadde in acqua. Si andava adagiando sul fondo del fiume ondeggiando come un aquilone tagliato, dietro la lastra di pietra legata alla gola. Con molta fatica i sommozzatori della guardia costiera lo riportarono a galla. Al posto dell’antica pietra, al suo collo ne venne legata una più piccola. Da allora cominciò a limarla da sé. Come la luna calante, la forma di quella pietra diminuiva giorno dopo giorno. All’inizio prese le sembianze di un disco, poi di un piattello e infine di una scatoletta di fiammiferi. Si rimpicciolì pian piano sino al giorno in cui divenne grande come un amuleto.

Prakash ha fotografato quella pietra magica che rimpiccioliva gradualmente. Le prostitute non se ne sono ancora andate da Manduadih. Ormai quel giovane non vive più sulla barchetta. Mostrando il suo amuleto al collo continua a cantilenare il ritornello solenne di come un giorno libererà Kashi

dall'onta della prostituzione. La gente lo ritiene uno affamato di pubblicità, lo deride come un millantatore.

Allo stesso modo, Prakash ha la sensazione di aver legato al collo un amuleto che solo lui può vedere e, che spesso gli si impiglia nel bottone della camicia. La gente etichetta anche lui come un puttaniere, un protettore, un cronista pronto a vendersi per un quarto di litro. Si prende gioco di lui e del suo giornale.

Prakash pensa che sia giunto il momento di sposare Chavi. Va bene non poter mettere la verità per iscritto, però può accoglierla nella sua vita.

GLOSSARIO

Acār: conserva sottaceto preparata con frutta o verdura e spezie, chiamata in inglese *pickle*.

Āśram: eremo, luogo di ritiro e di romitaggio in cui si raccoglie chi si dedica a forme di ascesi e di isolamento dal resto del mondo.

Āyurveda: il termine indica la “scienza della longevità”, ossia quell’insieme di pratiche e di saperi medici tradizionalmente codificati e trasmessi fin da antichi trattati.

Bābū: appellativo di rispetto, “signore”, persona istruita.

Bābā: letteralmente “padre”, termine onorifico riservato a uomini anziani o saggi, usato anche per invocare rispettosamente un Dio.

Bājī: il termine denota in genere le etere, cantanti professioniste—vere artiste—considerate socialmente delle prostitute. Questa figura è ormai pressoché scomparsa.

Baṭuk: giovane studente brahmano.

Betel: nome indigeno dello scialagogo.

Bhaṅg: *cannabis sativa*. Preparato di infiorescenze e foglie di Canapa indiana mista a burro chiarificato e spezie a piacere. Si fa sciogliere in bocca e viene ingerito con dell’acqua oppure diluito in bevande a base di latte e suoi derivati. Genera un forte effetto psicotropo.

Brahmacārī: chi pratica *brahmacarya*, il primo dei quattro stadi della vita di un uomo. Un giovane studente che vive seguendo rigide norme di castità e cimentandosi nello studio dei *Veda*.

Cāy: bevanda a base di tè bollito in acqua, con l’aggiunta di zenzero, cardamomo, zucchero e latte.

Dādrā: genere musicale semiclassico dalle forti connotazioni erotiche che presenta componenti di danza. Fusione raffinata di canto e gesti espressivi (soprattutto delle braccia e del viso).

Dalit: oppresso, calpestato. Termine utilizzato per riferirsi alle persone che erano considerate intoccabili.

Devadāsī: di origine sanscrita, il termine significa letteralmente ‘serva (*dāsī*) del Dio (*Deva*)’ e indica quelle bambine o donne che vengono dedicate al culto e al servizio di una divinità o di un tempio per il resto della vita.

Ḍhābā: chiosco da ristoro.

Dīvālī o *dīpāvalī* (lett. “ghirlanda di luci”): una delle principali festività hindu, festeggiata il giorno di Luna Nuova del mese di *kārtik* (ottobre-novembre) per celebrare il ritorno di Rama dall’esilio durato quattordici anni: tutte le case vengono ornate di suggestive lampade di terracotta per illuminare la strada al principe.

Divān: ufficiale della stazione di polizia.

Ḍholak: piccolo tamburo tradizionale della musica indostana suonato su entrambe le estremità.

Dhotī: indumento costituito da un telo (in genere lungo 3 metri) che dalla cintola arriva alle caviglie, o portato a mo’ di calzoncini facendo passare un lembo tra le gambe e infilandolo posteriormente alla cintola.

Dvārācār: rito matrimoniale eseguito alla porta della casa della sposa.

Gaṇikā: cortigiana di lusso. Il termine deriva dal sanscrito *gaṇa* “gruppo” o “schiera”, ma anche da *gaṇanā*, “contare”. Il significato è dunque connesso ai soldi e alla professione, alla gente e agli insediamenti urbani. Dalle testimonianze letterarie è possibile affermare che le *gaṇika* erano dotate di grande talento artistico, facevano parte dell’organizzazione dello Stato e venivano remunerate per i loro servizi al re.

Ghāṭ: scalinata che scende a un corso d’acqua, un bacino di raccolta idrica o un lago, che permette l’accesso all’acqua ed è particolarmente importante per le abluzioni rituali.

Gazal: breve composizione di contenuto amoroso, erotico o descrittivo, propria della lirica persiana.

Havan kuṇḍ: Fossa rettangolare in cui vengono eseguiti riti sacri con oblazioni al fuoco. Può essere considerato come un *sanctum sanctorum* per la cerimonia vedica del fuoco.

Jī: suffisso affettuoso ed onorifico, applicabile a qualsiasi nome.

Khicrī: misto di riso e lenticchie gialle cotti insieme.

Kīrtan: canti devozionali, in genere incentrati sulla vita di Krishna.

Koṭhārin: uno degli epiteti utilizzati per indicare le prostitute attive nei monasteri.

Lākh: Unità di misura indiana equivalente a centomila.

Maṇḍap: Portico dei templi. Il termine indica anche una costruzione provvisoria eretta in occasione di feste e matrimoni.

Makar-Saṅkrānti: festival celebrato in occasione dell’entrata del sole nel segno zodiacale del Capricorno.

Masālā: miscela, misto di spezie, aromi.

Maṭh: monastero, centro monastico.

Mujrā: spettacolo che aveva luogo nei salotti delle cortigiane durante il quale le Tawā'if (cfr.) intrattenevano con canti, danze e componimenti poetici dalle forti connotazioni erotiche un numero ristretto di uomini benestanti ed aristocratici. Era un'esibizione di rara raffinatezza estetica, oggi pressoché scomparsa.

Pān: bolo alimentare con leggero effetto inebriante che colora di rosso intenso fauci e gengive, composto da una foglia di *piper betel* che viene spalmata con una dose di calce spenta ecc. e ripiegata in un fagottino contenente noce sminuzzata di *areca catechu*. Ha inoltre effetti digestivi e, a stomaco vuoto, dà un senso di sazietà.

Pān masālā: noce di *areca catechu* sminuzzata in polvere da masticare.

Paṇḍā: termine generico con cui si fa riferimento ai bramini di basso rango che, in alcuni casi, non eseguono il rituale in prima persona, ma fanno da mediatori-agenti tra i pellegrini hindue gli specialisti del rituale. Il rapporto cliente-*paṇḍā* è legittimato sulla base di un legame ereditario e permanente.

Pāpar: sottile sfoglia speziata a base di farina di legumi fritta nell'olio o tostata.

Prasād: offerta devozionale rivolta a una divinità, in genere consistente in offerte di cibo, poi condivise tra i devoti alla fine della cerimonia rituale.

Pujārī: sacerdote del tempio che celebra le cerimonie devozionali (*pujā*).

Rākhi: talismano protettivo: filo sacro legato in maniera cerimoniale ai polsi di un protettore o di un patrono nel giorno di luna piena del mese di *śrāvaṇ*. Il termine indica anche la festività celebrata in questo giorno, quando le sorelle legano un braccialetto sacro al polso dei fratelli come segno di protezione, in cambio di una piccola somma di denaro.

Roṭī: pane indiano non lievitato a base di acqua e farina.

Samādhi: stato superiore di coscienza o di concentrazione meditativa che nella pratica yogica coincide con l'ottenimento della condizione di assorbimento totale. In questo stato di "perfetto raccoglimento" lo yogin non è più consapevole del corpo e di ciò che lo circonda, ma la sua coscienza è assorbita in uno stato superiore. Per *jal samādhi* si intende dunque la deliberata intenzione di "abbandonare" il proprio corpo in acqua.

Sādhu: asceta, santone.

Śaktipīṭh: dimora della *śakti* (potenza, energia divina femminile). Santuari e mete di pellegrinaggio dove i fedeli possono recarsi per rendere omaggio alla Dea. Secondo la mitologia, questi luoghi sacri hanno avuto origine dallo smembramento del corpo di *satī*, emanazione della *śakti* e consorte di Shiva. Oggi sorgono dove sono cadute le sue membra. Se ne contano diversi e sono disseminati tra India, Nepal,

Bangladesh, Tibet, Sri Lanka e Pakistan. A Benares c'è uno *śaktipīṭh* dove si crede siano caduti gli orecchini della Dea.

Śrāvaṇ: quinto mese dell'anno secondo il calendario lunare hindu. Corrisponde ai mesi di luglio e agosto ed è credenza idealizzata che in tale periodo di piogge monsoniche si cantino canzoni romantiche in altalena.

Svāmī: Titolo che viene conferito ai religiosi e con in quale ci si rivolge a Dio.

Tawā'if: cortigiana. Parola di origine arabo-persiana derivante dalla radice *tawf* che significa muoversi, viaggiare, vagabondare, circumnambulare, girare intorno. Il termine suggerisce dunque il movimento del corpo nello spazio, la danza. Erano queste danzatrici ad intrattenere i nobili aristocratici con danze virtuose e canti sofisticati, oltre che insegnare loro le buone maniere ed istruirli nelle arti amoroze. Per estensione indica anche il movimento fisico delle cortigiane che seguivano fedelmente i sovrani Mughal durante le loro spedizioni. Raggiunsero l'apice del riconoscimento sociale nel XVIII sec. parallelamente allo sviluppo delle corti musulmane nell'India del nord.

Ṭappā: genere vocale tipico della tradizione canora di Benares.

Veda: l'antico corpus dei testi sacri dell'induismo. Nella tradizione indiana, i *Veda* sono i testi rivelati.

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“On the efficacy of lies” (嘘の効用) by Suehiro Izutarō (末弘巖太郎)

Translated by Jason Morgan

Usō no Kōyō: A short introduction to its author and intellectual-historical background

Although far from a household name even in Japan, Suehiro Izutarō (1888–1951) was one of the most important figures in twentieth-century Japan’s intellectual and legal history. In Japan today, Suehiro, when he is mentioned in legal history textbooks or other works by academic specialists, is often remembered as one of the founders of Japan’s labor law.¹ It is true that Suehiro was very much involved in labor law and, more directly (as both partisan and negotiator), labor disputes. He ran into trouble early in his career for his support of sharecroppers in their fight against landlords, for example, and ended his career, under the American Occupation after Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, acting as a broker between Occupation officials and labor leaders in Japan.

But while Suehiro was certainly a founding father of the field of labor law, that work was just one part of the much bigger problem that occupied Suehiro for his entire adult life. Namely, Suehiro was concerned with the gap, as he saw it, between the law in the books and the law on the ground—in Japan’s case, between the Civil Code, which was compiled under the influence of a French scholar named Gustave Émile Boissonade (1825–1910), on the one hand, and on the other hand the “living law” (*ikeru hō*), as Suehiro would later come to call it, borrowing and translating the *Lebendesrecht* concept from Austro-Hungarian legal philosopher Eugen Ehrlich (1862–1922).² Like everyone else in his cohort at the ultra-elite Tokyo Imperial University Faculty of Law, Suehiro was trained to interpret the Civil Code, and was trained mainly in the Code and in German *Pandekten* law (law rooted in Digests, compilations of laws and findings) and *Begriffsjurisprudenz*, a species of positive law highly influential among German jurists and theorist. But various historical circumstances and global intellectual trends—for example, the opportunity to live among the poor, Hull-House style, after a mammoth earthquake and inferno leveled much of Tokyo in early September, 1923—pushed Suehiro into a decidedly non-Idealist direction.³ He didn’t want to see the law as something written in books and pronounced from on high. He rebelled against the very notion of it. Instead, he wanted to see society,

¹ See, e.g., Suehiro (1926), Kawasumi (2022: 316–340) and Ishii (2015).

² On Ehrlich, see Morgan (2019: 47–54).

³ See Morgan (2018).

the people in the streets, as the custodians and progenitors of law, and the law in lawbooks as a lagging approximation of the “living law” in the hearts of women and men. That laborers were facing injustices Suehiro saw as just one symptom of this much greater disease, namely the disconnect between book law and “living law.”

It is in this context that Suehiro wrote what was arguably his most seminal work, *Usō no kōyō*, for the progressive flagship magazine *Kaizō* in 1922.⁴ “On the efficacy of lies,” as I have rendered the title in what I believe is the first-ever complete translation of this important work into English, is a product of Suehiro’s general discontent with the legal framework and social situation, as he sees them, in late-Taishō-era Japan. Suehiro was writing at a time when Japanese society was undergoing enormous changes in political participation and when Japan as a nation was growing strong, rich, and imperially dominant. Whatever the Civil Code said, Suehiro thought, the framers of those laws had no idea of what regular people thought. He wanted to change that, and to use the courts as a means of doing so. Suehiro led a case-law study group at the Tokyo Imperial University hoping to use the gap between law and society as a fulcrum for leveraging social change through judicial activism (or, if need be, through activating judges to be more attentive to the plight of the average citizens who came into their courtrooms).

This grand vision for social change in turbulent, post-World War I Japan (riots over the price of rice had toppled the Japanese government in 1918, just four years before Suehiro wrote “On the efficacy of lies”) helps explain Suehiro’s ambitious, even aggressive posture in his public-facing prose. He opens with a sweeping endorsement of “lies” (*uso*), arguing from a variety of standpoints that without lies societies would not function. In this very broad-brush treatment of lying, we can see Suehiro’s generalized frustration with the gap between law and society—the gap that preoccupied him for his entire career. But we can also see a man on a social mission, writing at a time when society was coming apart at the seams. “On the efficacy of lies” is very much the work of a young, idealistic scholar, a socially-conscious intellectual who has formed a vision of the legal establishment as out of touch and the political establishment as under the control of oligarchs. As a solution, Suehiro recommends leaning into the lies, embracing the gap and using it to effect change in both law and government. As mentioned above, Suehiro developed the “case method” that he learned from legal realists in the United States (such as Roscoe Pound (1870-1964) at Harvard and James Parker Hall (1871-1928) at

⁴ *Usō no kōyō* and accompanying essays by Suehiro were re-released in 2018 as part of the celebrations surrounding the centennial of Nihon Hyōronsha’s founding; see Suehiro (2018). In addition to the English translation here, I know of only one other Western-language translation of *Usō no kōyō*, by Stefan Vogl into German (Vogl 2022).

Chicago), marry it with Ehrlichian ideas about the "living law," and attempt to use the bottom-up pressure of the Japanese masses to bring about institutional change.⁵ These things were very much on his mind as he took pen to paper to write a virtual paean to the skillful use of lies in making the world a better place.

But, even given this context, and even taking into account Suehiro's youthful idealism, there is something ironic in how Suehiro frames his endorsement of "lies." For, in seeing the law as lagging behind social progress, Suehiro is simply transposing (not really even translating) the ideas of legal thinker and historian Sir Henry Sumner Maine (1822-1888) into a twentieth-century Japanese milieu. Suehiro mentions Maine once in "On the efficacy of lies," but even had Suehiro not mentioned Maine, the latter's influence would have been obvious on Suehiro's essay and general patterns of thought. In Chapter II, "Legal Fictions," of his *Ancient Law* (1861), Maine lays out the case for the bifurcation of law between legal codes and social awareness, for example in this opening salvo:

When primitive law has once been embodied in a Code, there is an end to what may be called its spontaneous development. Henceforward the changes effected in it, if effected at all, are effected deliberately and from without (Maine 1917: 13; see also 75-78 for related discourse).

Maine then posits "Legal Fictions" one of three ways—the other two are "Equity" and "Legislation"—that "Law is brought into harmony with society" (Maine 1917: 15). What this means for Suehiro's position—and this is a point which is reinforced by Suehiro's reliance on other Western legal thinkers, such as Rudolf von Jhering (1818-1892), whom Suehiro also brings into "On the efficacy of lies," and Ehrlich and Pound and others—is that there is an inherent tension in what Suehiro is trying to do, a tension which I find to be rooted in the way in which Suehiro understands the gap between law and society. To put a finer point on it, Suehiro takes it as a given that what Maine says is as true about Roman law as it is about law in Japan. Whether the two can be compared at all is an open question, but Suehiro doesn't even ask it. He just jumps in, assuming that what Maine says is transferrable root and branch to the (entirely foreign) soil of an archipelago in the northwestern Pacific.

This is the irony of Suehiro's approach in *Uso no kōyō*. He claims to be reaching back into the Japanese past to recover an older, more humane way of doing courtroom work. But the things he excavates from the supposedly superior past are displayed in, as it were, Western display cases, and

⁵ On Pound and Hall and their influence on Suehiro, see Morgan (2019: 46-47). The *Freirechtsbewegung* which Suehiro mentions in the essay should also be understood broadly along these same lines. For a general overview of the *Freirechtsbewegung*, see Núñez Leiva (2014) and Schmidt (2016). On Suehiro and case law as method, see Kobayashi (2010).

introduced and labeled as almost Western things. In other words, Suehiro applies Maine’s dialectic—a rather Hegelian one, it should be noted—of conservatism and progress to the trials of Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-kami (1677-1752), whom Suehiro praises in “On the efficacy of lies” (and elsewhere) as having conducted humane trials with full view of the social consequences of jurisprudence (Ishii 1973: 52-56). Suehiro looks to Ōoka, who was a magistrate during the Edo Period, as a paragon of what we might today call social justice. But there is irony in that, in holding Ōoka up as an example of how law and society should interact, Suehiro should at the same time see Ōoka as effecting a kind of legal progressivism which would have been utterly alien to Ōoka, and which is, at any rate, a Western idea which Suehiro has imported to Japan essentially whole-cloth. Suehiro starts and ends with Maine, and presses an Edo-period magistrate into service in the middle act. It makes for an odd performance, if one is willing to read between the lines of Suehiro’s 1922 essay.

There are other problems with Suehiro’s approach, problems which I hinted at in the opening of this introduction. “On the efficacy of lies” makes sweeping claims about what Suehiro sees as a kind of salvific mendacity, the power of lies to keep society moving, the necessity of hypocrisy to the smooth functioning of legal and social order. But in this panoramic view, Suehiro fails to make distinctions which later and more careful scholars have made for him. To my mind, the best of Suehiro’s critics on this score is Sasakura Hideo, professor emeritus in the Waseda University Law School.⁶ Sasakura distinguishes among a wide variety of things which can be called “fictions,” a definitional yeoman’s work which Suehiro—perhaps for want of page space, or perhaps for want of rigor—neglected entirely. For example, Sasakura draws a clear line between, say, novels and virtual reality, and lies and natural phenomenon such as mirages (Sasakura 2002, 2021). These things are all, roughly, fictions, Sasakura says, but if one is going to be careful about how terms are used, especially when talking about the law, then simply lumping all of these things together into one “fictions” category will not do. Sasakura’s work, read in tandem with Suehiro’s “On the efficacy of lies,” shows the faults of logic and argument in the 1922 essay which many, taken in by Suehiro’s buoyant and playful writing style, may have overlooked the first (and second and third) time through.

This preliminary definitional work allows Sasakura to turn to the main object of his critique, which is not Suehiro but legal scholar Kurusu Saburō’s (1912-1998) 1999 book *Hō to fuikushon* (“Law and fiction”), a foundational text in legal philosophy in Japan (Kurusu 1999). Sasakura finds that Kurusu’s definition of “fiction” is “too broad,” encompassing as it does (Sasakura argues) four strands:

1. voluntary estrangement from reality (*jitsuzai kara no nin’iteki rihan*)

⁶ I took some of Professor Sasakura’s classes in legal and intellectual history while studying at Waseda some ten years ago.

2. positing the existence of something which in reality does not exist (*genjitsu ni sonzai suru mono denai nimokakawarazu sonzai suru to sareru*)
3. saying that some factually existing thing never existed or occurred, or that something which never factually existed or occurred did (*atta 'jijitsu' wo nakatta to ii, nakatta 'jijitsu' wo atta to iu*)
4. means convenient for arriving at some desired conclusion (*nozomashii to kangaeru ketsuron ni tōtatsu suru tame no bengiteki shudan* (Sasakura 2015: 29-30).

These things are, respectively, lies (*uso*), delusions (*mōsō*), semblances (*kashō*), and principles (*gensoku*) or objectives (*mokuhyō*), Sasakura concludes. Kurusu ought to distinguish among them, he says, but doesn't (Sasakura 2021: 30). But what has Sasakura's critique of Kurusu Saburō to do with Suehiro and his encomium to falsehood?

One reason Sasakura's critique of Kurusu's theory of fictions in law is important is that Kurusu's work overlaps conceptually, of course necessarily so, with similar research into Suehiro's theories of legal fictions. For example, Kurusu has done important work on the German theorist Hans Vaihinger (1852-1933), whose theory of *Als ob* ("as if") has been central to much research in Japan on the philosophical problems of fictions (Kurusu 1983). Another, and more important, reason is that Kurusu himself takes up Suehiro's fictions, and Sasakura uses a comparison of the two theorists' treatment of fictions as key points of his own research. Sasakura points out that, for instance, whereas Suehiro saw legal fictions—by which Suehiro meant a kind of socially-conscious, almost freewheeling judicial activism—positively, as something to be encouraged, Kurusu took precisely the opposite view (Sasakura 2015: 62-63). In another example, Kurusu, again with Vaihinger in the background, takes issue with Suehiro's characterization of Ōoka's courtroom work as "lies," preferring instead to see Ōoka's method as "bending the facts" (*jijitsu waikyoku*), or what in English might be called "stretching the truth." (Sasakura 2015: 63-635). Suehiro was playing too fast and loose with language, in other words. Sasakura, towering over both Suehiro and his critic Kurusu, has produced what I think is the best work on Suehiro's legal philosophy, and such conceptual insights are crucial, I believe, to understanding what Suehiro does (and fails to do) in "On the efficacy of lies."

Now, to be fair, Suehiro might argue that all this hair-splitting is exactly what he hates, is exactly what is keeping the man and woman in the street under the thrall of an establishment wholly unresponsive to their needs. And, to be sure, perhaps there is not much difference in outcome, at least in the case of activist judges, between lies and stretching the truth or "bending the facts." Whatever Ōoka did, Suehiro might counter, he saved regular people from the horrors of a codified law inflexibly applied. But, *pace* Suehiro's ghost, conceptually there is a difference, and it should be noted that,

conceptually, Suehiro, like Kurusu and also like Sasakura, is working in an almost completely Western intellectual universe. It is on just this point that I would like readers to review my other essay in this issue, on the *xiezhi* and legal fictions in East Asia prior to the era of widespread Western intellectual influence. For my view is that Sasakura is right as far as his analysis goes, but that there are kinds of legal fictions which predate the advent of ideas such as Maine’s and Vaihinger’s—and, later, Lon Fuller’s (1902-1978), Herbert Lionel Adolphus Hart’s (1907-1992) and Alf Ross’ (1899-1979).⁷ What I would like to do is to put Suehiro in conversation, as best I can, with some figures from the far-distant East Asian past, clearing away the clutter of Western influence as best I can and hearkening back to a time when there were legal fictions—if we can call them that, and maybe we can’t—of an entirely different order. Suehiro was a Japanese legal philosopher, but he was, for all that, very Western in his outlook, at least in his younger years. Readers of the Suehiro translation in this issue of *Kervan* are respectfully requested to read also my essay on the *xiezhi* and decide for themselves whether I have gotten “legal fictions” in East Asia right. Those whose interest is piqued by what they read here are also cordially invited to delve into the world of Japanese legal intellectual history. What I have offered here, vicariously through the great Suehiro Izutarō, is but the smallest of samplings of what is on offer for the intrepid explorer.

Finally, a word about my translation of *Usō no kōyō*. I have benefitted greatly from the help of my friend and mentor J. Mark Ramseyer, who offered many, many comments and suggestions that saved me from grievous error on every page. I am completely responsible for whatever errors remain, and I hope readers who find errors will let me know about it. Now, there will surely be those who will take exception to my translation of certain terms of art which Suehiro uses. For example, I render *jishhitsuteki kōhei* as “substantive fairness,” and *gutaiteki datōsei* as “actionable universality of

⁷ See e.g., Fuller (1967), Hart (1961: 11-12), Toh (2005: 95-96) and Fernando (2021). The concept of legal fictions is of course much more complex than I have been able to sketch in this brief introduction, and Suehiro’s, and other Japanese thinkers’, engagement with the array of legal-fiction ideas has been rich. For a background to Japanese legal intellectual history with a focus on Suehiro, see Morgan (2019). For some idea of the scope of the problem in Western discourse, see, e.g., “Lecture Two: Legal Fictions” in J.H. Baker, *The Law’s Two Bodies: Some Evidential Problems in English Legal History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 33-57, “‘To Law for Our Children’: Norm and Jurisdiction in Webster, Rowley, and Heywood’s *Cure for a Cuckold*,” in Bradin Cormack, *A Power to Do Justice: Jurisdiction, English Literature, and the Rise of Common Law, 1509-1625* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 291-329, “The Restless Spirit of English Law,” in R.H. Graveson, *One Law: On Jurisprudence and the Unification of Law, Selected Essays*, vol. II (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1977), 75-95, Aviam Soifer, “Reviewing Legal Fictions,” *Georgia Law Review*, vol. 20 (1986), 871-915, Biquet (2013) and Petroski (2013).

application”.⁸ These are unorthodox translations in the extreme. The first is deadpan-literal, and the second is almost acrobatic, or maybe just vaudevillian. The rub is that there are, to my mind, no better ways to convey, concisely, in English what Suehiro wants to say by using these terms. Other terminology, such as “nominal damages,” is, or should be, much less controversial, but please don’t take my word for it. There are surely other ways to translate virtually any term in the text, and I look forward to learning about good translations that I might have overlooked, or been too ignorant to come up with in the first place.

⁸ See Sasakura (2015: 73) for a critique of Suehiro’s use of the latter phrase, as well as for an explanation of why Sasakura views Suehiro’s linking of the concept to judicial precedent (*hanreihōshugi*) to be mistaken from the perspective of common law legal history.

“On the Efficacy of Lies”
by Suehiro Izutarō

We legal scholars are often in a position to realize that things generally deemed irrational in the world outside the law, once subjected to a value judgment within the legal realm, are immediately rationalized. And, because I think that this phenomenon is often found bearing the particular features of both the law and of the nation-state, I think that collecting and studying such phenomena are, for me as a researcher of the law and of the nation-state, extremely beneficial and necessary. In this sense, for the past several years I have felt a special interest in researching legal fictions (*Rechtsfiktion*), or false pretenses operating within the law.⁹ This essay is, in truth, but a minor by-product born of the happenstances of this course of research. This essay, an expanded version of the text of an address I gave at Keio University, appeared in the July, 1922 (Taishō 11) issue of the magazine *Kaizō*.

1

From the time we are children, we have it drilled into our heads that we must not tell lies. Perhaps we could even say that everyone in the world—without a single exception—believes that lies should not be uttered. Whatever the reasons, everyone, in one way or another, undoubtedly thinks this is so. When we hear the word “lie,” we immediately and quite naturally conjure up images of “The Boy Who Cried Wolf,” the story about the shepherd boy who kept telling lies that there was a wolf around. Eventually he lost the trust of the villagers, so that when a wolf really did appear the boy was eaten. This gives some indication of how very deeply in our brains the lesson that we must not tell lies has penetrated.

However, despite having had this lesson deeply inscribed and drilled into us in this way, our world abounds in lies. Unavoidable lies, avoidable lies that we tell anyway, lies told surreptitiously in the shadows, lies told out in the open, and even, sometimes, lies under the protection of the law, terrifying in that they carry the pain of punishment if denied: all of these lies are told brazenly here under heaven. In this world, then, there are told countless lies of every size and stripe.

Truth be told, our world is arranged such that it would seem to be completely impossible to live for very long were we to refrain absolutely from telling any lies.

⁹ Suehiro uses “legal fiction” and “*Rechtsfiktion*” in the original roman lettering in the text (tr. note).

Therefore, if we want to get along with one another in this world, we will have to solve the extremely important, but also exceptionally difficult, problem of what is to be done about all of the kinds of lies mentioned above. For, you see, while it is true that we must not tell lies, we cannot get through this life without them.

2

I am a practitioner of the law. As such, I have no interest in assuming in public—in informal discussions aside—the expressions of a real pioneering thinker and expert in any matter outside of my own area of expertise, namely the law. A legal practitioner is an expert only when he stays within the law's disciplinary boundaries. The instant he steps outside of those boundaries he becomes a layman. Now, there is no law that says that just because someone is an expert, he mustn't express layman's views. But when an expert leaves his area of expertise, there is nothing to set his layman's views apart from the opinions of any other workaday layman with no particular expertise. No—that's not entirely true. The expert is so given to viewing the world through the colored glasses of his expertise that his opinion on various matters tends to be skewed. We might even say that, because of this, the views of an expert may be of meaner stuff than those of your average layman. And yet, to a surprising degree people show unwarranted deference to an expert's layman's views. People attach tremendous prestige to an expert's layman's opinions, much more than to the layman's opinions of laymen. For example, some Joe Blows and Jill Nobodies, complete unknowns, are born with outstanding critical eyes for the theater. But as soon as some Marquis X or Learned Doctor Y expresses his layman's views on the theater, people rush to exclaim, "My, isn't he knowledgeable about drama!" or "Goodness, what familiarity with plays!" Taken with these odd displays of respect, Marquis X or Learned Doctor Y gets into an expansive mood and discourses publicly in grandiloquent fashion. Maybe the Marquis or the Learned Doctor is the rare type who knows as much as any other man in the street about the shows, despite his exalted status. Apart from these cases, though, I feel altogether uncomfortable when I hear these kinds of people unabashedly put on the airs of honest-to-goodness experts while conveying their layman's views, or when I hear the man in the street showing undue respect for these kinds of people. I think such displays as these are nothing other than a kind of "unjust enrichment." All the same, the experts of the world are prone to getting tripped on just this point. Regular people, too, generally make the same mistake again and again, paying undue regard to the layman's views of experts. I find all of this utterly bizarre.

I am a legal scholar. So, I am qualified to deliver an expert opinion solely and exclusively on the law or on academics. Therefore, when thinking about how to deal with the lies to which I refer in the

title of this essay, “On the Efficacy of Lies,” I shall limit my discussion to the parameters of the law and academics. It is not my remit to deliver myself of opinions on matters touching on general morality and education, as though I were a trained professional in those fields.

For better or for worse, lies play a variety of roles both in law and in academics in general. I think everyone—not just I as a solitary legal practitioner but people of all walks of life—will find it interesting to think about this. Above all else, I feel that it is of utmost importance for me to convey my thoughts “on the efficacy of lies” in order to make clear my position on law and learning. At the very least, conveying my thoughts in this way will go a long way toward making my position on law and learning clearer. This has been the main motivation for me in writing this essay.

3

First, let me give two or three examples of lies which we find in the history of law. I will also consider how those lies have functioned in actual practice.

When I think about law and courts and the like, my mind goes straightaway to Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami.¹⁰ I think Ōoka was an ideal judge, an eminent justice. Today, whenever we hear carping about trials conducted out in the world having no sense of human emotion or lacking in human sentiment, or about judges being fossilized relics devoid of common sense, I think of Judge Ōoka. I want there to be court trials like his, where the human element is in play.

This is so, but why was Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami so popular in the past, to the point that he is praised in this way, or if not praised then at least the subject of stories and folklore? Unfortunately, I don’t know of any academically rigorous historical facts that would explain this. I haven’t the least bit of accurate knowledge as to whether any of the facts written in the so-called Ōoka Seidan (“Ōoka administrative tales”) are really and truly the accomplishments of Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami. But I really don’t care. For the sake of argument, let us say that the entirety of a given tale has nothing to do with what Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami actually did while in office. Even so, the fact that such a story has been incorporated into the so-called Ōoka Seidan and handed down to the present day shows just how much the people of Ōoka’s time embraced trials such as those described

¹⁰ Ōoka Tadasuke (1677-1752) was a magistrate who lived during the Edo Period of Japanese history (*Echizen-no-kami* is a term of political and social standing, indicating that Ōoka was nominally the lord (*kami*) of the Echizen region, or what is today part of Fukui Prefecture on the Sea of Japan side of Honshū. He is well known in both history and in the folklore that has grown up around him for having been creative in effecting justice for average people within the strict confines of the written Edo Period law (tr. note).

in the tales. Let this be a disclaimer, then, that the Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami about whom I shall now speak refers to the Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami who appears in the Ōoka Seidan, and that it is not my intention at all to affirm or deny that any of the Ōoka Seidan tales conform to historical fact.

Why were the trials conducted by Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami said to be eminent ones with a piercing keenness for the subtleties of human feeling? The answer I would give is this: in one word, it's because Ōoka was adept at telling lies. Put aside, for the moment, the question of whether lies are good or bad. The fact is that Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami was a masterful liar. And he was praised as someone expert in lying. Read the Ōoka Seidan and see for yourself. The law at the time was top to bottom a fastidious thing. It did not budge. It was unwieldy in the extreme. If one were to try applying the law down to the letter just as it was written on the books, it would have made the masses of people tremble with fear. What's more, judges back then weren't able to creatively bend the rules, as the law was an order issued from on high. The law was not to be moved, and not to be skirted. Such a law as this made it very difficult for anyone to hold a trial adapted to human sentiments, one redolent of the actual flavor of real human life. But this is just what Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami did. And he wasn't dismissed from his post for it, but was instead praised by those around him for what he was doing.

But how did he get away with it? His method was the lie. The law of the day was rigid, unadaptable. It was impossible to bend the law to bring it closer in line with human feeling. So, Ōoka hit upon the idea of bending the facts instead. If a certain fact was admitted, then, according to the law, a certain punishment would necessarily have to follow. But if that punishment were carried out, then it would deviate from the felt sense of justice which humans share. The only thing that a judge could do in this situation was to make use of lies. There was just one method: to say that a certain fact had, in fact, not happened, or that something that had not occurred had, in fact, taken place. Ōoka Echizen-no-Kami was highly proficient in bending the truth in this way.

Ōoka Tadasuke, Echizen-no-Kami was not the only one who brought the full flavor of human life into trials using this approach, however. It is likely that judges everywhere—although of course there will be variations in degree depending on the time and place—can be understood to have adopted similar methods. In Rome, for instance, it is said that judges would often apply the legal principle of the “*monstrum*” in order to allow mothers who had killed their deformed children to escape the legal responsibility for murder.¹¹

¹¹ Suehiro uses the word *monstrum* in Roman letters in the original text (tr. note).

In Rome, if a deformed child, though born of a human womb, was deemed not sufficiently human in appearance, then he or she was called a *monstrum* (“demon spawn,” or, colloquially in Japanese, a child who does not bear resemblance to his or her parents) at law and was not imbued with legal personhood. It seems that this way of thinking goes back deep into the Roman past. It was later set down in the Code of Justinian by the legal practitioner [Julius] Paulus, whose opinion on the *monstrum* can be found in *Digestorum Lib. I. Tit. V. de statu hominum L. 14.*¹² The practice of disposing of the *monstrum*, if logic is followed without splitting hairs, was undeniably a species of murder. What happened was that a mother who gave birth to an unsightly child, or a child whose features did not resemble those of his or her parents, would quietly kill the infant, on the belief that letting such a child live would bring shame on the household and be a misfortune for the child him- or herself. But indicting such a mother for the crime of murder was absolutely intolerable for a judge as a human being, and was also a foolishness from the standpoint of society. Therefore the judge in such a case, wishing to do something to save the mother from the murder charge, hit on the solution of the legal principle of the *monstrum*. A mother had killed her child. But it had actually been a *monstrum*'s, not a human being's, life that was taken. Therefore, there had been no crime. In this way, the judge had strained logic to take pity on the poor mother.

Seen through the eyes of modern medicine, nothing other than a person can be born of the womb of another person. Even if we grant this, however, it would be thoughtless of us to laugh at the Romans for having been ignorant or stupid. Yes, the concept of the *monstrum* does not hold up under the modern medical gaze. But by this same concept a human life was saved. In his own day a judge was surely praised for deploying this illogical logic.

We hear in Japan of the patrolmen during the Tokugawa Period who took to heart the important principle of seeing but pretending not to have seen. If we are pedantic about it, we can argue that the authorities should have prosecuted whenever and wherever the patrolmen discovered a crime. But if the authorities were to bring each and every crime to trial, they would conversely lose legitimacy in the eyes of the people. So, it was considered a virtue (?) of the patrolmen to see but to pretend not to have seen, in other words for patrolmen to lie.¹³ But this was not limited to the old Tokugawa, but has also been practiced during the Meiji and Taishō periods, as well. The Code of Criminal Procedure was

¹² From my research, it would seem that Suehiro may have meant Book VI, Title 29. Also, the use of *monstrum* in the *Digestorum* appears to be somewhat different from the way Suehiro has presented it. More research is needed to confirm these points (tr. note).

¹³ There is a question mark in parentheses in the original text exactly where indicated in the translation (tr. note).

revised this year. Despite the lack of any clear prescription prior to this, many scholars in the past have used the term “opportunism” (*Opportunitätsprinzip*) to describe placing the decision whether to prosecute a crime or not entirely at the discretion of the prosecutor, with the officers of the court following the prosecutor’s lead.¹⁴ Applying the term “opportunism” makes the practice sound very dignified, but in fact it amounts to the same thing as a patrolman’s having seen something but then pretended not to have seen it. However this has now been codified in the text of the law, appearing in Article 279 of the new Code of Criminal Procedure as follows: “[P]rosecution need not be instituted if it appears unnecessary because of the character, age, and environment of the offender, the circumstances of the offense, or the circumstances following the offense.”¹⁵ Instead of officially sanctioning so-called lies, a standard has been established for liars. The result is that we are able to obtain truth from lies. Readers are invited to try opening the judicial statistics to the “infanticide” section and see for themselves. Doing so will reveal just how often, on this point, today’s prosecutors are “seeing, but pretending not to have seen.”

4

There is a system of nominal damages in the laws of England and the United States.¹⁶ If you read the Japanese translation of “nominal damages” [*songai baishō*] literally it manifestly means a system which aims to compel payment for [*baishō*] damages which have actually been incurred [*songai*]. If there has been an infringement of rights but no damage has arisen, then there is therefore no obligation to make any restitution for damages. Let us say, speaking now of Japan, that A enters B’s privately owned land without permission, and B sues for damages. If B has not suffered any loss because of A’s having entered B’s property, then the requirements for establishing that an illegal act has been committed have not been met and B is bound to lose his case. Speaking strictly from the standpoint of logic, because B has suffered no loss, it stands to reason that he has no right to seek any damages. However, it is also certain that, strictly speaking, A has infringed on B’s rights. In this sense, A is definitely in the wrong. Therefore, B will find it an extraordinarily unsatisfying conclusion if, having lost the case on nominal grounds because no damage was suffered (even though B’s rights were infringed), he were compelled

¹⁴ Suehiro uses the term *Opportunitätsprinzip* in Roman letters in the original text (tr. note).

¹⁵ See Dango (1970: 518; tr. note).

¹⁶ Suehiro uses the term *nominal damages* in Roman letters in the original text, following the term *meigijō no songai baishō*, for which I believe “nominal damages” is an adequate and accurate gloss.

to pay court costs for his failed suit. B will think to himself, “I don’t mind receiving no damages, but I don’t want to lose in court.” If B were to be deemed the winner on purely formal grounds in this situation, he would surely be very pleased.

In English and American law, “nominal damages” comes to B’s rescue in situations such as this. Strictly speaking there has been an infringement of rights, so there must be some kind of compensation made in return. As a symbolic gesture recognizing damages, the court might impose a fine of, say, one shilling to be paid by A to B. When things are arranged in this way, the aggrieved party can say that he has won his case, even if it’s a financial victory of a single shilling. Nominally speaking, and from a practical standpoint as well, there is a real benefit in having avoided paying court costs. In actual fact, no damage has been proven. But the court deems that insofar as rights have been infringed there has been damage incurred. The beauty of this system is that damage is given concrete form in the symbolic payment of a shilling. This is a prominent example of the efficacy of lies.

At the present time the general run of legal scholars in Japan is in the thrall of a narrow-minded rationalism which absolutizes the principle of “no damages, no compensation”. These scholars hold that the irrational and unique system of nominal damages should never be transplanted from England and America to Japan. However, I hope fervently for the day when it is, for I believe that if the nominal damages system were to come into practice in our country it would lead to an untold increase in the trust that average people, ignorant of the law, have in courts, as well as to a much greater commerce between tort law and morality. However, in order for that day to come, narrow-minded rationalism must first be driven from the brains of the average legal scholar [in Japan], and in its place planted a much deeper and broader way of thinking which emerges by means of what is rational, and resting upon what is rational.

5

Next, let us consider that the current law of most European countries and in America does not recognize uncontested divorce. Because divorce is permitted only in the event of certain causes stipulated in the law, absent any of those causes a divorce cannot be obtained, even if both the husband and the wife mutually consent to it. In this, the divorce laws of Europe and America are rigid and narrow, entirely different from the laws in Japan. However, in the West, too, a husband and wife who have decided to part ways do not just accept their lot and go on living together in a civil fashion. Even though in the Bible it is written, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,” when two people want to part ways, they want to part ways, and that is simply that. So, when a husband and wife have decided to say goodbye to one another, they convey their intentions each to each and

the wife sues the husband for divorce. The judge will ask her on what grounds she brings her suit. The wife will reply, “My husband has mistreated me, he has beaten me three times.” The judge will then turn to the defendant, the husband, and ask, “Do you admit that what the plaintiff, your wife, says is true?” “Yes,” the husband will answer. Thus the judge is deceived and the divorce is granted. Even if he harbors some reservations about the veracity of the facts presented to him, the judge still hands down the judgment of divorce. In point of fact, then, in the West, too, there is also divorce by consent, with both parties agreeing to the deal. The tool used in this case is a species of lie, a kind of performance.

The law exists for the sake of human beings. Law is first truly practiced only when it is grounded in human ways of thinking, in the requirements of human society and economies. A law may have conformed to social thinking and economic conditions in the past, but as social circumstances change so the practice of the law changes *de facto* alongside them. Legislators may try to force a law on society without having investigated the actual conditions prevailing in that society, but such a law will hardly, in fact, be followed. To the extent that people believe that divorce is wrong, the law prohibiting uncontested divorce will be solemnly upheld. However, once that belief has given way, then the people in that society, pressed by demand, will chip away at the law with the weapon of the lie, no matter how stern are the prescriptions written down in the lawbooks. At the extreme, the result will be that it will not make any difference whether there is any law at all.

The same thing happens in the case of hardline calls for government officials to be held responsible for things. Even bureaucrats must eat. They, too, have wives and children to feed. If a bureaucrat is thoughtless and ends up fired, he and his family will be thrown out onto the streets. Some low-ranking official may be assigned by chance to keep watch over a certain area. Let's say that some lawless fellow plants a bomb in his own pocket and leaps out while the official is on watch, detonating the bomb and killing himself in the process. While it may be warranted to criticize the official for not having discerned the lawless nature of the scene in advance, even so there is no call to make the bureaucrat assigned to guard that area bear absolute responsibility for what happened there. Whether to hold the bureaucrat responsible ought to depend on whether, in a real and demonstrable way, he has been derelict in his guard duties in actual fact. Judgment cannot be passed absolutely based solely on the official's having been assigned to a certain place by chance. But in Japan today the question of official responsibility is treated with tremendously rigid formality. When a crowd throngs a railway station, then no matter how careful the stationmaster is there could be someone who gets shoved onto the tracks. In this case, unless the stationmaster has somehow failed to exercise the utmost care, he bears no responsibility for the accident. The responsibility lies with the person who did the pushing,

as well as with the people who caused the crowding. And yet, as things stand today, in such a case a responsible party will have to be found, and that party will come from among the stationmaster and the station staff.

Responsibility requires the freedom to act. When regulations deprive someone of his freedom, then responsibility no longer attaches. Even so, government offices and big corporations, which try to control everything with a barrage of regulations, also attempt the formal regulation of their employees' responsibility. The result is that responsibility is sclerotic and stylized, and loses all grounding in morality.

But the bureaucrat must go on living. He must take care of his family. If the bureaucrat is not given the freedom to act, will he really just grit his teeth and accept final responsibility when this is pressed on him as a matter of formality? No. In such a situation, the bureaucrat will without fail doctor the facts which are held to give rise to his formal responsibility, will conceal those facts, will pull the entire complex of his responsibility up by the root. In other words, he will lie.

In relating the above, I am in no way passing judgment in any particular way on any specific incident that has happened recently in Japan. What is true, however, is that we now often hear about government officials' telling lies. If this is true, if government officials really are lying, then we must think about the fundamental causes of this serious problem. I maintain that the cause of it all is taking a hard line when it comes to assigning responsibility.

If a parent pays absolutely no attention to the wants of his child and raises the child up sternly according solely to how the parent thinks, then that child will, without fail, become a liar.

6

It should be clear from the above two or three examples just how big a role lies play in the law.

First, the Ōoka trials example and the discussion about the *monstrum* make us realize how powerful lies are to save people from overly-strict legal systems.¹⁷ Even those of the most ramrod-straight uprightness will surely have understood that the lie is not to be despised. In particular, when legal codes are not able to keep pace with vicissitudes in social sentiment because conservative elements in a certain society hold sway, a rift forms between society and the law, and law conforms to social expectations. This is a kind of lie. The people often say that judges have fossilized, that they have no common sense. But no matter how fossilized a judge, how lacking in common sense, he is still a

¹⁷ The word *monstrum* appears again in the original in Roman letters (tr. note).

human being, after all. He is a human being who sees beauty and knows it is beautiful, who tastes sweetness and knows it is sweet. This is why when a judge sees a defendant before him in court, listens to what he has to say, and comes to know the circumstances behind the case, it is only natural that the judge will think—as a human being, and regardless of what is written in the law—that this way of punishment or of handling the matter is best, or that this is the kind of trial that ought to be conducted. And when a judge thinks along these lines, then, if the law has some elasticity then he will make use of that and stretch the law, but if the law is stern and inflexible then the judge will, without fail, appeal to the lie for aid. The judge will skirt the law by saying that something that happened didn't, or that something that didn't happen, did. In this way, the judge will satisfy the requirements of humanity. This is not, at all, a question of good or evil. This is a fact. And it will go on being a fact forever, for as long as court trials are conducted by human beings.

Further, those who have heard the example above of the government bureaucrat or read the tale previously related of Western divorces will surely have come to the full realization that the law, contrary to what many people today, and in particular many judicial authorities, hold, is not omnipotent. Government administrators are particularly prone to the belief that anything can be ordered under the color of law, that the law enables one to reform any manner of morals or mores. But human beings are not as meek and submissive as government administrators think. There are limits, more or less, to what human beings can do. If a law lacks rational basis but still demands what goes beyond the bounds of reason, then human beings are not going to bow and scrape and go along with such a law. It isn't going to happen. If someone is a serious type with a firm will, then he will even risk death to fight the law. But if someone is the type who goes along to get along—as the majority of people are—then he will seek refuge in lies. In doing this, he will slip out of the net of the law. The more excessively severe the law is, the more the people will become liars. They will lose their moral polish. “Tyrants make a mockery of us,” they will cry. But tyrants who go on making a mockery of the people will not find that mockery, or the meanness and mendacity of the people, funny. The reason is that the tyrants will have brought all of this about themselves, because the people, just like the tyrants, value their lives above all else.

The bottom line is that lies will be efficacious once the law has stopped meeting the needs of society. We shall discuss later whether this is a good or bad thing. But, good or bad, it is a fact which cannot be denied.

Human beings are, for the most part, conservative creatures. At the same time, human beings love rules and regulations. They hate exceptions, to the point of absurdity.

Let us say, for example, that we have a certain law. But then, let us say, the world changes bit by bit, until eventually new facts come into existence which don't fit within the parameters of the pre-existing law. The most rational step to take when that happens is to set up an exception for those new facts. The logic of this is eminently reasonable. However, in most cases people do not choose to go down the road of rationality. They strive to stuff the new facts into the old law. They don't refrain from bending the facts—that is, at lying—in order to make them fit.

It is for this reason that, when we look at the history of legal development, we find that lies play the role of mediators in the actual evolution of the law. This fact is pointed out by Henry James Sumner Maine, the founder of the English Historical School, in his esteemed volume *Ancient Law*, and by Rudolf von Jhering, the founder of the German Sociological School, in his enduring masterpiece *The Spirit of the Roman Law*.¹⁸ These scholars seek examples in the changes in the ancient law. However, the phenomenon of change is hardly confined to unenlightened antiquity. Examples of it abound even among modern, civilized men, who flatter themselves that their civilization has progressed and that they themselves think and act in an eminently reasonable way.

For example, the principle of “no fault, no strict liability” developed gradually from the time of the Roman law, and came to full form especially toward the end of the eighteenth century. This principle is manifestly at work in the current Japanese civil code, as well as in the laws of Europe and the United States. However, with the progress recently in material civilization and the development of major industry, there have been many inventions which are very convenient for the person using them, but very obnoxious and dangerous for everyone else. There have also been many inventions which are now indispensable in general cultural facilities, or at least very convenient to use, but which are also prone to inflict damage on other people. What I mean are things like automobiles, steam trains, big factories, reservoirs, and gas tanks.¹⁹ These things are very convenient. They are also very dangerous. Under the prevailing “no fault, no strict liability” principle, in the majority of cases it is practically impossible for people who have been injured due to the use of these things to seek damages, because of the impossibility of proving that the owner or operator of the car or train or factory has

¹⁸ Suehiro uses the names “Henry James Sumner Maine” and “Jhering” in roman letters in the original text (tr. note).

¹⁹ For the “reservoirs” reference, Suehiro probably has in mind the famous case of *Rylands v. Fletcher* (1868).

been negligent. For instance, the other day a gas tank exploded in Fukagawa. The company pleaded force majeure, but the victims lay the blame at the feet of the company. Under the prevailing legal principle, if the victims want to seek damages they will have to prove negligence on the part of the company. But the tank has already exploded and all the debris has been cleared away, so that not a trace of the original tank remains. What will the victims use as proof? The victims are without remedy, or without, at least, any apparent one. It's exactly the same when someone is run over by a car and killed, or when someone is killed or has his property destroyed due to the collapse of a reservoir. So, in recent years society has come to call for a "liability for compensation even in the absence of negligence" principle, over and against the former "no negligence, no liability" rule.

The time has come for legislators to enact new laws which incorporate such new requirements as appropriate. Negligence is not the only factor giving rise to liability. There are other examples which should rationally suffice to give rise to liability for damages. New laws must be established based upon this sound foundation. Scholars are on the case, and so are some legislators. One example is the automobile liability laws enacted in Germany and other countries. But as legislators in those countries hemmed and hawed, and as German scholars carried out a paper-and-ink war over the theory of no-negligence liability, the courts in one country—France—managed to make a giant leap forward.

The French courts have attempted to make objective the originally subjective concept of negligence. The courts have objectively decided that in such and such cases there is obvious negligence, and have stopped allowing the old subjective meaning of negligence at trial. Of course, the language has not changed—the word is still pronounced "negligence". But the same word now means something only very slightly different from "unlawful". While the German scholars were busy grappling with the problem of no-negligence liability in their research and debates, the French courts arrived at the same destination of no-negligence liability without coming out and saying that that's what they were going to do. The weapon in this fight? Lies. The French court used lies to establish new law.

The courts in Japan today also often try the same thing. The most visible example was in a *Daishin'in* [Great Court of Cassation] decision of September 1, 1920. The summary is as follows. Someone left his wife and children behind in their home village and went to America, but as he did not send sufficient money back home to them, the wife borrowed twenty or thirty yen in order to make ends meet. When the lender demanded repayment, however, the wife cancelled the loan contract and refused to pay back the money on the ground that "Under Article 14 of the Civil Code a wife may not take out loans without her husband's permission." In this situation, if any of the circumstances enumerated in Article 17 of the Civil Code had applied then the wife would not have had to seek her husband's permission in order to take out a loan. As such, the wife would not have been able to cancel

the loan contract as described above. Unfortunately, there were no such circumstances in this case, so it would seem that, technically, there was no choice but to go along with what the wife said. However, the court held that, “In cases such as this one, in which a husband, seeking to earn money, leaves his wife and children in their home village and crosses over to a faraway land, but then fails to send money to his wife and children for several years, then, absent special circumstances such as there being wealth in the home in which the wife and children are residing sufficient to cover living expenses, in order for the wife to maintain the household and to educate and care for the children, it is reasonable and equitable to acknowledge that she has obtained the husband’s permission in advance to see after the maintenance of the household by taking out a certain amount of loans, as necessary. Understanding the matter in this way, this court finds it fitting to temper compassion with justice to the fullest extent.”²⁰ The wife thus lost her case. In this example, it is a fact that the wife did not obtain the permission of her husband to take out loans. But the case would have turned out the wrong way had it ended there. The lender would have been told, sorry, but you must eat your losses. So, the court invented the fiction of permission. In point of fact, no permission had been granted. However, the court proceeded as though it had, and rounded out the fiction with phrases like “reasonable and equitable” and “temper compassion with justice to the fullest extent”. Dr. Makino [Eiichi] the most zealous of the Freirechtsbewegung adherents in Japan, said of this decision that “The courts have used expanded exceptions to Article 17 of the Civil Code.” Conversely, Dr. Tomii [Masaaki], an esteemed veteran of the French legal school, finds Makino’s logic difficult to accept, and argues instead that “The exceptions in Article 17 have not been expanded, rather, the courts say that permission was, in fact, granted.” As a third-party observer to this minor debate, I have been greatly interested in seeing the way both scholars’ minds were working, apart from the way their thoughts were manifested verbally. In the thought patterns of Drs. Makino and Tomii we have been able to see the contrast between the French way of thinking, which amounts to “see, but pretend not to have seen,” and the Freirechtsbewegung style, which attempts to use cases in a rational way, like the rungs of a ladder, to effect [legal] evolution.

8

As can be seen from the above, historically, lies have displayed great social efficacy. We can continue this line of reasoning to see the same efficacy manifested in our own time. We know that lies are being

²⁰ In the original, the quoted passage is in old-style Japanese, in keeping with the Daishin’in case being quoted, with *katakana* used where *hiragana* would be used today (tr. note).

used today because human beings feel themselves to be eminently reasonable, although this conceit is punctured by their being unexpectedly unreasonable in actual practice.

Thinking along purely rational lines, it is a given that lying is wrong. It is simply not *comme il faut* to say that something that happened didn't happen, or that something that didn't happen, did. The revolutionaries who want to do away with all falsehoods, compromise, and tradition are almost always opponents of the lie. These revolutionaries also want to rid the legal system of every last trace of fiction. As an example, consider the laws following the recent workers revolution in Russia. For instance, a September 16, 1918 law in Russia prescribed the total abolishment of the adoption system. In a statement providing the rationale behind this law, we apparently find that "The first code of the [Bolshevik Family Law?] does away with all fictions and presents the bare facts as they are, bringing them straightaway to the surface, namely the facts of relations between parents and children. This is done not merely by means of words, but as a way to inculcate in the people the habit of speaking the truth and so free them from all manner of superstition."²¹

Now, it is true that, on grounds of reason, it is not a felicitous phenomenon that so many fictions are used in the law. Rather, such thinking goes, there being lies in the law indicates the need for legal reform. But because human beings are unexpectedly unreasonable, it is urgent that the objective of practical legal reform be achieved by means of these fictions. Jhering, in the aforementioned *The Spirit of the Roman Law*, brings forth this principle in the following way: "Throwing away fictions before laying the grounds for having methods for achieving actual solutions is the same as telling a limping person to throw away his crutches."²² Jhering further states that "Were there no fictions in the world, then many aspects of the Roman law, which exerted a profound influence on later generations even over the course of its vicissitudes, would surely have been applicable even farther into the future than it already was."²³

However, at the same time Jhering recognizes that fictions are not a perfect method for revising the law. Recognizing that the occurrence of fictions in the law indicates that the law is in need of reform—no, that that law has already, in practice, been revised—I would like to use these instances as rungs along the evolutionary ladder. There is no underlying principle to lies. So, if lies are the only method that courts use to bring the law into harmony with social changes, then regular people will feel

²¹ I have not been able to find the original. The quotation is my translation from Suehiro's Japanese (tr. note).

²² Quote is from Jhering (1865: 288).

²³ Quote is from Jhering (1865: 288). Suehiro's translation into Japanese expands on the German original without changing Jhering's overall meaning.

uneasy, unless the courts somehow express some grandiloquent and truly believable ideal. But even if courts do possess such a grandiloquent and truly believable ideal, and tell the people to trust in the ideal and be at ease, then it is conceptually no different from putting one's faith in a benevolent monarch and giving a free pass to despotism. We moderns, baptized in the French Revolution, are not likely to accept this. Moderns seek some reliable standard other than human beings. We want a guarantee.

Furthermore, if the law is fixed and the judges are inflexible, then as I wrote earlier it will be the people themselves, who are in a position of having to accept the law as applied, who will resort to lying. It is clear that this would be no cause for celebration in the slightest. A child who tells many lies betrays a parent with a pigheaded disposition. A people which tells many lies betrays a national law maladapted to social circumstances. In these situations, the attitude which both the parent and the state must adopt is one of reflection and repentance. And as for judges in this situation, theirs is to let lies be lies, to awaken to the fact that the time for legal reform has come, and to “see but pretend not to have seen” until comes the imminent completion of that reform.

9

Human beings have a fondness for what is fair. Moderns in particular, who have suffered through long years of iniquity, love fairness above all else. Modern man's universal and fundamental expectation of national society is that all must be equal under the law. The rule of law is a system born of this expectation.

The rule of law is a way of thinking according to which laws are laid out once and for all, after which the world is managed in accordance with those laws. In effect, it's a way of thinking involving the creation, ahead of time, of a measuring stick which is known as “the law”. However, the basic quality which a measuring stick must have is rigidity, fixedness. A measuring stick which can be stretched or crimped at will is a contradiction in terms. If, for example, there were a clothier who sold bolts of fabric which he had measured using a stretchy rubber measuring tape, there would surely be few who would trust him and do business with him. Likewise, if a nation's laws are able to be stretched or shrunk down with abandon, then it is a certainty that the people will have no refuge in the law, and will give voice to their discontent.

However, if the measuring stick of the law is completely inflexible and cannot be stretched or trimmed by even the slightest degree, then those greatly enamored of fairness will also, without fail, air their grievances in public. People want fairness, but they hate hidebound rules. At first blush, it must be admitted that these two things constitute an altogether contradictory and petulant demand.

But what is to be done? Humans are contradictory. They are petulant. That's just who they are. The law that must prevail among humans, these contradictory and petulant humans just as we find them, is a law that can satisfy these contradictory and petulant demands. The reason is that we must think, not of laws for a utopian Cockaigne, but of laws for the real world of human beings.

It would seem that most of those who debate the law have no understanding of the contradictions and petulance which beset human beings. As a result, some of them argue that if people want equality before the law, then there must be no demanding elasticity in the law. When the existing law is applied to some specific circumstance and the common run of people see this as unfair, then the scholars who insist on equality before the law offer a curt reply, saying, "It is the law. It must be applied." And they apply the law reflexively. This is certainly gallant of them. But is there not somewhere in the hearts of these gallant men of iron, hard and level-headed and given to bold and decisive action, a certain soupçon of unease? They are people too, after all. They are human beings who see beauty and know it as beautiful, and who hear of sadnesses and feel sad. If they were to cut a man down, then in their hearts they would undoubtedly shed the tears of a man. If not, then they could not be called human beings. To make a trial turn by activating the law is no different than feeding meat into a grinder. It should give us no joy to have raised to an exalted station a machine for the judging of human beings.

And yet, why shouldn't there be those who cut men down resolutely, even while shedding manly tears on the inside? I admire the high-minded will of those people. But at the same, I cannot help but calling such high-mindedness stupidity. For, if the law is a completely fixed and inelastic thing, and if those who apply the law do so inflexibly, then the contradictory and petulant people in the real world will doubt the law—will they not?—and will wonder what, exactly, the law is for. And those among the people who are serious and courageous will try to destroy the law, while those who go along to get along and who love just being alive will duck and flout the law in secret. The reason is that people must go on living, even if it means privately treating the law with scorn.

Among the people, those who are of serious and courageous disposition have no tolerance for lying. They are willing to risk their lives to destroy the law if the law means telling lies. Because these people strive to live without lying, and because they teach their children and grandchildren to live without lying, too, they will seek the ruin of the law. People who view the law as unbending and who seek to use it in that way, fear revolutionaries above all else. But, in fact, revolutionaries come precisely from the midst of these very serious and courageous types of men.

Then you have those, the majority, who go along to get along, and who are neither so serious nor so courageous. These people cop to the lie and sidestep the law. If the law is fixed, and if it is applied absolutely without question in certain cases, then the only way to avoid applying the law is to say that

what is, isn't. It goes without saying, is in fact plain to see, that those who passionately love life will seek refuge in this method of lying. Would those who see the law as unbending and who seek to apply it as such relish what comes of such ideas and practice? No. These people would hate what they have wrought, hate it like nothing else. But however much those who see the law as fixity hate when the law is skirted, it is, in practice, impossible that those with a passionate love for life will ever do other than lie. What else can we call, other than stupid, the fact that the legalists are oblivious to this towering fact of human nature?

A big river rolls boundless on. Men, seeking to narrow the river's breadth, build an iron wall along its right bank. The river flows against the iron wall, trying to wash it away. But, noticing that this can't be done, the water changes course and pours against the left bank instead. The river runs rampant against this soft bank and swallows it up, carrying it away downstream. In this example, if we imagine someone asleep atop the iron wall along the right riverbank, content with pleasant dreams, then surely anyone would say that such a man was a fool. There are those who advocate *Freirechtsbewegung*. Then there are those who reject *Freirechtsbewegung*, advocating a position dead-set against it. These anti-*Freirechtsbewegung* people dream atop the bulwark they've built holding the river back, and think themselves sublime. However, these same people do not realize that the left bank is steadily eroding away. These people ought to leave their studies, get out of their red-brick government buildings, and use the eyes they were born with to see reality as reality, to take a long, hard look at the world as it really is. It shouldn't be that hard. They would understand immediately that the opposite bank was being washed away. However, there are also the go-along-to-get-along types among them. These types pay lip service to the law's being inflexible, but when it comes down to it they lack the bravery, and know only the sublime way it feels to put the inflexible law into practice. They are captive to prevailing tradition and dogma and mouth the words “the law is fixed”. But they cannot realize their ideals in practice. What do they do, then, when this contradiction comes to a bitter head? How do they extract themselves from the crisis they have made? The weapon they use at such moments is always the same: lying.

Of course, judges—and in particular judges in societies where conservative elements are in power, or in countries under the rule of law—must assume a judicious demeanor. The reason is that they are in the difficult position of having to bring into accord, by lying, the law and the world of men. However, we can find no reason at all that those—namely, scholars—who both legally and socially speaking are not in the least constrained, should tell lies out in the open, whether consciously or unconsciously, in order to make the varying threads of tradition and dogma and human necessity align, finding themselves to be tangled up in these threads. The position they must adopt in these cases is, on the one

hand, one of legal reform, and on the other hand one of affirming and also engendering the law's elasticity. But when they who seek to harmonize the law and human nature with lies also defend and conserve their own dogmas and traditions with lies, then this entire arrangement amounts to one gigantic self-delusion.

10

Ultimately, the path we must follow is to pursue fairness while forging a law sufficient truly to satisfy human beings, who detest being persnickety about rules.

In Europe in recent years, surely the one who first began calling for such a path to be followed was the French jurisprudence scholar [François] Gén²⁴. Gén²⁴ was able to theorize new legal concepts because he attempted logically to conceptualize the fact that French judges in the past used lies to make the various elements of a trial line up. The result was that *Freirechtsbewegung*, which arose from Gén²⁴'s insights, began influencing legal circles in Japan a dozen years or so ago. However, at first this influence did nothing beyond provoke abstract debates among legal scholars. *Freirechtsbewegung* was almost completely divorced from reality. Nevertheless, after the Great War, *Freirechtsbewegung* theories gave rise to tremendous changes in the general economic situation and social thought patterns in Japan. Because of this, suddenly a vast gulf opened between the law and human beings, providing another opportunity for *Freirechts* thinking to come to the fore. It did so, in the event, under the rubric of the socialization of the law.

This should no doubt be celebrated. But what we must remember here is that no matter how much people detest overly fastidious rules and crave trials with a human element, these same people also absolutely never discard their desire for fairness and an assurance, a guarantee. Even though we moderns, baptized in the French Revolution, may be fully aware that the desire for vain freedom itself caused the social calamities of the nineteenth century and thereafter to unfold, it doesn't mean that we want to get rid of freedom. And, while people know full well that the rule of law principle is liable to bring about over-fastidiousness for the rules, they also do not give up on seeking assurances of fairness. So, while we advocate for *Freirechtsbewegung* and argue for the socialization of the law, what we must never forget, even for a moment, is that we must secure for the people what they seek: freedom, fairness, and the assurance thereof.

²⁴ Suehiro uses the name Gén²⁴ in Roman letters in the original (tr. note).

Apart from those scholars of recent years who explicate *Freirechts* and argue for the socialization of the law, or those who speak of the law’s ideal, or of the law’s purpose, or public order and salutary customs, there is no one who advances actionable ideas that would satisfy the real social need for guarantees of fairness. To be sure, one can certainly join the noble fight for a “new organization” to encourage young people highly prone to become entangled in tradition and tripped up by fine-filamented logic and grow dejected. It is also a powerful thing to break through long-entrenched *Begriffsjurisprudenz*, bureaucratism, and formalism. However, if this is all that scholars achieve, then the good fruits of their labors will last but a moment. Such efforts are transitional. This work merely destroys what is old—apart from that, it constructs nothing new for the sake of human culture. No sooner will the dawn break on such scholars’ throwing a busted-up *Begriffsjurisprudenz* out by the front gate than a clamoring for fairness and freedom will rush in by the back gate to assail them. If this is true, then it is surely no different than riding the crest of a wave one has happened to catch and laughing down at the lowness of those in the same wave’s trough. Before long, those scholars, too, will fall into a wave trough and invite the scorn of whoever comes along on the next wave’s crest. I have heartfelt doubts about whether there is any cultural value to what these scholars are trying to do.

Those who babble uselessly about vain ideals and strive by word and deed to realize public order and good morals must, in the end, also be those who allow for the despotism of judges.²⁵ At the light of dawn, when the *Freirechts* for which we have indiscriminately been arguing has finally been achieved, what will have been the point? For yet again will come then the calls for guarantees of freedom and fairness. What I seek is to preserve guarantees of freedom and fairness while also avoiding the trap of over-fastidiousness for the rules. In other words, I want guaranteed, substantive fairness.

Typically, those who have tried to bring substantive fairness or actionable universality of application into the courtroom have chosen from among two main methods. The first method is reliance upon enlightened magistrates, the second is the jury system. Given an enlightened magistrate fully in control of the conduct of a trial, it may indeed be possible that those trials will be actionable universality of the law’s application for each individual case brought before that magistrate. However, given the disgust with political corruption today, calling for reliance on enlightened magistrates is the same as singing the praises of enlightened despotism. I am of the firm belief that culturation is the means by which that which is now reserved for a certain class of people may be made easily accessible by all, and that education is the means of achieving this. It must amount to a repudiation of

²⁵ On “public order and good morals,” see Section 90 of the Civil Code: 「公の秩序又は善良の風俗に反する法律行為は、無効とする」 (tr. note).

jurisprudence to say that enlightened trials would be impossible without enlightened magistrates. It is virtually equivalent to arguing that, so long as there is a famous craftsman who has made a famous blade, it matters not whether Honda Kōtarō is around to wield it. We must still create laws which will allow for enlightened trials even when there are no enlightened magistrates. In other words, we need laws which will preserve substantive fairness and actionable universality of application in all particular cases, in the face of all of their concrete details. Failing this, then the moment we gain *Freirechts*, we will begin longing for freedom and fairness.

The second method is the jury system, which preserves the law while allowing for adaptations to human needs. This method, while diametrically opposite to enlightened magistrate despotism, nevertheless aims at exactly the same outcome. Judges are prone to being constrained by demands for fairness, that is, consistency of application. Fairness, after all, is the original point of law. As a result of this tendency, trials are liable to lose their human element. One way to rescue judges from this tendency is the jury system, which involves bringing several laymen into the courtroom, lining them up, and having them certify the fundamentals of guilt or innocence. This method has the merits of allowing for trials to be infinitely rejiggered as the world changes, and also of introducing a standard of elasticity to the law. However, as this elasticity can sometimes be taken entirely too far, it becomes difficult for trials to be conducted governed by the concrete facts of each situation, which in turn makes it easy for trials to lack both reasonableness and fairness.

In this sense, enlightened magistrate despotism and the jury system have opposite good and bad points between them. At the same time, both methods share in their failure to satisfy modern man, who hopes to have guarantees of freedom and fairness but who also hates sticklers for the rules.

11

We seek a standard by which to measure. And yet, we seek a flexible standard at the same time. This is, yes, a contradictory desire. But because human beings are as we have described them above, law must satisfy this desire in all its contradiction.

I therefore believe that the law which must henceforth be created must be a flexible standard which adapts to each concrete case in a regular way, and that jurisprudence must seek out just this universal standard of elasticity. As long as *Freirechtsbewegung* looks for nothing other than a standard which will flex just like rubber, then it will have the effect solely of destroying the past.

But how does one make a standard which flexes in a regular way? This standard is the only one for which jurisprudence must henceforth aim. However, it also belongs to the group of problems which are nearly impossible to solve.

As I see it, the perennial and fundamental problem with law and jurisprudence is that both have neglected to take as their subject of study human beings. Not only that, but law and jurisprudence have also recklessly hypothesized human beings as a kind of background object. In other words, law and jurisprudence have not sufficiently inquired into the ever-present unknown variable [i.e., the human person]. Instead, they have cavalierly repositioned the unknown variable as a known variable. Of course, hypotheses are the premises of all learning. The reason for this is that unless all the figures given in a certain question are posited as known variables, even if in a hypothetical way, then it becomes impossible to come up with any scientifically accurate answers. However, hypotheses to be used in finding answers to scientific questions must be arrived at only after having done adequate experimentation beforehand, and only with a full view of probabilities. And yet, your typical legal scholar or economist will think nothing of taking human beings, which should be understood as fundamentally X, and changing them out for A, or B, or what have you, hypothesizing that human beings are rational, that they are self-interested, and so forth.²⁶ Can scholars who work in this way expect easily to arrive at any formal, let alone accurate answers?²⁷ Human beings are rational, but also have extremely irrational aspects. They are also simultaneously self-serving but with non-self-serving aspects. So, no actionable universality of application is bound to present itself in each individual case as the result of a logical process casually predicated upon hypothesized human beings.

I think, therefore, that, within the bounds of jurisprudence, at least, human beings, as they are—in other words as the unknown X factor—must be added into the equation without any manipulation. Of course we must assiduously pursue the known elements within that variable X, based upon the fundamental and empirical knowledge gained by the human race over long years of struggle. How regrettable, though, that the known-factor elements under the X rubric, which have been gleaned from the knowledge which humans have come to understand thus far, are so pitifully few. In the final analysis, we must accept that a great many unknown elements will remain. This is why it is a rash plan, badly lacking in humility, to willy-nilly change out X for A or B. Even so, leaving X as X does not a science make. X must be made into a known variable. So, the first thing to do, as far as is possible, is to find known variables within X: a, b, c, d, and so on. In doing so, however, we must also steel ourselves to accept that there will remain, even after this process, a big unknown variable. Let us call that big unknown variable x. Then, instead of following the standard jurisprudential practice of cavalierly substituting X for A or B or the like, we can lay out the information like so: $a + b + c + d + x$. Of course, in

²⁶ Here and in the following paragraphs, Suehiro uses “X”, “A”, “B,” and so forth (tr. note).

²⁷ There is a question mark in parentheses in the original exactly where I have placed the same in the translation (tr. note).

this case we will have to leave the determination of the value of x entirely at the discretion of the judge or the juror. It goes without saying, therefore, that the thinking of the judge or the juror will exert a profound effect on the form which the answer ultimately takes. Even so, the method I have just described will vastly improve the actionable universality of application of trials in each concrete situation when compared with the cavalier transposition of X for A or B or the like. The method I advocate will also guarantee much more fairness than were we to entrust entirely to judges or jurors the determination of X when used as X . In this way, in the itemized list $a + b + c + d + x$, each letter may be expressed as a' , b' , c' , and so on, or as a'' , b'' , c'' , and so forth, thus maintaining a relational correspondence which will sway the final result. I think it must be the goal which jurisprudence should pursue henceforth to find just this sliding scale.

We must put to maximum use all the spoils of science. At the same time, however, we must not overemphasize the gains that science has made. We must accept the fact that x will remain within X forever. Furthermore, it must be added that it is extraordinarily self-delusional to think that accurate answers can be obtained by cavalierly swapping out X for A or B . We should dissect X to the fullest extent that science allows. Then we must determine the value of the x that remains based on an ideal foundation. Accuracy in jurisprudence must be exactly as I have herein described.

12

I am a legal scholar. So, my argument, concretely and finally, comes down to case law. By seeking $a + b + c + d + x$ via a dissection of the actual details of each individual case as found in a multitude of judicial decisions, and then by finding the relational correspondence between these details and the answers [found in those decisions], I hope to gain material for deliberating upon what actionable universality of application should look like in cases which arise in the future. These will be, I believe, invaluable materials allowing us to move away from individual decisions' being a matter of applying a fixed law to each case, and also to think about what law is in its kaleidoscopic and ever-changing pursuit of actionable universality of application.

I am convinced, on this score, that legal education henceforth must be conducted using the case method.²⁸ Jurisprudence heretofore, which proceeded with great faith that correct conclusions could be drawn by swapping out X with, say, A or B or the like, has not taught students the pith and marrow

²⁸ Suehiro uses the words "case method" in Roman letters in the original.

of the law.²⁹ Traditional jurisprudence involves little more than acquiring logic and a wily dexterity in applying it. But it must be admitted that the law obtained hereby is far removed from the real law.

I began conducting jurisprudential education at [Tokyo Imperial] University using the case method from the spring of this year. This has been problematic for many. What I am doing is decidedly not in the spirit of the traditional practicum with which law students have long been familiar.³⁰ I consider that the case method is the only way to teach the real living law, the law which is a flexible standard bending in accordance with a fixed rule.

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Reviews

Serena Talento. 2021. *Framing Texts/Framing Social Spaces: Conceptualising Literary Translation in Three Centuries of Swahili Literature* (“Verbal Art and Documentary Text of African languages,” Volume 42). Köln: Rüdiger Köppe. 408 pages. Paperback. Euro 69.80. ISBN 978-3-89645-742-4.

Translation practices in the Swahili-speaking context have a long history and have been the object of growing interest on the part of several scholars who have carried out different linguistic, literary, cultural, and socio-political studies, including some articles by the author of this review. Among these publications, the volume *Framing Texts/Framing Social Spaces: Conceptualising Literary Translation in Three Centuries of Swahili Literature* by Serena Talento constitutes one of the few comprehensive studies, which stands out as innovative in the field on two levels. Firstly, it investigates the construction of a discourse on literary translation into Swahili from a sociological perspective in the following contexts: the pre-twentieth Swahili coast and colonial and post-independence East Africa. On the other level, it has a solid conceptual and methodological framework which draws on European sociological studies by critically and proactively applying these theories to the Swahili context. In so doing, this research contributes to the development of the study of translation in Africa and to the trend of decentring the international field of translation studies by bringing attention to an East African context and to an African-language textual tradition. The author, Serena Talento, has been Assistant Professor of Literatures in African Languages at the University of Bayreuth in Germany since 2015. There, she also gained her PhD after completing a MA at the University of Naples “L’Orientale” in Italy where she specialised in Swahili language and literature and translation studies. The present work is based on her PhD dissertation.

The book consists of the acknowledgements, an introduction by the author, five chapters, concluding remarks, four appendices and a rich bibliography. Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework adopted in the study, which employs the sociological theories of Bourdieu, Casanova, Heilbron and Sapiro to develop a conceptual framework apt for understanding the dynamics of production and circulation of knowledge, culture, and arts in the Swahili-speaking world. Here, concepts such as *field*, *capital*, *habitus*, *doxa*, etc. have been carefully discussed as means to help contextualise and conceptualise the East African sociocultural dynamics, and they are consciously adapted to the East African context. Chapter 2 illustrates in detail the methodology adopted in this research, which comprises various elements, namely an examination of translation flows on a large scale, an investigation of the discourse on translation through the analysis of selected texts, para-texts and extra-texts, socio-historical facts, and a contextualisation of the literary field and of the roles and activities of translators. The following chapters are devoted to the three historical periods under

examination. Chapter 3 focuses on the pre-twentieth century literary space of the Swahili coast, an area of intercultural contacts at the centre of networks connecting the Indian Ocean world and the East African continental regions which also experienced Portuguese occupation. The author explores the construction of a discourse on translation by analysing a selection of Swahili classical poems composed in the stanzaic metres *utendi/utenzi* and *kawafi* dating mostly from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century and preserved in manuscript form (in the Arabic alphabet). Talento's research on these Swahili verses shows that the poets' notion of translating did not correspond to the current common understanding, i.e. of a linguistic transfer from a source text to a target text, but, interestingly, included a wide range of activities combining various modes of translation of one or multiple sources and original poetic creation. On a social level, the author argues that translation was used to reinforce claims of patrician descent in a context where Oman's suzerainty over the Swahili coast threatened the position and influence of local elites. Furthermore, translation offered the poets an opportunity to negotiate their socially and culturally expected humility, looking for fame and high-ranking status. In chapter 4, the discursive practices on translation during British rule in East Africa are investigated as part of a system of unequal power relationships. The literary translations in that period were carried out by British residents, mostly colonial administrators, educators, and missionaries with the collaboration of East Africans whose role was often effaced or obscured. The chapter focuses on the literary translations which were undertaken within the framework of the Inter-Territorial Language Committee. This was a colonial institution created in 1930 to standardise the Swahili language in British East Africa (on the basis of the Kiunguja dialect of Zanzibar) and to produce a corpus of prose translations into standard Swahili to be employed in colonial schools. These were mainly translated works of British novels for young people (such as *Treasure Island*, *The Jungle Book*, *Robinson Crusoe* etc.); many of them were undertaken by the secretary of the Inter-Territorial Language Committee, Frederick Johnson, who was also the author of a *Standard English-Swahili Dictionary and Standard Swahili-English Dictionary* (1939). The author, who has investigated the various elements which frame these works of translation (such as the prefaces, notes, mode of translation etc.), convincingly argues that beyond the notable literary impact, these translations were a component of the colonial dominion, which on a cultural level was also exercised over language and literature. British translations conveyed to the Swahili literary space a new genre, written prose, in a context where prose was mostly transmitted orally and in a new language, standard Swahili, in a context in which literature was created in local Swahili varieties. These translations, thus, were intentionally used to reduce or obliterate the literary and symbolic capital of the Swahili classical poetic tradition. Considering this, the author proposes the concept of *deconsecration* as a contrast to Casanova's notion of *consecration* in the work *The*

World Republic of Letters, as a more adequate means to describe the presence (or absence) of literary exchanges in a context of political, economic and cultural subjugation. Chapter 5 is devoted to literary translations into Swahili in post-independence Tanganyika and later Tanzania (the Republic resulting from the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964), focusing in particular on the first decades which correspond to the period of implementation of *ujamaa*¹, the Swahili word used by the first president Julius K. Nyerere to illustrate his project of African socialism. The Swahili language, which played a prominent role in spreading the campaign for independence, was considered by Nyerere as a fundamental medium for his project of *ujamaa*, for building Tanzanian national identity along with a decolonised, non-ethnic, modern, egalitarian society.² In this chapter, Talento investigates the symbolic contribution of translations into Swahili to the process of forging a new nation and to the validation of Swahili as a national and literary language, a process defined by Talento as *reconsecration* in opposition to the above-mentioned *deconsecration* carried out during British rule. Translation ceased to be the prerogative of colonial administrators and educators, with the often invisible collaboration of a few educated Africans. Now it was undertaken by Tanzanian activists, mostly political and academic figures. However, Talento notes that the small presence of women translators remained a constant in this period, as it had been also in the colonial era. In post-independence times there was an enlargement of the geographical provenance of the source texts, a differentiation of the source genres, and the number of translations into Swahili rose consistently.³ From the 1960s to the 1980s there were three main translation flows into Swahili: Western classics, especially Shakespeare, translated in Tanzania by J. K. Nyerere and Samuel Mushi (Promoter for Swahili in the Ministry of National Culture), Anglophone African authors such as Achebe, Armah, wa Thiong'o, etc. and texts from countries committed to communism or socialism, particularly China and the Soviet Union.

Another interesting aspect of the volume is that the author offers new insights into the historical developments of modern Swahili literature by showing the impact of translated texts, despite their small number compared to creative works on the Swahili literary scene. This is particularly true of the translations provided by influential figures, one such being J.K. Nyerere, who chose to translate two of

¹ *Ujamaa* means brotherhood, sense of cohesion amongst the members of a family or, more broadly, of a community.

² For that reason, after the Arusha declaration (*Ujamaa and Self-Reliance*, 1967) and the adoption of the policy of "Education for Self-Reliance" (1968), Swahili was introduced as the language of instruction in primary education and the adult education programme.

³ As it emerges from the catalogue of literary translated texts into Swahili compiled for this study, published translations rose from 27 during British rule to 141 in just the first two decades after independence.

Shakespeare's dramas, *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*,⁴ in their entirety and respecting their verse form. This was in contrast to colonial times when Shakespeare's work had appeared in Swahili only as short prose texts.⁵ As pointed out by Talento, Nyerere's translation strategy consisted in "merging heterodoxy and orthodoxy" (see 5.7.4) i.e. domesticating Shakespeare's verses by employing a Swahili metre, the *shairi*, but at the same time innovating this same form by eliminating the rhyme, one of the basic principles of Swahili poetic tradition. This groundbreaking choice by an authoritative intellectual and political leader paved the way for the innovative poetic research of the younger generation. Inaugurated by Ebrahim Hussein and Euphrase Kezilahabi, this triggered an intense debate in East Africa between the "traditionalists" who condemned this poetic practice, and the "reformists" who defended their verses, influenced by Western literature as well as by other verbal traditions in Bantu languages. This literary dispute, which is still to some extent alive today, has conveyed identity issues, as well as generational, cultural, and political dynamics, and has been investigated by several scholars in the field of Swahili literary studies. The present volume contributes significantly to the study of modern developments in Swahili poetry by highlighting the activity of the East African translators of English poetry into Swahili, people such as Nyerere and Mushi, as well as the discursive practices around these translated texts.

Finally, the book has four appendices, useful tools for researchers in the field: 1) "Corpus of translations pertaining to the pre-twentieth century period"; 2) "Corpus of translations pertaining to the period of missionary activity and colonial power"; 3) Corpus of translations pertaining to the early post-colonial period"; 4) "Catalogue of literary translated texts into Swahili (1663-2021)."

Considering all the above points, this volume is a remarkable study of literary translation into Swahili from a sociological and historical perspective which enriches scholarship on Swahili literature and also international research on translation.

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⁴ *Julius Caesar* was translated twice, the first time retaining the original title (1963), and the second time entitled *Juliasi Kaizari* (1969). *The Merchant of Venice* was entitled in Swahili *Mabepari wa Venisi* (The Capitalists of Venice) and published in 1969.

⁵ Based on *Tales from Shakespeare*, an English children's book written by Charles and Mary Lamb in 1807.

Michael M. Kretzer and Russell H. Kaschula (eds.). 2022. *Handbook of Language Policy and Education in Countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)* (“Handbooks of Language Policies in Africa,” Volume 3/1). Leiden: Brill. xvi+368 pages. Hardback: EUR 179.14. ISBN: 978-90-04-50805-7. E-book: EUR 175.76. ISBN: 978-90-04-51672-4.

This volume is part of the new Brill series “Handbooks of Language Policies in Africa.” It discusses the language and educational policies of the sixteen African countries that make up the “South African Development Community” (SADC). As its name implies, SADC is an *economic* community based on geographic closeness (although to which extent the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania are *southern* African countries escapes me: the magic of politics!). It is no wonder that not much else unites these countries: they are home to a great number of African languages actually belonging to all four Greenbergian phyla (but with a great predominance of Bantu, and therefore Niger-Congo, languages); they are Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone in their colonial linguistic heritage (and official languages); very diverse are their language policies, too: one goes from the plethora of languages mentioned and recognized in the constitutions of South Africa and Zimbabwe to the strict monolingual policy of Angola and Mozambique.

Given this amount of diversity, one would expect some principled organization according to geographic or linguistic criteria or, still, on the basis of language policy. The editors have opted instead for the alphabetical order. We have therefore sixteen nation-states, from Angola to Zimbabwe, discussed by different authors—most of them working in the countries under analysis.

Each chapter (and country) is introduced by a (rather unuseful) b&w map showing nothing else than the borders of the country and the neighboring states, and a summary list of data on the country. Each chapter is approximately 20 pages-long, references included.

Beyond this general format, the chapters differ greatly, both in quality and contents: from overviews of the language and educational policy of a country (the great majority of the chapters) to rather detailed sociolinguistic accounts of specific languages and language situations.

Confronted with a volume of 368 pages, 17 chapters and a total of 21 authors, this reviewer cannot do much else than offer the reader a succinct overview and a few general remarks.

After a short Foreword and an Introduction (: 1-10), the editors offer the reader a comparative analysis in Chapter 1 (: 11-40). This is followed by Nicolau Nkiawete Manuel’s ‘Language Education Policy and Portuguese Dominant Ideology in Angola: Historical Processes, Discourses and Impacts’ (: 41-58). The weight of the Portuguese heritage and the persistent official monolingualism are duly stressed, together with some, timid and contradictory, steps toward toward the inclusion of the (major)

African languages in the educational sphere. The article is plagued by some bizarre wording, as when the languages of Angola are described as ‘mainly Bantu and non-Bantu’ (: 43), or trivial (and repeated) statements like ‘In order to guarantee parental acceptance of African languages as an efficient medium of instruction equal to Portuguese, an improvement in their status is crucial’ (: 54), and many others. Most of all, an insufficient proofreading has resulted in many awkward passages and downright errors.

Andy Monthusi Chebanne discusses Botswana in ‘Language and Education Policy in Botswana: Some Critical Issues’ (: 59-78). The chapter has several language issues, but is on the whole very informative of the language policy and educational system of an African country where a single ethnic (the Tswana) and linguistic (Setswana) group dominates, relegating minor languages (both Bantu and “Khoisan”) and communities to the periphery.

Rich, informative and detailed is Mohamed Ahmed Chamanga’s contribution: ‘ShiKomori, the Bantu Language of the Comoros: Status and Perspective’ (: 79-98). The language situation here is much simpler: ShiKomori is the only real African language of the archipelago and is set against two official languages (of very different social status)—French and Arabic. Still, it is refreshing that, rather than just constitutions, laws and decrees, the attention is paid here to a real language, its dialect variation, its standardization, etc. The article is also enriched by detailed maps and (sadly, b&w) reproductions of posters.

Both linguistic and sociolinguistic is also Helena Lopez Palma’s ‘Native Languages of the Democratic Republic of Congo’ (: 99-116): maybe too ambitious and certainly too short, the article is overall a missed opportunity. The author laudably extols the linguistic richness of the country, a wealth going well beyond its national languages—i.e. the “big four:” Lingala, Swahili, Cilubà (or Luba-Kasai) and Kongo (or Kituba). But in reality, cursory notes are given only on the Central Sudanic languages (‘Nilo-Saharan’ becomes here ‘Nilo-Sahara’—possibly after the mold of ‘Niger-Congo?’), Mongo, Nzadi and Cilubà (itself one of the “big four”). Here even more than elsewhere maps would have been necessary. The author has a penchant for the potential of indigenous languages in ‘developing cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence technology’ (: 100), a belief often repeated but which I still fail to properly understand. Equally unsubstantiated are many other bold statements, such as ‘Language variety evidences the genetic force of the human faculty for creating linguistic systems’ (: 112), or about the necessity of poets and story and song writers in order to change ‘the actual unstable and weak state of native languages into rich, artistic, and robust natural languages’ (: 110).

Owen G. Mordaunt and Paul A. Williams’ ‘Language Policy in Eswatini: Challenges in a Globalised World’ (: 117-134) is an interesting discussion of an officially bilingual but basically monolingual country—Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). Sadly, the chapter, itself not very long, is weighed down by a

longish section ‘Language Policy’ (: 120-123) that looks more like a sophomore literature review on general issues and whose relevance for Eswatini becomes (weakly) evident in the second part of page 123 only. Still the article has much to commend it: first, different from much current literature (other articles in the volume included), the authors abstain from denouncing the negative impact of the former colonial language (English) and stress the on-going necessity of English in economic and technological matters. Second, the Eswatini language policy and the rise of siSwati at the expense of isiZulu are very well described. All in all, the article is low on rethoric and very high on actual and clear data presentation.

‘Language as a Kennel and Husk of the African Philosophy: The Case of Lesotho’ (: 135-155) by Mosisili Sebotsa and Khahliso Mahula is a completely different article: rather than dealing with the language policy of the Kingdom of Lesotho, the authors make the case for the importance of African languages in understanding and properly evaluating African philosophy on such topics as humanity, democracy and gender. The present author remains highly skeptical on the subject of the African roots of the ancient Greek democracy and on the origin of the Basotho from... Egypt (: 147-148).

‘Language and Education in Madagascar: Ideological Conflicts and Implementation Challenges’ (: 156-181) by Penelope Howe is an accurate rendition of the legal history of education in Madagascar, well summarized in the long Table 8.1 (: 158-160). As usual, the story is that of an unresolved conflict between a largely monolingual country (speaking Malagasy or varieties thereof) and the former colonial language (French). An additional twist is provided by the non-standard varieties of Malagasy, maybe more than linguistic dialects but still under the thumb of the Merina dialects of the capital (and formerly the “royal” dialect).

‘The Prevailing Sociolinguistic and Socio-Political Realities in Malawi and Their Implications on Language Policy’ (182-198) is signed by Joshua Isaac Kumwenda and the volume co-editor Michael M. Kretzer and stands out for a very nice color map (: 185) of the languages of the country (why hasn’t the same been done for all the countries?). Again, a dominant language (but less so than in the case of Botswana and Madagascar), ChiChewa has for a long time been promoted at the expenses of all the other languages and ethnic groups. Alas, the authors display an overt, strict adherence to the ideological tenets of a centralized nation-state, as shown by such remarks as ‘a very strong federal system would mean less inter-tribal and inter-regional interactions that would eventually threaten the national cohesion’ and the very last sentence, that advocates a language policy ‘that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all the people and also one that safeguards the continued existence of the nation-state as an entity’ (: 196).

In Nita Rughoonundun-Chellapermal's 'Pluralism without Inclusion: The Case of Mauritius, a Linguistically Diverse Diasporic Small Island Developing State (SIDS)' (: 199-221) describes the very complex language situation of Mauritius, but with an exclusive focus, again, on language-in-education. Such a complexity is the result of the presence of two colonial languages, English (in a dominant position) and French, a number of 'Asian Ancestral Languages' (mainly learnt for cultural reasons), and a French-based creole that is the first language of a vast majority but whose role in the school system is still tentative and limited.

The same tentative use in education of the languages of the vast majority is seen in Eliseu Mabasso's 'Shifting from "Uncivilised" People's Languages to Ordinary People's Languages: An Overview of Past and Current Practices in Mozambique's Language-in-Education Policy' (: 222-241). We witness in Mozambique the same timid steps toward bilingualism in education seen in Angola, to which the author adds the language use of the national TV system—a topic sadly missing from many other contributions.

'Multilingual Education Policy for Namibia: A Case for Endangered Indigenous Languages' (: 242-258) by Sarala Krishnamurthy is very clear but definitely too short for the topic at hand. As many as four pages (251-254) are devoted to a project by the author and a colleague of hers on three endangered language groups. The relevance of this in a chapter on the educational policy of the country is not very clear.

Marie Flora Ben David and co-editor Michael M. Kretzer's 'Using "Kreol Seselwa", the Seychellois Creole Language to Strengthen Connections between the Government, Public Entities, Educational Institutions and Beyond' (: 259-279) stresses the peculiarities of the Seychelles, where a creole (Kreol Seselwa) is fully integrated in the education system alongside English and French, and this, according to the author, is one of the reasons for the high literacy and educational level of the country. Notwithstanding a certain rosy and optimistic view of the Seychellois language policy and the status of the Creole, the persistent biases and dominance of English in both the educational and economic sectors are well pointed out.

The volume editors co-author Chapter 14 'Legal Regulations, Obstacles and Current Developments in the Language Policy of the Republic of South Africa' (: 280-298). Apart from a few downright errors (I wonder what the "click tones" (: 283) are), the article is very informative and clear. It clearly shows the neglect of language policy in post-apartheid times (: 287) and has the added value of revealing all the bombast and little substance in the politicians' speech on language rights and minority groups. Remembering that this is a country boasting as many as 11 official languages in its Constitution and pledging to protect even Sanskrit, this is no small achievement.

‘The Ambivalent Language-in-Education Policy of Tanzania with Specific Reference to Kiswahili’ (: 299-326) by Birgit Brock-Utne and Mwajuma Vuzo tells us about a country that any practitioner of language policy is sure he or she knows well. This is why the insistence on the ambivalence in the promotion of Swahili vs. the colonial language (but surely to the detriment of the countless other languages of Tanzania—utterly forgotten in the article) is welcome. The article develops as a detailed account of the—so far failed—shift from English to Swahili as a language of secondary and tertiary education. Pressions from international donors, the former colonial power, the publishing industry and the elites certainly played the big role the authors expose. At the same time, they acknowledge that parents are at the very least ambivalent on the issue and would often prefer their children to be educated in English. The authors sternly denounce this attitude and rightly point out that a foreign language must not necessarily be a language of instruction. Still, I cannot forget the collapse of Somali education that I personally witnessed in the eighties of the last century after the Somali language had been made the only language of instruction; I realize now how caution is of the utmost importance in these matters.

Sande Ngalande and Bandana Sinha Kumar co-author ‘No English but English: The Case of Language Policy and Planning in Zambia’ (: 327-343). This is a country whose language policy is the lack of an overtly stated language policy. The language-in-education, language-in-religion and language-in-media policies are basically unwritten. In a world dominated by more and more intricate and detailed language regulations, this could sound refreshingly new, but, as the authors note, ‘the status quo meant inadvertently choosing the colonial master’s language’ (: 331). Also the role played by different Christian denominations in the development of separate sectarian writing systems is noticed by the authors.

The last chapter is ‘Ergonyms as Material Complementing Language Policy for Education outside the Classroom in Zimbabwe’ (: 344-362) by Liketso Dube. One must remember that, quite to the opposite of Zambia, this a country with 16 official languages (probably a world record). It is therefore only apt that the author mostly skips the policy from above and chooses to focus on the use of an unrecognized minority language (TjiKalanga) in a (minority of) commercial signs of a single town. This case of self-empowerment represented by the promotion of a language through its visibility is probably rare in the African landscape: its presence at the end of this volume is all the more welcome.

A common problem throughout the book is the very poor editing, with many typos, awkward wordings, and at times even incomprehensible sentences. It looks at times like proofs were not checked or corrections not implemented. One can further question a few editorial choices (starting with the

alphabetical order in which the countries are discussed) and a deep-seated ideological penchant for top-down policies and state-control (one would like to know more about bottom-up initiatives, language in private education and the linguistic landscape in general). Still, notwithstanding all its numerous shortcomings, this volume gives the reader a wealth of data and much food for thought. Not enough is known yet about the language situation of the African countries at large. This volume—a volume to read, consult, ponder—will not be the final word; but it is certainly a big step in the right direction.

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Simone Bettega and Luca D'Anna. 2023. *Gender and Number Agreement in Arabic* (“*Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 109*”). Leiden: Brill. 407 pages. ISBN 978-90-04-52723-2. EUR 157.94.

This book by Bettega and D'Anna represents a unique attempt at addressing from multiple perspectives a well-known feature of Modern Arabic syntax: namely, the rule dictating feminine singular agreement with non-human masculine plural controllers. As emerges in the very first paragraphs of this almost four hundred pages essay, there are several interrelated questions that arise around, perhaps, one of the most salient traits of Modern Standard Arabic and of several contemporary dialects. Such questions concern both the synchronic distribution of this agreement pattern, and its historical origins. Moreover, the authors call the scholarly attention on a more specific aspect: if we consider synchronic variation across spoken dialects or diachronic language change in written Arabic sources from different periods, everywhere F.SG is attested, it is far from categorical and there is always some degree of language-internal variation, also within inanimate nouns. This is why, when possible, corpus data and frequency distributions are taken into account as potential indicators of ongoing tendencies in specific dialects or written varieties. Such tendencies are analysed by the authors in the light of the typological-functional paradigm, as they ultimately identify a major rationale for the emergence of F.SG agreement in the animacy/individuation scale.

The first chapter (1-27) presents a critical overview of the available readership on agreement in Arabic, especially in relation with gender and number, with a distinction also between works on written Arabic vs spoken varieties. Most of the accounts discussed by the authors are rooted in the tradition of Arabic or Semitic linguistics, and at this point the different terminologies used by single (groups of) scholars may engender perplexity among readers who are unacquainted with this field. Bettega and D'Anna, though, are aware of jargon-related problems and almost immediately introduce their own terminology, which is used consistently throughout the book. An important point in this respect, which goes far beyond mere terminology and returns throughout the entire book, is the identification of an ideal division between gender-distinguishing and non-distinguishing dialects, which means dialects that retain the distinction between masculine and feminine in plural verbs, adjectives and pronouns, and dialects that have lost this distinction. This categorisation is functional to the description of gender/agreement systems and provides a major interpretive key of the variation observed within Arabic grammar, especially in that it cuts across other traditional distinctions such as that between bedouin and sedentary dialects. The authors claim in fact that due to the societal changes that have involved bedouin—as well as sedentary—communities throughout the centuries, it is no

longer possible to categorically associate either of these communities with specific linguistic features, which makes the distinction itself inadequate for the investigation of this phenomenon.

Chapter 2 (28-177), the longest of the whole book, departs from the tradition of Arabic linguistics and seeks to root the description of agreement patterns in the light of the categories of general linguistics. Specifically, most of the discussion is actually based on the works by Greville Corbett on gender, number and agreement which are, in turn, couched within the functional-typological paradigm. The authors present a thorough account of agreement across different varieties of Arabic. More precisely, they cover written Arabic as well as all dialects for which a description of agreement is available. Whenever possible, they rely on self-collected data and in some cases expand on previous studies, as is the case for example with the account of Najdi texts. Based on this survey, 6 major types of gender-agreement patterns are identified, which represents an important generalisation that is, to my knowledge, unprecedented in this field of studies. Moreover, an interesting result is also represented by the fact that in the varieties for which corpus data are available agreement with plural non-human controllers has a probabilistic nature, and is better definable in terms of synchronic variation patterns.

Chapters 3 (178-276), 4 (277-324) and 5 (325-376) tackle the description of agreement from a diachronic perspective. Chapter 3 presents first an overview of agreement-related phenomena within the Semitic family and in the Afroasiatic phylum. Most of the discussion concentrates on the presence of broken, or internal, plurals which appear to be one of the major factors driving the changes observed in Arabic. The authors in fact demonstrate the presence of ongoing change since the times of pre-Islamic poetry. The authors contend that the origin of F.SG agreement reside in the different semantic connotation that characterizes nouns that take broken plurals, which bear a semantic nuance of non-individuation. In the pre-Islamic period, broken plurals, where gender is not overtly marked, started spreading as an alternative strategy for plural marking, with respect to the use of M.PL and F.PL suffixes. In Bettega and D'Anna's interpretation, broken plurals were first associated as a strategy for plural marking in non-individuated nouns, and this is actually the domain in which F.SG agreement in the plural is supposed to have been first developed. At a later stage, this opposition based on individuation was then resemanticised in terms of a *human / non-human* opposition, which gives us the situation of Classical and Modern Standard Arabic. Crucially, an overview of Arabic traditional grammar reveals that this rule was formalised at a relatively later stage, in the works of Nasif Al-Yazigi, dating back to the 19th century. All this discussion is of paramount importance also for what concerns the interpretation of agreement in spoken dialects: the authors are able to demonstrate that F.SG

agreement must be regarded as a conservative feature, perhaps possibly favoured by contact with MSA, but to a lesser extent than what others have argued.

As should have emerged from this summary, one of the key points of this book is that, being informed on a great variety of sources, it provides a rich information on virtually any variety of Arabic as far as agreement is concerned. It presents in fact a wide-scoping research, in that the synchrony and diachrony of agreement in Classical Arabic, MSA and spoken dialects addressed. Moreover, the book benefits from insights from different complementary subfields of linguistics: on the one hand, the tradition of Arabic linguistics, on the other, multiple approaches within theoretical linguistics. Part of the analysis is specifically couched in the typological-functional paradigm, where notions such as *target* and *controller gender*, or the animacy hierarchy were first formulated. Moreover, considerable parts of the analysis adopt a quantitative corpus based methodology that, as said, is particularly useful to conceptualize agreement patterns in terms of language variation rather than as a categorical rule. A possible development in this respect would be to test the conclusions reached in this work with the use of inferential statistical models.

While the book globally locates at the intersection between Arabic linguistics and dialectology on the one hand, and theoretical linguistics on the other hand—and in fact provides a significant contribution in both fields—readers who are acquainted with Arabic linguistics or dialectology will still find themselves much more at ease than theoretical linguists. Key concepts in Arabic grammar, such as the definition itself of broken plurals, or *nisba* adjectives, are taken for granted to some extent, or, at least, a reader unfamiliar with salient features of Arabic grammar could want to know more, in order to fully benefit of the authors' discussion. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the book provides an important contribution to both Arabic and theoretical linguistics, as it offers and systematizes original discoveries on the rise and diffusion of F.SG in Arabic that improve not only our knowledge of this language but also of the functioning and diachronic evolution of agreement patterns in the world languages.

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Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych. 2022 [2023 for the open access e-book]. *The Cooing of the Dove and the Cawing of the Crow. Late ‘Abbāsīd Poetics in Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī’s Saqṭ al-Zand and Luzūm Mā Lā Yalzam*. (“Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures,” Volume 43). Leiden: Brill. 380 pages. Hardcover. € 126.14. ISBN: 978-90-04-49927-0 (print), 978-90-04-49928-7 (e-book).

The Cooing of the Dove is a beautiful, carefully designed and informed example of text criticism hallmarked by one of the leading experts in the domain of ‘Abbāsīd literature. The scope is deliberately narrow, as Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych chooses to focus on selected poems from the vast literary production of al-Ma‘arrī. The monograph is divided into two parts dedicated to al-Ma‘arrī’s major diwans, *Saqṭ al-Zand* and *Luzūm Mā Lā Yalzam (Al-Luzūmiyyāt)*, situated, so to speak, on the watershed of the ‘Abbāsīd period. They exemplify the transition from the High ‘Abbāsīd *qaṣīdah* to the post-classical aesthetics. Pinckney Stetkevych follows the individual evolution of the poet, passing from what she defines as his ‘poetics of engagement’ to ‘poetics of disengagement.’ In parallel, she proposes two approaches to the task of reading and interpretation: the collection of *qaṣīdahs* belonging to al-Ma‘arrī’s youth is the object of ‘performance/performative-based’ reading, while the diwan of his maturity appeals for a ‘Stylistics-based’ method putting in the limelight such aspects as rhyme and prosody.

I read Pinckney Stetkevych’s book from the perspective of a World Literature scholar, that is probably somehow apart from the book’s main target public, i.e. the specialized Arabists. Nonetheless, it corresponds to the author’s hope that her detailed and informative interpretations “will open the gate to further readings of these poems, other poems by al-Ma‘arrī, and Late ‘Abbāsīd Arabic poetry in general” (p. xii) in a broader academic community, including the adepts of comparative literature. Certainly, what attracts me to her topic and remains constantly present as a background of my appreciation of the book is the vast tradition of studying al-Ma‘arrī in colonial and postcolonial scholarship. The figure of the Syrian poet played an important role in the shaping of the European perception of World Literature. On the other hand, his legacy, opening the post-classical Age of Decline (*‘aṣr al-inḥiṭāt*), played an important role in the reevaluation of Arabic past by the thinkers and scholars of the Nahḍah. Those facts of intellectual history still contribute to the considerable visibility of al-Ma‘arrī’s poetry. It serves as one of major orientation points in the vast landscape of global literature and literary history. The state-of-the-art monograph is particularly useful in this context, bringing the errancy of the early comparativists back to the level of specialised close reading in a focused critical framework.

The value of the study lies not only in philological precision of description, but also in the conclusions on the innovative use that al-Ma‘arrī makes of the old *qaṣīdah* paradigm. Pinckney

Stetkevych persuasively shows that “it is precisely the ‘rigidity’—or ‘conventionality’—of the *qaṣīdah* tradition that allows for such subtle multivalency of expression and nuanced possibilities for interpretation” (p. 38). In this way, the book contributes substantially to the crucial research task in global literary studies that consists in tracing the outlook of the evolution of major non-Western literary genres, such as *qaṣīdah*. Its definition and description as “a ‘ritual’ of allegiance, a bond of mutual recognition and obligation” legitimizing the patron’s rule (p. 13) is extremely thought-provoking. Al-Ma‘arrī’s poetical creation and reflection on poetry is put in the context of a larger debate on *ṣan‘* (artistry, artifice) versus *ṭab‘* (innate talent). In a comparativist’s perspective, the explanations and translations of Arabic literary and rhetorical terms are particularly useful. Also the ample contextualisation of al-Ma‘arrī’s motifs such as the night journey in terms of literary antecedents, including a richness of textual quotations in Arabic and excellent English translation, is an advantage for the reader wishing to acquire a deeper perception of the literary tradition stretching from the pre-Islamic to Late ‘Abbāsīd and post-classic periods.

Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (973–1057), born in Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘mān, southwest of Aleppo and blinded at a young age by smallpox, used to be presented as a deeply pessimist ‘philosopher’ by the older interpretative tradition searching for ‘ideas’ inscribed in his literary texts and fostering a discussion of his allegedly ‘irreligious,’ ‘deist’ or even ‘atheist’ views. The ascetic poet who adopted the sobriquet of *rahīn al-mah̄basayn* (inmate of two prisons, i.e. his blindness and his house)—adding to these a third one, his body—is often described as an anti-natalist (defender of the view that the best for a child is not to be born at all, so his or her suffering would be spared). Pinckney Stetkevych refuses to participate in the debate concerning al-Ma‘arrī’s philosophical outlook, stressing her commitment to strictly literary reading, focusing on his value as a poet and the specific qualities of his poetic idiom, developing in the constant shadow of an ‘anxiety of influence’ and the sense of coming short of the noble legacy left by his predecessors, both the creators of the *badī‘* poetry of the ‘Abbāsīd Modernism and those belonging to the previous generation of poets that produced a figure of such a stature as al-Mutanabbī. *Saqṭ al-Zand* gathers the worldly poetry of a young, ambitious man keen to find his place in the literary high-life of Baghdad, who nonetheless faces a bitter failure and returns to his seclusion in the provincial hometown. *Al-Luzūmiyyāt*, on the other hand, reject the worldly entanglements of the *qaṣīdah* in search for a personal expression of the secluded poet, that goes from pious to ironically irreverent. In his quest for literary mastery, al-Ma‘arrī works on the rhyme pattern of the *qaṣīdah*, adding increasingly complex strictures: complicating the double rhyme with the vowel endings of all the letters of the alphabet. In this way, he tries to outdo his predecessors in formal complexity to produce not only an unrivalled

textual masterpiece but also a novel genre, the *luzūmiyyah*, characterised by the multiplication of abstract, formal constraints.

Pinckney Stetkevych's approach focuses on the double treatment of literary conventions: firstly, the compliance with the rules and expectations of the court genre in the diwan composed by the poet in his youth, and secondly, the formal experimentation of maturity. The young poet entangled in social obligations and such challenges as he could find at the court (rather than in the lasting poetic tradition) produces a 'performative' poem that is to shine as a demonstration of mastery in the immediate time and circumstances of its creation. To interpret such a kind of literature, Pinckney Stetkevych proposes a unified theoretical approach of her own making, that she calls the 'poetics of engagement.' She relies on the earlier work concerning ritual, the performance-performative approaches, as well as Bourdieu's conceptualisation of symbolic capital. She also builds upon the classical T.S. Eliot's reflection concerning the articulation of tradition and 'individual talent,' persuasively contrasting this approach with the Arabic reflection on the factors of inborn inclination and learned craft in poetry. In this way, the author analyses the treatment of nocturnal passages (*qīṭa'*) that are al-Ma'arrī's original development of the traditional motifs of the *nasīb* (the opening section of the *qaṣīdah*) dealing with the lyrical motif of night journey leading to the final praise (*madḥ*) of a notable figure. The further analysis deals with yet another traditional form, the *ʾikhwāniyyah* (fraternal poem), configured as a 'response,' either to a praise of the poet formulated by a fellow or to a mistreatment of a friend. Finally, it takes the form of a self-defense, as the poet answers to alleged insults and strives to restore his dignity and worth.

Chapter 3 deals with "Elegy as Performance," exploring the poetic expression of mourning. The analysis focuses on two contrasting poems. The first one, written on the occasion of the death of a young, little-known Ḥanafī *faqīh*, exploits the traditional motive, the cooing of a dove as a figuration of memory and mourning recollection. On the other hand, the death of the Shi'ī notable al-Sharīf al-Ṭāhir, whose two sons were reputed poets, serves as a display of the 'poetic' capital of al-Ma'arrī before the elite of Baghdad. In this elegy, al-Ma'arrī chose to use a highly surprising, unsettling, and thus resounding theme: that of the cawing crow that becomes a novel figuration of a mourner. Finally, in the last chapter of this part of the book, the author deals with the performance of nostalgia and yearning in two opposed settings: firstly, the yearning of the aspiring poet for his native Syria and then, after the failure of his ambitions and the rejection suffered in the capital, his yearning for Baghdad.

The second part of the monograph, focused on *Al-Luzūmiyyāt*, describes al-Ma'arrī's quest for technical virtuosity. This solitary work paradoxically conserves the performance dimension, yet as the poet himself states it, the compulsion is no longer derived from social servitudes, but is self-imposed,

as an internally motivated quest for perfection. The ‘poetics of disengagement’ that the poet formulates in his seclusion implies a radically abstract program of poetic constraints, based on double rhyme and alphabetical order. The choice of the word imposed by the rhyme brings about syntactic and morphological consequences that require a careful appreciation in the micro-scale of a single verse and the poem as a whole. In parallel, the use of the mythical figures from the Arabic tradition, rather than names of live political or social protagonists, anchors this kind of literature in the domain of mythopoesis. Chapter 5 brings a particularly striking analysis of a brilliant poem using the term ‘Ṭasmū’ as the rhyme word. This polysemic term, that can be translated both as ‘spontaneous generation’ and ‘constriction’ is further referred to the extinct Arab tribe Ṭasm, remembered on the occasion of an overheard narration about excavations in Damascus. What brings those heterogenous elements into a whole is the traditional topos of *ubi sunt*, characteristic of the *nasīb*. The reading of the word *ṭasm* not as the name of a tribe, but as a synonym of ‘erasure, obliteration,’ built up into *ṭasmū* (‘constriction’), moves the poem from tribal lore into the abstract domain of lexical exploration and experimentation. This and other similar examples show how the play of end-vowels (such as case-ending) serves the construction of the multiple layers of textual meanings. Finally, Chapter 6 explores the constraint (*luzūm*) of the double -b-d rhyme that serves as a formal reason to associate three proper names: those of the poets Labīd ibn Rabī‘ah and ‘Abīd ibn al-Abraṣ, as well as Lubad, one of the seven vultures of the pre-Islamic sage Luqmān. The poetic legacy and the legends evoked in this way lead to moral recollections.

In the Conclusion, the author delves in the reflection of al-Ma‘arrī concerning his both diwans and the profound reasons why he chose to treat them as antithetical. The poet’s own appreciation of *Al-Luzūmiyyāt* as the crowning achievement and his personal challenge to the fellow poets of all ages contrasts with the Arab-Islamic reception that traditionally praises *Saqṭ al-Zand* much higher. This appreciation remained very powerful throughout the Arabic literary history, even if it is largely due to the influential opinion of a single person, the Andalusian scholar Ibn Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (d. 1127). This contradiction permits to formulate an interesting question concerning the repercussions of the programmatic work. Paradoxically, al-Baṭalyawsī himself projected retroactively the form of an alphabetically ordered collection proposed in *Al-Luzūmiyyāt*. He edited a compilation of *Saqṭ al-Zand* with some interspersed poems from the later diwan to complete the pattern of the alphabetic list of rhyme letters, so the postulate of formalism utterly prevailed.

Overall, the focus proposed by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych shows that the scholarship concerning al-Ma‘arrī is far from exhaustion, even if the topic has already an extremely abundant bibliography. With great clarity and persuasiveness, the author puts in the limelight the peculiarity of

late ‘Abbāsīd aesthetics and facilitates the reader’s access to the intricacies of the eleventh-century quest for the essence of poetry. Her approach strikes the reader of global literary studies as fresh and innovative, suggesting new paths of analysis not just in Arabic poetry, but also in the vast field of non-Western comparative literature.

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Mehrdad Vasheghani Farahani. 2022. *Writer-reader Interaction by Meta Discourse Features: English-Persian Translation in Legal and Political Texts*. Berlin: Frank & Timme. 206 pages. ISBN: 9783732908851, € 39.80 (Paperback), ISBN: 9783732990979, € 50 (eBook)¹

Writer-reader Interaction by Meta Discourse Features English-Persian Translation in Legal and Political Texts by Mehrdad Vasheghani Farahani is a book of research results that compares the translation of the metadiscourse features of legal and political texts in English and Persian. Legal and political texts that have been translated from English to Persian are compared using the linguistic corpus. (Farahani 2022: 13), focuses this book into three main discussions, namely:

1. The description of metadiscourse and interactional features used and shared throughout the English language corpus;
2. the description of the metadiscourse both interactional and interactive used and shared in the Persian translation; and
3. a description of the differences and changes in models of interaction between writers and readers of legal and political texts translation from English into Persian.

Farahani (: 20) emphasizes the urgency of this book that English is an international language that is in favor of the author. This assertion is supported by several sources cited by Farahani (: 21). For example, the opinion of (Hinds 1983, 1987, 1990) suggests that the writer's responsibility is to make the reader easier in understanding the information. In other words, writers are required to facilitate the flow of information and understanding of texts (Hinds 1990; Maddalena and Belmonte 2011). According to (Mur-Dueñas 2011) English is assessed as a writer-oriented language. The writer is responsible for making the text and its discourse as understandable as possible. Writer-oriented language usually uses linguistic characteristics to openly express its views and attitudes in the text by applying comments, evaluations, and questions. Thus, by means of Farahani (2022) that legal and political texts that use English and then translate into Persian have the potential to cause readers' misunderstanding because there are differences in meta-discourse features based on the linguistic corpus of English and Persian. Therefore, the writer also considers that to prevent misunderstandings in meaning, it is important to

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state clearly, both quantitatively and qualitatively, a description of the meta-discourse features of legal and political texts translation in English and Persian.

The meta-discourse features concept is emphasized in this book as well as guiding to open up readers' understanding of the meta-discourse concept. In this case, Farahani (: 18), refers to several opinions to clarify the intended meta-discourse concept. According to (Boggel 2009), meta-discourse provides a valuable tool and strategy because it helps clarify the textual organization to highlight the authorial presence in the text and to interact with various readers or audiences. Hyland and Tse (2004) and Grosman (2011) argue that at the second level of meaning, the writer-reader or meta-discourse level, writers and speakers interact with the intended readers and audience. The facts show that the interaction between the reader and the writer is deliberately constructed. The writer builds interactions with readers who explicitly guide readers through the organization and structure of the text, comment on the process of the writing itself, or express their beliefs and opinions about the content (Herriman 2014: 1). In other words, at this level, the writer does not expand the content level of meaning; instead, he goes beyond the subject content and tries to define readers' expectations (Boggel 2009). The concept of meta-discourse characteristics constructs and links these two levels of meaning (Hyland 2005). Further, Williams' opinion (2010) shows that meta discourse refers to the way the writer cites the text, both writer and reader must understand the content of the propositions of the text to help the reader understand the text. The writer persuades the reader to accept their arguments. In other words, the primary purpose of meta-discourse features is to guide and assist potential readers or listeners in strategies for interpreting content propositions (Flowerdew 2015). To further elaborate on the notion of meta-discourse (Hyland 2017, 1998) argues that meta-discourse is a discourse about discourse and refers to the author's linguistics embodied in the text to classify or organize discourse and the expressive implications of what is said. In other words, meta-discourse features are rhetorical devices used by the writer to represent their presence in the text and guide the reader in communicating.

Structurally, this book is arranged systematically based on research structure. It begins with an abstract (: 13), then a description of the background and objectives (: 17-22), and a literature review—including previous related research literature—to strengthen related concepts and arguments (: 23-57), methodology (: 61-75), data analysis (: 77-129), discussion, and conclusions (: 131-179). Sequentially, the abstract describes the objectives, the methods, the results, and the conclusions of the research. The abstract is written like an executive summary. In the first part, this book affirms the urgency of research, problem statements (: 20-21), and research questions (: 22). Part two explains scientifically the concepts and definitions of meta-discourse features (: 23), the importance of discussing meta-

discourse (: 45), the rhetorical issues of meta-discourse (: 47), and the role of meta-discourse in the relationship between readers and writers (: 48), and is then supported by previous meta-discourse research (: 50). Part three of this book includes methodological descriptions of research design (: 61), research instruments (: 62), research procedures (including research corpus and data collecting) (: 63), and general conclusions about research methods (: 75).

The data analysis strategy is presented in section four. This section is methodical since it describes the components of the data that were analyzed by an analytical instrument used. This section begins with an overview of the data analysis strategy (: 77). Then, the classifications of meta-discourse features are explored in detail. The discussion then shifts to the Persian monolingual corpus, which is divided into interactive and interactional categories Persian corpus (: 78). Furthermore, it divides the English meta-discourse corpus into the same two categories as Persian: interactive and interactional (: 87-93). Then, it explains the meta-discourse properties of the translation corpus in English and Persian in detail (: 94). This section also includes samples of law and political texts from the original corpus of English as the source language, as well as the outcomes of their translation into Persian, to aid in a more comprehensive examination (: 107). A comparison of translations from the two language corpora; English and Persian is then shown in some of the original English and Persian features, as well as their respective translations containing law and political literature. This description makes it easier for readers and users of the book to assess the data analysis approach and findings. Furthermore, this book includes a data analysis summary (: 129).

This book covers the data analysis result in connection with the responses to the three research questions that form the basis of the discussion in section five. This section begins with a general description of the answers to the questions posed by the research (: 132-133). In the next section, it is explained in detail and systematically about the responses to the research questions. Farahani provides an answer to the first research question (: 133) by describing how interactional and interactive meta-discourse features are used and distributed in the English corpus. According to the research, the monolingual Persian corpus exhibits fewer word repetitions. The Persian translation corpus is larger than the English corpus. A higher ratio indicates that the translation into Persian contains fewer repetitions (fewer meta-discourse features in this study). This relates to the monolingual Persian corpus's token-type ratio. The responses to the second research question are then given, stating that the English corpus, Persian translation corpus, and the Persian monolingual corpus are all orientated toward the interactive category (: 141). The interactive aspect of the text may lend credence to the notion that native writers from both English and Persian paid more time and care in crafting texts to provide a more comprehensible message to the reader. In summary, the more frequently the

interactive meta-discourse feature is used, the writer recognizes that he is engaging in the message received by the reader and meeting the reader's demands persuasively.

The interactive meta-discourse feature focuses on how the author characterizes the text's structure based on an assessment of the reader's potential knowledge and understanding. According to (Hyland 1998), this assertion is correct. This means that the authors in the corpus, both the English corpus and the Persian monolingual corpus, pay close attention to editing and molding their texts to fulfill the needs of the readers. Persian has less interactive and interactional meta-discourse qualities, hence translators pay less attention to structuring information propositionally. A variety of interactive meta-discourse aspects suggest that the translator is less concerned with the quality of the translation or the persuasive message in Persian while translating from English to Persian on the subject of legal and political texts. The description that the third research question is answered by combining the information provided in the first and the second research questions (p. 142). Overall, the English corpus with meta-discourse traits appears to be more interactive than interactional. When compared to the monolingual Persian corpus, it is possible to establish that there is a relationship between the two. In other words, the interactive meta-discourse traits in the Persian monolingual reference corpus outnumber the interactional ones.

Based on the description, this book is intended for students or professional translators of legal and political texts in English and Persian. This book is scientific and academic, so it also fits the needs of researchers and university teachers in translating English and Persian legal and political texts. There are several advantages of this book. First, this book is arranged systematically and methodologically to meet the rules of a scientific book. Second, this book presents examples of translations of legal and political texts into two languages; English and Persian. Third, this book presents verified data because it presents both quantitative and qualitative data. Fourth, the research questions are also the study's focus, so the discussion only delves into some aspects of translation. The focus of this discussion is strengthened by measurable research instruments that can be analyzed systematically. Fifth, an explanation of the research results can be understood more quickly because it is supported by data in tabular form and meta-discourse comparisons of the two languages, quickly verifiable English and Persian. Sixth, based on concepts and ideas, this book can be accounted for because it is supported by relevant and up-to-date literature so that the concepts and definitions discussed are more easily understood and updated.

Therefore, this book contributes significantly to research ideas on meta-discourse in various languages, in English and Persian. Books that discuss meta-discourse like this one is rare. Likewise, the meta-discourse concept developed in this book can inspire other researchers to discuss how a

translated text does not experience a difference in meaning from the source language to the target language. The apparent difference in meaning can cause misunderstanding for the reader. Of course, this misunderstanding significantly impacts the practice of using translated texts, primarily legal and political texts, which are of public concern in various countries. Errors in the meaning of translations of legal and political texts have the potential to cause conflict. Discussion of connectivity between two languages, English and Persian, especially regarding metadiscourse in the translation of legal and political texts, also contributes, not only to language but to the potential for cooperation between the European region and the Western World as users of English, on the one hand, and several countries such as Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan, which are Persian-speaking countries, on the other hand. Apart from that, this book also contributes to the cultural discourse of English- and Persian-speaking countries because meta-discourse in translation makes it easier for readers to understand the ideas put forward by the author from the source language, both English and Persian vice versa. The exchange of information through quality translation is believed to support mutual respect, tolerance, and diversity among people in English- and Persian-speaking countries.

Despite the many advantages and contributions that this book has, there are still some shortcomings that are important to note. So, that similar books can be more easily understood and support learning motivation for the international community. One of this book's weaknesses is that it would need to be more textual, because it is difficult for learners of English and Persian translations to accept it in a broader context. In addition, this book focuses too much on legal and political texts, making it difficult to understand English and Persian texts from other disciplines such as; literature, economics, culture, astronomy, chemistry, et cetera. Therefore, a book is needed that discusses, in a straightforward and relaxed manner, the translation of texts related to meta-discourse features from other fields. For example, this book should emphasize at the outset the reasons for the importance of translating legal and political texts into English and Persian and vice versa. The reason for studying English is strong enough because it has been emphasized that English is an international language. On the other hand, more information about the importance of learning the language and translating Persian texts must be provided. If only Farahani had given an earlier explanation of the urgency of translation from and into Persian from other sides, for example, the legal and political context from the aspect of bilateral relations and business opportunities between citizens, this book would be even more interesting because it would open the reader's horizons to understand more seriously the importance of translating legal and political texts from and into Persian.

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Kathryn Hansen (editor and translator), Somnath Gupt (author). 2023. *The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development*. New Delhi: Seagull Books. xx + 255 pages, 31 illustrations. Paperback. \$ 24.50/£ 19.99/Rs. 599. ISBN: 978-1803092003. Available at: www.seagullbooks.org

In this second edition of the translation of the classic study on Parsi theatre by Somnath Gupt, professor Kathryn Hansen casts new light on the history of Parsi theatre by enhancing the translated and annotated edition of 2005, already a fundamental source on the scholarly treatment of the topic. A cornerstone of South Asian culture, the substratum of popular Indian cinema, and a precursor of the modern Bollywood film industry, Parsi theatre has long been neglected and misunderstood. The impact of Parsi theatrical tradition on Indian cultural heritage is paramount. Not only did Parsi theatre deeply inform modern drama, but it also impacted Indian popular cinema, moulding the talkies. Its influences crossed the borders of India and reached several areas of Southeast Asia where new dramatic styles saw the light thanks to Parsi touring troupes. Despite the developments brought about by Parsi theatre and its contribution to different cultural domains, this field of study struggled to achieve recognition and started to be acknowledged only in the 1990s when scholars such as Anuradha Kapur, David Willmer, and Kathryn Hansen herself undertook critical research on the subject.

In the foreword to the first edition included in the present volume, Hansen outlines the main features and developments of Parsi theatre. Originating in Bombay in 1853, it evolved into different travelling companies which toured across princely and colonial India, also becoming popular in Southeast Asia. Plays were mainly in the local languages, prevalently Gujarati, Urdu, and Hindi; the stage used to be in the European-style proscenium. In evaluating the significance of Parsi theatre within Indian culture, Hansen emphasises the need for reliable scholarly resources in English that led to the translation of Somnath Gupt's work *Parsi Thiyetar: Udbhav aur Vikas* published in 1981 by Lokbharati Prakashan (Allahabad). In the translator's words, this book

is the best single reference for the early period of Parsi theatre history. It covers the antecedent phase of English theatre in eighteenth-century Bombay and extends through the end of the nineteenth century (p. xiv)

An English edition of the above-mentioned book in Hindi became even more necessary when considering that Gupt's work is outstanding in its references to primary and secondary literature consisting of heterogeneous materials in several Indian languages and English including:

advertisements, reviews, English newspapers, The Bombay Times, The Bombay Courier and Telegraph, and the Gujarati newspapers, Rast Goftar and Kaiser-e Hind; early autobiographies and memoirs, like Jahangir Khambata's work, Maro Nataki Anubhav (My Experiences in the Theatre); and compendia of theatre lore published in Gujarati and Urdu, such as those by Dhanjibhai Patel (Parsi Natak Takhtani Tavarikh or the History of the Parsi Theatre) and Abdul Alim Nami (Urdu Thetar) (p. xv)

Furthermore, Gupt's work appears free from linguistic, ethnic, or religious bias and acknowledges different cultural contributions to the art of Parsi theatre. However, Hansen, aware of the limits, lacunae, and discrepancies of Gupt's book, rendered it more accessible and consistent by supplying missing information through useful editorial additions, providing some necessary corrections, removing redundancies, and improving a complex and prolix descriptive style.

The Parsi Theatre has nine chapters and one appendix and it is enriched by several illustrations (thirty-one), twice the number of photographs included in the original text, without attribution.

Chapter 1 closely looks at the Bombay Theatre, the antecedent of the Parsi theatre, dating back to 1776. Different documents are quoted concerning the Bombay Theatre the history of which is retraced in three main phases up until the establishment of the Grant Road Theatre in 1846. Its features, building, scenery, lighting, management, and audience are described in the following section along with details concerning ticket prices and audience tastes.

Chapter 2 retraces the origins of Parsi theatre. From 1853, following an increase in the number of Parsi and Hindu spectators, plays began to be performed in local languages (p. 28).

Chapter 3 explores the development of Parsi theatre inextricably linked to theatrical companies, both amateur and professional. The shortage of playhouses in Bombay led, on the one hand, to the establishment of itinerant theatre and, on the other, to the construction of new playhouses. A list accompanied by a short description is provided in a dedicated section. Another section presenting the most significant Parsi playwrights has been chronologically rearranged by the editor and followed by an alphabetically ordered list of minor dramatists.

The most important Urdu dramatists of Parsi theatre are listed in Chapter 4 along with their concise biography and description of the plot of their principal plays. Mahmud Miyan Banarasi 'Raunaq' (1825-1886) wrote famous works like *Benazir Badremunir*, *Jafa-e Sitamgar*, and *Zulm-e Azam*. Husaini Miyan 'Zarif', wrote poetry and adapted plays of other playwrights, turning old popular plays into new works. Munshi Vinayak Prasaad Talib, the author of several plays, such as *Sangin Bakavali*, *Ali Baba aur Chalis Chor*, *Nigah-e Ghaflat*, and *Ramlila*, was criticised by Gupt for the use of Urdu dialogues between the characters of Ram and Sita. Narayan Prasad Betab (1872-1945) penned the successful play *Mahabharat* which was performed in Delhi in 1913 and marked the end of the prevalence of Urdu in

Parsi plays. Agha Mohammad Shah ‘Kashmiri’ (1879-1935), well-versed in Hindi and Urdu and a profound connoisseur of both Hindu and Muslim mythology and tales, is regarded by Gupt as the greatest Parsi playwright; he also founded the Indian Shakespeare Theatrical Company. Mahdi Hasan ‘Ahsan’ was another prolific Urdu playwright who composed the Urdu dramas *Bhul Bhulaiyan*, *Dilfarosh*, *Khun-e Nahqon*, and *Bazm-e Fani* based on the plots of Shakespeare’s works, respectively *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Other major playwrights mentioned include Abbas Ali ‘Abbas’ (1889-1932), Mohammad Ibrahim Ambalavi ‘Mahshar’, Joseph David, Pandit Radheshyam Kathavachak, and Muhiuddin Nazan.

Chapter 5 offers a broad view of Parsi theatrical companies and their history, whereas Chapter 6 considers Parsi actors; a separate section is devoted to early actresses of Parsi theatre, initially strongly opposed and contested by the public.

Other elements of Parsi theatre are the subject of Chapter 7 which gives insights into the audience, the relationship between the playwright and the spectators, the performance space, stage scenery, costumes, and music. Initially composed mainly by Parsis and Iranis, Urdu dramas came to be more popular than Gujarati plays from 1870 leading to an expansion of the audience that came to encompass Hindus and Muslims, as well as British (p. 199). Gradually different classes of spectators were included, especially middle and lower working classes. In the early phases, Parsi theatre revolved around historical and religious dramas until satirical plays and adaptations of English dramas started to be staged. Patriotic and Hindu devotional plays were performed as well. Given the heterogeneity of the spectators and repertoire, Gupt defined Parsi theatre as ‘democratic’ (p. 202).

Chapter 8 explores the impact that the Urdu play *Indar Sabha* written by Saiyad Agha Hasan with the pseudonym ‘Amant’ had on theatre. The play, a *rahas* (‘circle-dance’) was translated not only into both Indian and non-Indian languages. Its influence extended to the composition of several *sabhas* and *majlis*, spectacular musical dramas with divine characters as their protagonists.

The last chapter evaluates the impact of the Parsi theatrical companies on Indian culture. Early Hindi cinema was deeply informed by several elements of Parsi theatre, from the extensive use of Urdu to music, and dance sequences. Films such as *Alam Ara* (1931)—considered the first Indian ‘talkie’—and *Khun-e Nahaq* (1935) are adaptations of Parsi plays.

The book concludes with an appendix on *The Beginnings of Hindi Drama in Bombay and Maharashtra*. This last section dwells on Hindu theatre and explains how, around 1846, dramas in Indian languages, especially Marathi, began to be staged in Bombay, as suggested by descriptions found in the newspapers of the time (*The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*). Gupt in the last section of the

volume stresses that the first play to be performed in Hindi in Bombay, in 1853, was *Raja Gopichand and Jalandhar* by Vishnudas Bhave.

Kathryn Hansen filled the gaps of incomplete information left by Gupt by consulting a large number of records of the British Museum and India Office Library where old printed plays are kept. The editor/translator's experience and deep knowledge of the subject have resulted in a comparative analysis of Gupt's text with previously published and unpublished material not quoted by the author. Hansen has aptly identified and acknowledged original sources and the reliance upon other authors in exhaustive and informative footnotes. Overall, she has improved, simplified, and updated the original work by Gupt by placing it within a consistent explicative framework.

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Esterino Adami. 2022. *Language, Style and Variation in Contemporary Indian English Literary Texts*. New York, NY and Abingdon: Routledge. 152 pages. Hardback: £104.00. ISBN 9781032211152. Ebook: £31.19. ISBN 9781003266792.

The book by Esterino Adami delves into the intricate tapestry of Postcolonial stylistics within Asian literature. This ground-breaking study examines the complex relationships between language, style, and variance in literary works written in Indian English, providing a comprehensive analysis beyond merely examining words on a page. Adami's insightful study sheds light on the evolving linguistic landscape of contemporary Indian literature, offering readers a profound understanding of the cultural and linguistic dynamics at play.

This book holds particular significance within the academic discourse, converges on the common ground of Asian literary exploration, and emphasizes the pivotal role of language and style in shaping narratives postcolonial. Adami's meticulous research aligns seamlessly with the scholarly pursuits of the journal, creating a symbiotic relationship that advances the collective understanding of English literary texts in the Asian context.

As readers embark on this literary journey, they will uncover not only the rich tapestry of Indian English literature but also the interconnectedness of Adami's work with the broader academic dialogue. These contributions constitute a significant milestone in exploring Postcolonial stylistics, offering a valuable resource for scholars and enthusiasts.

Chapter 1 of the book (:1-16) explores language style and variation in Indian English literary texts, focusing on their unique characteristics and linguistic nuances. The book's objectives emphasize the importance of understanding language style and variation in Indian English literature, with Case Studies providing a deeper understanding of selected literary works or authors.

Chapter 2 (:17-32) discusses Indian English and its linguistic and stylistic variation, tracing its evolution and unique features. It delves into key linguistic concepts and contemporary Indian English authors, emphasizing the relationship between literary expression and linguistic variation. The chapter uses examples and illustrations to illustrate these variations, underscoring the importance of studying linguistic and stylistic variations for a comprehensive understanding of Indian English literature.

Chapter 3 (: 33-65) focuses on the concept of otherness, the central feature of the vast field of postcolonial literature, which reflects forms of cultural diversity as well as in many other disciplines, and discusses the writer's analysis of Jeet Thayil's novels, *The Chocolate Saints Book* (2017) and *Narcopolis* (2012). The writer has attempted to analyze how Thayil uses different linguistic tools to depict different

kinds of Otherness in “*Narcopolis*”, which directs his treatment from the other side in a double perspective. The first is a different Bombay/Mumbai theme image that revolves around the drug world, and the second is a strategic use of language manipulation to challenge, alter, or reverse the popular perceptions, views, and ideologies that are frequently attached to many aspects of the drug theme. Furthermore, in recently developed Indian English writing, the author highlights the heteroglossia discourse of Thayil's second novel, *The Book of Chocolate Saints*, which celebrates difference and identity. The study reveals that narrative structure makes extensive use of two textual strategies: phrases, which are appealing devices that challenge the reader or character and raise controversial issues while also supporting the general development of diegetic text, and lists, which are cognitive components of meaning construction. Ultimately, the writer concludes that Thayil's choice of language suggests otherness as a means of expression and identity.

In Chapter 4 (: 66-96), the writer delves into two modern Indian English novels, *Burnt Sugar* by Avni Doshi and *Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line* by Deepa Anappara, examining the language and stylistic representation of lament. Lament, a timeless human expression, is explored in the context of cultural and historical narratives. Avni and Deepa drew inspiration from the Raj era to give voice to marginalized subjects. The persisting challenges in modern India, such as caste inequalities and global exploitation, evoke lamentation, particularly in the daughter-mother relationship. Stylistic representations of lament vary, prompting a cognitive exploration of linguistic forms and their impact on readers. This chapter serves as a cultural testimony, highlighting the enduring social questions in contemporary India through the lens of literary expression.

Deepa Anappara, a former journalist born in Palakkad, Kerala, addresses the pressing issue of missing children in India through her novel. Drawing on her investigative background, Anappara illuminates the harsh realities faced by vulnerable street children, exploring themes of poverty, abuse, and resilience. The narrative employs a polyphonic style, blending fantasy and reality, with child narrators navigating complex social issues. Anappara strategically uses stylistic elements, including references to djinns, to engage readers and prompt reflection on power dynamics and societal challenges. Through her rich and nuanced storytelling, Anappara sheds light on the marginalized voices of Indian youth.

Avni Doshi, an Indian author residing abroad, explores intimate lament in her novel *Burnt Sugar*. The narrative delves into complex family dynamics, particularly the strained mother-daughter relationship. Despite its non-autobiographical nature, the novel received global acclaim for Doshi's skilled prose and profound exploration of end-of-life care. The story revolves around memory's ambiguous role in shaping family history and identities, skillfully navigating Alzheimer's effects. Doshi

employs chromatic symbolism, using the color white to convey multifaceted meanings. Her literary project provocatively unfolds bitter emotions, offering a poignant exploration of memory as a container for relationships and the profound impact of its emptiness.

The relationship between the senses in language and fiction is covered in the fifth Chapter (: 97-129). It includes a cognitive linguistic approach emphasizing how language reflects the relationship between the mind and body and how senses are represented in fiction. The writer suggests reading Megha Majumdar's *A Burning* (2020) and the novella *Night of Happiness* by Tabish Khair (2018), whose themes are discrimination and crime. Additionally, the sensory experiences that Tabish Khair and Megha Majumdar have in their stories (novels) are the main focus of this chapter. Tabish and Megha effectively address the idea of trauma while avoiding stereotypes related to the Indian cultural setting. They also examine how these concepts extended beyond the individual to the larger community under the stories' covers. The writer selected the novels for this chapter's analysis because they have comparable histories, especially regarding discrimination. Megha and Tabish use metaphorical, pragmatic, and cultural levels to produce emotional involvement in their stories and convey language sense. In the end, the language style that Tabish and Megha applied based on the writer's analysis is conversational and keeps adding an Indian touch to stories meant for consumption by both Indian and foreign readers.

Language, Style, and Variation in Contemporary Indian English Literary Texts by Esterino Adami is a valuable resource for both linguistic practitioners and educators, as well as students of literature seeking a nuanced understanding of postcolonial concepts within the realm of novels. This book provides insightful methodologies and perspectives for linguistic practitioners and educators to enhance their approach to language and style analysis in literary texts.

Furthermore, the book's uniqueness lies in its exploration of English as a Second Language (ESL) in India by Pandey and Jha (2021), a distinctive position that elevates the relevance of Adami's insights. As India holds the third-highest number of English language publishers globally, the book's examination of literary texts within this context becomes pertinent and globally significant after the UK and the US. While the book admirably addresses various critical issues, such as discrimination, it is essential to note the recommendation for a more inclusive gender perspective. Each chapter focuses on two works with the same gender perspective that should be expanded to include diverse gender viewpoints, broadening the scope of analysis.

Overall, constructive criticism also suggests the incorporation of a standardized rubric for reviewing literary texts, outlining specific criteria for evaluation. This approach would enable readers to discern strengths and areas for improvement, providing a valuable reference for aspiring writers

seeking to refine their craft. Additionally, a more transparent and objective method for selecting the object of the research, beyond mere achievement, would enhance the book's credibility.

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Ali Fuad Selvi and Bedrettin Yazan. 2021. *Language Teacher Education for Global Englishes: A Practical Resource Book*. London: Routledge. 316 pages. ISBN 9781003082712 (eBook). £28.79 (eBook), £104.00 (Hardback).

This book showcases theory and practical applications for teacher educators in diverse contexts by bringing a Global Englishes (GE) perspective to their pre- and in-service education courses. The Global Englishes paradigm has recently served as a favorable response to the complexities of identity, interaction, use, and instruction surrounding English. It is important to improve the knowledge base of teachers—their specific knowledge, skills, competencies, and commitment—to deal with the changing needs of English Language Teaching. The chapters in this book provide an accessible theoretical orientation to various aspects of the Global Englishes paradigm, from teaching materials to language assessment. Also, these chapters are complemented by a range of practical applications that foster teacher development. This book is recommended as a viable professional development resource for teacher educators looking for activities and resources to prepare teachers for various teaching contexts, realities, abilities, and constraints. Since “reflection” is a key concept throughout this book, we briefly explain each crucial section.

Part 1 (: 9-72) is entitled “The Global Spread of English and Global Englishes, Language Teaching Pedagogy”. This section consists of 10 chapters containing discussions of current issues: the increasing calls for pedagogical change and the discussion around the idealized domination of native speakers in ELT. Research in chapters 1.1-1.6 (: 11-49) in Global Englishes highlights the changing needs of English language learners and the irrelevance of “traditional” curricula for many students, including measures of proficiency and competence regarding outdated, fixed, monolithic, idealized norms of native speakers. At the heart of this discussion is the need for curricula to reflect the current usage of language and to promote a more flexible view of language that repositions the target audience, fosters language creativity, and learning institutions, recognizes that multilingualism is the norm, and ultimately liberates “native speakers” from the ideal “native speaker” norm. This can be realized among Language teachers through audio and video media to listen and speak together, both inside and outside the classroom, with an effort to cultivate students' awareness of the Global Englishes (GE) paradigm and enable them to reflect on their belief, and current normative practices in ELT pedagogy and their own beliefs and practices as users and potential teachers of English (Dellar and Walkley 2012).

Chapter 1.7-1.9 (: 55-66) discusses the formative assessment activities in a teacher education course called “English in the Pacific.” By using the Moodle-based discussion forums, forums are

designed to promote reflection on five main themes: first, English is not linguistically superior to any other language; second, it is neither pure nor unchanging; third, it acquired power and prestige through phenomena such as colonialism and globalization; fourth, “Standard English” is an important (albeit disputed) notion and learners do need access to whichever variety brings prestige; and fifth, while there is no single “Standard English,” this does not mean that anything should be. Reflection from the field suggests that the activity allows teachers to reflect on their prior beliefs and insecurities about the nature of English while reviewing their classmates’ reflections. This activity is perfect for the Outer Circle context and easily adapted to the Expanding Circle context.

Furthermore, chapter 1.10 (: 67-72) explains the concerns of implementing innovative Global English-oriented pedagogical actions in teacher education programs, the authors introduce an activity that involves discussion with teacher educators about evaluating teacher attitudes. This activity uses the Global Englishes Orientation Questionnaire (GEO-Q), recently developed by the author, concerning the Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) model, as an example of an evaluation tool. This activity helps teacher educators to feel more confident and better prepared to complete Global English-conscious teacher education, providing opportunities to become teacher-researchers. Thus, this activity can be carried out in conjunction with several other Global English awareness-raising activities. This activity can be utilized not only with teacher educators but also with teacher candidates and practicing teachers.

Part 2 (: 73-132) is entitled “Language Teaching Methods and Instructional Materials in Global Englishes”. This part has 9 chapters focusing on speakers of English as a Second and Foreign Language (ESL/EFL). Chapter 2.1-2.4 (: 75-99) shows heterogeneity in educational background and purpose of using English. As part of a teacher’s formal education, they also receive English teaching materials that exhibit diversity. Textbooks published by global and/or local publishers can show variation in many aspects. Afterward, they share a practical assignment integrating Global Englishes into a pre-service EFL teacher education course to acquaint senior teachers with published materials used worldwide to teach any English in the teacher’s local context. In this assignment, a group of prospective teachers was given the task to analyze the language, topics, cultural aspects, and methodologies in English textbooks for teaching English in various parts of the world. This task aims to increase teacher-student awareness of material from different countries and cultures, develop their understanding of the differences between Anglo-American and local textbooks, and encourage reflection on these experiences.

Meanwhile, chapters 2.5-2.9 (: 100-132) offer educators several teaching activities on the theme “World English in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED)”. These activities show teachers how to

effectively engage with OED World English content in their teaching practice. The proposed teaching activity aims to increase awareness and understanding of the plurality of the English language. This activity includes some overviews of the function of the OED, such as exploring the etymology of English words derived from other languages and new and old entries from Asian and European languages, along with the pronunciation of these words. Through this activity, English educators will gain awareness of how English words of Asian origin were borrowed or created, how they developed, their usage, and their significance in the particular historical and cultural experiences of the people who use them. The authors hope to provide meaningful opportunities for English language teaching (ELT) educators to recognize the plurality of the English language and to accept emerging global diversity as valid as traditionally recognized diversity.

Part 3 (: 133-196) consists of 8 chapters (chapters 3.1-3.8: 135-196), the problem described is about “Transculturality and Identity in Global Englishes.” The concepts of culture and cultural differences have been discussed in the field of language education. They echo scientific work on intercultural communication, which has laid the conceptual foundation of culture in general. Topics and approaches related to culture in language teaching include

1. teaching culture as content,
2. cultural awareness in teaching,
3. cultural representation in teaching materials,
4. critical approaches to teaching culture, and
5. issues of cultural identity.

Consistent with the recent shift from fixed and normative conceptualizations of English to an emphasis on linguistic fluidity, plurality, and hybridity, as seen in Global Englishes, understanding of culture has shifted away from an essentialist view focusing on national culture and White Anglo images to a more pluralistic conceptualization embracing multiplicity and fluidity.

Therefore, language, as a reflection of cultural norms, can sometimes cause communication problems when people speak in L2 but think in their L1. This can be illustrated by the word guru ‘teacher,’ which holds a respectful form of address in a vertical society, but it may sound impersonal in more horizontal cultures. Thus, the focus here is on the intersection of the native language and culture of EFL students, as expressed in their English. Students describe the implications in their society where students and teachers are “placed” on a social scale. The teacher then raises the students’ cultural knowledge about how teachers are addressed in their home country. Students can then explain the reasons behind these greeting terms, and the teacher can present the same explanation from their own

country. After conducting cultural and linguistic discussions together, students and teachers can understand the implications of common words regarding how they are used in outside cultures. This exercise thus clearly illustrates the importance of pragmatic competence, and not just syntax, as a means of expressing language use that may require students to think in a foreign culture when they speak a foreign language.

Part 4 (: 197-236) consists of 6 chapters (chapters 4.1-4.6: 199-236), this part explains issues regarding “Language Assessment in Global Englishes.” Globalization which has intensified in the last few decades, has given rise to new communities of English learners/users, various contexts for learning English, and various functions of using English. This fundamental change poses a challenge for language assessment at Global Englishes. The fundamental problem with this approach, namely the adoption of varieties/norms of native speakers (primarily American and British English) as standards and benchmarks in their definitions of constructs of English proficiency (Hu 2018). The first approach, known as the “weak” approach (Hu 2012), is accommodative and focuses on modifying the delivery and scoring of native speakers’ English proficiency normed tests to make them fairer and more accessible to different English speakers. These modifications include:

1. checking the text in the English proficiency test for potential bias against speakers of other varieties of English;
2. avoiding or obscuring lexical or grammatical features that may be unfamiliar to non-native English users;
3. using expert foreign English speakers as interlocutors in speaking tests to improve their ability to adapt their speech in a way that is familiar to Global English speakers;
4. involving foreign speakers as evaluators and training them only to punish mistakes that interfere with communication; and
5. engaging non-native English speakers in a standard setting exercise to set boundaries that will allow competent non-native English users to pass exams (Elder and Davies 2006). The other alternative, referred to as the “strong” approach, is more radical and “revolves” around the notion that the Outer- and Expanding Circle varieties of English are independent of the Inner Circle varieties but are linguistically valid.

Part 5 (: 237-264) consists of 3 chapters (5.1-5.3: 239-264), this part describes “Curriculum Development in Global Englishes.” One of the main influential factors driving new curricular possibilities is the nature of the language (Richards 2013). The dynamic and extraordinarily complex nature of English, observed from the current “messy” sociolinguistic reality of English, has prompted applied linguists to

challenge the assumptions that support ELT and urged language educators to orient their curricula towards the Global Englishes (GE) paradigm. Because such a curriculum remains abstract, it aims to critically review some key fundamental questions guiding curriculum development—purpose, content, and assessment practices—with the GE paradigm in mind. The following elaborations are two aspects of curriculum content that teachers/teacher educators might want to consider: First, nowhere in the GE-related literature do scholars of the pluralist paradigm ever claim that American/British English and its cultural values should be excluded from curriculum content. If summarized by an ecological lens, students' surroundings require them to learn the English language and culture mentioned above, then this diversity and values must be incorporated into the curriculum content. It does not matter which learning model is dominant—be it the local variety or established—and whose cultural values are included as long as

1. The decision to include them is wise and made after thorough consideration and exploration of what is relevant in the sociocultural context direct students.
2. When delivering curriculum content, the teacher shows awareness of the protean nature of language; and the dangers of approaching language and culture from an essentialist point of view. Teachers should be encouraged not to “ignore students’ need to be prepared for encounters of other varieties” (Matsuda and Friedrich 2011: 337).

Second, the volume edited by Fang and Widodo (2019) has suggested the need to go beyond a prescribed curriculum to raise learners’ awareness of GE. While this suggestion is valid, teachers who know GE must also be aware of the “top-down” nature of language curriculum design in some teaching contexts where teachers do not have much control over curriculum content. It is not surprising that teachers from such contexts are skeptical of the idea of going beyond a prescribed curriculum.

Part 6 “Conclusions” (: 265-273) reiterates that in this book scholars discuss the GE and GELT framework, which includes scientific trends such as multilingualism, and multicompetence. Most of the chapters in this book follow the three-phase pedagogical model developed by Bayyurt and Sifakis: Exposure, Critical Awareness, and Action Planning. This structure unifies the chapters and helps teacher trainers decide whether they want to use it in their courses.

This book could significantly contribute to rethinking English teacher education in the years to come. The volume thus provides a long overdue “tipping point” to influence ELT practitioners around the world to understand and incorporate theoretical contributions from the last 35 years in the pluralistic fields of World English, English as an International Language, and English as a Lingua Franca—all united in under the umbrella term “Global Englishes.”

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