JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

VOLUME XIV | 2022

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

EDITORIAL: NEW EDITORS, NEW LOOK!

MORGAN CLARKE, CHIHAB EL KHACHAB, AND DAVID ZEITLYN

After many years of publication under the firm and steady eye of Bob Parkin, to whom we are immensely grateful, a new editorial team has been appointed to run JASO as the general editors. From Michaelmas 2022, Morgan Clarke, Chihab El Khachab, and David Zeitlyn have become co-editors of the journal.

JASO was established as a student-run journal in 1970 with Edwin Ardener in the background. Historically it was run by students at the Oxford University Anthropological Society (OUAS) in conjunction with staff members at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology (ISCA). It was initially an alternative space within ISCA to discuss emerging ideas in British social anthropology, which had little room at the Institute's weekly seminar or in established journals such as *Man* (now *J.R.A.I.*). Those early years feature a marked interest in the aftermaths of structural-functionalism, in Lévi-Straussian structuralism and what Edwin Ardener called 'the new anthropology'. Over the years, JASO became a vibrant space in which both ISCA staff and students exchanged and publicized their emerging ideas in the journal's classic stencil format, and the journal's back-catalogue, now fully digitised, is an invaluable resource on anthropology's history.

JASO lost some steam in the 1990s, but after a long hiatus between 2000 and 2009, the journal came back in its current, online-only form. Thanks to the tireless work of our co-editor, David Zeitlyn, JASO became a diamond open-access journal *avant la lettre.* All issues dating back to 1970 are now available online with no publication or reader fees. Since 2009, our journal has hosted regular special issues on topics as diverse as indexicality and belonging, sexual harassment in the field, anthropology in times of crisis, and lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to welcome proposals for special issues on any theme of current interest to social anthropologists.

Following the change in editorial leadership, we are implementing some long-planned changes in JASO's editorial process and overall appearance. Our current issue is the first to feature our new logo and a new, more digitally adapted format. All articles will now be published in a Word and PDF version in order to improve accessibility and searchability. More importantly, we plan to involve a wider range of contributors in the editorial process. This will include welcoming research students as guest editors on individual issues of JASO, as well

as a renewed openness to special issue proposals, exploiting the flexibility that online publication and open-access editorial control allow us.

The current issue features five articles, including the first in our new occasional series on 'Anthropology in Translation'. We start with an article by Christopher Morton, examining the socio-material dwelling practices of the Mbanderu living near Lake Ngami, in Botswana. The second article, by David Zeitlyn, is an invitation to practice a more epistemically humble form of anthropology, based on a detailed reading of six key articles.

The third and fourth articles were written by our late colleague, Marcus Banks, who died suddenly in October 2020. As it happens, Chihab El Khachab and David Zeitlyn are coordinating the wider project to publish Banks' collected works, starting with a volume of his early works on Jainism. We include here two pieces which will not feature in the collected volumes under preparation. One is a visual and ethnographic study of WhatsApp memes and their social uses among middle-class tradesmen in the Gujarati town of Jamnagar. The second is the introduction to a planned special issue on 'anthropology and fear', co-written with Howard Morphy and Robert H. Barnes, which never materialized. Both unpublished essays were retrieved from Marcus Banks' digital files and are published with permission of his estate.

The final article is the inaugural piece in our 'Anthropology in Translation' series, which aims to make valuable work more widely available. David Zeitlyn here translates an article by Ismaël Moya from CNRS Paris, on domestic economies in Senegal and the limits of anthropological investigation into this realm. We would welcome proposals for further translations in this series, which we hope can become a vital exchange site across linguistic and anthropological traditions.

As usual, the issue concludes with a set of book reviews. We remind readers that we welcome suggestions of titles (published in any language) to review, particularly when accompanied by offers to review them. We also have books received for which we welcome potential reviewers. Please contact the book reviews editor for more information.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

DWELLING PRACTICES AND THE REPRODUCTION OF MARGINALITY AMONG THE MBANDERU OF NGAMILAND, BOTSWANA

CHRISTOPHER MORTON[1]

The Mbanderu of Botswana are a people closely related to the Herero, both communities having been displaced by German colonial aggression in Namibia in 1896/7 and 1904/5. However, little ethnographic attention has been paid thus far to this marginalised pastoralist community in Botswana. The paper outlines Mbanderu dwelling practices around Lake Ngami, examining concepts such as cooperation within their established grazing lands (*ekondua rimue*), the relation between dry and wet season dwelling sites, and their associated material practices, as well as the way in which burial, homestead abandonment and rebuilding are intimately connected in the landscape. Finally, the situation of Ovambanderu living in the town of Maun is considered, and the argument made that perceptions of socio-political marginalisation within Botswana, and suspicion of state attitudes towards them, on the part of Mbanderu are reproduced through the material practices of dwelling in the town, where a state of 'permanent temporariness' is recreated over time through dwelling activities.

Keywords: Botswana, Mbanderu, pastoralism, building practices, settlement, burial

Introduction

This article considers settlement and building practices of the pastoral Mbanderu people of Lake Ngami region in northern Botswana.[2] The Mbanderu are a people closely related to the Herero, with whom they share considerable social and cultural similarities, as well as a history

[1] Head of Curatorial, Research and Teaching and Associate Professor, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, UK. E-mail: christopher.morton@prm.ox.ac.uk

[2] Fieldwork was carried out in 1999-2000 during an attachment as Research Fellow in the Department of Sociology, University of Botswana, and as a research student at St Antony's College, Oxford, where this data was originally submitted as part of my wider DPhil thesis on settlement practices in Ngamiland (Morton 2002). The support of the ESRC is gratefully acknowledged (grant no. R00429834578).

of migration into Botswana around the turn of the twentieth century, fleeing warfare and persecution in Namibia (Pennington and Harpending 1991). Both groups speak dialects of the same language, and both maintain a similar double descent pattern of social organisation, based upon the *omaanda* (sn. *eanda*), sometimes termed matriclans or mother groups, as well as the *otuzo* (sn. *oruzo*), again sometimes termed patriclans or father groups. However, both the Mbanderu and Herero of Botswana consider themselves as distinct peoples. This article constitutes the first detailed ethnographic account of the Mbanderu in Botswana. Of the existing literature on the Herero and Mbanderu in Botswana, Vivelo (1977) deals with some aspects of Herero culture, including homestead design, and Algamor (1980) deals with external perceptions of them as not integrating into Tswana society, arguing that their strong assertion of Namibian identity finds most expression in their maintenance of a pastoral identity in Ngamiland. The continuing social experience of uncertainty among the Mbanderu community with regards to their homeland, even more than a century after forced migration, is characterized by a permanent temporariness, affecting a wide range of social and economic activities. This finding corresponds with that of Parkin (1999) concerning the prolonged contexts of displacement found among refugees even many years after resettlement, in which uncertainty about relationships between persons, places, possessions and identities can be socially reproduced over time.

This experience was widespread for instance in the area settled by Mbanderu in Maun, the largest town in Ngamiland, called Mabudutsane, where, as I discuss below, most inhabitants firmly believed that the Botswana government intended to forcibly evict them and use the land for commercial development. This perception of marginality and disenfranchisement partly explained the low registration by Mbanderu of plots with the Land Board and thereby the lack of plot fencing in Mabudutsane ward. Whereas in the pre-Independence period land was understood as belonging to the Chief who had arbitrary control over people's residential land, after Independence this sense of authority and possession was passed to the government. There is a strong continuity in perceptions about socio-juridical relations to land as an element of people's perceptions about the nature of power and authority in Botswana that has important material implications in the relation between dwelling and building. I am not here arguing that an absence of any practice of freehold tenure means a lack of any 'permanence' in social relations to land or place, far from it. What interests me here is how indigenous notions of authority, possession and land relate to social activities, especially building activities, and how we might characterise these shifting relations.

Uncertainty over social relations to place exists perhaps on different scales and in different social and material contexts – for instance on the scale of the nation or of the homestead. On a national scale, relations between household and Chief, or between household and state, are the relevant social relationships for negotiation over rights to living, farming or exploiting natural resources in an area, or even concerning forced removal. Transience of dwelling has been an important social experience for Mbanderu people since their migration into Botswana, produced and reproduced materially through building practices, and is especially relevant when one considers the historical reluctance of Mbanderu to invest socially and materially in Botswana. This experience of permanent displacement or

permanent temporariness has been documented occasionally in other research in Africa. In *Permanent Pilgrims* (1995) C. Bawa Yamba describes how 'most of the inhabitants of the pilgrim villages in Sudan are third-, fourth-, even fifth-generation immigrants who have lived all their lives in Sudan, yet still regard themselves as being in transit. And not only do they define themselves as being on their way; to the outside observer, they live and act as if they were on their way' (1995: 1). Differing perceptions about social relations to place between different groups are an important dimension of how social activities and material relations are configured within the landscape.

The multi-locational aspect of this article reflects such diverse and fluid sets of experiences, characterised by frequent movement between locales and dwelling sites within the landscape. Such movement is an important and integral dynamic of social life for the Mbanderu. Whilst on one level such pathways are an integral part of a group's material and dwelling strategies, there are important social dimensions to movement occasioned by visiting, gifting, sharing in tasks etc. – paths allow and create the potential for arrivals and departures, the path of life and finally of death. Mbanderu people talked often of the paths (*ditsela*) that unite homesteads in the landscape, not just a metaphor for social ties but a description of how social relations are carried out in an everyday sense.

It is not my intention in this article to offer an exhaustive historical overview of Mbanderu settlement change, from pastoral dwelling to multi-locational and semi-sedentary living, but rather to examine how shifting contexts within the landscape have affected dwelling experience and practices. I have examined such contextual change for the most part as an integral aspect of the inherent temporality of the taskscape, put forward by Ingold as 'the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking' (1993: 158). The concept of taskscape can be seen as an attempt to develop a dwelling perspective within the context of actual historical change within the landscape, and to explore the interconnectedness of social and material practices in the shaping of landscape and settlement patterns. Toward this I have structured the analysis into two distinct parts: firstly, an examination of the pastoral Mbanderu taskscape and the morphology of the cattle homestead, and secondly an examination of Mbanderu dwelling on the social and economic margins of the then rapidly urbanising regional centre of Maun.

Observations and comments on building activity in Africa can of course be found in a large number of monographs and anthropological studies, but relatively few have attempted to analyse building and use of space as a central concern (notable exceptions include Moore 1986; Blier 1987). Much of the neglect of buildings and building activity within anthropology can be seen as historically enmeshed in the particularities of the development of anthropology, especially in the UK, which saw material culture studies as increasingly peripheral to the analysis of social structure as developed by Durkeim, Radcliffe-Brown, Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. Houses themselves were of less interest to anthropologists than the notion of what the house constituted, that is, a 'household' or nuclear kin unit (see Carsten and Hugh-Jones (eds) 1995). The materiality of the house was subordinated to the way societies were seen to use houses to structure social relations, especially domestic arrangements for individuals during their life course. There is little understanding in such studies of how the house as material culture is an influential dimension of social relations. For some social anthropological studies, the house

became invisible, a container for social relations rather than an active element. Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) indeed argue that the subordination of the materiality of the house in anthropology was partly connected with the nature of social anthropological fieldwork, whereby 'houses get taken for granted... [i]n time, for both anthropologists and their hosts, much of what houses are and imply becomes something that goes without saying' (1995: 4). The importance of a material approach to dwelling practices has been something that I have tried to address in earlier publications (Morton 2004, 2007) as well as in this article.

The Mbanderu

During 1896-7 and 1904-5 a series of migrations into Ngamiland took place. These were by Herero (pl. Ovaherero) and Mbanderu (pl. Ovambanderu) peoples fleeing (mostly without their cattle) from German colonial aggression in Namibia. Both Mbanderu and Herero are closely related pastoral groups whose fluidity of movement within the landscape is linked with movement of herds to new grazing. The Mbanderu had no centralised polity, but rather a double descent system of patri- and matriclan. The patriclan (*otuzo*) is essentially a kin-based religious system closely associated with ancestral spirits, with the matriclan (*omaanda*) associated with marriage and identity. According to Kandapaera (1992: 28) the Tawana[3] allowed the Mbanderu to settle the Lake Ngami region (Sehitwa-Thololamoro area) subject to their acceptance of Tswana overlordship and colonial taxation policies (Hut Tax). Since they had no or few cattle following the ravages of both wars and rinderpest, they worked as servants[4] (*batlhanka*) for Tawana in return for gradually building up their own herds through *mafisa*, a system of lending cows for another's temporary use (such as milking, offspring etc). Poor relations with the Tawana in the early twentieth century however led to further Mbanderu migrations, especially to Chobe in 1918, and later to Rakops (Tsienyane) and Ghanzi districts further south.

The Lake Ngami region has nonetheless remained the main area for Mbanderu pastoral activity for over a century, with homestead locations entirely encircling the now mostly dry lakebed. When Livingstone visited the Lake in 1849 the lake was a vast stretch of fresh water, approximately 80 kilometres long by 40 kilometres wide. By the turn of the twentieth century, the lake had begun to dry considerably, and by the 1920s hardly any water remained. Geomorphologists increasingly believe that the gradual drying of the western tributaries of the Okavango delta has been the result of a gradual shift in flow eastwards, possibly caused by earthquakes and the shifting of numerous fault lines across the system that form part of the great East African rift system, as well as climate change. Whilst Lake Ngami is now largely a historical lake, it still occasionally receives enough rainwater during the wet season (Nov-March) to have shallow waters in some areas, and some Mbanderu families live in and around

[3] The Tawana are a Tswana subgroup who split off from the Kwena subgroup and migrated north to Ngamiland around 1800.

[4] For a discussion of the history of *batlhanka* as servants or enslaved persons in the Kalahari region, see B. Morton 1994.

the village of Sehitwa (Figure 1), on what was once the northern shore of the lake, including the family of their acknowledged leader in Botswana.[5]

Figure 1 – Mbanderu homestead in Sehitwa, with doors facing west. Photo by the author, 2000. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [PRM2009.168.285].

The Mbanderu Social Landscape

The Mbanderu of the Lake Ngami area understand their region as a single unity, referred to as *ekondua rimue* – *rimue* being the term used to describe people affiliated to the same descent group. The *ekondua rimue* is considered an area of pastoral activity within which each Mbanderu has social rights of movement and dwelling with his cattle. This sense of fluidity was expressed in responses to the Tribal Grazing Land Programme of the government of Botswana, which they termed *ondorota no ongaruhe*, 'fences there for ever' (Algamor 1980), that is, fencing that would restrict the free movement of people and cattle within their region. The notion of *ekondua rimue* is an important context that frames the everyday pastoral taskscape. Many Mbanderu argue that fencing within the *ekondua rimue* should not be 'there for ever' in the manner of private ranches, demarcating private land. The *ekondua rimue* is understood as loosely arranged into differing named 'locations' where certain households consider their grazing areas to be. Such locations have 'their own' rainy season pasture into which they move with their cattle when the rains come, and whilst this does not mean that a household must graze the same specific pasture each rainy season, it usually moves to a

[5] I was told that this leader was junior in authority however to a senior leader who remained in Namibia.

pasture area that is known as the grazing ground of their locality. The pattern of moving to pasture zones associated with specific localities seems to be relatively fixed over time.

Although within each locality important socially co-operative practices exist, many people saw their closest social connections outside of their locality, since although close genealogical relations used to bind people to localities in the past, this no longer seemed to be the case. One of the effects of expansive settlement around the lake periphery seems to have been the breaking off of agnatic sub-units (e.g. sons with their families) into new localities, which effectively weakened some social links between sub-groups, yet reinforced social ties at the level of the sub-unit homestead. The expansion of sub-units into localities is facilitated by the fact that cattle are identified as belonging to individuals rather than being communally owned within a collective herd. Livestock units belonging to social sub-units cared for in the same cattle pen are seen as inherently separable, and this enables groups to come together co-operatively and yet move apart again.

The meaning of 'locality' for families is layered. On one level a man will describe a certain area, for example where his mother or father is buried, as a place where he has 'rights', as well as listing other localities with which he has an *oruzo* (patriclan), *eanda* (matriclan), or *ovakue* (affinal) connection. On another level, all localities within the *ekondua rimue* are felt to be interconnected due to the nature of such social bonds. Algamor has noted that 'the issue of different locations might seem to be ecological, but it is, in effect, social' (1980:53). I would rather see both ecological and social dimensions of location and place within the pastoral taskscape as essentially interconnected aspects of dwelling, and the Mbanderu 'location' as a process of dwelling involving interconnected social, material and ecological relations. The often-expressed notion (in Setswana) *re masika rotlhe*, 'we are all kin', was used to explain the notion and practice of free movement within the *ekondua rimue*, a connectivity to various aspects of the landscape that is created, maintained and expressed through reciprocal economic and social relations. For example, drought may badly affect grazing in some localities, and this may initiate a movement of people into other people's areas that have been less badly affected, and this is seen as being possible since there will undoubtedly exist complex social ties to neighbouring groups established over time.

Mbanderu cattle dwelling sites take the form of *onganda* (pl. *ozonganda*) or main homestead, and *ohambo* (pl. *ozohambo*) or wet season grazing camp. According to Kandapaera (1992), *ozonganda* were frequently moved in the past, in search of better dry season grazing and water sources, and the *ohambo* moved in relation to the *onganda* within the locality. The notion of *ekondua rimue* is essentially a spatial one since it describes a certain network of established grazing locations but is also particularly social. As Casey (1996) argues, we should perhaps instead think about landscape in terms of its 'placiality' rather than spatiality and consider the Mbanderu *ekondua rimue* as a 'socio-placial' term. As such, it expresses an understanding of landscape in which places of pastoral activity and social interaction are interwoven in the production of meaning. As Harvey has noted, differing modes of production and social formations 'embody a distinctive bundle of time and space practices and concepts' (1992: 204). This said, both spatial and temporal aspects of *ekondua rimue* should also be grounded in material processes, since it is through these processes, which I now turn to, that social relations are expressed and communicated (Lemonnier 2012).

The nuclear homestead (*onganda*)

The Mbanderu homestead or *onganda* is the centre of pastoral, social, and even religious activity. Without any centralised social or political system, it is the *onganda*, and especially that of the head of a patriclan, that serves as a social and ritual focus. From an Mbanderu perspective, the central part of any *onganda* is the cattle pen (*otjiunda*), in relation to which the household head builds his house, and his family in relation to him. The cattle and the everyday tasks associated with them form the nexus of life within the homestead. One of the most consistent features of the internal organisation of the *onganda* is the positioning of the main house (*ondjeuo onene yo okuruo*) occupied by the head of the household and his wife, with respect to the cattle pen. Almost invariably this house is built with the door facing the main cattle pen in a westerly (*kukuhitira ejuva*) direction, and a visible path leads from this house to the entrance of the pen in which calves are kept apart from the milk cows.[6] To the left of the main house as it faces the cattle pen, curving away in a semi-circle are the houses of the sons (*omuatje uomuzandu*), and to the right the daughters (*omuatje uomukazona*), with the first born (*omuatje uomutenga*) furthest away, and the last born (*omuatje uomaanderu*) closest to the main house. In polygamous households, the first wife (*omusuverua uandje*) occupies the main house (Figure 2), and other wives build beyond the eldest son to the left. Over time, these relative social positions are altered by additional marriages, as well as the building activities of maturing children of the homestead, all of which result in movement of house positions within the homestead.

The path between the main house and the cattle pen also serves to orient important religious practices within the homestead. Mbanderu religious practice is centred upon the spiritual intercession of ancestors between living family members and a supreme but remote deity. Within the homestead such religious practice is centred upon the ritual hearth (*okuruo*) that is situated just to the right of the path between the main house and the cattle pen. Next to the ritual hearth is an upturned thorn bush (*etho*), which is ritually linked to the *okuruo* (Figure 3). Not all homesteads are responsible for keeping *okoruo* and *etho*, since they are inheritable within a patriclan from father to son or between brothers. It is relatively common for sons to refuse to inherit the *okuruo* and *etho* if they are churchgoers, in which case they may pass the responsibility on to another male relation.

[6] It was suggested to me on several occasions by Tswana informants that the significance of facing west in Mbanderu and Herero culture could be understood if one considered that they were facing the direction of their homelands in Namibia, and that the dead were buried facing toward their ancestors there. No Mbanderu would confirm this however, arguing that it was simply an inherited cultural practice (*ombazo*). Herero oral historical data from Namibia does tend to corroborate this. In the collection of oral histories and stories, *Warriors, Sages and Outcasts in the Namibian Past* (Heywood et al. 1992), Kaputu relates that, 'in those days the houses of the Hereros were built in a circle within an enclosure with four gates. One afternoon a baboon came into the homestead from the west ... then walked between the holy fire and the kraal, and from there it walked past the door of the main house of the holy fire to the eastern gate' (1992:62). The description of the baboon's movement suggests that the homesteads of pre-displaced Herero and Mbanderu in Namibia corresponded very closely to those found in Ngamiland, as noted by Vivelo (1977).

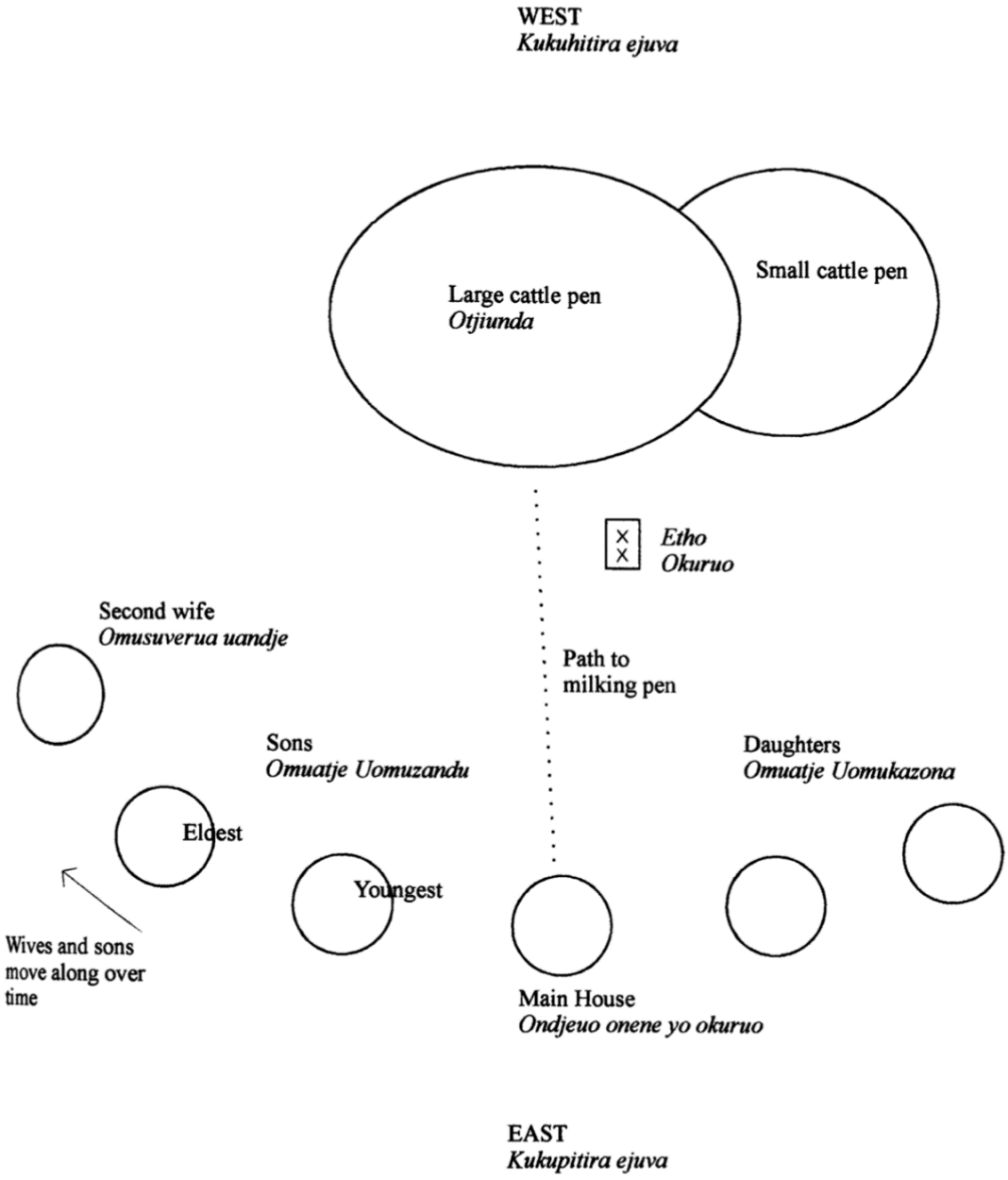

Figure 2 – Normative layout of house positions and dynamics in an Mbanderu *onganda* (homestead).

The *etho* consists of a small thorn bush (normally Blackthorn, *Acacia detinens*) which symbolises the revered *omumborumbonga* tree (Leadwood, *Combretum imberbe*), which is widely held by Mbanderu to be associated with ancestral spirits. The *etho* bush is collected by pulling up a bush (since its roots must be in place) and walking back to the *onganda* with it on the back. Both the *okuruo* and *etho* are used in the treatment of illnesses caused by ancestral displeasure, involving the ritual splashing (*o kumba omeva*) of the sick. Vivelo blames the loss of such 'former descent-based activities such as reciprocal curing among patrisibs' (1977: 76) for a breakdown of adherence to the 'ideal' homestead pattern. The Mbanderu headman in Sehitwa explained the *okuruo* to me as the 'bringer of light and good luck' (Setswana: *mathogonolo*) to both the immediate household as well as the extended patriclan. The association with light refers to the fact that the *okuruo* is lit each morning and evening by the main wife, or if she is away by another person, and that the well-being of the patriclan is connected to this ritual observance.

After visiting numerous *onganda* in western Ngamiland, it is clear that this arrangement of houses among the nuclear family, as well as the importance of orientation toward the west, is a consistent organisational principle that orders the *onganda*. When it comes to more complex family arrangements, over time different families approach building relations in a variety of ways. In the case of polygamous households many agree that a second wife should build to the left of the main house beyond the eldest son (of the first wife, if she has one), although some say she should build between this son and the main house.[7] For a third wife, some say she should build between the second wife and the eldest son, and others that she should build to the right instead, with a fourth wife building to the left again. When questioned on cases of extended family households, responses regarding homestead organization are mostly based upon past experiences rather than any cultural norm.

Since the practices of previous generations are invariably seen as the source of Mbanderu social and cultural continuity, idealized notions of 'Mbanderu culture' expressed by informants are directly associated with memories of past ancestral practice rather than any abstract blueprint for dwelling. Vivelo's search for such a blueprint of the Herero homestead, presumably following Bourdieu's structuralist account of the Kabyle house (1970), shows just how misplaced the search for an ideal can be, for instance when he suggests that whilst 'not one existing Herero homestead conforms to the ideal, it was confirmed as an ideal plan by all' (1977: 34). In practice, he argues, most homesteads only roughly follow the ideal pattern and for the most part do not adhere to them at all. The major flaw with this sort of approach to the *onganda* is its lack of recognition that there is always a tension between past and current cultural practice which is generative of certain discourses concerning moral or social degeneration, cultural identity, ancestral displeasure, and so forth. This means that the search for idealized cultural patterns and their origins is dubious and, in any case, not historically useful in understanding the way in which material practices communicate social relations. Nonetheless, the diagrams presented in this paper were ones given to me directly by Mbanderu informants as structuring guides to their own family practice, and so worth presenting as such.

[7] If the first wife only had daughters, a second wife would still build to the left where sons normally build.

Figure 3 – The ritual hearth (*okuruo*) and thorn bush (*etho*) at an *onganda* in Ngamiland. Photo by the author, 2000. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [PRM2009.168.266].

The cattle camp (*ohambo*)

During the wet season (November-March) when surface water ponds are available, cattle may graze for some time away from grazing areas close to the *onganda* and its water source, usually a hand-dug well. Such suitable pastures are widely known and seem to be repeatedly visited by those grazing within certain locations. These remote cattle camps or *ozohambo* are often-revisited sites where houses and cattle pens are renewed with materials gathered in the bush close by. Thatching grasses are collected that will last the rainy season, and new poles may be cut from Terminalia trees, with walls in-filled with soil and cow dung mixture between horizontal supports. Visiting between the two locations (which may be a day or more away by foot) begins immediately, with milk, sourmilk and meat being brought back to the *onganda*, and other goods being taken to those staying at the *ohambo*. Those staying away with the cattle are likely to be young herders, but it is not uncommon for women to be there also, milking and making sourmilk. The *ohambo* is built in a similar manner to the *onganda*, but is likely to have fewer buildings since most of the family will only visit for relatively short periods. The important ancestral fire and thorns do not move to the *ohambo* during the wet season, and elderly and young children may also remain behind. It would be wrong to consider the *ohambo* as an inherently temporary wet season dwelling site in relation to the relatively permanent *onganda*. The social landscape of Lake Ngami is perceived as divisible into locations, each containing interdependent dry and wet season grazing areas. Wet season grazing areas are relatively consistent within the landscape over time, and are perceived as being just as 'permanent' as village sites. Also, although building practices and other material investments

at the *ohambo* involve less labour when compared to the *onganda*, the *ohambo* is not inherently perceived as 'temporary' in a social sense. The period of time at the *ohambo* is remarked on by people as a time of intensified social activities, such as singing and dancing, which heighten its social and ritual importance to the group. This observation accords with other ethnographies of pastoral peoples, especially Evans-Pritchard's classic discussion of the relationship between Nuer camps and villages, where the movement between sites during the year can make camps feel like villages, and villages like camps (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 63).

The pattern of moving between wet and dry season grazing sites has been affected over time by a combination of influences which has led to increasing semi-sedentary practices, such as village homesteads without any cattle and even agriculture. For most Mbanderu people living in villages such as Sehitwa, the *onganda* is a cattleless village or town homestead, and *ohambo* the remote cattle homestead, thus becoming roughly equivalent to the Tswana division between village home (*motse*) and cattle post (*moraka*). The fact that the term *ohambo* increasingly denotes a cattle post rather than a wet season grazing camp is significant in that it suggests the extent to which the Tswana model of village, cattle post and fields (*motse*, *moraka le masimo*) has been translated within an Mbanderu context.

From homestead to burial site

A deceased person is often buried within the homestead in a position dictated by their social relation to the household head (*omuini*). The cemetery at Sehitwa (the main Mbanderu village location) was being used as an alternative, especially for churchgoers. If an *omuini* dies and is buried in the homestead then an Mbanderu family will move away, although often only up to a kilometre, and the old home abandoned. Other members of the family may be buried in the homestead without precipitating a move. Whilst for groups such as the Yeyi burial in the homestead is not incompatible with continued residence, and in fact produces closer social relations to place, for the Mbanderu the burial of the household head in the homestead leads to a shifting migration (*o kutjinda*), a movement that transforms the *onganda* into a burial site or *etundu*. The term *etundu* can indicate either a former dwelling place or burial site. Whilst all such burial sites are former dwelling places, not all former dwelling places are necessarily burial sites. One Mbanderu woman told me that moving after burial was a response to 'not wanting to live among graves', something echoed in Cyprian Ekwensi's story of the pastoral Fulani of Northern Nigeria, *Burning Grass*: 'Sunsaye was indeed well beloved and they buried him in great pomp on the spot where his first camp had been. Then they cleared away in great haste. For legend holds that the place where a man died is bad luck.' (Ekwensi 1962: 118)
Another important facet of the *etundu* is the way that it becomes used as a burial ground for future generations. Indeed, unless a household have moved to a completely new location, family members are more likely to be buried at such an ancestral burial place close by than in their own homestead. If the *omuini* is not buried in the homestead, but in the *etundu* of his parents or grandparents or in a cemetery, many Mbanderu say that they need not migrate, although some argue that the homestead is associated with the deceased leader and the new *omuini* should establish his own *onganda*. If the family do not migrate, the new *omuini* will be expected to occupy the main house, although I have seen examples where he will not do so until the deceased leader's main wife either leaves the house or dies. One informant, Tududa, told how his great-grandparents were buried in Namibia, but that his grandparents had been buried in their old *onganda*, which has become the family burial site (*etundu*) since his father and mother are also buried there. Another woman, Kautaponde, described how her husband had been buried in their homestead, after which they stayed there for about a year, during

which time she was not supposed to milk the cows or even look toward the cattle pen (*otjiunda*) for fear of bad luck. Her eldest son then established a new homestead some distance away. However, another man, Johannes, argued that a migration should take place at most one to two months after a burial.

Whilst the burial of a former *omuini* precipitates a reorganisation within the household, it is the movement of the cattle pens to another site linked to a new household head that is perceived as the central dimension of migration. Inheritance and ownership of cattle socially defines the new *omuini* as a social nexus for the dwelling relations of other relations. This important dwelling relationship between cattle activities and sociality is also inherently a material process – the reconfiguration of social relations over time is spatially engaged with through the group's material practices at the dwelling site, building and rebuilding the cattle pens, houses, and hearths as part of collective activity. Once new cattle pens have been made from cut thorn bushes, spatial (that is, building) relationships based upon each person's relation to the new *omuini* of the main house (*ondjeuo onene*), are renegotiated. Within the homestead both building relationships and social relations are interwoven dimensions of dwelling experience. Whilst homestead movement precipitates a sudden reorganisation of these spatial relations within a homestead, when no migration takes place socio-spatial changes through building may be more gradual. Building, moving, and rebuilding are common experiences as socio-spatial relationships change over time. One informant, Uatira, described how his father's second wife had had to rebuild three times, and himself twice, in order to accommodate the houses of younger brothers and their wives. The second wife then decided to move to the right side in order to avoid another move, even though she felt 'wrong' there on the side where normatively daughters build.

Another woman, Konee (Figure 4), pointed out that she is married to the eldest son in an *onganda*, and that they had had to move twice to make space for the second son after his marriage to two wives. Even though her husband was the *omuini*, his mother was still alive and they would only move into the *ondjeuo onene* (main house) after she died. The mother had not left the main house after the death of her husband because he had been buried elsewhere and they didn't have to move. Konee also described how she and her husband crushed the old houses and took the useful parts away, even though it was the responsibility of the younger son 'forcing us to move' to gather materials for them. She also related how the family had moved from a previous place due to poor shade, and that her husband's father had insisted he be buried there and to make it the *etundu*, 'since he did not wish to force us to move from this new place as we all liked it'. Another elder woman, Mata, told how her husband had been buried at his parents' *etundu*, and that she would also be buried there. Her eldest son would then move to occupy the main house, having previously moved once before to make room for the second wife of his younger brother.

If the new *omuini* or household leader (usually a son or brother) is to inherit the *okuruo* and *etho* (ancestral fire and thorn bush) from the previous homestead then additional practices are involved. When the previous *omuini* is buried, the *okuruo* and *etho* are taken from their place to the right and moved to the left of the path. Some describe this as a form of 'death' to accompany that of their custodian. The inheritor is usually an eldest son, or if he is unwilling (perhaps due to Church sensibilities) another senior male relative such as a brother. Two informants, Wahuma and Washiwa, described how the migration of the *okuruo* and *etho* always takes precedence, so that it is one of the first things done. 'If the main house is not yet built, the place where the house fire is to be will be made, and after lighting it will be taken to the *okuruo*, made ready near the cattle pen'. The importance of this continuity is such that a stick from the previous *okuruo* is used in its migration. One elder in Sehitwa, Pata, described how he had inherited the *okuruo* and *etho*, 'cutting a piece of *Mogkalo* (Blackthorn) across the grain rather than splitting it (*go kgaola*) and putting it in the *okuruo*. Whilst it was still burning, I

brought it here to make a new *okuruo*.' Pata used his parents' *okuruo* fire to light his new house fire, which was then used to light the new *okuruo* the next day. In this way, ancestral continuity was assured between both ritual and home fires. Whilst there is no domestic cooking done on the *okuruo* since it is considered a ritual hearth connected with ancestral spirits within the homestead and patriclan at large, it is lit each morning from the main house hearth, normally by the senior wife, which establishes an ongoing relationship between daily dwelling activities and religious practice.

Figure 4 – Konee (right) with her child and mother-in-law, at their *onganda* near Sehitwa. Photo by the author, 2000. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [PRM2009.168.288].

Burial positions: Dwelling and transformation

In summary, burial is a practice carried out both within a homestead and at a former homestead or *etundu*. In general, the burial of family members other than the household head (*omuini*) may take place within the *onganda* (such as females within the cattle pen) without precipitating a migration. If the *omuini* is buried within the *onganda* then a new leader will normally re-establish a dwelling site a short distance away soon after. If the *omuini* is buried elsewhere (at an *etundu* or cemetery) then a migration may still occur, or the new leader may soon after inhabit the main house of the *onganda*. I now examine differences in the positioning of graves within the homestead and then after its transformation into an *etundu*. The transformation of a place from dwelling to burial site is an important one for the Mbanderu, which brings with it altered burial practices and social activities connected with the site.

In terms of burial practice within the homestead, discussion with at least a dozen households showed that certain consistent elements over time are evident. The most significant is the positioning of the grave (*ombongo*) of the *omuini* or male leader of the

household, which is positioned outside of (and with head towards) the cattle pen (i.e. facing west), and to the right of the central path, close to the ancestral fire and thorn bush (*okuruo* and *etho*) (Figure 5). Wives of household members are usually buried *within* the smaller cattle pen, and the head of the woman should face toward the centre of the larger pen. Children should be buried beneath the thorn fence of the smaller pen, and the thorns replaced over it. One woman stated that 'children are buried under the thorn fence so that their graves cannot be trampled by cattle…older people's graves can support themselves but a child's grave is too fragile to be stood on'. It was customary for generational lines of graves to move from right to left, so that some graves would be placed to the left of the path over time instead of to the right. It was considered that there should be a clear spatial division in the grave lines of males, women and children. However, all the graves should face west, said one man, 'since everything has its own culture - even the birds build their nests in the trees facing west.[8] I visit the *etundu* very often. If someone is sick I cut a twig from a thornless tree to show respect and place it on the graves as I call their names'.

Some Mbanderu reported that occasionally families departed from these norms, especially when building in the village setting of Sehitwa. For example, in the past, on the death of the household head, the door (*omujeruo*) of his house was said to have been removed and placed to one side. One informant, Johannes, related how formerly the door was made from the skin of a cow, and that this skin would be taken by the new *omuini* to found a new main house. However, it seems that although the door is still removed today to indicate respect for the deceased household leader, it is not necessarily inherited. In general, after migration none of the materials from the old main house are reused but left to decay. 'We do not crush his house', said another informant, 'because we want the spirit of the man to remain in the *onganda* since he is buried there in the *otjiunda*'. 'The first thing done at the new *onganda* is the construction of the *otjiunda*' related one woman, 'and whilst the new pen is being made the *omuini* will place a stick where the new main house will be, and it will be built there after'. Once this building is finished, the rest of the household would then build in spatial relation to it. Several other informants also said that they never took materials from an old homestead when establishing a new one, especially not the thorn fence. 'Nothing is supposed to be taken', one man insisted, 'for instance for firewood, especially from the cattle pen for young cows since beneath these thorns a child may be buried. You see, the cattle pen is both the cradle and the grave of the *onganda*'.

The cattle pen, the *otijiunda*, is perceived as both the thorn fence boundary and the space created within, which together hold and gather the cattle of the homestead. The metaphor of the cradle is suggestive of the way this feature of the homestead is perceived as both protective and nurturing, not just of the cattle, but of the social existence of the household - its very identity and future well-being. In this sense the material boundary of the *otijiunda* gathers and nurtures the vulnerabilities of the symbiotic relation within the homestead between cattle and people, it is felt as demarcating a space connected with the ancestors.

[8] Birds mostly build nests in on the westerly side of Acacia trees to avoid the intense heat of the day, and some Mbanderu suggested to me that doors were faced west since people wanted to ensure that the entrance to doorways, where people often sit, was likewise kept shaded.

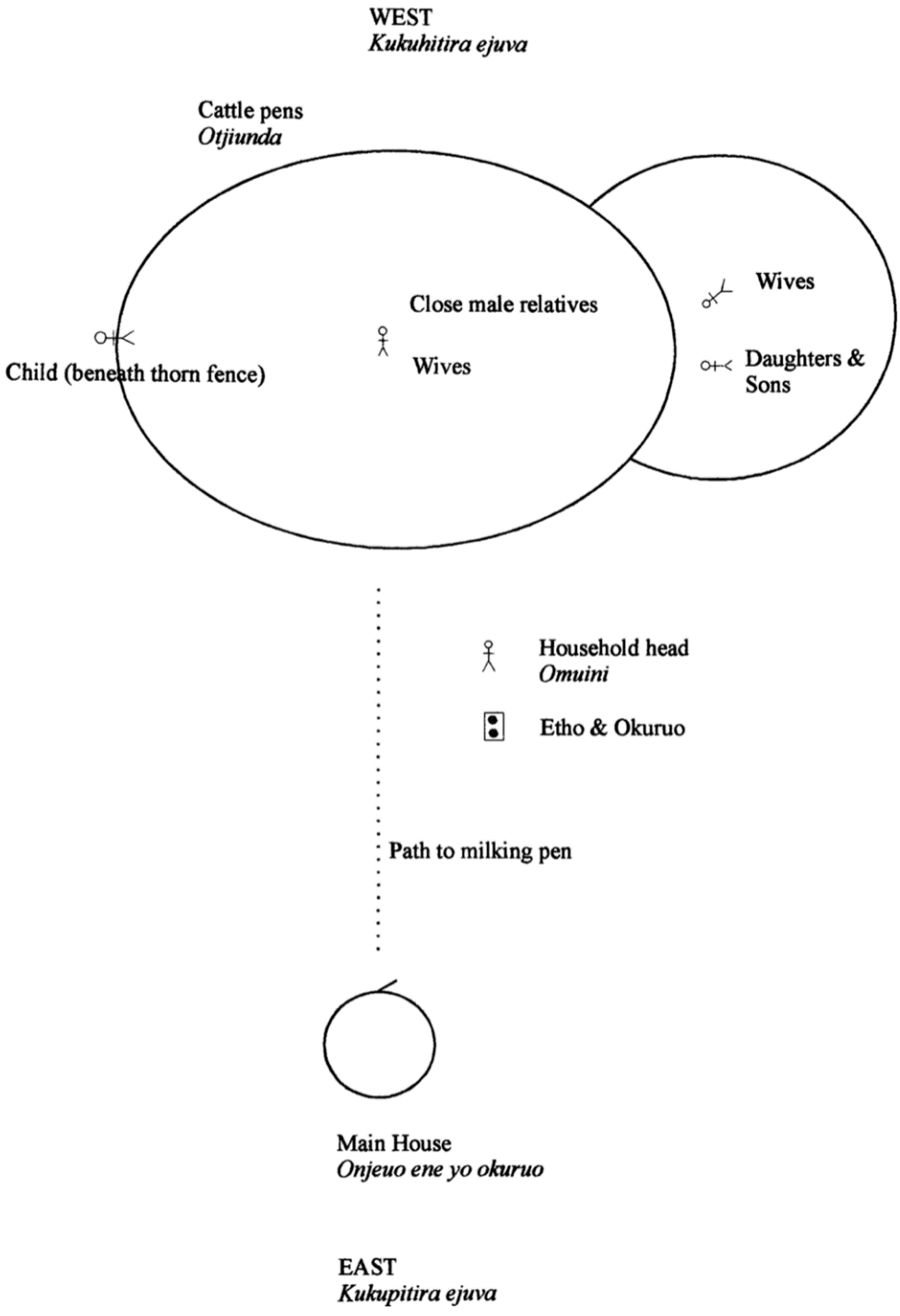

Figure 5 – Normative burial positions of family members in an Mbanderu *onganda*.

Most people see the *otijiunda* as situated outside of normal space and time relations within the *onganda*, and thereby in essence closely connected with religious practice. The ancestral and religious contexts in which the relations between cattle and people are bound make the *otijiunda* the material and spatial focus for ritual activity within the homestead.

The transformation of a homestead into a burial place is a process in which material and social forces are both at work. The importance of a temporal approach to the social landscape is evident here, since these places emerge as important to a process of dwelling, as events as much as sites. It is evident that the positioning of graves within the homestead is altered significantly when the homestead site becomes an *etundu* or burial place. Although there is a significant variation in burial practice, all Mbanderu distinguished between burial within a homestead (*onganda*) and a former homestead (*etundu*). To summarise this distinction, in the homestead people are buried in relation to the cattle pen as the social and ritual focus of dwelling, in a position dictated by their social identity within the homestead (i.e. wife, child etc.), whereas in the *etundu*, people are buried in relation to the graves of previous generations, and often in a line below them or to one side. In the example shown in Figure 6, the former cattle pens and houses have long since gone, the family having moved on the death of Tududa's grandfather who was buried next to the milking pen. Tududa's grandmother was also taken to be buried at this site some years later, as were his father and mother, in a line behind them. According to Tududa, future graves would not follow this line, but instead move to the other side of the former path, where graves will be placed according to their social relations to each other.

In another example (Figure 7) this mixture of generational and sex-based organisation at the *etundu* is shown. In this case however, clusters or areas of burial are used instead of lines, with the founding grave placed according to burial in the *onganda* (father of interviewee) and his mother to the left of the path. These two examples show how Mbanderu burial organisation at the *etundu* is considered mostly from the perspective of close kin ties, especially the relationship between the deceased and the ancestral founder of burial site.

This transformation of burial practice between the *onganda* and *etundu* within the same site is obviously closely connected with the temporality of dwelling, since it is the removal of the cattle from the former cattle pen to a new place that is fundamental to the process of social transformation. Within the *etundu*, the former cattle pen location is not regarded and is unimportant in the positioning of family graves. The importance, and meaning, of the cattle pen as a physical locus for burial within the homestead is interwoven with its role as a material container of the household cattle – it is its temporal dwelling context that is important in religious practice, rather than any abstract or symbolic meaning. Once the cattle have been removed, the *otijiunda* loses its meaning as a locus for ritual activity, especially burial.

One of the key elements arising from the examination of data on settlement discussed thus far is that of temporality, and how the consideration of movement through time is central to an understanding of socio-spatial change. In addition, it is the material practice of dwelling that grounds our concepts of spatiality and exerts an important influence on sociality in general. The way in which movements in the landscape are socially ordered is through an engagement with the various tasks of dwelling – the making of the cattle pen, the main house, the lighting and daily renewal of the fire – and the practice of such activities is involved in the creation and maintenance of social groupings.

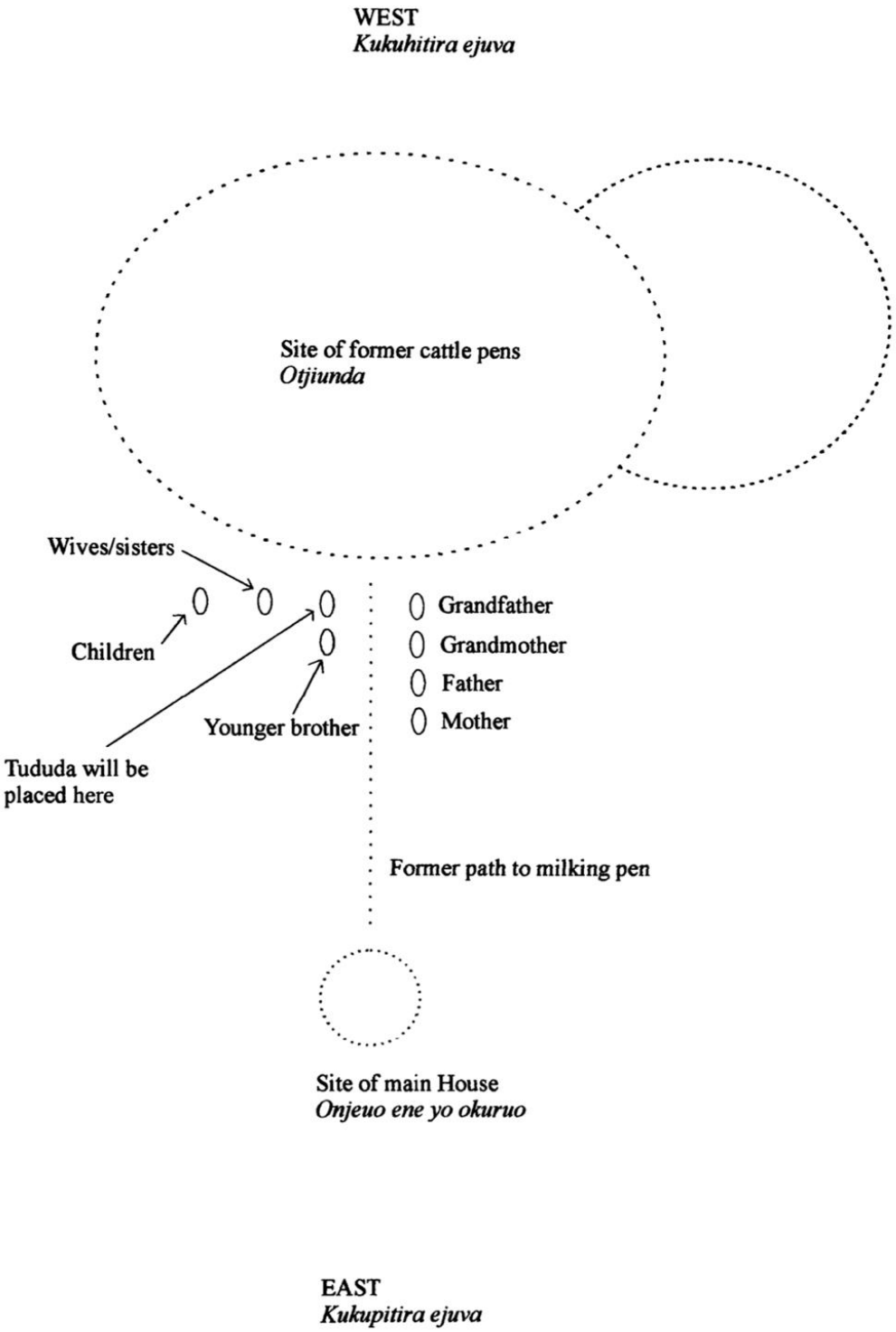

Figure 6 – Burial positions of Tutuda's family at their *etundu*, the former homestead of his grandfather.

The way such social activities give rise to cultural forms such as the *onganda* or *etundu* is a shifting, temporal process, for instance in the way burial in the *onganda* is focused on the cattle pen (*otjiunda*) where everyday life is centred, whereas post-migration burials will normally focus spatially on relations to other graves. Moreover, the way in which the materiality of the *onganda* arises through dwelling activities, can be seen as exerting a mutual influence upon the social processes within the *onganda* over time, producing and reproducing an arena of socialisation. The temporal responsiveness of homestead forms to changes in this taskscape is such that socio-spatial relations within the *onganda* are frequently in a state of flux in response to the human lifecycle.

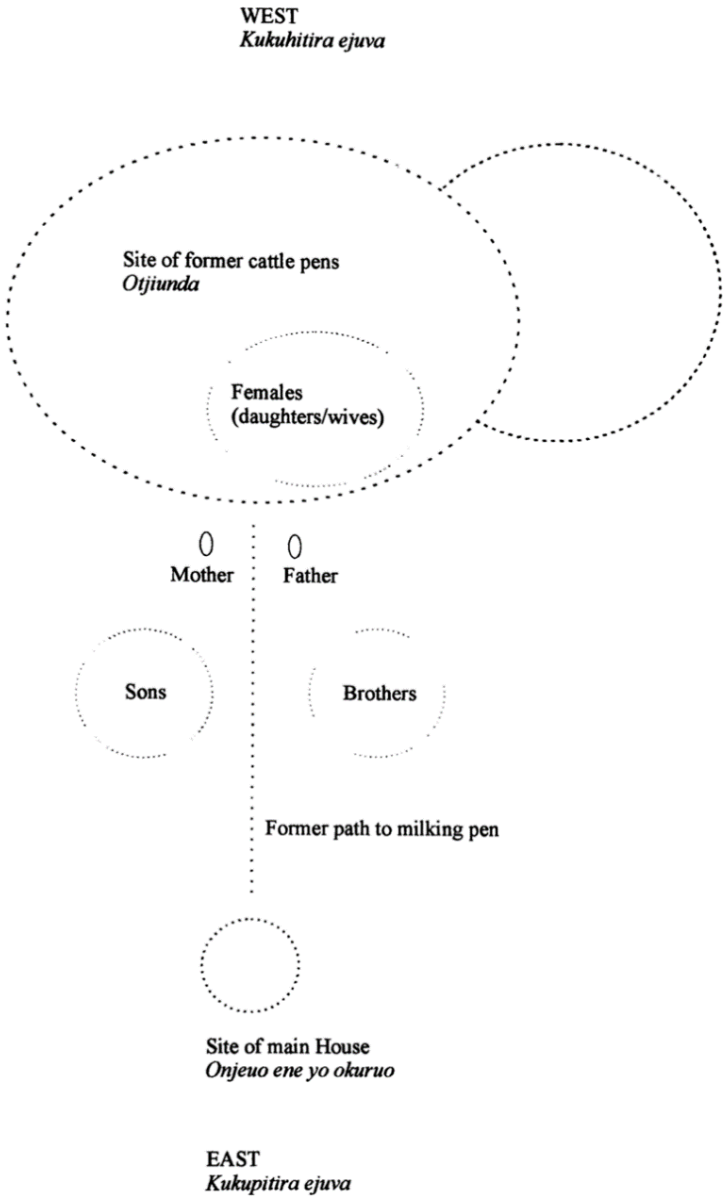

Figure 7 – Organisation of burials at an *etundu* (former homestead) in Ngamiland.

Reproducing displacement and marginality: Mabudutsane ward, Maun

I now turn to how the question of how these material practices of dwelling are transformed in the context of the Mbanderu ward of Mabadutsane (a sub-ward of the Tswana ward of Mabadutsa, sometimes colloquially known as 'Herero village') in the main regional town of Maun. It seems that there has been some Herero and Mbanderu presence in Maun since at least the 1930s, that is, shortly after the founding of the village. According to one woman, the first Herero inhabitants in Maun were two women, Enoke and Kangamero. Her own family have had a presence there since the early 1950s after the Tawana regent Elizabeth Pulane Moremi tried to influence the Herero headman Kaominga Kahaka to settle in Maun. Although some families were by 2000 cattle-less and permanently resident in Mabudutsane, the majority continued to consider Maun a place for schooling, visiting the hospital or relatives and purchasing goods, whilst most of their attention was directed toward cattle-based activities elsewhere. Frequent movement between remote *ozohambo* (cattle posts) and the *ozonganda* (homesteads) in Maun produced and reproduced networks of material and social exchange. As an arena of socialisation, Mabadutsane can be understood as having materially produced and reproduced social and temporal notions of displacement and marginality commonly expressed by its inhabitants. An examination of several case studies of family dwelling areas will help to ground this analysis.

Mabadutsane is on the western side of Maun, either side of the road in from Sehitwa. The Tswana headman of this ward, Rra Odirile, explained that since the Mbanderu have never been granted their own ward within Maun they lived there without any local political representation. Whilst the area is often known as 'Herero village', probably less than one third of its inhabitants identify themselves as Herero, with the majority claiming Mbanderu identity. I spent over six weeks in this roadside community, and conducted approximately thirty formal interviews with households, as well as numerous informal discussions and activities. I also produced a detailed plan of the portion of Mabudutsane on the south side of the Sehitwa road, between the road and the property of the U.C.C.S.A. (United Congregational Church of Southern Africa). Figure 8 shows the location of Mabadutsane as well as the area that I planned in detail, as well as recent satellite imagery that shows that the area remains largely unchanged in terms of Mbanderu occupation of the area, despite their fears of removal at the time.

Houses in Mabadutsane at this time were made from natural and salvaged materials rather than concrete blocks, as is more evident today.[9] Corrugated iron shelters housed a number of drinking places where people grouped to purchase and drink sorghum beer. Most households comprised school children of varying ages, with female relatives taking care of them. Other noticeable groups were more transient and included people attending clinics or the village hospital, which was relatively close by, young males and females hoping for some cash work, people visiting and purchasing commodities, and women in informal employment. A town planning report prepared on the area in 1991 concluded that: 'the socio-cultural attributes of the predominantly Herero community in the area may have somehow also influenced the development of the unusual plot formations, which has unfortunately led to overcrowding. Young adults tend to erect their huts next to their parents on the same plot rather than move ... this suggests a desire to maintain strong family and community ties' (Malila 1991:46).

[9] Google street view data used to assess this comes from 2012, which showed even then a marked increase in investment in concrete block *mantlo a sekgoa*, or European-style building.

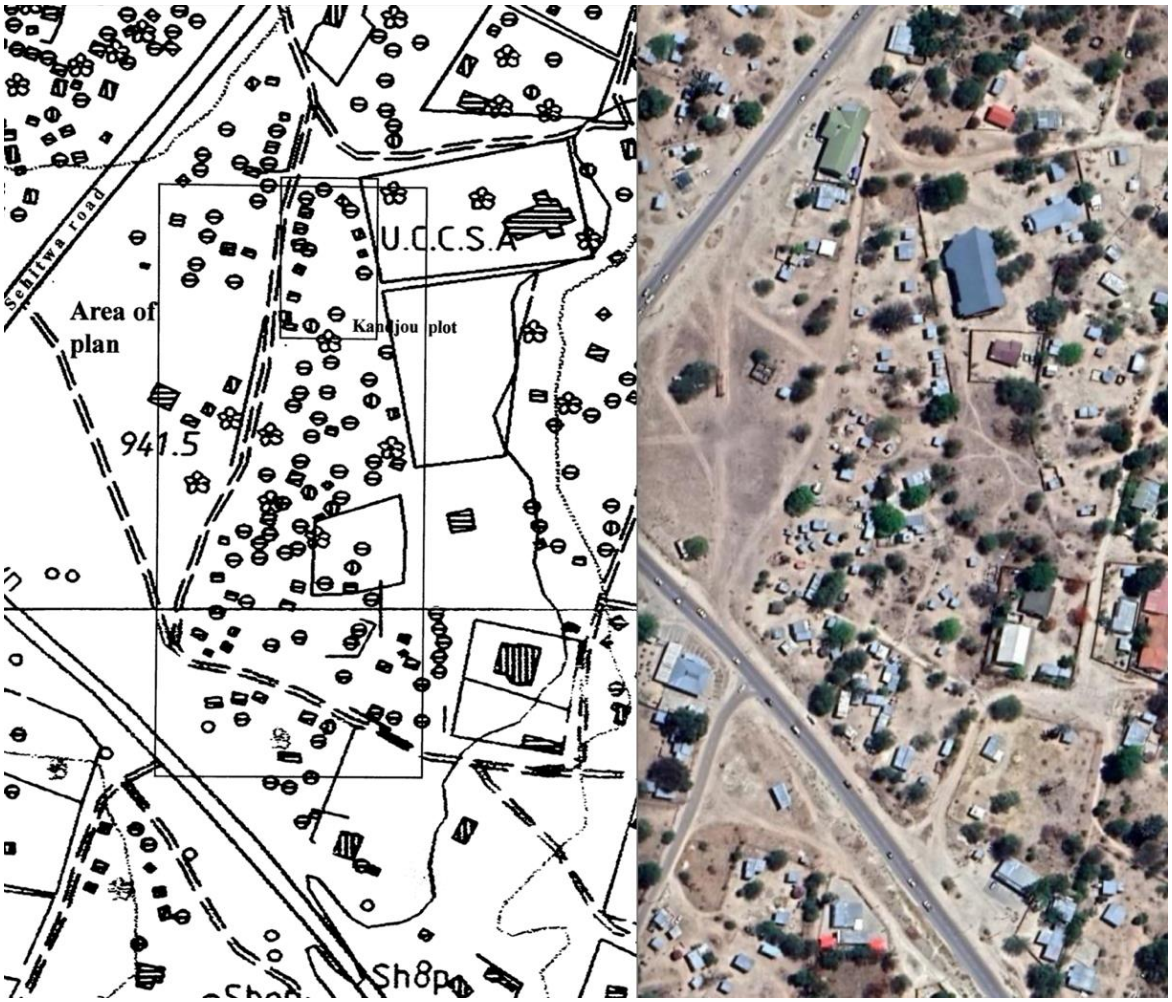

Figure 8 – (left) Location of Mabadutsane or 'Herero village' in Maun, showing area planned in detailed by author[10] and location of one family grouping (Kandjou); (right) same area from Google satellite imagery in 2022.[11]

Most of the homesteads in this area of Mabadutsane were unfenced, in contrast to most wards elsewhere in Maun, where plots were officially allocated and fenced, and more than one household usually built together as extended kin. In fact, this was partly intentional on the part of its inhabitants, who consider the area as a 'base camp' for Mbanderu and Herero people whilst in Maun, rather than a permanent home or ward of the town.

Over time, the number of houses had increased with extended family members joining each other, and since no formal plot boundaries existed, demarcation and formal Land Board-granted rights to living spaces were rare. On drawing a detailed plan, people were however able to identify their agreed dwelling areas. These areas were not simply where they carried out domestic activities such as cooking, but in fact were zones around houses belonging to specific relatives who had built with them. People often built houses in specific spots to incorporate the resulting space between buildings within 'their' area. This process, in which

[10] The detailed plan is available for consultation in the Pitt Rivers Museum Manuscript Collections, Morton Papers, Box 2.

[11] Map sources: (left) Dept of Surveys and Mapping, Government of Botswana, 1994 (Sheet 0943) Based upon 1994 aerial photography; (right) Google Maps. 'Maun, Botswana.' Satellite image. 2022, https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Maun,+Botswana/@-19.998701,23.4197523,728m Accessed 20 July 2022.

the practice of building creates and maintains social space, explains much about the socially recognised plot boundaries shown to me in Mabudutsane. 'We never thought of fencing our areas', said one woman, 'since we are all related people staying in one place.' 'We don't know how to organise ourselves in a village', said another woman, 'since there is no *otjiunda* or main house to build with'. 'We do not need to separate ourselves with fences like the others in Maun,' related another, 'since we are all related people staying together, sharing our everyday things … you cannot live together with such boundaries'. 'At the *ohambo* no-one is allowed to build behind another person, but you will find that here' stated another woman, 'my parents built in a line and this is better since we can see each other and communicate well'. It was noticeable when planning Mabadutsane how the building norms outlined in the first part of this paper did not feature here. Instead, most houses were influenced in their orientation by the hard boundaries of the main road and the wall and fence of the U.C.C.S.A. land to the south (Figure 8). Houses clustered and jostled for space, with doors facing all directions, rather than west.

Mabudutsane was therefore an inherently negotiable and fluid social area, made and remade through the material practices of building. It was characterised by a sense of long-standing temporariness or marginality, enhanced by its peripheral location squeezed between a main road and a church property, and without any formal recognition or land allocation by the local government authorities. What quickly became apparent was that this settlement was a product of the range of Mbanderu social and economic activities in Maun, activities that contrasted markedly with other resident groups. For the most part, most Mbanderu did not regard Mabadutsane as a secure area for living, despite some having stayed there for years, and were generally suspicious of Tswana tribal administration and government intentions towards them. Few Mbanderu families expressed to me that they considered the place their permanent home, and acknowledged the transient nature of visits, employment, schooling and residence. Some Mbanderu women earned money from tailoring (Figure 9) due to their tradition of making dresses and headgear. Many suggested that the area had become crowded and haphazard as a result of collective reluctance to admit any long-term notion of 'belonging' to the town, or even Ngamiland.

Mabudutsane existed as a site in which Mbanderu experiences of displacement and marginality as a group within Botswana were both evident and generationally reproduced. The building strategies that I surveyed there exerted an influence upon the inhabitants who created it largely as a location for the care of schoolchildren sent by their families to Maun from remote *ozonganda* to gain some education. Although experiences of displacement and marginality are not separate issues, they are separable, since more recently displaced groups within Botswana, such as the Mbukushu, are arguably less marginal, although only recently displaced from war in Angola in 1970. Many Mbanderu said that it was their pastoral identity that continued their social marginalisation in a rapidly-urbanising, cash-based economy such as Botswana. The inhabitants of Mabudutsane frequently responded to questions about settlement in terms of their marginal status as a group, and frequently equated their marginality as a result of their displaced status as a people. Material dwelling practices both reflected and were involved in the social reproduction of such responses over time.

Figure 9 – A dressmaker in the workshop of Itah Hikwama in Mabadutsane, Maun. Photo by the author, 2000. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [PRM 2009.168.297].

Many inhabitants of Mabudutsane openly discussed their belief that the authorities intended to remove them from the town to locations further away on the periphery, where only fenced plots with nuclear families would be allowed by the town's Land Board. Many argued that this was proof of their marginal status as a group, and it was evident that many felt bound together by such possibility of potential exclusion at the time. However, it is clear now, some twenty years on, that this was an unfounded fear and that their occupation of this area of Maun continues today, as Figure 8 shows. Two women once became very angry when recounting

that they had been told to remove their head-dresses for a photograph required for their national identity (*Omang*) card, believing that it was a Tswana attempt to oppress them, by removing representations of their culture in official documentation. The government report of 1991 concerning sanitation concerns in the ward, referenced earlier, in fact did not propose wholesale removal of inhabitants but recommended that 'the area be de-congested to allow developments to be carried out … the decision of individual households to move should be achieved through persuasion not coercion. It must be remembered that there is already some suspicion in the Herero community that the purpose of the exercise is to remove them from the village centre' (Malila 1991:8). However, given Botswana's track record of 'persuading' minority groups to adopt different modes of settlement, such misgivings were arguably not misplaced. 'We do not feel secure living here', stated one Mbanderu man, 'since we may be moved any time. We do not feel like investing in houses or anything here, since we may be told to leave tomorrow'. Whilst similar sanitation projects were openly discussed in other parts of Maun, people continued to invest time and money in building since they had been told that cash compensation would be paid to all Land Board permit holders. Few in Mabudutsane owned such official Land Board permits, and few trusted that the government would compensate them is removed. The coping strategies of historical displacement were still current within Mbanderu social and material life. Algamor noted that one of the main reasons for Mbanderu reluctance to invest in boreholes was a widespread belief that their stay in Botswana was temporary, and that 'you cannot take a bore-hole to Namibia' (1980: 49). In this way both social and material relations were deeply involved in the constant negotiation of group identity over time, and the social relationship to specific landscapes. In Mabudutsane, Mbanderu children experienced social space as a communal and corporate sphere of activity produced by the way building activities expressed and reproduced dwelling relationships among the group. Over time, the socio-spatial communality of their built environment can be seen as a crucially influential factor in the way learned dispositions arose and the way social activities were reproduced.

Of particular interest is the complex way in which marginality and the extended structures of displacement are mutually reproduced over time in specific settlement contexts. In Mabudutsane, the lack of spatial markers as boundaries, the materiality of building and other social activities, and significantly the overt contrasts in homestead arrangement and organisation between village and *ohambo* contexts, were all influential in producing and reproducing sets of social activities that confirmed their own narratives of cultural difference. For instance, the importance of cattle-based activities for many families meant that time and mutual social involvement were located at the *ohambo*, whereas only infrequent activities were located in Mabudutsane where they stayed in a house within an extended kin area. The material and socio-spatial attributes of Mabudutsane were often consciously reflected upon by people as revealing that they were not 'village people' but pastoralists, and did not 'know' how to settle in villages. This reflection was further politicised as evidence of group difference and marginality. More importantly however, the lasting and transposable dispositions, or *habitus*, of displacement and marginality, can be seen as having had an important material involvement in the way settlement contexts operated as locales for learning sociality. As 'a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group' (Bourdieu 1977: 86), the *habitus* of dwelling practices in Mabadutsane had its roots in the pastoral life discussed earlier, but which found different forms and strategies in a town in a country that many Mbanderu still did not feel settled in.

Conclusion

Mabadutsane was a place of other places, its houses, pathways and meeting areas were forms of a wider social landscape. The social and material biographies discussed in this paper suggest a relationship to landscape in which multiple connections to differing locations are highly desirable for many displaced and migrant groups such as the Mbanderu. This notion is expressed in the Mbanderu concept of *ekondua rimue*, which makes possible pastoral movement and flexibility through complex sets of reciprocal social relationships within both patriclan and matriclan groups and affinal relations. Although it has a conceptual dimension, *ekondua rimue* should really be understood as the various sets of material practices engaged in by people, such as cattle-keeping and village contexts, and the way in which Mbanderu go about dwelling across such contexts. Building relations within the *onganda* set out spatial relationships, and these spatial relations are also expressions of a family's kin relations. Practices of homestead creation through marriage, birth, and eventually death, are also processes that convert homesteads into burial places, prompting movement once again. Material and social practices of settlement join across the *ekondua rimue* to create the social landscape. Central to this analysis of dwelling has been the presence of place as process rather than site, as in the understanding of social production and reproduction. Most Mbanderu asserted that visiting relatives in other places was integral to their dwelling in the landscape, one person even comparing the social trails of visiting as the veins along which blood flowed within the extended family's body. The total set of relationships between these metaphorical 'bodies' over time may well come close to how *ekondua rimue* should be understood both as an abstract social concept and as an involved and engaged manner of dwelling in the world. My argument in this paper has been that whilst contexts of identity are continually evolving, the making of dwelling places are integrally involved in such processes, and that the material practices of dwelling in Mabadutsane could be understood as dynamically involved in processes of producing and reproducing Mbanderu senses of 'permanent temporariness' and marginality within Botswana.

Bibliography

Almagor, Uri 1980. Pastoral identity and reluctance to change: the Mbanderu of Ngamiland, *Journal of African Law*, 35-61. doi:10.1017/S0021855300008846

Blier, Suzanne Preston 1987. *The anatomy of architecture: ontology and metaphor in Batammaliba architectural expression*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carsten, Janet and Stephen Hugh-Jones (eds.) 1995. *About the house: Lévi-Strauss and beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Casey, Edward S. 1996. How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: phenomenological prolegomena, in Feld, S. & K. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place*, Santa Fe: USA.

Ekwensi, Cyprian 1962. *Burning grass*, London, Heinemann.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1940. *The Nuer: a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Harvey, David 1992. *Justice, nature and the geography of difference,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Heywood, A, Lau, B, and R. Ohly (eds.) 1992. *Warriors, sages and outcasts in the Namibian past*, Windhoek (Namibia): Michael Scott Oral Records Project.

Ingold, Tim 1993. The temporality of the landscape, *World Archaeology*, 25/2, 152-73. doi: 10.1080/00438243.1993.9980235

Kandapaera, Kaendee ua 1992. War, flight, asylum: a brief history of the Ovambanderu of Ngamiland, Botswana, 1896-1961, University of Botswana: Unpublished B.Ed. Thesis.

Lemonnier, Pierre 2012. *Mundane objects: materiality and non-verbal communication*, Walnut Creek (CA): Left Coast Press.

Malila, Ikanyeng 1991. *Maun socio-economic and housing study: Mabudutsa and Mabudutsane wards*, Gaborone: Ministry of Local Govt. & Lands.

Moore, Henrietta 1986. *Space, text and gender: an anthropological study of the Marakwet of Kenya*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morton, Barry 1994. Servitude, slave trading, and slavery in the Kalahari, in Elizabeth A. Eldredge and Fred Morton (eds.), *Slavery in South Africa*, 215-250. London: Routledge.

Morton, Christopher 2002. Dwelling and building in Ngamiland, northern Botswana, Oxford: DPhil thesis.

Morton, Christopher 2007. Remembering the house: memory and materiality in northern Botswana, *Journal of Material Culture*, 12/2, 157–79. doi:10.1177/1359183507078123.

Morton, Christopher 2004. Fixity and fluidity: chiefly authority and settlement movement in colonial Botswana, *History and Anthropology*, 15/4, 345–65. doi:10.1080/0275720042000298688.

Parkin, David 1999. Mementoes as transitional objects in human displacement, *Journal of Material Culture*, 4/3, 303-20. doi:10.1177/135918359900400304

Pennington, H. and R. Harpending 1991. How many refugees were there? History and population change among the Herero and Mbanderu of Northwestern Botswana, *Botswana Notes and Records*, 23/1, 209-221.

Vivelo, Frank R. 1977. *The Herero of western Botswana: aspects of change in a group of Bantu-speaking cattle herders*, St. Paul, USA: West Publications.

Yamba, C Bawa 1995. *Permanent pilgrims*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

ARGUMENTS FOR HUMILITY: LESSONS FOR ANTHROPOLOGISTS FROM SIX KEY TEXTS

DAVID ZEITLYN[1]

In support of a lean and humble anthropology I discuss six key articles that provide indirect arguments for humility. In summary, these articles teach us that the terms of a discussion may be flawed and cannot be resolved by agreeing shared meanings (Gallie); we must accept limits on what we can know (Nagel); depictions, visual representations are potentially confusing, forms of translation across media types are ubiquitous; (Wolf); portraits are exemplary performances of the self, even the most casual depictions are of the act of posing; (Berger); varying meanings may be associated with a single item, which may convey different things to different people in different places and at different times (Miller and Woodward); and that accounts of a social group and its ideas must encompass vagueness and inconsistency rather than present a misleading coherence and consistency (Favret-Saada). Together these provide reasons for developing a humble anthropology, one that recognizes its incompleteness and revisability.

Keywords: Humility, sparsity, meaning, vagueness

Introduction

Sparsity and humility make good bedfellows. By saying less we have to leave gaps, leaving space for the contributions of others. This means we have to recognise that we do not have the last word, which in itself is a form of humility. This can still be done while yet honouring anthropology's global, comparative perspectives. The way out of the conundrum (not, I think, a contradiction) is to aspire to create accounts that are knowingly incomplete, leaving room for others to provide alternative and/or complementary accounts. Sparse theory can facilitate the task of comparison and establish partial (incomplete) commensurability. The very parsimony of sparse theory is helpful, allowing anthropologists to achieve clarity even when

[1] Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford. ORCID: 0000-0001-5853-7351. Email: david.zeitlyn@anthro.ox.ac.uk

discussing unclear or vague ideas (I discuss the argument for sparsity at greater length elsewhere (Zeitlyn 2023 in press)).

In the terms used by João Biehl and Peter Locke the humility of a knowing incompleteness is also a readiness to be startled. For them anthropology is like life, always in a state of becoming, always not quite achieving fruition, in which the present folds in views on the past and anticipation of multiple possible futures. Such a dynamic unfurling holds of humans living ordinary lives. More than that it also holds of anthropology in the tensions between theory and description. As they put it

> The tension between empirical realities and theories is permanent and irresolvable, and these approaches allow theory to be always catching up to reality, always startled, making space for the incompleteness of understanding that is often a necessary condition for anthropological fieldwork and thinking. (Biehl and Locke 2017: 7-8)

In this article I seek to make a case for humility by co-opting the work of others to my cause. To that end I discuss six different pieces (published over almost seventy years) that I think have wide relevance. Overall, they enjoin us to humility, to accept that not all of our questions are answerable and never definitively, in full. They encourage us to think about how reciprocal understandings of the parts we play, the roles we adopt,[2] are informed by posture and demeanour. And they teach us that these roles are learned from our peers and reflect what we show them. They teach us that, although we may be dealing with 'the same thing' (in Miller and Woodward's example discussed below, wearing blue jeans), the attitudes we adopt conform to cultural norms that vary across space, as well as time. Wearing a pair of jeans 'says' different things in different locations, and the messages sent now may be different from those sent fifty years ago. The wider implications of these readings add up to providing an argument for caution. They provide reasons for the development of a humble anthropology, one that recognizes that it is incomplete and revisable, for all the rigour deployed in the use of various field methods as we do our research.

There are different types of humility. There are humble individuals, reticent about coming forward, yet whose arguments and actions may be anything but humble. Separate from such personal humility is a humble approach to theory: trying to make the practise of anthropological research modest in its claims and in the ways in which evidence collected is then used to make arguments. This paper is about humble arguments (whether or not made by braggarts).[3]

[2] Harking back to Goffman (1959).

[3] On the related question of personal humility I note that there are ways of removing personality from the game of anthropological publication, for example, by anonymising authorship (just as informants are often anonymised in publications: if their names are removed then why not also remove the names of the researcher?). This is discussed elsewhere by Luther Blissett (no date).

Six texts

While helping students to prepare for doctoral research I find myself referring year after year to a few texts outside of their usual disciplinary remit, as well as two from within anthropology. The texts are discussed here because I think their overarching relevance deserves wider recognition. In this article I discuss what makes them so useful, not just for young researchers, but for all of us (and actually I think not just in anthropology but in all social sciences). They promote the development of a humble anthropology, one that self-consciously recognizes its limitations. As such this is a response to the promotion of High Theory, often associated with *turns* (see also Zeitlyn 2022 for a different type of response). The articles are the following (in chronological order):[4]

- Gallie, William 1956. Essentially contested concepts.
- Nagel, Thomas 1974. What is it like to be a bat?
- Wolf, Bryan 1990. Confessions of a closet ekphrastic: literature, painting and other unnatural relations.
- Berger Jr, Harry 1994. Fictions of the pose: facing the gaze of early modern portraiture.
- Miller, Daniel, and Sophie Woodward 2007. Manifesto for a study of denim.
- Favret-Saada, Jeanne 2012. Death at your heels: when ethnographic writing propagates the force of witchcraft.

In summary, these articles teach us the following:

- Gallie: the terms of a discussion may be flawed and cannot be resolved by agreeing shared meanings;
- Nagel: we must accept limits on what we can know;
- Wolf: depictions and visual representations are potentially confusing; forms of translation across media types are ubiquitous;
- Berger: portraits are exemplary performances of the self; even the most casual depictions are of the act of posing;
- Miller and Woodward: varying meanings may be associated with a single item, which may convey different things to different people in different places and at different times; and
- Favret-Saada: accounts of a social group and its ideas must encompass vagueness and inconsistency rather than present a misleading coherence and consistency.

In the following I consider their arguments in more detail.

[4] The citations are to the first publication of each article, to preserve the relative chronology. Several have been widely republished.

Gallie, 1956

Discussing 'appraisive concepts', Gallie first gives a hypothetical example from team sports (which is 'the best team' in sport X?) and then discusses religious affiliation (in his example, 'being a good Christian'), as well as democracy and art.[5] The range of these examples shows that evaluative ideologies lurk at the edges of what may be claimed to be neutral classificatory decisions. This is perhaps clearest in disputes about whether or not a piece is to be regarded as a work of art. Duchamp's urinal, re-purposed as an artwork entitled 'Fountain', illustrates the dilemma. The classificatory question of whether it constitutes art is neither straightforward nor without ideology. Gallie argues that such hidden evaluations are common even when what may seem to be simple or neutral classificatory decisions are made. Still more difficult is the issue of evaluating what is or is not *good* art: any criteria seem slippery, to say the least. Gallie suggests this is inescapable, anticipating in some ways Howard Becker's exploration of the sociology of art worlds (1982).

Gallie's hypothetical case of evaluating sports teams is contemporary with Wittgenstein's discussion of family resemblance, which also cites games when arguing against forms of essentialism (1958: 65ff). Gallie concludes that 'it is quite impossible to find a *general principle* for deciding which of two contestant uses of an essentially contested concept really "uses it best"' (Gallie 1956: 189, original emphasis). If people have different understandings of words like 'art', 'freedom' or 'democracy' this can lead them to argue across each other (as occurs, for example, when arguments are couched in terms mistakenly assumed to be shared). To rephrase Gallie's argument, the concepts being discussed are what Susan Leigh and James Griesemer called 'boundary objects' (1989): concepts that span divides and provide the substance of debate, argument and division. As such they constitute the *explicanda* (the things to be explained) not the *explanans* (the terms of the explanation). Indeed, as Gallie argues, it would be a category mistake to think that the problems could be resolved by any single, perfect definition. Since definitional issues are mired with political entanglements, consensus cannot be achieved, and it is misguided to think otherwise. As analysts we should select less contentious explanatory or analytic terms, and seek to understand the arguments in more prosaic, and knowingly incomplete ways. As far as possible, terms of analysis should not be essentially contested.[6] In the spirit of Gallie I would argue that reducing the contestability of analytical terms should make it easier to reduce the 'meta-arguments' about how to do research enabling us to spend more time discussing the results.[7] It allows room for many different applications of research. That process might result in sparser anthropological theory, but provides greater clarity about what is being explored, in what terms and to what purposes. As Marilyn Strathern noted 'it matters what ideas one uses to think other ideas (with)' (1992: 10).

[5] Parts of this are taken from the relevant section of Zeitlyn 2022.

[6] A parallel discussion concerns 'wicked problems': see Rittel and Webber (1973). See also Lane and Woodman (2000), a decision-making version of Gallie's argument.

[7] To be clear I do not think it possible to remove essentially contested terms altogether, but it is helpful to try and reduce them wherever possible. And of course all description is theory laden but again my argument is that the recognition of that point should lead us to reduce the theoretical commitments whenever possible.

Nagel, 1974

In the context of a philosophical discussion of consciousness and the mind-body problem that is particularly focused on qualia, the subjective experience of consciousness, Nagel asks: 'What is it like to be a bat?' My shorthand summary of his position is: 'What is it like to be a bat? Don't know. Can't know. Deal with it.'

He asks whether a parallel can be established between echolocation, as used by bats, and sight, as used by primates and other mammals.[8] He suggests that the differences are so great that any such parallel is unreliable: the way I *see* my computer is not the way a bat *hears* it. We may both have sensory access to or information about it, and we may both in some sense 'represent' it, since we can interact with it, but that is as close a parallel as we can draw. This is an instance of radical translation: trying to talk across experiential (and species) boundaries. Nagel argues that in our interactions with bats we lack the bridgehead that enables humans to get along with each other and sometimes, with a lot of work and a huge investment of time, to talk to one another.[9]

Researchers working in Amazonia have addressed these questions in a very different way (e.g. Viveiros de Castro 1998). On their account of Amazonian 'perspectivism', humans can know what it is like to be a bat, armadillo or anaconda: they are just like us (only they seem different to our normal senses). So there is no profound difference and Nagel's question can be answered without any surprises. This points to an interesting dilemma not only about ontological difference but also about epistemological humility. Nagel enjoins us to accept the possibility of real ontological difference which may be unbridgeable. The Amazonianists describe an ontological system in which there is nothing to bridge, so the assertion of profound ontological difference is at the same time an assertion of deep similarity (Kohn 2007: 7 see also Myhre 2018: 104). However, this isn't the place for an argument about Amazonian ontologies. The point about epistemological humility goes back to the quote from Biehl and Locke above, and our readiness to be startled. Is it odder (more startling) to be asked to accept that surface difference masks hidden similarity or that the differences go all the way down, in ways we literally cannot imagine? If humility means accepting our limits then perhaps we are better drawing some lines in the sand and saying 'this is where anthropology ends' (for now – such lines by definition can be redrawn later).

My own response to Nagel is to ask a host of different 'What is it like to be …?' questions. And a further response is to ask a counter-question: 'What is it like to be Thomas Nagel?' Different, though seemingly similar, questions raise different sorts of problems about how and whether they can be answered: they can, at best, get very different sorts of answer. It is one thing to ask about a category, bats, another to ask about a single individual, Thomas Nagel. And if we change the question to be about our species, as opposed to an individual,

[8] See discussion of Amerindian perspectivism below.

[9] I note that Dennett (1992) is critical of Nagel for assuming the point and not examining the literature on echolocation and bats. Dennett thinks we can gain some idea of bats, and is vehement in his criticism of Nagel's position as resting on 'qualia' the idea of what it *feels* like to be an 'xxx'. Dennett sees no need to be concerned about qualia at all.

the question seems different again: 'What is it like to be a human?' I think this is unanswerable in a different way from the way the original bat question is unanswerable. Here is my list of possible 'What is it like to be…?' questions.[10]
Consider what it is like to be the following:

- a chicken
- a pig
- a pet (a cat or a dog, not a stick insect)
- a chimpanzee
- a Neanderthal
- a human
- a human of a different gender
- a human of a different ethnicity
- a human of different ethnicity and gender
- a member of your family
- yourself

The greater the commonality, kinship or knowability, the more possible it seems to provide a substantial answer to the question 'What is it like to be…?' However, Nagel's paper prompts me to add a further list of increasing lack-of-communion, non-kinship or unknowability:

- a fish
- a bat
- a jellyfish
- an octopus (*pace* Godfrey-Smith, 2017).

Nagel argues that such beings are unknowable. If we accept this then we must also return to the previous list: can we know dogs, other minds, ourselves? Is the way in which we know one of these profoundly different from the ways in which we know others? There may not be commonality within the possible kinds of answer. That is to say, knowing what it is like to be me may be a different sort of thing from knowing what it is like to be my sister, and both of these different again from knowing what it is like to be a cat. There need not be one sort of 'knowing'. This issue of communication across divides returns us to translation and to ekphrasis as a translation across boundaries. It prompts reflection on how we can learn: how we acquire the ability to say 'I know this' and why sometimes we should say 'I don't know and cannot know'. It seems to me that positive claims to know something are somehow stronger than the inverse claim not to know something.[11] In Gallie's terms, perhaps *knowing* is essentially contested. Recognising these concerns suggests a rolling back of what we aspire to when we seek to know.[12] This is a form of humility.

[10] In his 'Reflections on Nagel', Douglas Hofstadter (1982) gives a wider range of possible 'what is it like?' questions.
[11] This inverts Wittgenstein's discussion of how to know a form of life. Knowability is part of 'the mythology in our language' (Palmié 2018).
[12] A reviewer helpfully points out the tension between this sort of philosophical sceptical minimalism and the possibility of other ways of knowing (some not part of mainstream Western intellectual traditions), for example, empathy (what it is like to be another person) and animism (in the sense of 'what it is like to be an animal'). As

Nagel's article and Douglas Hofstadter's commentary on it (1982) also prompt the reflection that knowledge is not an all or nothing state of affairs. We may know (can know) next to nothing about being a bat. However, we may know *something* about being dogs and perhaps something more about being our siblings. The first list above reflects increasing commonality, offering increasing possibilities for greater knowledge. Our knowledge, even of ourselves, may always be imperfect and improvable, but critically it admits of degrees. We can have *some* knowledge of a thing which, with work, may be increased. So, although Nagel's account explains why anthropological accounts are incomplete, this is not a counsel of despair, but rather an injunction to work harder and to accept some limits on what it is possible to know. I take it to provide a foundation for using sparse theory in anthropology (Zeitlyn 2023 in press) building on what has been called merological research (Zeitlyn and Just 2014). A sparse theoretical scaffolding can provide a framework for ethnographic density. And as I have suggested above, this can enable an anthropology that is sparse in its commitments and humble for that.

Wolf, 1990

I found Bryan Wolf's article when working on ekphrasis. Ekphrasis is the representation in one medium of things in another. It was originally used for descriptions in words of artworks (sculptures or paintings). Inspired by Wolf, I now characterise ekphrasis as a translation between different media. It also makes connections between the literature on translation between languages with work in art history and visual studies. In his article Wolf talks about 'closet ekphrasis' and makes connections between realism and display. For Wolf, closet ekphrasis concerns the silencing of art: the rhetorical claim that the visual is silent, because it is outside of any language. It is well established that meaning is a social construct or achievement (rather than an individual state of mind). This idea was developed to deal with speech in conversation, but applies equally to images. An isolated image or portrait is mute just as a person is when alone. The portrait is mute and meaningless when isolated from a social context or set of uses which might give it meaning. Wolf cleverly links this to a far wider argument. He considers Dürer's woodcut of a draftsman looking through a grid while drawing a female nude, where the social relationship giving meaning to the image is that of a patriarchal gaze. He goes on to suggest that perspective (and representation in general) can be seen as a form of possession.

His argument implicitly connects gender, cartography, colonialism and imperialism: so to chart or draw is part of taking possession.[13] Where does this leave us? Although description cannot be neutral, neutrality remains the ideal, along with being open and honest about our

already noted, although some Amazonian groups have been celebrated for their traditions that hold that 'what it is like' to be an animal is just like what it is to be human, (with the consequence that there are few surprises from adopting the perspective of an animal) many other indigenous groups round the world do not share these perspectives.

[13] Timothy Mitchell's work on mapping Egypt is a case in point (2002).

positionalities and biases.[14] We strive to comprehend, to explain our comprehension, and to account for how we came by it. As Wolf shows, this is both delicate and difficult: that makes attempting it all the more important.

Figure 1 – Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman ca. 1600 Albrecht Dürer. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/366555 Public Domain

Berger, 1994

Harry Berger Jr's article is also about ekphrasis, but he takes a different position on the visual representation of people. In *Fictions of the Pose* he argues against the 'ecphrasis of physiognomic representation', the claim that character can be 'read' from a face or an image of it ('inferred from image', in his phrase (1994: 88)). By calling this an ekphrasis, he points to the artificiality, the cultural constructedness, of the claim that personality is visible, that it can be read from a face. As he later put it:

> a portrait presents itself as a sign that denotes its referent by resemblance; the referent it denotes is not simply a person but a person in the act of posing; and since posing is part of the causal event that produced it, the portrait as a sign is indexical as well as iconic. I use the term 'iconic' in a fairly restrictive and simplistic way to denote the relation between the portrait as a sign and the act of portrayal it depicts as its putative referent (2000: 26).

In other words, portraits represent the act of portrayal – so are 'indexical icons' (like photographs!) indexical of the act of sitting (1994: 99). He emphasizes the collaboration in creating a portrait between sitter and portraitist, and how this is read by the viewer. Portraiture and caricature are contrasted: although a caricature may depict an individual (as in a political cartoon) it can also be read as a more general statement (ibid. 99), whereas a portrait by definition depicts an individual (even if that person is unknown to the viewer).

[14] As a reviewer helpfully pointed out, like all ideals, neutrality and disinterestedness have a politics and a history, for example as discussed by Daston and Galison (1992).

Although Berger's article does not cite Erving Goffman, his 2000 monograph (also called *Fictions of the Pose*) does discuss Goffman's work in a long footnote, of which this is an extract:

> Goffman's approach is valuable because he insists that the performance of any activity is always an activity of performance 'oriented toward communication' and that the 'interaction constraints' imposed by any situation 'play upon the individual and transform his activities into performances', so that instead of 'merely doing his task [...] he will express the doing of his task' [Goffman 1959: 65…] The problem with this analysis for my purposes is that in the basic distinction between public and private – or 'front-region' and 'back-region' – performances, both are treated primarily as performances before others. Performance before oneself is a marginal topic in Goffman's project, and even as he exploits the notion that selves are performances, characters, and social productions, his terminology doesn't allow for the methodological distinction between presentation and representation that notion seems to require. As we move from 'she presents herself' to 'she presents her self' to 'she presents her self as/in this or that character', the demand for the distinction increases: what she presents, performs, or displays is neither an unmediated self (a *presence*) nor merely another presentation, performance, or display; she presents a representation of the self the situation calls for and helps induce (2000: 543–544, original emphasis).

In his original article Berger devotes several pages to the way in which sitter and portraitist make a portrait jointly, agreeing a pose, a setting and so forth. In doing so the subjects 'give themselves to be seen' (1994: 94) in acts 'of posing, which, in the prephotographic era, must always be […] intentional' (1994: 98). He calls this

> *the fiction of the pose*. Its claim is that the sitter and painter were present to each other during the act of painting; that the sitter did in the studio (or wherever) what she or he appears to be doing in the portrait; and that in posing before the painter he or she was projecting the self-representation aimed at future observers (ibid. 99, original emphasis).
>
> If the Mona Lisa has always made observers conscious of her consciousness of posing - conscious, in the Lacanian formula, of giving herself to be seen - the fiction of the pose reminds us that the sitter's first observer is the painter (ibid. 100).

Although discussing early modern portraiture (Leonardo, Bronzio, Titian etc.) Berger bookends his discussion with Barthes' comments on the experience of being photographed, an experience which for Barthes has the scent of death about it and which is key to Geoffrey Batchen's discussion (1988) of posing in photography. For Batchen and Barthes photography is ineluctably a *memento mori*. This raises the spectre that representation in general may be a *memento mori*. We haunt ourselves through the representations we create, even when we call them science or social science.

Bryan Wolf reviewed Berger's 2000 monograph (2001: 567). In his summary he quotes Berger: 'the sitter "knows that we know that he knows that we are gazing at him"' (Berger 2000: 387). This is an argument against essentialism applied to the self. Implicitly, Berger is arguing that there is no true hidden self to portray, or if there is then it appears in no portrayal. This raises issues about essences that are discussed very differently by Thomas Nagel and have implications for the limits of representation and portrayal.

Miller and Woodward, 2007

Miller and Woodward lead us to consider how to think about the small scale in the context of larger scales. Or how to consider very widely distributed artefacts, whose significance and use, let alone their meaning, cannot be assumed. More precisely, we cannot assume that the significance of a widely distributed artefact is itself widely shared. It is entirely possible that meanings differ notwithstanding that 'the same object' is ubiquitous. And Thomas Nagel might ask what does it mean ('what is it like') to say a pair of jeans has meaning for someone? The philosopher would want to know if an object 'means' in the same way a word 'means' something. If there are differences (and I suspect there are) then what are their implications? (I am resisting the lure of asking what is the meaning of those differences!) The meaning of jeans (and other objects) is interestingly difficult to pin down (see below). It is an anthropological *and* a philosophical challenge.

The methodological and conceptual challenges of this proposition are taken up by Miller and Woodward in their 'denim manifesto':

> The term manifesto is justified by the evidence presented in this paper that denim is such a grounded analogue to philosophy; one that is employed by populations to resolve major contradictions of living within the modern world and associated forms of anxiety. Our manifesto is a call to make manifest the profound nature of that response. It is pitched against the established philosophical sense of ontology that assumes being always resides in depth, and that things of the surface, such as clothes, are intrinsically superficial, a concept of being that is by no means shared by all peoples. […] However, if the grounds for wearing denim are always specific to that region or population then how can anthropology contribute to the other factor that needs explaining; that is the global ubiquity? In this paper we attempt to overcome this dualism, and produce a genuine dialectic that starts from the evident situation that people are wearing jeans simultaneously for global and local reasons (Miller and Woodward 2007: 335-337).

Miller and Woodward ask how to deal with 'the extreme polarity of the most global and the most intimate' (ibid. 345). They use a commodity chain analysis to link the levels. They discuss 'clothing anxiety' and its resolution through 'clothing security' in choices of what to wear: 'the very anonymity and ubiquity of jeans protects from judgement. You may not be especially right, but you can't go far wrong with denim jeans' (ibid. 348). Our lives are beset with contradictions even while making mundane decisions about what to wear or eat. Although

these choices are often heavily constrained (e.g. by financial constraints or local availability) they are nonetheless choices. Our perceptions of ourselves, others and the world influence the decisions we make; these decisions in turn create the world that influences later decisions by others and by our future selves. Some say one thing and do another, some want to do one thing but do another because of how they think others would react. So social worlds are made. Essential to understanding those worlds are approaches that comprehend the global *as well as* the particular, such as the way in which the minutiae of decision-making (e.g. what to wear) occurs. We need to understand how such decision-making creates patterns of systematic, recurring types of choices by different types of people, which can have global ramifications.

The other articles considered here argue that caution and circumspection are required when shared meanings are identified and discussed. To rephrase Miller and Woodward's examples in Berger's (and almost Nagel's) terms: we cannot assume that 'What it is like to wear a pair of jeans' is the same in Rio di Janeiro and in London. The portrayal of self as 'a wearer of jeans' is a small identity statement, which may or may not get captured in a selfie. Invoking Harry Berger's argument, we could caption such an image 'me *posing* as a jeans wearer'. We portray ourselves in the clothes we wear, and selves emerge from the patterns of choices made. Social scientists or fellow humans who 'read' such choices are making ekphrastic jumps from surface to depths, from a set of visible attributes to those such as character or group affiliation. Berger and Wolf question these jumps in quite different ways from Miller and Woodward, who also question the underlying inferences. In everyday life people everywhere do this unthinkingly, mostly with great success. In social science research something similar is done consciously and cautiously. We must recognise that there are limits to the inferences we make and this is why we must be cautious. But that must not stop us trying, and the successful transactions of everyday social life give reason for optimism. In the interactions of ordinary life, people mobilise in many different ways deeply nuanced understandings of how social life works. These understandings are continually revised and polished as we go about our lives. If we notice, for example, that this person likes bad jokes and that person is sensitive to comments about religion, this may influence our behaviour towards them. Such implicit understandings can also be given explicit description and analysis: this is the task of anthropologists and other social scientists.

Favret-Saada, 2012

The final reading is also the most recent, although it relates to fieldwork that started in the late 1960s. Jeanne Favret-Saada discusses the process of dewitching (and its links to psychotherapy) in rural France. As she makes abundantly clear, understanding these processes is not helped by using the vocabulary of 'belief' (2012 : 47). Whether someone 'believes in X' is and can be different from whether one does Y. The delicacy of this may be seen in the use of Tarot, astrology and other forms of divination in contemporary Europe. We have to accept the possibility of people who, for example, might say when asked that 'they do not believe in the occult', but who might also sometimes consult Tarot cards and so forth. As Favret-Saada

points out this has methodological implications about how to study the phenomena. Many of the people concerned are likely to be in the grey area of the *nevertheless* captured by Mannoni's phrase (1964) 'je sais bien mais *quand même*' ('I really do know that, but *even so*'; as discussed by Boullier 2004) – or the quantum physicist Neils Bohr who reported his neighbour saying that 'horseshoes brought good luck even if you didn't believe in them' (the story was told by Werner Heisenberg 1971: 92). Another way of thinking about this is to see it as falling within the *pause*, the moment of 'hesitation' identified by Bruno Latour when talking about religion (2001). As Kirstine Munk put it discussing contemporary astrology in Denmark: 'Astrology is a tricky but typical example of modern non-institutionalized religion because there is no clear connection between belief and use. Some people believe in astrology but do not use it; others believe in it and use it, while others use it but do not believe in it' (2007: 288).

Jeanne Favret-Saada has seen this lived out. Faced by persistent misfortune, modern, sophisticated 'scientific' attitudes of 'disbelief' may go out of the window: her urban elite readers and even some of her distinguished colleagues at the CNRS ask for help, for dewitching, their formal status of not believing in witchcraft notwithstanding. As she points out this has implications for how to characterise or describe what is going on. She argues for a 'minimal ontology' (I would call this 'sparse'), one able to accommodate variation and vagueness, where actions and words may not always be perfectly consistent especially when written out on the unforgiving pages of an anthropological ethnography. This is an argument against the essentialism that lurks in much of the ontological turn in anthropology: the suggestion, almost always implicit, that there is an essence, a central core of a delimitable culture that an astute anthropologist can summarise.[15] But not only are human groups permeable and often without hard and fast boundaries but people exhibit huge variation in their behaviours and attitudes to their actions which are not well served by being described as 'an ontology'. 'Taking seriously' without reducing to a series of beliefs or worldviews is one of the rallying calls of the ontological turn (Viveiros de Castro 2015) . Favret-Saada shows how a researcher can 'take seriously' ways of being, or of living lives, without characterizing them as a set of perspectives on the world, in other words, without an ontology.

Conclusions

These six articles jointly underpin a modest manifesto: to recognise the challenges and limitations inherent in acquiring and recording knowledge and then to do the best possible job of it. Having struggled with the limitations, and perhaps scratched at the boundaries, in a process akin to sgraffito, we can produce accounts that others will find interesting and useful whether or not we share theoretical positions.

Of course many other authors have also provided helpful suggestions for thinking our way into ethnography. For example, Carlo Ginzberg (especially *Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm*) writes about attention to detail and the interpretation of traces, and what he calls

[15] See Theodoros Kyriakides (2016) for further discussion and comparison between Favret-Saada, Evans-Pritchard and Willerslev.

the humane sciences and their distance from quantification (1989: 113). A key element of his approach is summarized by the sentence 'When causes cannot be reproduced, there is nothing to do but to deduce them from their effects' (1989: 117). He is keenly aware that such deduction is fraught with uncertainty, approaching the stance taken by Nagel. Another example is *The Thinking of Thoughts* by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1971), which discusses the problem of distinguishing a blink from a wink. In objective, observational terms they are identical. In order to characterize the difference we need more than a bare account of what happened: we need what Ryle calls *thick description* which communicates meaning, giving where possible the internal perspective as well as external experience.[16] Yet Nagel shows that there are limits to what thick description can achieve: perhaps only a partial understanding, or none at all. The 2016 science fiction film *Arrival* is wildly optimistic on this score, suggesting that it would be easy to come to understand a (literally) alien language. Rather than abandon the exercise as impossible, I suggest proceeding but with great caution. We produce detailed ethnographies replete with thick description, yet, as suggested in the introduction, when writing this up the starting point should be one of theoretical sparsity and humility to make our biases clearer to see.

I encourage readers to read the articles themselves, and to reflect on their interconnections. The lesson I draw from these readings is that both in my field research and in the way I write it up I should try to construct a position of knowing incompleteness. This includes the use of a wide range of different theoretical positions, each with its own advantages and shortcomings (including biases), and being open about the gaps and limitations of what we do know. Ethnographic accounts should be more like mosaics than totalizing narratives, *not* aspiring to have the last word.

As I said at the start of this piece I think these add up a set of reasons for developing a humble anthropology. Such an anthropology recognizes that it is incomplete and revisable, and that anthropologists do not have the last word, nor should they aspire to this. Indeed, by leaving the gaps showing it may be easier for others to continue the work and build on what we have done.

Bibliography

Batchen, Geoffrey 1988. Le petit mort: photography and pose, *SF Camerawork Quarterly* 15/1, 3-6.

Becker, Howard 1982. *Art worlds*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press.

Berger Jr., Harry 1994. Fictions of the pose: facing the gaze of early modern portraiture, *Representations* 46, 87-120. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/2928780.
--- 2000. *Fictions of the pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[16] In anthropology this was taken up by Clifford Geertz (1973), to whom the phrase is often wrongly attributed.

Biehl, João and Peter Locke 2017. Introduction: ethnographic sensorium, in João Biehl and Peter Locke (eds.), *Unfinished: the anthropology of becoming*, 1-38. Durham: Duke University Press.

Blissett, Luther no date. The Hau of the paper and dividual authors: reimagining authorship in anthropology. Unpublished manuscript.

Boullier, Dominique 2004. Au-delà de la croyance: «je sais bien mais quand même», *Cosmopolitiques* 6, 27-47.

Collingwood, R.G. 1950. *An autobiography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Daston, Lorraine and Peter Galison 1992. The image of objectivity, *Representations* 40, 81-128. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/2928741.

Dennett, Daniel C. 1992. *Consciousness explained*, London: Allen Lane.

Favret-Saada, Jeanne 2012. Death at your heels: when ethnographic writing propagates the force of witchcraft, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2/1, 45-53. doi: https://doi.org/10.14318/hau2.1.004

Gallie, William B. 1956. Essentially contested concepts, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56, 167-98.

Geertz, Clifford 1973. Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture, in *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*, 3–30. New York: Basic Books.

Ginzburg, Carlo 2013 (1989). Clues: roots of an evidential paradigm, in *Clues, myths, and the historical method*, (trans. J.A. Tedeschi), 87-113. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Godfrey-Smith, Peter 2017. *Other minds: the octopus and the evolution of intelligent life*, London: William Collins.

Goffman, Erving 1959. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Heisenberg, Werner 1971. *Physics and beyond: encounters and conversations,* New York: Harper Torch.

Hofstadter, Douglas R. 1982. Reflections on Nagel, in *The mind's I: fantasies and reflections on self and soul*, Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel C. Dennett (eds.), 403-414. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Kohn, Eduardo 2007. How dogs dream: Amazonian natures and the politics of transspecies engagement, *American Ethnologist* 34/1, 3–24. doi: https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2007.34.1.3.

Kyriakides, Theodoros 2016. Jeanne Favret-Saada's minimal ontology: belief and disbelief of mystical forces, perilous conditions, and the opacity of being, *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 7, 68–82.

Lane, Robert and Graham Woodman 2000. Wicked problems, righteous solutions: back to the future on large complex projects, *Proceedings 8th annual meeting of the international group for lean construction*, Brighton, UK, August 17-19 2000.

Latour, Bruno 2001. 'Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain' – being a sort of sermon on the hesitations of religious speech, *Res* 39, 215-234. doi: https://doi.org/10.1086/RESv39n1ms20167530

Mannoni, Octave 1964. Je sais bien, mais quand même, *Les Temps Modernes* 212, 9-33.

Miller, Daniel and Sophie Woodward 2007. Manifesto for a study of denim, *Social Anthropology* 15/3, 335-351. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0964-0282.2007.00024.x.

Mitchell, Timothy 2002. *Rule of experts: Egypt, techno-politics, modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Munk, Kirstine 2007. *Signs of the times: cosmology and ritual practice in modern, western astrology*, Doctoral Thesis: University of Southern Denmark.

Myhre, Knut Christian 2018. Deep pragmatism, in Giovanni da Col and Stephan Palmié (eds.), *The mythology in our language: remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, 95-113. Chicago: Hau Books.

Nagel, Thomas 1974. What is it like to be a bat? *The Philosophical Review* 83/4, 435-450. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914.

Palmié, Stephan 2018. Translation is not explanation: remarks on the intellectual: history and context of Wittgenstein's remarks on Frazer, in Giovanni da Col and Stephan Palmié (eds.), *The mythology in our language: remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, 1-27. Chicago: Hau Books.

Rittel, Horst W.J. and Melvin M. Webber 1973. Dilemmas in a general theory of planning, *Policy Sciences* 4/2, 155-169. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01405730.

Ryle, Gilbert 1971. The thinking of thoughts: what is 'le Penseur' doing?, in *Collected papers. Volume 2*, 480-96. London: Hutchinson.

Star, Susan Leigh and James R Griesemer 1989. Institutional ecology, 'translations' and boundary objects: amateurs and professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39, *Social Studies of Science* 19/3, 387-420. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/030631289019003001.

Strathern, Marilyn 1992. *Reproducing the future: anthropology, kinship and the new reproductive technologies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo 1998. Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, 469-488. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/3034157.
--- 2015. Who is afraid of the ontological wolf? Some comments on an ongoing anthropological debate, *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 33/1, 2-17. doi: https://doi.org/10.3167/ca.2015.330102.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig 1958. *Philosophical investigations*, *2nd Edition, revised*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wolf, Bryan 1990. Confessions of a closet ekphrastic: literature, painting and other unnatural relations, *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3:181-203.
--- 2001. Review of Harry Berger Jr. 'Fictions of the pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance', *The Art Bulletin* 83/3, 566-569. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/3177246.

Zeitlyn, David 2012. Divinatory logics: diagnoses and predictions mediating outcomes, *Current Anthropology* 53/5, 525-546. doi: https://doi.org/10.1086/666829.
--- 2015. Looking forward, looking back, *History and Anthropology* 26/4, 381-407. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2015.1076813.
--- 2022. *An anthropological toolkit: sixty useful concepts*, Oxford: Berghahn.
--- 2023 in press. An argument for sparsity, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.*

Zeitlyn, David, and Roger Just 2014. *Excursions in realist anthropology: a merological approach*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

GOOD MORNING! MEMES AND THE VISUAL ECONOMY OF IMAGES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

MARCUS BANKS[1]

India is one of several developing nations – including many in Africa – where mobile phone use has grown exponentially since c. 2005, and where for many millions of people access to the internet is via smart phone, not computer. According to the Telephone Regulatory Authority in India, mobile phone ownership stands at an estimated 1.1 billion (in a population of 1.3 billion) as of 31 January 2017 and is growing all the time. While the federal government is exploring the use of mobile telephony to eliminate all cash transactions, I am interested in Indian people's use of mobile telephony to make and maintain new forms of sociality. I focus in particular on the 'good morning' meme which, sent in its millions each morning across the country, threatens to break the mobile phone networks.

Keywords: Memes, smartphones, authenticity, WhatsApp, India

Introduction[2]

This paper is a spin-off project from some field research I conducted in 2017 on photographic reception in a small city – Jamnagar – in western India (Banks, 2014; 2020). The aim of that research was to investigate how people responded to photographs of themselves in the 1980s

[1] Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford

[2] This previously unpublished posthumous paper was initially presented on June 8th, 2018, in a farewell symposium held in honour of Thomas Fillitz at the University of Vienna, entitled *Art, Authenticity, Anthropology*. A later version of the paper was presented in a conference at Worcester College, Oxford. Some core examples were initially presented in an unpublished paper entitled 'Photography in and of the city: Three moments from the past and present of an Indian city'. Banks presented versions of this paper at the 2017 annual meeting of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (ASA) in Adelaide, the 2017 annual meeting of the German Anthropological Association (DGV) in Berlin, a 2017 departmental seminar at the University of Sussex, a 2018 Pitt-Rivers Museum Visual, Material, and Museum Anthropology seminar in Oxford, and a 2019 keynote at the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) Student Conference in Oxford. The current version has been edited by Chihab El Khachab, based on the Vienna and Worcester drafts and PowerPoint slides, with minor additions from different versions of the paper entitled 'Photography in and of the city'. (Editorial note)

(by me) and photographs of their environment taken a century ago (by an unknown photographer). My research subjects are men in their 60s and 70s (who I first got to know in the mid-1980s), but also their children, and sometimes their grandchildren. My research subjects are all relatively prosperous middle-class men, who mostly run their own retail businesses. Once I realised that my photo-elicitation interviews were largely failing to engage informants with my photographs from the 1980s, I decided to start interviewing people about the photographs on their own phones and to observing phone camera use.

Figure 1 – Image taken from WhatsApp feed, original source unknown

Almost all of my research subjects in 2017 owned smart phones (though not the latest) or 'feature' phones (e.g. Nokia 105s), with photographic capabilities ranging from the crude to the highly sophisticated. Along the way I became interested in the images my research subjects had on their phones (almost none of them took or created photographs). I became interested in the 'good morning' meme that many men received each day by phone, and to which many of them contributed. My particular interest is in the authenticity of the sentiment that lies behind these memes. As you can see (Figure 1), the meme consists of an image with superimposed text, and often – though not always – additional text added by the sender. These memes are sent to individuals or groups via WhatsApp, or posted on Facebook. They are typically sent first thing in the morning – hence the title – though I will also discuss the case of a fieldwork participant who generally posts good evening or good night memes.

Figure 2 – Crime scene photograph, Oxford

In another paper, on crime scene photography (Banks, 2017), I developed an argument (following Elizabeth Edwards (2012) on the visual contours of the 'no style style') that crime scene photography – that is, official photographs taken for or by police officers at the scene of a crime – was characterised by its banality (Figure 2). The crime scene photographers I interviewed were adamant that there was nothing in their images that reflected anything that could be construed as an aesthetic sensibility. As far as they were concerned, the images they produced were entirely functional and neutrally descriptive of the 'evidence' they portrayed.

Figure 3 – Image taken from WhatsApp feed, original source unknown

At first glance, the 'good morning' memes are anything but banal – the photography is generally extremely artful, based on a stock image often employing highly saturated tones (or sometimes, moody sepia tones) and well-recognised principles of composition. It is meant to grab the attention in one's news feed or WhatsApp conversations, after which the recipient or viewer can dwell on the often highly sentimental message. However, in this short paper, I want to argue that such memes are also banal, not least because of their ubiquity, yet at the same time they are perceived by both senders and recipients to be highly authentic.

Figure 4 – Early twentieth century architecture in the city of Jamnagar, western India; photographer unknown

Figure 5 – Arvindbhai with his personal 'archive' of photographs accumulated over the years. © Marcus Banks

Photography in Jamnagar

First, some background. In spring 2017, I made a research trip to India, to my original PhD research site in Jamnagar, a medium-sized city in what is now Gujarat State, western India. The purpose of my visit was to conduct interviews around a set of photographs of the city taken in the 1920s when the city was undergoing a period of radical urban transformation. The changes were initiated by the then king of the city, Jam Saheb Ranjitsinhji, a famous cricketer, still talked of and loved today, though there can be no one alive today who remembers the transformations taking place. My research participants back in the mid-1980s (for a completely different project) were my age or older, and the majority of them were relatively prosperous cloth merchants, all men, although I also met many of their wives and children.

On my first visit to the city, and for many years subsequently, I was almost the only person I knew who owned a camera. With one exception, a cloth merchant called Chandrakant, no one I knew owned a camera (apart from professional wedding photographers who I encountered at the many weddings I attended). Furthermore, few people owned any hard-copy photographs apart from those in their own wedding album (where relevant) and perhaps a few studio photographs taken of themselves with family or friends to mark an occasion such as a birthday. There were a few cameras for sale in India in the 1980s, but they were expensive, as was film and processing. However, I think most of my research participants could have afforded a camera and associated costs if they had wished. As far as I can tell, cameras – and therefore photographic practice – were rare and unusual right through to the 2000s.

However, by around 2006, mobile phone sales had taken off (following economic liberalisation). In 2018, there were estimated to be around 775 million users – around half the total population. Many of these are smartphone users, but many more have so-called 'feature phones', a number that remained high as they were cheaper, have longer battery life, etc. Feature phones can send text messages, and many have a very basic camera. India is often presented as a country that has bypassed the personal computer and laptop: most consumers seem to have gone straight from being digital virgins (or having only encountered computers in school or college) to owning a smart phone and getting on the web.

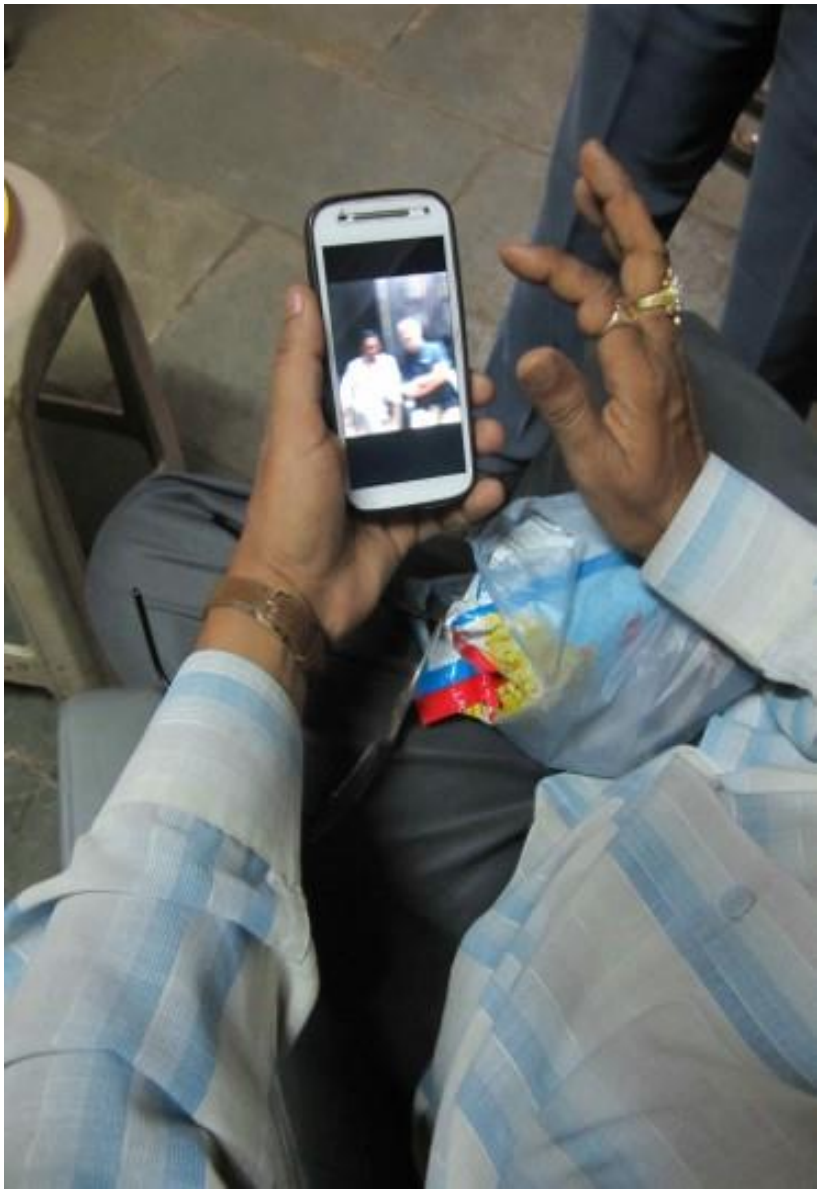

Figure 6 – Rakesh looking at a photograph messaged to him by Rajesh. © Marcus Banks

As well as the project on the historical photographs, on my visit to India in 2017, I also intended to conduct photo-elicitation exercises, using my own photographs from the 1980s and 1990s. For a variety of reasons which I explore in another paper (Banks, 2014), this project was not a great success. However, while in the field I decided to start interviewing people about the photographs on their own phones and to observe phone camera use. As elsewhere in the world, selfies are popular, though perhaps not so much with the generally older men I was interviewing. A couple of my research respondents commented that selfies were most popular with young women rather than men of their generation (which is generally understood to be the case in Europe and America). This may also be linked to the fact that few if any of my older male informants actually took photographs with their phones or sent them to their friends (it is entirely possible that young women do). What they did do however was to use their phones to *view* photographs, on Facebook for example.

Figure 7 – Double selfie of author and Chirag. © Marcus Banks and Chirag Mehta

Younger men were more adventurous, however. For example, Chirag – a young cloth merchant (the son of Chandrakant, the only man I knew who actually owned a camera in the 1980s) – used my phone to take a selfie of the two of us together, and then requested that I send him a copy via WhatsApp (Figure 7). This was not because he wanted to hold a treasured memory (while he is Chandrakant's son, we don't know each other particularly well – he was a child last time I visited Jamnagar), or to share it with his friends, but because he wanted to use it for marketing purposes: he had sold me the cloth to make the shirt and wished to advertise it to his customers on his Facebook page. Unlike his cloth merchant father who has a shop nearby (and who also has a smartphone), he sells some ready-made garments, and also suggests novel designs to customers that can be made up – 'stitched' – at a local tailor's shop.

For example, one morning when I was sitting at Chirag's shop, some prospective customers arrived – a middle-aged couple from a nearby village and their daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law was interested in a particular fabric and Chirag suggested she might like to

have it made up into a 'ladies' shirt' (he used the English phrase) rather than as a sari blouse (*choli*). By this he meant a fitted western-style shirt to be worn with a skirt or jeans, garments that have been fashionable in major Indian cities for several years now, but are not so common in socially-conservative Jamnagar, and even less common in the rural hinterland. The woman and her parents-in-law were confused by what he meant, however; in the end he took out his mobile phone and showed them pictures of 'ladies' shirts' that he had had tailored locally, displayed on a mannequin.

The selfie Chirag requested from me shows me wearing a shirt I had ordered from him, stitched from a particular tie and dye fabric for which Jamnagar is historically very well known. This fabric – *bandhani* – is traditionally used for saris and women's scarves: I was genuinely surprised when he told me that men now have the fabric made up into shirts, but I have always liked *bandhani* and was pleased that it was now acceptable for men to wear. As an aside, my sixty-plus friend Arvindbhai is a trader in traditional *bandhani* and was bemused by my shirt. This photo, taken by Chirag and WhatsApp-d to his phone, would stay on his phone to show the next person who enquired.

Like many others, Chirag made extensive use of WhatsApp, and in particular – like others I interviewed – he was a member of a WhatsApp group for members of his family. This way, family members, especially younger people who may have migrated for study or business to Ahmedabad, the state capital, or Bombay, or even overseas, could keep in touch. As I noted earlier, my older research informants, 60 and above, rarely if ever took photographs with their camera phones, but consumed photographs avidly, largely through Facebook and WhatsApp.

For example, in the course of an interview with Kishor, an informant in his 50s, his cousin Rajesh (a man in his 60s who was present) criticised his younger cousin for having only a feature phone, not a smartphone. Because Kishor didn't have the WhatsApp app on his phone, he was not able to contribute to family WhatsApp exchanges. Although Rajesh himself rarely if ever took photographs with his phone and never posted self-made photographs to the group, he appreciated being able to see younger members of the extended family as they travelled, went to restaurants, and generally lived 'modern' lives. Although his cousin Kishor has, in some ways, a more 'modern' life than Rajesh – he travels extensively within the state of Gujarat selling auto parts, he travels on holiday beyond the state with his wife and children (rather than going on pilgrimage as older generations would have done) – his failure to engage with WhatsApp exchanges was seen as a failure of engagement with tradition by his older cousin. It might seem odd to criticise a 'modern' man for not being traditional enough, but what Rajesh was getting at was that 'modern' technologies such as smartphones, allowed 'traditions' (such as keeping in contact with kin) to be maintained.

Figure 8 – Screenshot taken from WhatsApp feed, original image source unknown

Figure 9 – Screenshot taken from WhatsApp feed, original image source unknown

Good morning!

Although he takes few if any photographs on his phone, Rajesh does make extensive use of his phone's photographic capabilities. For various reasons, Rajesh has few face-to-face social contacts with family or friends today, although when I knew him in the 1980s and 1990s, he was at the centre of many overlapping networks of kin and friends. In 2017, he had a humble low-income 'service' job, and spent his evenings engaging with the wider world through his two phones, both smartphones: one for family and local friends (he is not married), the other for wider internet use. On the 'family' phone, he used WhatsApp and Facebook to keep in touch with family members and to take local telephone calls but, as noted, he did not take photographs to contribute to the familial WhatsApp chats. On his other phone, he used Google+ to search for inspirational memes which he customised by adding comments, in English, such as 'How true!!!' or 'This is how [I] feel', as well as – of course – 'good morning' (or more often, 'good evening'), and then posting them to Facebook and to WhatsApp contacts (including myself).[3] This searching for good morning meme images on Google is apparently causing concerns at Google HQ. Between sunrise and 8.00 a.m. in India, millions of images are downloaded and sent on, causing users' phones to freeze and placing a heavy strain on Google's servers. There are also rumours of Indian mobile phone networks crashing under the weight of all the 'good mornings' sent.

Rajesh has also somehow made contact with a number of (presumably) single women in Romania, and he and they conduct platonic relationships via WhatsApp and Facebook. They tend to send him head and shoulders photographs of themselves, along with 'inspirational' memes or photographs, and he in turn rebroadcasts these to his WhatsApp contacts and Facebook friends – including myself!

When I asked him about his 'good morning' habit, Rajesh said it was just something he liked to do. However, the Indian press is full of rather alarmist stories of the over-60s generation (Rajesh is 63) becoming 'addicted' to WhatsApp. Press stories contain accounts of adult children – who often live away from their parents in quasi-nuclear households – attempting to wean their parents off the 'addiction'. WhatsApp was introduced to India in 2010 and has been a runaway success ever since, with more than 200 million active users. Rajesh said he sent 'good morning' and other memes to around ten other users each day, and received six to seven himself each day (as noted above, on his other phone, he followed family members through WhatsApp but did not participate). He had been using Facebook and WhatsApp for three to four years before 2017, about the time he became semi-estranged from his family. He didn't often post in the morning, except sometimes on Sundays, because he was in a hurry to get to work, which was at some distance from his home, but typically, he came home from work around 9.00 pm, had something light to eat, and then hit his phones.

[3] The general thrust of Rajesh's memes and annotated photographs are (i) an appreciation of nature (highly manipulated shots of mountains, gorges, forests, and so forth) generally captioned by him with sentiments such as 'So beautiful!!!'; (ii) 'cute' pictures of young children, generally not captioned; (iii) wistful images of women in shadowy profile, or couples walking through woods, often in sepia tones, with captions such as 'Always trust those who make you smile'.

He did not drink alcohol (Gujarat state is dry anyway), and he did not have a television, but he did smoke. His phones were his primary means of engagement with the world.

Figure 10 – Screenshot taken from WhatsApp feed, original image source unknown

When asked about his choice of images, Rajesh said they were either his choice, or re-postings of the memes of others. When I pressed him further, he said that all the pictures he sends are 'true' (*saachun* in Gujarati). As most if not all the images are clearly staged, they are most certainly not true in a conventional sense, but to Rajesh they were 'true' expressions of his feelings. He was prone to self-pity and many of the more inspirational texts seemed to be attempts to generate some optimism about his life. However, especially when sending memes to his Romanian friends, he tended to go for more upbeat images and themes, as he felt these friends (who he had never met and almost certainly never would) were 'true' friends, precisely because their friendship was disinterested and therefore 'pure' (*swacch*).

Figure 11 - Screenshot taken from WhatsApp feed, original image source unknown

Be happy

Rajesh was very conscious of his fallen circumstances, and slightly ashamed – at least in my presence – of the tiny, dilapidated two-room house he rented in the city centre. One could therefore hypothesise that he retreated into the colourful world of memes as a form of psychic escape, much as earlier theorists of Bombay cinema deemed it 'escapist', especially for the urban poor. However, more recent studies of cinema all around the world have shown that even in what seems to be such a passive medium, there is extensive engagement by audiences – whether during the screening, or in subsequent discussion, or both. Social media like WhatsApp and Facebook facilitate this engagement to a level previously unknown. We know from the work of Horst and Miller (2012), among others, that engagements with social media are complex and many-stranded: there is no single thing that social media 'do'; rather, they are reconfigured according to the context.

Rajesh's creative engagement with his phones allowed him to extend different aspects of his personhood into different social fields, including entirely new ones. The banality of the stock images and memes Rajesh used were precisely what attracted him. Although he did occasionally post photographs of himself, the one or two he used were studio shots taken in his early twenties, staring wistfully into the middle distance. Instead, on social media, he could be not anyone, but displayed aspects of what he considered to be his authentic self and what he considered to be authentic feelings: of platonic love, of friendship, and of a person who is meshed into wider networks of relationships.[4]

Bibliography

Banks, Marcus 2020. Photography, memory, and affect: two fragments from the history of an Indian city, in Peter Aronsson, Andrej Slávik and Birgitta Svensson (eds.), *Images in history: towards an (audio)visual historiography*. Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (Konferenser 99).

Banks, Marcus 2017. The significant banality of crime scene photography. Unpublished paper presented at the conference *Visual South Asia: anthropological explorations of media and culture*, University of Dhaka.

Banks, Marcus 2014. Slow research: exploring one's own visual archive, *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia* 3/2, 69 – 83. doi: https://doi.org/10.4000/cadernosaa.222.

Edwards, Elizabeth 2012. *The camera as historian: amateur photographers and historical imagination, 1885-1918*, Durham: Duke University Press.

[4] While the paper remains unfinished past this point, Marcus Banks is suggesting that memes elicit fragmentary representations of the self which, although shown as 'authentic', can never be integrally so. In other words, social media are neither an arena in which one integrally recreates oneself (i.e., by becoming 'anyone') nor an arena in which a pre-existing authentic self can manifest (i.e., by becoming 'oneself'), but one in which different aspects of the self are displayed in ethnographically variable ways even when they are lived and felt as 'authentic'. (Editorial note)

Horst, Heather A. and Daniel Miller 2006. *The cell phone: an anthropology of communication*, New York and Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Horst, Heather A. and Daniel Miller (eds.) 2012. *Digital anthropology*, London: Bloomsbury.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

FEAR AND ANTHROPOLOGY: A VIEW FROM 1995

HOWARD MORPHY, MARCUS BANKS AND R.H. BARNES[1]

In broad terms the agenda of this paper is set by its title: by linking anthropology with fear, a concept with assumed general applicability, we are inevitably posing questions about the nature of cross-cultural categories. We have to confront the danger of imposing a Western concept on data from other societies. Any anthropological consideration of the human emotions must be concerned with the question of universality; with the relationship between the biological inheritance of humans and the autonomy of culture.

Keywords: Fear, anthropology, cross-cultural categories, universalism, culture

Note from the editors

The following text is an edited version of the introduction for a special edition of the journal *Social Analysis* (to have been edited by R. H. Barnes, Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy) prepared in late 1995 that never went further. It was prepared after a seminar series in Oxford where drafts of many of the papers intended for the special issue were presented. It has been rescued from the unpublished drafts found on the hard drive of the late Marcus Banks.

In editing it for publication in 2022 we have tried as much as possible to keep the tone of the original. However, in recognition of the almost thirty years that have passed since it was first drafted, and to make it clearer to subsequent readers, we have changed words such as 'recent' and 'present' and added a sub-title. We have also edited references to the 'contributions' to make clear that they do not actually follow this piece. Finally, we also note that we have not attempted to update the references overall, although where they were incomplete in the draft we have added some more up-to-date sources, as well as citations to published work by the intended contributors (although we have not attempted to find revised versions of the quotations from what were, in effect, early drafts). A large amount on fear and anthropology has been published since this was drafted, under headings such as the 'anthropology of fear' and more generally within the anthropology of the emotions.

[1] Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford. Emails: howard.morphy@anu.edu.au, robert.barnes@anthro.ox.ac.uk

A cross-cultural focus on fear

In broad terms the agenda of this paper is set by its title: by linking anthropology with fear, a concept with assumed general applicability, we are inevitably posing questions about the nature of cross-cultural categories. We have to confront the danger of imposing a Western concept on data from other societies. Any anthropological consideration of the human emotions must be concerned with the question of universality; with the relationship between the biological inheritance of humans and the autonomy of culture.

In British anthropology at least, the problematic which links social construction and psychology remained submerged for the middle part of the twentieth century, partly in reaction to earlier evolutionist and diffusionist concerns with general theories of the development of human beings as cultural animals, in which history and psychology were interwoven (for a development of this perspective see Kuklick 1991:119ff.). In 1934 Hocart concluded that 'future generations will have to explain why the first quarter of the twentieth century was so fascinated by fear, why that emotion was made to account for everything from weddings, for funerals, for religion itself' (1934: 475). While Hocart may have exaggerated somewhat there is no doubt that Radcliffe-Brown's functionalism moved the central concerns of anthropology away from the psychological aspects of human beings and human culture towards a social determination of action. Kuklick (1991: 120) writes that 'functionalists postulated that individuals' modes of thinking and feeling were "collective representations," imposed on them by their society. And collective representations were rational by relative rather than absolute standards — appropriate insofar as they served to motivate individuals to play their proper social roles.'

In the years before 1995 there was a movement towards a more phenomenological form of relativism, to a framework in which individual agency has been accorded a significant place and in which the emotions are acknowledged once again to play a motivating role in social action; social action is frequently directed at the emotions and often implies cognisance of psychological states. However, there still remains a tension between relativism and perspectives which allow more general characteristics of human beings to have a role in the development and transformation of human cultural systems. We will argue that in many respects that opposition is false. Fear is often generated in the context of action which is not bounded by social group, culture, ethnicity, or nationhood but involves the crossing of boundaries. While not all actions will be interpreted or felt in similar ways across cultures, fear is part of a global discourse which has concerned the relations between groups — relations of domination and subordination and sometimes the use of terror — as well as reflecting widely shared human concerns about death and grief.

At first glance fear appears to be a self-evident universal category that is part of every human being's experience of the world and a possible instrument of human action; fear is integral to colonial experience and to the process of domination of one group by another; fear is a means of control and part of the experience of those whose lives are threatened by coercive power. Fear is associated with certain neurophysiological responses to a stimulus or a situation which result in sweating and increased heart rate. It is predominantly a negative

emotion associated with anxiety, stress and a desire to escape. Although people may fear different things and the kind of things feared may vary from culture to culture fear would appear to be one of those emotions most easily conveyed in cross-cultural discourse. We can apparently construct a number of examples from our experience to elicit feelings that correspond to our idea of fear. We can imagine that the feelings of the average human, when confronted by the idea of walking a tightrope or of falling off a cliff, of facing the executioner, of perishing from thirst, are likely to be similar across cultures. And it is this reaction, which we imagine to be shared, that forms the core of our universal category.

Following Wittgenstein, for example, Needham (1972: 141) comments that, 'it is not hard to make a preliminary and partial register of psychic states that have bodily concomitants. We can say, for instance, that a man looks hurt, fearful, worried, angry, surprised, intent, suspicious, disgusted, happy and so on.' He continues to say that, 'Some states of mind, then, have bodily concomitants which conduce to overt natural resemblances among men, and these states can be mutually recognized independently of their social and linguistic forms.' Nevertheless, 'Emotions, however they may be defined and classified, are not coterminous with all states of mind; and it is evident also that there is no direct connection between physiological conditions and the discriminations that are made by any society' (Needham 1972: 143).

A moment's reflection will show exceptions to our assumptions of the universality of the effect of particular situations on the emotional state of individuals. The tight-rope walker may feel relaxed about her situation since experience tells her she is not going to fall off or that if she does she will come to no harm as she bounces on the safety net. The rock climber may find that the burst of adrenalin as he hangs suspended over the precipice fills him with an overwhelming sense of the majesty of the universe, and he may experience joy rather than fear. And the thought of heavenly salvation may banish all feelings or evidence of fear from the mind and body of the martyr facing his demise.

One of our objectives was to deconstruct the concept of fear through cultural analysis, by showing the particular characteristics of a related set of emotions in the context of particular cultures. Through emphasising difference the apparent self-evident universality of the category might gradually disappear until it could be argued that fear is not an emotion that is experienced cross-culturally. In that case, if we have concluded as a result of cross-cultural analysis that fear, the subject of the analysis, is a different phenomenon in each case, we will have eliminated it as a concept useful for cross-cultural analysis.

However, the fact that different people react differently to different situations does not in itself invalidate a proposition of universality. Fear may be a general emotion that is manifested in very different contexts in different cultures. Moreover, the non-appearance of fear in contexts where we would have predicted it from our own cultural position may not be sufficient evidence for the absence of fear as a relevant factor. The non-appearance of fear may result from cultural processes which have effectively masked its appearance (see in particular the work of Cannell and James): for example, religious belief or fatalism makes martyrdom something to be welcomed rather than feared. It is probably the case that an intermediate view comes closest to the truth: there are elements of universality both in the emotional experience that we label 'fear' and in the contexts of occurrence of fear cross-

culturally. But at the same time the emotion of fear itself, or the emotional cluster of which fear is a part, will be shaped by the overall cultural background of the person experiencing it, and the range of contexts may vary in each case.

Fear of anthropology

The very objectivity of anthropology in this context could be said to produce fear: it can break down people's culturally constructed emotional defences by challenging their religious precepts or sociologizing them away. By revealing people's underlying fears anthropology can be seen to act on the beliefs of a group in the way that psychiatry acts on the individual.

In an appendix to *The Social Reality of Religion* Peter Berger states: 'Within the argument of this book ... I have felt it necessary in a few places to state that any statements made there strictly bracket the ultimate status of religious definitions of reality. I have done this particularly where I sensed the danger that the "methodological atheism" of this type of theorizing could be misinterpreted as atheism tout court.' (1969: 180). A few pages later he notes that works on the sociology of religion frequently set out by reassuring the theologian qua theologian that they should not 'worry unduly over anything the sociologist may have to say over religion' (ibid.: 182). 'Danger'? 'worry'? Although he does not use the word 'fear', Berger is clearly concerned that the theologian and believers more generally might well have something to fear (rightly or wrongly) from the sociologist seeking to understand and perhaps thereby explain away their belief. Elsewhere, in his *Invitation to Sociology* (1966), Berger describes the existential shock that sociological awareness brings, the realization that the world is not as we thought it was. This shock is liberating, for it brings us the freedom to understand and control our own actions, but as he says, 'People who like to avoid shocking discoveries...should stay away from sociology' (ibid.: 35). And, we might add, sociologists.

Like sociology, anthropology is a supremely corrosive discipline. What people always thought was true about themselves and the world they live in - that the evil eye of others brought sickness, or that rivers were anacondas – has been reconstructed by anthropologists and shown to be something else entirely. This was most clearly the case during the heyday of structural-functionalism and then of structuralism. Since the 1960s of course, interpretative anthropology has sought to come to a much deeper understanding of indigenous perceptions, but since the purpose of much anthropology is to render indigenous understandings and experiences in terms comprehensible to Euro-American readers, clearly some sort of gap remains. Again, in the earlier days of anthropology this perhaps did not matter so much. Those lives laid bare in the classic monographs were lived by people who had little or no opportunity to see their flayed social skins on the page. Today, however, with a greater call on anthropologists to be accountable, to make at least some effort to return the products of their research to the people they have worked with, there is every chance of innocent bystanders being caught in the cross-fire of academic debate. Increasingly, the subjects of anthropological investigation face the risk of seeing the threads of their lives exposed and woven in strange and alien patterns. If they want to avoid 'shocking discoveries' they should perhaps fear anthropologists.

Perhaps this is less of a problem when the anthropologist is deconstructing indigenous understandings of land tenure or dowry negotiations, but - as Berger notes above - it is clearly to the fore where matters of belief are concerned. Within the context of this text, we would add that it is also to the fore where matters of emotion are concerned. In neither case can anthropologists be sure that they perceive matters in a way that even approximates to the indigenous understanding; or rather, the anthropologist may succumb to a radical misunderstanding by assuming a universal experience of belief or emotion. Deconstruction invalidates belief by striking at its claims to unquestionable truth and is thus threatening; it is something to be feared; it invalidates emotion for the same reason, denying to individuals that which they perceive as most personally endogenous by seeking either universalism or cultural construction.

Indeed, in denying that belief is an experience, such as one can comfortably attribute to individuals across cultures, Needham (1972: 192-193) recommended that while the word 'belief' need not be abandoned in making belief statements within our own tradition, it should be abandoned in ethnographic reports and comparative epistemology. Following Waismann he deems, 'the first task of social anthropology [to be] precisely this: the undermining of categories throughout the entire range of cultural varieties in the conception of human experience' (Needham 1972: 203). Nevertheless, while some categories, such as belief, may disintegrate under this kind of corrosive analysis, others, 'will turn out to be far more resistant, and the result of attempts to undermine them by comparative analysis will prove instead to be a firmer delineation of their foundations and a substantiated estimation of their real sources of strength' (Needham 1972: 204). Needham appears to regard fear to be of this latter type, although he also takes the cautionary general position that, 'the search for primary factors or fundamental constituents of human experience must be absolute in intention but can be only relative in expectation' (1972: 223-224).

There would seem to be other parallels between belief and emotion, not least in their apparently 'black box' nature. No matter how much anthropologists explore and elucidate the social context of their manifestation, and hint at their social-constructedness and hence relativity, both are the subject of truth claims arising from personal experience. As a discipline, psychology would seem to offer some way into the black box, and some of the psychological literature is discussed below, but there is an initial difficulty to be raised at this point: an appeal to individual psychology does — at least to some extent — endorse the value of truth claims based on personal experience. To construct an anthropology of fear, or of the emotions in general, we need perhaps to move more towards a notion of Mauss's 'total man' {sic}, the triple perspective on humanity that draws upon the psychological, the biological and the sociological (Mauss 1979a: 101; see also Mauss 1979b: 27-29).

Anthropology and emotion

For many years British social anthropology suffered from Radcliffe-Brown's reading of Durkheim, which eliminated all psychological considerations and thus ignored the study of the emotions (Lynch 1990: 6). While psychology and anthropology remained in contact in the

United States (indeed White and Lutz claim psychological anthropology as one of the largest sub-disciplines (1992: 1)), the approach taken towards the emotions was an essentially Freudian and universalistic one which assumed a common base and considered only the interpretations of emotion (Lynch 1990: 6).

However, the last years of the twentieth century saw a remarkable growth in the anthropology of the emotions, deriving initially from psychological work on Euro-American culture and attempts to transcend some limiting paradigms of this approach. To summarise this literature is increasingly becoming a daunting task, and we would instead direct the reader to certain key readings, particularly the work of Catherine Lutz (1986a, 1986b, 1988). Lutz and White provide an overview of the literature to the mid-1980s (Lutz and White 1986), while Owen Lynch and Karl Heider each introduce their edited or authored works with an overview (Lynch 1990; Heider 1992: Chapter 1). Much work in psychological anthropology provides additional background readings and references (see, for example, Heelas and Lock 1981; Schwartz, White and Lutz 1992).

While some anthropologists still give at least cursory attention to neuro-physiological approaches to the study of emotion (e.g. Heider 1992: 15), most now appear to see cognition as the more profitable area; that is, privileging the cognitive evaluation component over the psychological arousal component of Schachter's two-factor theory of emotion (cited in Smith 1981). This, however, is not without problems. One difficulty, cited by several authors, is the suspicious overlap between Euro-American theories of the emotions and Euro-American folk wisdom or 'common-sense' concerning the emotions. Much of this theorizing centres on the emotions as essentially internal to the individual, as part of a private language of the self, as spontaneous, irrational, natural and associated with women. Euro-American emotions seize the individual, and can thus excuse behaviour (seen, most notoriously, in the French concept of the *crime passionel*). Owen Lynch calls this the 'myth of the passions' (1990: 10). Related to this difficulty is the problem of universality versus cultural specificity. Until c. 1995, anthropologists generally assumed a universality of human emotional experience, not least for the psychological reassurance it provided the fieldworker. To quote Lynch again: 'In a world of strange customs, odd practices, different logics, and alien moralities, it was comforting to assume that others were familiarly "human" when they laughed, cried, loved, and raged. Especially was this so when loneliness threatened the expatriate field-worker.' (ibid.: 7). While there is probably a general truth in what Lynch says, certain earlier anthropological writings recognized the complexity of cross-cultural emotional interpretation: Laura Bohannon's 1954 anthropological novel, *Return to Laughter* remains a milestone in the exploration of this territory (Smith Bowen 1954).

Karl Heider, following the psychologist Paul Ekman, proposes a neat coming together of universalist and culture specific positions, by focusing on the interplay between the two (both of which he seems to regard as present and unproblematically separable), such that, for example, a neutral antecedent event (such as a death) is culturally defined, produces an inner state, which then has an expression (such as weeping) that is itself subject to culturally specific 'display rules' (Heider 1992: 6-8). For our purposes, the significant factor is that he enlarges on Ekman's notion of 'display rules' and talks instead of 'reaction rules'. Heider alerts us to the fact that emotions are expressed in cultural contexts and are directed towards cultural

others. Emotions are not merely manifest (through facial expression, for example), they are communicated.

Heider, following a well-trodden psychologists' path, explores the communication of emotion states by exploring the language of emotion. He does this, not by way of looking at natural language use following the procedures of conversation analysis, but by administering questionnaires and word check-lists, and by use of what other social scientists might term focus group discussion. The result is three 'cognitive maps of the landscape of emotion' for the language Minangkabau, Indonesian as spoken by bilingual Minangkabau, and Indonesian as spoken by bilingual Javanese. The maps show the clustering of terms associated with emotion, and follow on from work on American English conducted by psychologists such as Joel Davitz (1969). We will mention below Heider's and Davitz's particular findings with regard to 'fear' and its cognates; for the moment, let us note that work such as this, while meticulous and highly detailed (particularly Heider's), is also highly limited, inasmuch as it refers to language categories rather than language use. In this it resembles, as Heider notes, earlier work by anthropologists on kin terms and colour terms, but as he also notes 'emotions...are not constructed on an obvious, concrete biological or physical base such as age and gender, or hue and brightness' (1992: 6). If by this statement he is referring to the inadequacy of neuro-physiological research on emotion, then we concur, but there are other ways in which the 'biological or physical base' may be relevant.

For example, Davitz, who compiled a check-list of 556 'descriptive statements' for his 50 North American subjects to match against 50 'emotion terms', claims that cultural differences within his subject group must have been insignificant on the grounds that 'The experience of "my heart pounding"...is probably different from everyone else's experience of a "pounding heart". But...one can at least distinguish between the experience of "my heart pounding" and "my head aching"; and it does not seem so unreasonable to assume that..."my heart pounding" is similar to "your heart pounding".' (1969: 139). And perhaps, on paper, that is true of the statements Davitz used. But we have no sense of the possible variation in which the pounding of the heart is experienced. As Owen Lynch (who does not refer to Davitz) states: 'much difficulty comes from eliding the feeling of emotions with feelings of sensations as though they were the same. Yet most everyone will agree that feeling the hurt of an insult is not the same as feeling the hurt of a cigarette burn' (1990: 11).

There is no necessary contradiction between the two statements, but Lynch raises a point that may be more apparent to an anthropologist than to a psychologist, for he prefaces his remark with a comment that while English constructs emotions as sensations through the use of the verb 'feel', other languages do not. Specifically, he claims, in the languages of north and south India verbs indicating feeling are not associated with emotion terms (Lynch 1990:11). Certainly, in Gujarati, a language that one of us is familiar with, verbs of 'feeling' such as *lagvun* are associated with sensations such as hunger or thirst, or else have a sense of 'happening' or 'seeming', while 'love' is something that is 'done', not 'felt'. 'Love' is conceptualized in Gujarat as an interior 'voice' that 'speaks' and which is listened to or ignored by the self, heard or not heard by others (Banks 1996).

This raises a further point: the Western tradition is by no means the only one to have explicitly conceptualized emotion. A recurrent problem that anthropologists of non-European

complex societies face is that many of their anthropological colleagues persist in treating Euro-America as the only source of 'real' theories, while the rest of the world must make do with 'folk' theories alone, discoverable through methodological enquiries such as ethnosociology. Yet the great civilizations of China, India, Japan and the Arabic world have literate scholarly traditions that have wrestled with many of the same problems as those encountered by the West. So for example, in India, the Sanskrit aesthetic tradition gave rise to the theory of *rasa* (juice, essence) as a means of accounting for an audience's emotional reaction to a performance. *Rasa* theory understands the emotions to be inherent and dormant within the body, awaiting arousal. The audience members should work on their emotions, cultivating them as universal aesthetic experience and thus as a taste of the divine. So, while emotions may be experienced individually, it is the individual's aesthetic and even moral duty to seek out their universal form (Lynch 1990: 17-19).

By contrast, the far more materialist Jain system of knowledge, at least in the early period, understood *rasa* merely as 'taste' (sweet or bitter for example) and thus as a material property of things. The 'passions' (*kasayas*) by contrast were thought to be generated by *karma* (matter that occludes the soul). The passion-arousing *karmas* do not cause emotions; these are inherent within the soul and the particular *karmas* act as catalysts for them (Jaini 1979: 115-21); indeed, the common meaning of the term *kasaya* is 'stickiness' or 'resin': the passions are what cause *karmas* to stick to the soul (Dundas 1992: 84). It should be added, perhaps, that in contrast to the cultivation of emotion that *rasa* theory enjoins, the Jain position is that the *karmas* should be stripped away in order to achieve enlightenment by quelling or calming the associated passions or emotions. It must be added, however, that later Jain writers came to endorse *rasa* theory and indeed were among its main proponents.

Interestingly the anthropological perspective that emotions are culturally or socially constructed can be applied as a meta-theory to both Sanskritic and early Jain practice to show how individuals are socialised into different ways of interpreting and producing emotional responses. However, as a class of theory in its own right the anthropological theory is arguably more similar to the Sanskritic theory than to the early Jain one, since it sees the manifestation of the emotions as subject to human control and modified by cultural context. Highly developed theories of the emotions exist also in the Chinese, Japanese and Arabic traditions. Several of the articles that were presented at the seminars in Oxford in 1994-1995 (Barnes, Cannell, Howell, James and Telban) discussed indigenous theories of fear through analysing the cultural categories used and, in particular in the case of Howell, linking them to the nature of personhood. The Uduk, for example, are shown by James to have two distinct concepts of fear which again can be mapped on to the difference between Jain and Sanskritic theories in that one refers to an internal source and the other to external stimuli.

Anthropology and fear

Let us consider first a number of previous approaches to the study of fear. The general explorations into the emotions mentioned above all (of course?) discuss fear, though only within the context of other emotions, and rarely if ever within a broader social context, a

point to which we shall return below. Most studies seek to impose some sort of classification or categorization upon the range of emotion terms or states considered.

Heider, for example, found the Indonesian and Minangkabau equivalents of 'fear' to be among eight emotions which fit well with 'pan-cultural expectations', but whereas sadness, anger, happiness and surprise posed few problems in matching such expectations, fear, like love, disgust and contempt, was situated toward the end of stronger cultural specificity. In mapping the synonyms of emotion words suggested by his subjects, Heider found fear to be closely linked by Minangkabau to indecision and by Javanese speakers of Indonesian to confusion. In nearly one third of suggested associations, fear was related to contexts which in English would evoke the ideas of shame or guilt. Fear has a secondary antecedent of 'doing wrong', where the wrong doing is unknown to others, a feature which seems absent in tests of speakers of English. He also found the key word for fear, *takut*, to be a hinge between two forms of fear, the one associated with indecision and having to do with anticipated misfortune and sickness and the other with direct threats. The one he denotes as 'fear-anxiety' and the other 'fear-terror'. As for shame, he says: 'there seems to be evidence from several parts of the western Pacific region for a close association of "fear" and "shame" that is not immediately familiar from English and, indeed, is somewhat counterintuitive for English speakers' (though see below). Despite these differences, he concludes that Malay and American antecedents for *takut* /fear are nearly identical, arguing that some earlier work on American English has missed the connection for methodological reasons (Heider 1991: 77-8, 203-14). Early on in his book Heider warns against the 'rigid equation of one word = one emotion' (ibid.: 5, emphasis in original) and stresses the importance of cluster rather than one word analysis. Thus he speaks of the 'fear cluster' (ibid.: 203-14) which contains five or six terms for the three language maps. This fear cluster is linked to other clusters, such as indecision, confusion or anger.

Similarly, Davitz, by a less ethnographically-grounded methodology, associates US-English 'fear' strongly with 'anger' and 'panic' in one of his three 'primary clusters': 'Negative: Type 2 Emotions' (less closely related, but within the same cluster, are 'contempt', 'hate' and a further nine terms - including 'anxiety', but not 'shame') (1969: 125). In the original formulation of the Indian *rasa* theory mentioned above (some 200 years on either side of the start of the common era) fear was considered one of the eight primary emotions along with anger and disgust, and thus more fundamental than a further 33 'transient emotions' (Lynch 1990: 18). By contrast, the early Jain writers saw fear (*bhaya*) as one of nine kinds of subsidiary passion or sentiment, along with sorrow, disgust and sexual craving. The main passions, by contrast, were anger, pride, deceit and greed. But all these passions and sentiments were considered within a much broader category of destructive (*ghatiya*) *karmas* which affected things such as perception more generally (Jaini 1979: 131-2). That is, for the Jains, an understanding of the emotions was tied intimately into an extraordinarily complex and detailed set of ideas concerning the soul and its liberation. In turn, this should lead us to question whether we should take Heider's warning against the easy association of one word=one emotion a step further, and ask whether it makes sense to consider even a set or cluster of emotion terms. In the Jain system of knowledge, the links between emotion term clusters that Heider identifies for Minangkabau and Indonesian, are or would be meaningful only if we also allowed links to areas (linguistic or epistemological) that lie far outside the

Euro-American conception of 'the emotions'. Heider himself, drawing on Eleanor Rosch's prototype theory (Heider 1991: 29-30; 41-3), is concerned to explore the boundaries of emotion terminology, and remarks on the 'dissolve into neighbouring terminological realms, especially the realm of *sifat* ("characteristics")' (ibid.: 43).

The grounds for cross-cultural agreement upon the place of 'fear' within the range of other emotions thus look increasingly insecure, as indeed does the notion of a discrete realm of 'the emotions'. When we turn away from purely language-based analysis to consider the wider social and experiential context of the emotions — and as anthropologists we must — further qualification seems inevitable. Jean Smith, drawing on historical evidence, writes that the Māori of New Zealand understood fear as a punishment from the gods, angered by the violation of a *tapu* rule. The person thus afflicted by fear (for example, before a battle) was not therefore held personally responsible for the emotion (Smith 1981: 149). Indeed, such fear was not even perceived by the self, but by a special organ, the *wairua*, which further distanced the person from his fear (perhaps because of her sources, Smith says nothing of women and fear) (ibid.: 155-6). By contrast, 'shame' was not located in an organ and could not be purged by ritual means as could fear. Shame, if experienced, was central to the person, not divorced from him, and could only be expunged through revenge (ibid.: 156). Hinduism, according to Lynch and his contributors, 'grounds' emotion not only in the person or the body, but externally, in food, scent and music, all of which of course are enmeshed within much wider sets of cultural relations (1990: 14). Elsewhere, in Malaysia, Howell reports that while the Chewong are fully aware of emotional states, they suppress them, the only exceptions being fear and shyness which are 'positively encouraged' (Howell 1981: 141). 'Fear' is thus marked out in a contrastive way through social behaviour, not (merely) cognition.

However none of this invalidates our comparative task. It is through reading back across the set of separate cases presented by the {originally planned} contributors, which are linked by the common topic, that an anthropology of fear emerges from anthropological praxis, and that the utility of the concept for further analysis is developed. In a sense the success of our project as a whole will be confirmed by whether or not, taken together, the separate cases make a polythetic set which has at its common core an emotional state that overlaps with a concept that the participating anthropologists recognise as fear.

Few if any of the studies of emotion terminology (such as Heider's) offer any evidence of the emotional states of the subjects when they were tested. They seem to presume that the subjects (very often university or college students, faced with a printed questionnaire or checklist) were in an emotionally neutral state, able to think dispassionately about 'love', or 'fear', either on the basis of remembered experience or on the basis of linguistic association, and able to move intellectually from considering one emotion to another, to another and so to the end of the list. To be fair, some investigators such as Heider constantly stress the preliminary nature of the task they have undertaken, and point out that it paves the way for more thorough and fine-grained field investigation.

It seems unlikely that most members of any given society are used to considering the terrain of 'the emotions' in the abstract, until asked to do so by the researcher. No matter how carefully and sensitively the anthropologist or psychologist sets about the task of gathering data on 'the emotions', if the methodology involves interviews or questionnaires

designed to elicit information about the range of emotions (as most studies do) then it is inevitably going to be an artificial task for the research subjects. It seems unlikely that when a subject is in a context where they actually feel or experience 'fear', they take the cognitive time out to consider what distinguishes that 'fear' from 'panic' or 'anxiety' or 'guilt'.

Heider claims that 'Actual emotion scenes or outbursts are relatively rare in daily life, and they are usually kept relatively private' (Heider 1991: 4), and uses this as his justification for instead mapping the contours of emotion terminology through checklists and direct question sessions. If by 'emotion scenes or outbursts' he means blazing family rows, or lovers swooning at one another's feet, there may be some truth in what he says, but at another level the statement is as short-sighted as that of an anthropologist of art claiming that aesthetic judgement is exercised almost exclusively in art galleries. However, it is one thing to claim that all human beings experience (even if they do not display) emotional states all or most of the time (just as they presumably make discriminatory judgements which we might call aesthetic all or most of the time), and quite another to investigate this in the field.

The analysis of fear in context may indeed reveal similarities that are obscured by a formal semantic analysis of the kind that Heider develops. Heider stresses the separation of fear and shame in Europe yet clearly fear, shame and guilt can be associated together in a number of contexts in English. Reaction to death often includes feelings of fear as well as sorrow, guilt, and shame. In a somewhat different sense shame can be seen to be associated with fear through fear of being discovered in a shameful act, a sentiment shared widely (see the work of Telban on the Ambonwari). It can be argued that the very words that Heider uses to represent each of the emotions in the cluster must themselves have different connotations according to the sets within which they occur. The meanings of these terms can only be established by analysing the lexical items in the context of the culture in which they occur to establish the range of their meaning. This semantic analysis both requires an analysis of the cultural context in which the terms are used and in turn informs the interpretation of those contexts. This dual process is integral to anthropological analysis and a prerequisite of cross cultural analysis which is ultimately required to address questions of universality.

To this end, a more plausible line of attack would seem to be the investigation of a single emotional complex in social contexts where one might expect to find it; in a sense the anthropologist is engaged in a phenomenological study guided by the experience of his or her own society. The anthropologist is investigating an emotional complex in relation to and in the context of a wide range of social phenomena with which an anthropologist is trained to deal. Thus Margaret Trawick's work on 'love' in South India (1989) tells us as much about Tamil family life as it does about 'love', while Howell's study of fear (see e.g. 1981, 1989) tells us as much about Chewong identity and their differentiation of self from other as it does about fear. Thus, in planning our seminar we sought papers from anthropologists who had conducted extensive fieldwork at times or in places where 'fear' could reasonably be assumed to be made manifest. In as much as we solicited papers on 'fear' it could be said that we prejudiced some issues from the outset, not least in assuming that there is some universal, cross-cultural category 'fear'. But it is in the wide range of cultural contexts covered, and the

wide range of interpretations of those contexts, that we believe the term begins to define itself.

The concept of fear that we explored[2] comes out of this discourse. The idea that there may be a concept of fear or shame which while varying in its particular associations has recognisable core elements appears plausible. Those core elements may be definable in terms of physiological descriptions of the state, such as sweating, rapid heartbeat, and/or contexts of occurrence such as being in the presence of danger. Wendy James's report of the Uduk description of bodily fear *ko* as 'the sense of coldness, stillness, sweating, rising temperature, pulse and a pounding inside' can be seen to echo through most if not all of the physiological descriptions of fear in the work of the proposed contributors. And the contexts in which fear occurs do turn out to have a predictability cross-culturally. However the concept of fear that develops from these anthropological analyses is fuzzy around the edges; it is emergent as a property of cross-cultural analysis and is subject to modification in particular cases since it is precisely out of cross-cultural variation that the fuzziness arises.

Universalism, particularism and relative autonomy in human cultures

Such an exercise in cross-cultural analysis is ultimately premised on the possibility of creating a set of terms which reflect common components of the ways in which human beings construct the world — the cultural equivalents of Wierzbicka's semantic primitives (1991, 2021). Underlying this premise is a definition of fully modern humans as people who share certain cultural as well as physiological characteristics. These characteristics might include a capacity for aesthetic response, a concept of exchange, the capacity to fear. The task of anthropology is in part to show the immense difficulty of arriving at such a definition and to be aware of the danger that the very perspective itself is an imposition of a western concept of self on the rest of the world. None the less we have to recognise the depth of our entanglement in such a universalising process through the very language that we use.[3]

Even if we ultimately reject the universal application of any concepts cross-culturally, it is necessary to develop an anthropological meta-language that enables anthropologists themselves to use the term with as much precision as possible when translating concepts of other cultures: so that when an anthropologist writes about 'shame' in the case of people the anthropological use of the word shame is clear and unambiguous before it is modified by the analysis of the particular case. This perspective is surprisingly similar to that of reflexive anthropology where in a less formal sense anthropologists are explicit about their own involvement in the research process and show awareness of the presuppositions with which they entered the field. The meta-language of anthropology becomes a discourse among interpretations, which when projected on to the worlds that are being described produces a

[2] The papers discussed were originally presented at the ISCA departmental research seminar in Oxford in 1993 (eds.).

[3] Frances and Howard Morphy have continued to develop these ideas in dialogue with Anna Wierzbicka in subsequent work, in particular in exploring the concept of mind as a cross-cultural category (see Morphy and Morphy 2020).

polythetic set of overlapping conceptual structures. Within those conceptual structures certain concepts may appear to be more universal in their occurrence than others. What anthropology should do is counterbalance the European bias in the definition of universality. Anthropologists can show that some of these more universal concepts are largely absent in the west or are more central to or more elaborated as concepts in certain non-western societies than in the case of European societies. The concept of mana may be such example. Though it must also be borne in mind that concepts are shared differentially within a population and that the reification of the West as a category and the implication of uniformity is as erroneous as it is in the case of any other group. Different western theories of the emotions may for example reflect precisely the kind of differences represented by the contrast between early Jain and Sanskritic *rasa* theories, which may themselves be internally differentiated.

The complementarity of universalism and particularism is difficult for anthropologists to grasp precisely because historically their research has emphasized difference and focused on societies in which cultural construction can be seen in terms of its difference from that of the anthropologist's own. While anthropologists have paid lip service to the common ground — to the 'psychic unity of man' — or to underlying cognitive and physiological constraints and potentials, these tend to have been seen as central to someone else's problematic and not to have been incorporated within anthropological paradigms. The late twentieth century upsurge of interest in cognition potentially challenges this position but has been used, ironically, to provide the basis of a critique of cultural construction and to refocus anthropology on the historically positioned individual (see for example Christina Toren's work, 2019). History replaces culture but itself remains unproblematised. However an holistic view of socio-cultural process should be concerned with the articulation of human potential (which includes the evolution of humans as culture-bearing animals — see Durham 1991), cultural construction, social context and individual agency.

In particular cases cultural construction often masks the relationship that exists between the particular and the complex underlying processes of human history and biology, and the reification of cultural construction can create overly constructed, apparently synchronous, deterministic models of social process. However the omission of culture from models of socialization and social action similarly leads to the neglect of a component of the process of socio-cultural reproduction that is integral to human action and the existence of human diversity. Jain theories of the nature of the cosmos and its embodiment in human life processes, Ambonwari theories about the gendered nature of the spirit world, Chewong theories of the integration of the opposition of their social and spiritual universe in opposition to those of others — all influence the context in which fear is experienced and how it is ameliorated. Yet at the same time worlds are not bounded, cultural structures are abstractions that are always imminent in social process, and individuals differ in their personal histories and in their position in society. This creates room for the existence of universalistic and particularistic perspectives on social context, since the content of human action is both influenced by and enabled by cultural conceptualisation and is reproduced in a relatively autonomous domain of action — one which is the product of historical circumstance, human potential and the intentional behaviour of the participants.

The complex interrelationship between culture, action and historical process comes out particularly clearly in times of social change and regional conflict, when conceptual structures are being challenged by their application to new contexts — contexts in which the ideational systems themselves are being transformed. Thus as Howell shows in the case of the Chewong, the adaptive significance of fear is being challenged by the disappearance of the forest through logging and the increasing impossibility of retreat. War and the imposition of terror from outside the community provide paradigm cases of societies out of control in which the established relationship between cultural practice and predictable outcome breaks down.

Fear, culture and the particularities of history

The seminar essays that we are discussing explored how a particular emotion, fear, may be both culturally structured in the particular case and in certain contexts be a relatively independent factor in human action and historical process. We would argue that fear is a concept that can be applied cross culturally precisely because it is a potential response that human beings have to certain situations. The particular construction of fear is something that can be understood in relation to this background. Yet it is impossible to predict in any particular case the ways in which fear is incorporated within the processes of social reproduction, or the ways in which fear is conceptualised and dealt with by members of different cultures, or the quality or value that fear has in relation to the structure of the emotions as a whole.

The contrast between Howell's analysis of the Chewong and Whitehouse's analysis of the Orakaiva demonstrates clearly the ways in which social context alters the value of an emotion, and relates in turn to the process of cultural identity and political action. Howell shows how the relations between the inside and outside worlds of the Chewong are constructed through a concept of fear. Fear of outsiders is thought positive and rational and is part of the process of the creation of community that separates Chewong from the non-Chewong. People who are fearless are to be feared and in Chewong terms are not part of the community. Violence and aggression is largely absent from within the community and the only response to angry people is their exclusion. The Chewong world includes the natural and spiritual world in which they exist and the very concept of being Chewong itself applies in oppositional terms to the whole material and spiritual universe outside.

The Orakaiva case is in marked contrast to the Chewong though, as Whitehouse shows, fear plays an equivalent role in constructing the community and in defining self in opposition to other. The Orakaiva certainly experience fear in relation to outsiders. Warfare is a not infrequent part of social life and one interpretation of the rigorous initiation system endured by Orakaiva youth is that it prepares them to face the dangers of conflict and enables them to act aggressively against others. However, a corollary of the initiation process is that the primary context for experiencing fear is an internal one. Whitehouse argues that fear binds people to the community and, using the concept of 'flash bulb memory', he argues that the group to which the individual becomes attached is a highly specific set of individuals whose

attachment to him is almost imprinted by a process of visualisation while in a state of extreme trauma (1996). Initiation in the context of the region {Melanesia} as a whole 'produces a highly fragmented political landscape composed of small, boundary-conscious ritual communities, standing in relations of hostility and rivalry'. Howell and Whitehouse's work taken together show the extent to which aggression and fear and their valuation are culturally constructed.

Telban's analysis of the Ambonwari, another New Guinea society but from the Sepik, is complementary to both Orakaiva and the Chewong cases. He shows how fear is constructed within the different contexts of Ambonwari society and how it is mediated through the process of seeing (2004). As in the case of most New Guinea societies fear is orchestrated and structured as part of the process of socialization, 'as a vehicle to quieten children', but to nothing like the extent described for the Orakaiva or for many Highland societies (see Godelier 1986, Herdt 1982). Fear is experienced within the community not so much in terms of fear of violence as fear of exposure. Fear of forces in the natural and spirit world are part of the process of structuring gender relations.

The Orakaiva represent a Hobbesian expression of human society. By contrast the Ambonwari share much in common with the Chewong for whom 'showing fear is a positive value'. Fear is associated with shame but shame is not something to be feared, as is the case in certain Mediterranean societies, but is in most respects a positive moral force that regulates relations within the community. For both the Chewong and the Ambonwari management of fear as an external agent is part of the process of creating community, though for the Ambonwari fear is also integral to the process of gender definition within the society. But in contrast to the Chewong, the inside and the outside worlds of the Ambonwari — the unfeared and the feared, the seen and the unseen, the safe and the dangerous — are not ontologically distinct: for example the spirits of dead men move to the status of maligned and alien beings the sight of whom is most feared, whereas the spirits of dead women are made publicly visible through carvings which are not hidden from anyone.

So far we have been considering relatively autonomous small-scale societies in which the significant structures of domination and subordination are largely internal to the society or circumscribe the boundaries of the social world but do not dominate daily life. Cannell considers the case of the Bicol, peasant farmers of Luzon in the Philippines, a society that has for more than a century been incorporated in a subordinate position within the political structure of a developing nation state (1999). For Bicol farmers life is hard, they live in poverty, their mortality rates are high and they are subjected to a repressive regime of land owners and state power. And yet Cannell argues that there is an absence of discourse about fear, and that the emotion of fear is largely absent from contexts in which we might predict it to be present or to dominate. Cannell's focus is on mortuary rituals, but she is concerned not so much with the fear of death as the fear of the dead and ways of transforming relations between the living and the dead. She deals with a process whereby relations of fear are partly transformed into relations of pity and a negative emotion into a potentially positive relation of 'benevolent dependency'. Fear is thus subject to cultural processes of value transformation which convert it into something else (compare Munn 1986).

It would be possible to argue from this case that fear itself as an expression of universality does not exist, since the cultural structuring of the emotions are so different in

different cases that new labels are necessary. On the other hand the absence of fear as a dominant theme of discourse could result from the incorporation of fear within an existing world of belief and way of acting that enables people to cope with fear as a universalistic emotion (associated with the dead), through processes of value transformation that alleviate its effect. Cannell argues that management of fear as a cultural category in Bicol is a symptom of more general relations of hierarchy and oppression for which cultural mechanisms and possible strategies of action have been developed.

Barnes's understanding of fear and ritual responses to misfortune in Kedang shows points of similarity with Bicol. There is however a major difference in the ways in which the respective societies are integrated into regional political systems. In Bicol fear is part of a cultural process that integrates people within the hierarchical structure of the regional system, whereas in Kédang fear is integrated within the local political structure and the history of clan relations. Barnes focuses on the embodiment of the emotions and shows how the body becomes an index of clan relations and the reflection of a wider spiritual and temporal world (see also Munn's analysis of space/time in Gawa (Munn 1986)). Barnes is able to show how Kédang ritual involves both complex representations of the physical substances that underlie or produce emotional states and an inquiry into the history of the personal and clan relations of the individuals involved. Emotion is the expression of an ongoing process within which the exigencies of everyday life and individual circumstances are incorporated. It would be a mistake however to reduce fear in Kédang to the cultural process in which it is incorporated and by which it is alleviated, and to fail to acknowledge the relative autonomy of different components of socio-cultural process and individual response to situations. As Barnes concludes: 'the physical and emotional aspects of fear in Kédang are much like they are pan-culturally but there is a culturally specific aspect to fear.'

Fear as a human universal is a potential object of value, a potential quality of feeling that can be culturally structured in ways that affect it across a set of otherwise unrelated contexts. In the case of the Chewong, fear of outsiders which is positively valued has a consequence on the way in which violence can be dealt with within the community. In this respect, fear is something which is worked on and in the case of Bicol 'an anthropological account of [fear] needs to be moving and not static; to trace not only meanings which are inscribed in fear, but the processes which people may choose instead to emphasise, by which they constantly work to eliminate it.' Indeed from a Western perspective to fear is often seen as undesirable or pathological, something whose causes must be identified and removed, and if the source of fear lies in something existential (fear of death) or something immovable (like an entrenched structure of domination) then the individual is expected to come to terms with that fear in order to keep acting.

Cannell's argument shows an interesting reversal of Telban's and Whitehouse's. Whereas in the case of the Ambonwari and Orakaiva fear structures the process of socialization and defines relations within the community, in Bicol the structure of power relations becomes the context in which fear (of death or the dead) is mediated. Yet it could be argued that the similarities are greater than the differences since in all cases fear, or the management of fear, is integral to the process of reproducing social relations. In a stable social trajectory fear is integrated within a multidetermined and complex process of reproduction

and eliminated through the maintenance (albeit a negotiated one) of a particular structure of social relations. To Telban anxiety expressed and counteracted through care has reached the dimensions of a social sentiment.

In these examples we are considering the place of fear in 'normal' times, in which it is part of a decipherable world. Fear and ways of coping with or using fear are integral to processes of social reproduction and part of people's everyday understanding of the cosmos and the world in which they live. We are dealing with predictable consequences of the unpredictable for which people have a response and an explanation. By contrast Zur, Pettigrew and James all examine cases in which the lives of the people concerned have been turned upside down by the late twentieth century imposition of violence or warfare from without. In her analysis of fear in the time of terror in Guatemala, *La Violencia*, Zur makes a contrast between the controllable fear associated with witchcraft and the fear of violent death associated with the terror (2019). This in part involves a change of agency from one which was integrated within the process of the social life of the community to one that cuts across it. The silence associated with *La Violencia* obtained, Zur argues, 'because people were unable to keep their experiences of violence in mind for they could not be integrated into cultural categories, concepts or codes of experience.'

The Sikh case that Pettigrew writes about shares much in common with the Guatemalan situation. In both cases there is a sudden change in the trajectory of the society, a normal state in which fear was part of an anticipated and imagined world into which people are socialized has been ruptured by the intervention of extreme violence. In India the violence came from outside the group as a reaction to the campaign waged by a sector of Sikh society for greater political autonomy. It too resulted eventually in the division of the community and the creation of uncertainty: the arbitrary nature of violence and the disappearance of individuals combined with increasing distrust within the community as people were suspected of collaborating with forces of oppression. There is some evidence in the Sikh case that the history of warfare and the cultural value placed on martyrdom and bravery in the face of violence means that fear occupies less of a place in people's consciousness than anger and the desire for justice (see Pettigrew1995, 2000, 2006[4]). But in both cases the seemingly arbitrary and overwhelming nature of the violence means that fewer people are prepared to stand out against the oppression. Fear in Guatemala and in the Punjab reaches the point where everybody becomes only an individual, where trust breaks down and the community divides against itself.

James's case study of the Uduk (1997) shows features in common with both Zur's and Pettigrew's material. The Uduk have been caught up in the events of over a decade of warfare, migration and famine on the Sudanese-Ethiopian border. As a small group they have been continually renegotiating their existence amidst warring factions engaged in conflicts that they, the Uduk, have seldom initiated. As in the case of the Chewong the rational response has always edged towards retreat, scattering to avoid being caught in cross-fire. To an extent, as in Guatemala, silence and passivity have been the main responses to a situation in which experience suggests that aggression is suicidal. Among the Uduk too 'the deadly choreography

[4] Pettigrew has pointed out in correspondence (p.c. August 2022) that a full study would have to consider the other side of the coin: where fear has produced collaboration.

of alternating partnerships and loyalties has thrown neighbours and kin against each other in unexpected ways'.

James shows how for most of their twentieth-century journey and perhaps for most of their existence the Uduk response to danger and to outrage has been one of restraint, of 'holding the liver'. She shows how in the late twentieth century Christian missionaries have built on this perspective of fear and anger and the particular ways in which it has been embodied to establish continuity between Christian teaching and existing values. But the central case she develops shows that freed from the normal restraints of their existence by a particular combination of circumstances the Uduk too can express themselves in violent anger directed against the circumstances of their twentieth-century history. James demonstrates the transformational nature of human cultures and the way in which emotions must be understood to have an existence independent of a particular cultural form of their expression, how emotional states articulate with cultural and historical process.

In the Philippines, by way of contrast, the structure of domination and subordination has had a prolonged existence and it can be argued that the cultural structuring of the emotions in relation to social process that has developed is adjusted to late twentieth century circumstances. Life, though hard and unjust, has provided ways of coping with fear and fear has been integrated within a hierarchical structure of pity and negotiation, which in the Guatemalan case has had no time to develop. The people of Bicol represent an adjustment to long-term conditions of repression: 'people are generally robust, resourceful and cheerful in their manner, with a strong sense of irony about the conditions of life'.

Conclusion

We are convinced that the analyses of the particular cases we have discussed reveal a useful cross-culturally comparable concept of fear, that the topic is valid and that the juxtaposition of the individual cases has enabled us to bring insights from the analysis of one case and apply them to the others. While each case shows different indigenous theories of the emotions and a different positioning of fear in relation to other emotions, and while the embodiment of fear is linked in each case to a unique set of processes and relations within the society or between earthly and spiritual domains, nonetheless strong linkages emerge between the different cases. We do not pretend to have established for once and for all an anthropological meta-concept of fear, but we hope we have shown evidence that fear can reasonably be taken to be a category for cross-cultural research. A cross-cultural category is one that should enter the anthropological process of interpretation and translation so that anthropologists can present to others the particularities of each case in terms of a more general discourse of anthropology. In the case of the emotions the aim must be to convey a sense of the experience as a means of communicating it to others and reciprocally 'to gain access to the conceptual world in which our subjects exist so that we can in some extended sense of the term converse with them' (Geertz 1975:24). As Wendy James writes of her own experience of fear as the Uduk would have felt it (distinguishing immediate bodily sensation from more general apprehension) on a night of violence on the Sudan-Ethiopian border: 'as we left Karmi past the protesting

traders I certainly felt fear in the first sense [that Uduk experience it]; as we returned along the dark road back not knowing what had happened in our absence, I believe I was briefly touched by the second.' (1997:123)

Anthropological analysis of cultural data enables first of all understandings of a particular case. The next task is to place those understandings in an appropriate context of discourse that they may be communicated to others. Through analysing fear across a number of different cultures we see differences in the structure of the emotions and differences in the way fear is felt and alleviated in particular cases. But the overlap which has emerged is sufficient to give fear the status of a polythetic category applicable across cultures and, potentially, the status of an anthropological meta-category which provides a focus for cultural and cross-cultural analysis. By such means the problematic referred to on the first page of this introduction is successfully and productively reinstated at the centre of anthropological concerns.

Bibliography

Banks, Marcus 1996. Constructing the audience through ethnography, in Peter I. Crawford and Sigurjon B. Hafsteinsson (eds.) *The construction of the viewer: media ethnography and the anthropology of audiences*, 118-34. Højbjerg: Intervention Press.

Berger, Peter L. 1966 [1963]. *Invitation to sociology: a humanistic perspective,* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

Berger, Peter L. 1969 [1967]. *The social reality of religion,* London: Faber and Faber.

Bowen, Elenore Smith [Laura Bohannon] 1954. *Return to laughter*, London: Victor Gollancz.

Cannell, Fenella 1999. *Power and intimacy in the Christian Philippines*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davitz, Joel R. 1969. *The language of emotion*, New York: Academic Press.

Dundas, Paul 1992. *The Jains*, London: Routledge.

Durham, W. H. 1991. *Co-evolution: genes culture and human diversity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Geertz, Clifford 1975. *The interpretation of cultures*, New York: Basic Books.

Godelier, Maurice 1986. *The making of great men: male domination and power among the New Guinea Baruya*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heelas, Paul and Andrew Lock (eds.) 1981. *Indigenous psychologies: the anthropology of the self*, London: Academic Press.

Herdt, Gilbert. 1982. *Rituals of manhood*, Berkley: University of California Press.

Heider, Karl G. 1991. *Landscapes of emotion: mapping three cultures of emotion in Indonesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Hocart A. M. 1934. The fear of the dead in primitive religion: Lectures delivered on the William Wyse Foundation at Trinity College, Cambridge, *Nature*, 134/3387, 475-6.

Howell, Signe 1981. Rules not words, in Paul Heelas & Andrew Lock (eds.) *Indigenous psychologies: the anthropology of the self*, 133–43. London: Academic Press.
--- 1989. 'To be angry is not to be human, but to be fearful is': Chewong concepts of human nature, in Howell Signe and Willis Roy (eds.), *Societies at peace: anthropological perspectives*, 45-59. London and New York: Routledge.

Jaini, Padmanabh S. 1979. *The Jaina path of purification*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

James, Wendy 1997. The names of fear: memory, history and the ethnography of feeling among Uduk refugees, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3/1, 115-131.

Kuklick, Henrika 1991. *The savage within: the social history of British social anthropology 1885-1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lutz, Catherine 1986a. The domain of emotion words on Ifaluk, in R. Harré (ed.) *The social construction of emotions*, 267-288. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Lutz, Catherine 1986b. Emotion, thought, and estrangement: emotion as a cultural category, *Cultural Anthropology* 1/3, 286-309.

Lutz, Catherine 1988. *Unnatural emotions: everyday sentiments on a Micronesian atoll and their challenge to Western theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lutz, Catherine and Geoffrey M. White 1986. The anthropology of emotions, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15, 405-36.

Lynch, Owen M 1990. The social construction of emotion in India, in Owen M. Lynch (ed.) *Divine passions: the social construction of emotion in India*, 3-34. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mauss, Marcel 1979a. The notion of body techniques, in *Sociology and psychology: essays*, 97-105. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Mauss, Marcel 1979b. Questions put to psychology, in *Sociology and psychology: essays,* 26-31. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Morphy, Frances and Howard Morphy 2020. Locating 'mind' (and 'soul') cross-culturally, in Helen Bromhead and Zhengdao Ye (eds.) *Life and culture: in conversation with Anna Wierzbicka*, 249-271. Canberra: ANU Press.

Munn, Nancy D. 1986. *The fame of Gawa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Needham, Rodney 1972. *Belief, language and experience*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Pettigrew, Joyce 1995. *The Sikhs of the Punjab: unheard voices of state and guerilla violence,* London: Zed Books.
--- 2000. Parents and their children in situations of terror: disappearances and special police activity in Punjab, in A. Sluka Jeffrey (ed.) *Death squad: the anthropology of state terror*, 204-25. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
--- 2006. The Indian state, its Sikh citizens, and terror, in Andrew Strathern, Neil Whitehead and J. Stewart Pamela (eds.), *Terror and violence: imagination and the unimaginable*, 89-116. London: Pluto Press.

Schwartz, Theodore, Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz (eds.) 1992. *New directions in psychological anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Jean 1981. Self and experience in Māori culture, in Paul Heelas, & Andrew Lock (eds.). *Indigenous psychologies: the anthropology of the self*, 145–59. London: Academic Press.

Telban, Borut 2004. Fear, shame and the power of the gaze in Ambonwari, Papua New Guinea, *Anthropological Notebooks* 10 /1, 5-25.

Toren, Christina 2019. What is it to be human? A unified model suggests history will have the last word, in Shalini Randeria and Björn Wittrock (eds.) *Social science at the crossroads*, 39-51. Leiden & Boston: Brill.

Trawick, Margaret 1989. *Notes on love in a Tamil family,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

White, Geoffrey M. and Catherine A. Lutz 1992. Introduction, in Theodore Schwartz, Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz (eds.), *New directions in psychological anthropology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whitehouse, Harvey 1996. Rites of terror: emotion, metaphor and memory in Melanesian initiation cults, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2/4, 703-715. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/3034304.

Wierzbicka, Anna 1991. *Cross-cultural pragmatics: the semantics of human interaction,* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wierzbicka, Anna 2021. 'Semantic primitives', fifty years later, *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 25, 317-42.

Zur, Judith 2019. *Violent memories: Mayan war widows in Guatemala,* London: Routledge.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

ANTHROPOLOGY IN TRANSLATION (JASO OCCASIONAL SERIES)

This new translation series provides an English-language space for current anthropological scholarship originally written in languages other than English. Such a space is long overdue. Successive debates about 'world anthropologies' or decolonisation – including in English – have produced little practical changes in editorial practices concerning non-English-language scholarship. It is no longer possible to ignore the many vibrant traditions of social anthropology worldwide, whose insights are well cognizant of English-language scholarship without receiving appropriate attention in the opposite direction. The global hegemony of English as a scholarly language, in addition to the everyday Anglo-centrism of Anglo-American anthropology departments, poses a serious epistemic barrier to an even scholarly dialogue within the worldwide anthropological community.

As an open-access anthropology journal based in Oxford, we wanted to open a modest editorial space to begin redressing this epistemic imbalance, by featuring a genuine avenue to engage with anthropology in translation. We are well aware that translation, on its own, cannot be the panacea to cure all structural imbalances in academic knowledge-production. However, it is a small step towards acknowledging the limitations of Anglo-American conversations that rarely feature non-Anglo-American scholars. We note, furthermore, that there is a broader trend towards a cross-linguistic anthropological practice in our discipline. Setting aside bilingual venues such as *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie sociale*, journals such as *HAU* and *Cambridge Anthropology* have begun featuring a translation section in recent years. Meanwhile, the American journal *Cultural Anthropology* has begun accepting articles in Spanish as well as English. We would like to join this broader trend in Anglo-American circles by offering a robust engagement with current world anthropologies through translation.

Our first article in the series is written by Ismaël Moya (CNRS) and translated by David Zeitlyn. The original article is entitled 'L'esthétique de la norme: Discours et pouvoir dans les relations matrimoniales et maraboutiques à Dakar', and it was published in *Autrepart* (2015). Moya argues that statements seemingly about matters of fact (household budgets) are actually about ideology. In contexts where an understanding of how things should be is much more important than trifling details on the ground the correct thing to do, to be helpful to a researcher, is to explain the proper state of affairs. This means that interview and questionnaire data about household economies reflect norms rather than the mundane situations in which families live.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

AN AESTHETICS OF NORM-ADHERENCE: DISCOURSE AND POWER IN MATRIMONIAL AND MARABOUTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN DAKAR[1]

ISMAËL MOYA[2]

This article shows the homology between two hierarchical relationships defined by Islam: husband-wife and marabout-disciple. Wives and disciples ostentatiously declare their submission to the authority of their husbands or marabouts although these stereotyped statements are not directly related to reality. Such contradictions are the *form* of these relationships rather than a demonstration of power. What matters is the conformity of the discourse -and not the actions of people- to the principles that govern these relationships. In ethnographic as well as daily interactions, people strive to say what is the most 'beautiful' and keep up appearances according to a moral system that values discretion and harmonious relations. The preservation of appearances and the ostentatious recognition of authority are not indexes of power relationships. Instead, they provide the 'dominated' a form of autonomy within the framework of hierarchical relationships.

Keywords: Norms, discourse, gender, household economy, Senegal

In the early 2000s, I began a long period of ethnographic fieldwork in the working-class neighbourhood of Thiaroye-sur-Mer, a suburb of Dakar, Senegal. The initial months of my investigations were devoted to exploring what later transpired to be a dead end: the domestic economy. My goal was to gather information, through interviews, on the impact of women's economic activity on household relations and the importance of their financial contribution to the household budget. My interviewees were, to a man and woman, willing and helpful participants, and showed a great deal of kindness in putting up with these conversations – a series of questions rather than a discussion.

---

[1] Originally published as 'L'esthétique de la norme: discours et pouvoir dans les relations matrimoniales et maraboutiques à Dakar' in *Autrepart* 2015/1 (No. 73), pages 181 to 197. This translation published with permission. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the editors (especially David Zeitlyn), with special thanks to Matthew Carey for everything.

[2] Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Email: ismael.moya@cnrs.fr

The vast majority of the women I interviewed about their involvement in household finances offered up the same stock responses, either in French or in Wolof. They consistently stated that the money they earned was not primarily intended for domestic expenses, but for their 'needs' (*soxla*); domestic expenses being mainly, according to them, the responsibility of the husband. These discussions were also punctuated by affirmations of the husband's authority as head of the household. Their husbands meanwhile, presented the same account, from the other side. According to them, the burden of the household rested on their shoulders. Their wives never did enough and did not know how to manage the household budget, which they frittered away on 'women's business', particularly on familial birth and marriage ceremonies. They also regularly reminded me of the principle of power asymmetry between spouses and complained that their wives did not always heed their words.

At first, the ease with which my interlocutors spoke about home economics allayed my fears that I might be rebuffed of chased out of certain homes. However, this stereotypical discourse of commonplace expressions, which I initially took to be a straightforward description of the domestic economy, later appeared to me to be a series of clichés that bore little relation to reality. I concluded from my travails that everyone had been gently mocking and misleading me , while politely trying to do me the favour of answering my questions.

In order to obtain more accurate data, I sought to circumvent this. First, I considered systematically collecting household budgets from the families of the people I had already interviewed. My interlocutors then became much less cooperative. Faced with the polite, but often outraged, refusal of many of my contacts to countenance the idea of my sticking my nose into their personal and domestic finances (and this after having already been interviewed), I decided to distribute expense sheets and ask them to fill them in. This too rapidly failed. The systematic discrepancy between the financial reality of the households, whose members I got to know much better as time went by, and the answers I obtained during the first weeks of my work in those household finance interviews never disappeared. Now, more than a decade later, my interlocutors in the field either continue to repeat the same thing or, sometimes, tell me to be cautious of such discourses.

This article focuses on the status of the discrepancy between the facts and discourses surrounding the domestic economy. This contradiction manifests itself in stereotypical statements about the contribution and hierarchical roles of husband and wife that clearly do not correspond to empirical relations between spouses, especially in financial matters. How can this contradiction be understood? Such discourse notably stresses the superior position of men and minimises the role of women in the domestic economy (Lecarme-Frassy, 2000). We could, for instance, apply a so-called 'critical' perspective, revealing the structures of power behind the discourse (Foucault, 1971), in this case, what Bourdieu calls 'masculine domination' (2001).

In order to answer these questions, we must first note that our interlocutors are well aware of the distinction between fact (action) and discourse (talk). This is the principle challenge the ethnographer faces, particularly in a place like Dakar where speech is the object of significant social control. Of course, public discourse, especially answers to survey questions, does not necessarily have a direct descriptive relationship to the facts or to the object of our questions. But insofar as this discrepancy is systematic and manifests itself in

stereotypical formulations, the apparent contradiction between facts and discourse on the domestic economy is worth exploring.

In this article, I suggest that the stereotypical nature of discourse on the domestic economy, as well as the direct association of issues concerning the domestic economy with the husband's position of authority, must be taken seriously. We are not simply dealing with a discrepancy or contradiction between the norms governing spousal relationships and empirical reality, but with a speech genre specific to the authority relations ordained by Islam.

The domestic economy appeals to Islamic principles governing hierarchical relationships between spouses, and in particular to the husband's position of authority. Stereotypical discourses on household finances are also part of a system of moral principles that value discretion (*sutura*), harmony in relationships and 'getting along' (*maslaa*). This moral system translates into a speech genre that privileges saying what is most 'beautiful' (*rafet*) and keeping up appearances. From this point of view, it is possible to draw an analogy between the relationship between spouses and the marabout-disciple relationship. Both of these hierarchical relationships, instituted by Islam, are manifest in stereotypical discourse, both in everyday and ethnographic interactions, in which wives and disciples conspicuously proclaim their submission, devotion and obedience to the authority of their husband or marabout. These stereotypical discourses are *not* evidence of a power relationship, but rather of a form of hierarchical relationship based on Islamic principles. What matters is not the conformity of the discourse to the actions of people, but to the principles that govern these relationships. Correlatively, the privileged mode of being of these hierarchical norms is not action, but discourse. It is a matter of saying and not necessarily of doing. The respect for forms that preserve appearances as well as the conspicuous recognition of authority thus ensure that those in subordinate positions (wives or followers) have considerable autonomy within these relationships.

Islam, domestic economy and the relationship between spouses

The relationship between spouses is presented by my interlocutors as governed, at a normative level, by rules drawn from the wider Islamic tradition, or even directly from the Qur'an itself.[3] Overall, marital relationships are seen as based on three principles. First, the husband is head of the household (*borom kër*) and has authority (*kilifa*) over his wife, who is sometimes said to be her husband's slave (*jaam*). However, the idiom of slavery denotes here less a form of subjugation than a relationship of submission and dependence based on authority, comparable, as we shall see, to the relationship between a disciple and his marabout. Second, the authority of the husband is directly associated with his obligation to provide for his wife. In the Qur'an, this link is directly established in verse 34 of the fourth sura. The translation of one of the most widely distributed editions of the Qur'an in French in Dakar, presents the verse as follows:

[3] In particular verses 32 and 34 of the fourth Sura, '*an-nisâ*': 'Women'.

> Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because God has given the one more (strength) than the other and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct admonish them (first) (next) refuse to share their beds (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience seek not against them means (of annoyance): for God is Most High Great (above you all). (Qur'an, s4, v34, translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali)

The husband has a threefold obligation: to provide full support for his wife and children, to provide a home for them and to have sexual relations with his wife. In addition to these two complementary principles (the husband's authority and his obligation to provide for his wife and children), there is also the principle that spouses manage their personal property and income independently (Qur'an, s. 4, v. 32). Thus, in principle, there is no requirement for the wife to participate in household expenses, although she is usually the *de facto* manager of the housekeeping budget (she is in charge of shopping, cooking, and receives from her husband the money for the '*ration'* (i.e. allowance) given each month and/or daily 'expenses'.

Jane Guyer (1981) has clearly shown that the notion of household, in the sense of a localised group, characterised as a unit of consumption, of mutual solidarity and having a common budget, has no meaning in many West African contexts, be they Muslim or not. The resources of spouses are not directly pooled (Fapohunda, 1988), especially in a context such as Dakar where polygamy is still common. Households do, however, represent nodes of compartmentalised and divergent financial flows in which the people who finance the domestic economy (husbands) are not those (wives) who manage the household's money on a daily basis. In Dakar, the norms that govern this distribution of expenses are presented as religious. The reference to the Qur'an, in which these two principles are clearly stated and posited as complementary, gives absolute and indisputable legitimacy to these norms. As a corollary, because the husband's authority is linked, in Islamic terms, to the distribution of expenses within the household, speaking of domestic economy brings into play an indisputable Muslim value.

The economic difficulties of Dakar's working class call into question the economic basis of this norm. In the early years of the 21st century, few heads of household are able to meet their daily expenses by themselves. The financial responsibility that falls on the shoulders of women is thus significant. In many cases, it is up to them to collect or at least complete the 'daily expenses'. Women's participation is obviously not new. However, for over thirty years, the rate of women's participation in income-generating activities has been increasing and economic hardship has reduced the ability of many male heads of household to shoulder the burdens of the domestic economy alone (or nearly so), particularly in polygamous households. Women's involvement in the domestic economy is significant, although they appear rarely to be the main breadwinner. The extent of their involvement is difficult to assess, as the data that can be collected is uncertain and should be treated with caution. In the early 2000s, direct observation of a dozen households and a questionnaire survey of 350 people suggested that women's actual participation was generally higher than that reported in the interviews,

although it is not possible to assess this difference precisely.[4] Finally, the information obtained in the first few months of my fieldwork from interviews on household management proved to be radically different from the more fragmentary and partial knowledge I acquired on some of the households in the survey as my fieldwork progressed on other topics: in the interviews conducted at the beginning of the survey, women systematically minimised their participation in the home economy.

Speeches by both women and men on the domestic economy are characterised by their formalism and the recurrence of stereotyped statements in which the husband's position of authority is acknowledged, and associated with the principles that order the distribution of domestic expenses. In their statements, women systematically downplay their participation in the domestic economy. They are characterised by two recurring clichés: 'I work for my own needs' and 'my husband pays, I top up the expenditure'. In general, such statements are associated with assertions, also stereotyped, of the husband's position of authority: 'the wife is her husband's slave', 'he decides everything', 'for everything, I ask for his authorization'. Such discourses can also be heard when it comes to women's economic activity: 'I work with the authorization of my husband', 'I asked my husband for permission to work', etc. Such platitudes establish a connection between the authority of the husband (as head of the household) and the domestic economy analogous to the one established in Islamic principles.

The aesthetics of discourse: beautiful talk and discretion

Daily life presents few opportunities to hear conversations about the distribution of burdens in the domestic economy. Financial arrangements between husband and wife(s) are subject to *sutura*, discretion. 'Issues of lack of "DQ" (daily expenses, [lit. *dépense quotidienne*]) are not to be discussed (outside of the household). We practise *sutura*. It's problematic to talk about such things. People see you doing that and they think you're destitute. It's a question of honour' (dixit a housewife, annoyed by my questions about household finances).

In Wolof society, the morality of *sutura*, the sense of discretion, is an essential principle of social interaction. To demonstrate *sutura* means not revealing or mentioning publicly anything that might bring another person into disrepute or back them into a corner (their faults, weaknesses, etc.) so as to show only what makes them respectable and promotes good relations. Discretion aims at doing what is 'beautiful' (*rafet*), i.e. keeping up appearances in accordance with an ideal of harmony and peace. No mistakes, problems or conflicts should be explicitly brought to public knowledge or even addressed directly. *Sutura* is not so much about honour as about potential shame: what matters is the preservation of appearances. Shame is predicated on public exposure: only a negative thing exposed publicly is a source of dishonour.

As Boubacar Ly (1966: 364) points out, *sutura* is linked to the notion of *kersa. Kersa* is the valorisation of restraint, modesty and self-control in all things: temper, speech, relationship to food, sexuality, etc. All forms of expression, everything that manifests itself in

[4] Some expenses, daily or otherwise, were not taken into account.

a person, whether it be words, conduct or emotions, must be controlled and restrained. To demonstrate *kersa* is to act calmly, controlling one's gestures, the display of one's emotions and, of course, one's words: to speak without raising one's voice, and relatively deeply, not to speak in public, not to sing someone's praises and, above all, to show discretion (*sutura*). *Kersa* is both an essential moral principle of social life, but also the value that statutorily distinguishes caste people (*ñeeño*), especially griots (*gewel*), from the rest of the population who do not belong to a caste (*géér* usually translated as 'nobles'[5]). Judith Irvine has studied in detail the link between discourse and social hierarchies between 'castes' in Wolof-speaking Senegal. According to her (1990), a real 'language ideology' articulates the distinction between 'noble' people and griots to verbal conduct in relation to *kersa*. In particular, she contrasts two 'styles of speech' that differ on the different levels of language (prosody, phonology, morphology, syntax and rhythm): 'noble-talk' (*waxu geér*), considered morally superior to the 'griot-talk' (*waxu gewel*).

Stereotypical discourses surrounding the husband's authority and household finances are about a hierarchical relationship pertaining to Islam, not caste. However, they are part of the same linguistic ideology. The morality of self-consciousness (*kersa*) and discretion (*sutura*) do not only imply that one should cast a veil of silence over that whereof one may not speak. As with griots, discretion is more or less directly associated with a speech genre, called *wax ju rafet*, literally 'beautiful talk' in Wolof. Beautiful talk is not the prerogative of griots, although they are recognised as experts in it. It is a speech genre that consists of saying only positive and valued things about a person, an act or a situation in order to make the relationship beautiful (*rafet*) through the speech. To put it another way, beautiful talk is wholly about embellishing (*rafetal*) through speech.

Sutura is a value in general, but a wife's words to preserve her husband's position are, according to my interlocutors, the archetypal example of this. It is part of the fundamentally hierarchical relationship in which the husband has authority over his wife. Insofar as possible, spouses display that they get along, their 'mutual understanding' (*maslaa*), and work together, through their stereotypical speeches or their silences, to preserve the husband's position. The asymmetry of the marriage relationship is, literally, unquestionable and wives' beautiful talk keep up appearances. In other words, this speech genre is undeniably the manifestation of a hierarchical relationship. My hypothesis is that it is not, however, indicative of a form of domination, but rather of the mode of being of the hierarchical relationships associated with Islam.

Conspicuous recognition of the authority of marabouts

The conspicuous declaration of authority is not unique to spousal relationships. In the Wolof context, it is a frequent aspect of the authority relations associated with Islam. In this respect, it is comparable to the relationship between marabout and disciple, which has a similar register: a relationship of authority, also marked by formalism, as many researchers have

[5] On the question of statutory categories, see discussion in Moya (2017: 81-115; 320-322).

demonstrated (see, for example, Audrain, 2004; Copans, 1980; Cruise O'Brien, 2002; Diop, 1981). A comparison between these two types of relationship of authority allows us to question the significance of efforts made to maintain a particular form of discourse about certain relationships at the cost of what may appear, from the outside, either as hypocrisy or as the expression of power relationships.

The religious, political and social importance of Muslim brotherhoods (*tarixa*) in Senegal and in the diaspora is well-known. And the marabout-disciple relationship is at the heart of most studies of the role and power of Senegalese Sufi brotherhoods. I will focus on the Mouride brotherhood[6] in which this relationship has been particularly discussed. Mouride *talibés* describe their situation vis-à-vis their marabout by ostensibly proclaiming their allegiance to the sheikh and their absolute obedience to his recommendations (*ndigel*) (Cruise O'Brien, 2002; Audrain, 2004). Such discourses may be prompted by a researcher's questions when interviewing disciples about their relationship to their marabout or to the brotherhood in general. But also, in conversations about religion, in everyday life or about politics, one regularly hears disciples proclaim their devotion and obedience in all things to the head of the brotherhood and/or to their marabout.

Disciples also regularly make offerings to their marabout: in the past, free labour in the fields of the holy man, today, monetary gifts (*addiya*). In Thiaroye-sur-mer, for instance, most people's relationship to their marabout is limited, at best, to a visit (*ziara*) once (or perhaps a few times) a year to give him a donation. This is often done collectively, the gift being given in the name of a localized prayer group (*dahira*). The disciples clearly acknowledge that they expect a return from this gift, namely the benefits of the marabout's blessing (*barke*). Moreover, this gift, because it is collective and because of its higher amount, is said to promise more benefits. In urban areas or even in a migratory context, these sums do not represent large sacrifices for each individual.

The vast majority of research has shown that the disciples' discourse of submission should not be taken at face value as an actual recognition of sheikhly dominance. Donal Cruise O'Brien, for example, has strongly emphasised this aspect. According to him:

> The disciple, in affirming his exploitation and subjection, is distorting the reality of his social and economic situation. In his own devotional language, he is in fact boasting. Boasting in varying degrees, certainly, but always boasting nonetheless. And it is logical enough that the disciple should wish to do so, in terms of the doctrine which the saint proclaims and which the loyal disciple must at least appear to accept. The declaration of allegiance, which is made by all disciples, is an engagement of total obedience to the saint 'in this world and the next'. Obedience in this world implies various forms of tribute, in labour, in kind, and in cash. This tribute in turn is ideologically justified by the disciples' access to the saint's charismatic powers of redemption *(baraka),* and by that alone. But Mouride ideology, however logically coherent on its own terms, in fact serves to conceal or disguise important aspects of the real relation between the saint and his disciple. (1975: 62-63)

[6] The Mouride brotherhood (*muridiyya*) was founded by Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba at the end of the 19th century in the Baol region of central Senegal. Along with the *Tijaniyya*, it is the most important Sufi brotherhood in the country.

According to Cruise O'Brien, these discourses of ostentatious subjection are part of an ideology, but this ideology does not legitimise a form of exploitation or univocal power. Rather, it conceals the 'real relationship' between the marabout and his disciple. By 'real relationship', Cruise O'Brien means two things: the actual power[7] of the marabout over his disciple and the exchange relationship between the two. Disciples are indeed far from being as unconditionally loyal and obedient as they maintain, be it economically or politically. And disciples expect a material and spiritual return for their submission and gifts (*addiya*) (Cruise O'Brien, 1975).

This analysis seems to me to require clarification on one point. Is there really anything here that is the object of concealment and, if so, who is it being concealed from? For no one is fooled. Neither the marabouts nor the disciples were surprised by the revelations of the 'mouridologists': the 'reality' of the relationship is not a secret for anyone. On the contrary, it is notorious and, for the protagonists in the first place, it is just as obvious, albeit in a different register and on a different level, as the disciple's conspicuous declaration of his subjection. The constitutive principle of this relationship is the *baraka* (divine blessing, *barke* in Wolof) which legitimises the status and authority of marabouts and defines the relationship between men and God through the intermediary of marabouts. The *baraka* is especially manifest in the material success of marabouts and disciples. Finally, marabouts are, by virtue of their *baraka*, mediators between men and God on the one hand and between men on the other. Equality is thus excluded from the relationship between Marabouts and disciples on principle.

There is reciprocity here only from a purely external point of view. In no way or form is the gift to the marabout (*addiya*) or the conspicuous recognition of the marabout's authority (which does not commit to much) placed in an equivalent relationship with the blessing since the relationship is precisely hierarchical. The transactional aspects of the relationship, presented by Cruise O'Brien and many researchers as a kind of external strategy, underlying, even subversive of, the proclaimed authority relationship, or simply as a form of exchange, are rather one of its mainsprings: the marabout is, by definition, a mediator and he is judged, among other things, on his 'results', i.e. his capacity to mediate. There is no need, therefore, to try to reduce this relationship by trying to eliminate, always somewhat arbitrarily, one aspect or another. *Talibés* are neither credulous devotees nor irredeemable calculators, any more than marabouts are. The marabout-disciple relationship, based on the religious value of *baraka*, includes the devotion and gifts of the disciples as well as their material and spiritual expectations. There is nothing contradictory in admitting the different aspects of this relationship, provided that the statutory asymmetry and the importance of mediation are recognised. His status undeniably confers a certain power (deriving from this status) on the marabout as an individual. The marabout can 'legitimately' exercise a certain amount of power (by respecting the forms), but there is also a threshold, which varies according to the context, beyond which he may not tread. Doing so, entails overstepping his remit and committing an

[7] Its capacity to command, to act on the actions of others.

abuse of power (which will be recognised as such) or giving orders that will not be followed, particularly in political matters.[8]

In this configuration, the conspicuous declaration of submission to the authority of the marabout by the disciple is not a secondary or superficial element. There is an obvious aspect of ostentation or conspicuousness, which is specific to Islam in Senegal. For example, it is not uncommon to come across men, either adults or the elderly, who, in order to display their deep religiosity, carry huge rosaries and ceaselessly chant *bismillahi* ('in the name of God') in a voice that is low but loud enough to be heard. Others display, as far as possible, all sorts of images of marabouts or signs of their devotion. But beyond these general aspects, respect for form and, above all, the discourses of conspicuous submission that researchers hear and record are central. Just as wealth and success are manifestations of *baraka*, discourses of conspicuous submission manifest - or publicly display, if you like - hierarchical relationships. Moreover, one becomes a disciple through a speech act by pronouncing one's allegiance/self-giving (*jebalu*) to the marabout. In this way, the disciple acknowledges the spiritual authority of the marabout and accepts the obligations that flow from the relationship. The conspicuous recognition of the marabout's authority is also an act that is valued as a reaffirmation of this initial declaration of allegiance. It is the reiteration of a performative act. This speech genre is simply affirming that the disciple is a disciple and recognising the marabout as such. Such stereotypical discourses have no direct connection with any actions of the disciple, but ultimately this lack of connection does not matter. The disciple's deference is the exact opposite of a cynical posture.[9] It is the manifestation of the constitutive character accorded to the respect for form.

The 'boasting' of disciples noted by Cruise O'Brien is not a demonstration of pride, but speech genre : beautiful talk that embellish the relationship with the marabout. In this respect, it may evoke *la langue de bois* (wooden language[10]), which, like *beau parler* (smooth speech), is a form of expression that is generally devalued in French, just for instance as are clichés or embellishment. However, this devaluation shows that discourse is still fundamentally understood as standing in a special relationship to reality or truth (whether facts, opinions, feelings, etc.) and not, for example, to an aesthetic norm. The transactional dimension, as well as the discourse of absolute submission, are constitutive of this relationship. The 'beautiful' rhetoric of the disciples is the form in which the fundamentally hierarchical relationship between marabout and *talibé*, established in Islam, is manifest. Disciples' conspicuous declarations of their submission to the authority of the marabout do not conceal anything (neither the disciples' autonomy, nor their expectations of return) for the simple reason that they are not intended to be illusory. These speeches express clichés in a stereotyped phraseology that has no direct link with the marabout's actual power over his disciple and the latter's obedience. They are nonetheless the form – i.e. the mode of being - of this relationship.

[8] For example, the speeches of the marabouts in favour of the incumbent president during the 2000 presidential election did not prevent the opposition candidate from winning (Samson, 2000; Dahou, Foucher, 2004). See also the work of Leonardo Villalòn on the limits of the influence of marabouts on local politics in the medium-sized town of Fatick (Villalòn, 2006: 193-199).

[9] In the philosophical sense of disregard for convention.

[10] The use of fixed talking points to avoid answering questions directly or addressing the 'reality' of a situation.

Norm aesthetics, power and hierarchical relations

The marabout-*talibé* relationship and the relationship between spouses share, from a formal point of view, several comparable features. Both are characterised, first of all, by the conspicuous declaration of authority, recognised and established on the basis of Islam. The authority of the husband and that of the marabout are, moreover, designated by the same term: both are *kilifa*, a term of Arabic origin which means 'authority' or 'chief' in Wolof. Moreover, both relationships are constituted by an act of submission. *Jébbalu* means the solemn act by which a disciple pledges allegiance to a marabout. The consummation of the marriage on the wedding night, which concludes the Muslim wedding ritual (*takk,*) is referred to as *jébbale*. These two terms are not identical, but have the same root. Finally, both relationships have an important transactional aspect: on the one hand, the maintenance of the wife by the husband and, on the other, the gifts of the disciples and, above all, the benefits of the marabout's *baraka*, which are manifested in the world, notably, by material wealth.

This comparison calls for caution. The conspicuous declaration of the husband's authority or the downplaying by wives of their contribution to household finances are, no more than that of the *talibé* vis-à-vis his marabout, proofs of the credulous recognition and fatalistic acceptance by women of their 'domination'. On the contrary, like the disciples, wives know very well what they are doing (or, to put it another way, their speeches are intentionally formalised): they consciously downplay their importance in the domestic economy and claim their subordination, which is in this context a valorising and valued attitude.

The relative silence[11] around the 'reality' of domestic economics, the stereotyped speeches of both sides must be understood as what they are: 'beautiful talk' (i.e. wooden language). Beautiful talk in this situation is indicative of the importance voluntarily given to the recognition of the husband's authority, which as it is instituted by divine law, is *constitutive* of the relationship between spouses, whatever the 'reality' of this relationship. If there is strategising at play, understood in the language of choice, it does not have power as its object, but rather the discursive preservation of the fundamental asymmetry constitutive of the relationship. The apparent respect for authority relations in Islam, whether between spouses or between marabout and disciple, is above all an aesthetic of discourse, not of one of action. The authority on which the relationship between husband and wife and that between marabout and disciple are based comes from Islam, an order of values that governs the relationship between men and God. The principles that govern these relationships are therefore considered universal and transcendent, and cannot therefore be discussed (and are not discussed). However, the stereotypical discourses of wives and disciples, as well as their 'beautiful talk' that embellish the 'reality' of authority relationships, are not a mere consequence of Islamic norms. They are part of a linguistic ideology, which results from the

[11] Of course, not all discourses on home economics embellish the financial 'reality'. It is common for women to criticise husbands for not supporting their wives financially or, in polygamous households, for women to blame their husbands for favouring one wife over them.

conjunction of these universal normative principles with a system of moral principles, which value the preservation of appearances.

My purpose here is not to undertake the converse demystification to that assayed by Pierre Bourdieu (2002), when he highlights the reality of male domination beneath appearances. I argue instead that there is nothing to reveal. Conspicuous speeches of submission and 'beautiful talk' in general conceal nothing, neither a *de facto* equality nor a relationship of power or symbolic domination. Of course, however formalised the assertion of the husband's authority, in many cases some husbands still exercise actual power over their wives. However, as Adjamagbo, Antoine and Dial note, 'it is as if equality in the household is not a crucial objective for women' (2004: 269). To put it another way, neither equality nor power, let alone rivalry, correctly describes the relationship between spouses. The authority of the husband, a recognised constitutive principle of the spousal relationship, is clearly distinguished from relations of power or exchange. The conspicuous declaration of the husband's authority signals that the spousal relationship is one of authority. It indicates nothing about the actual power relations or the nature of the private relationships between husband and wife. The same is true of stereotypical discourses on household finances insofar as the distribution of expenses within the household is understood in reference to Islam and the authority of the husband. Beautiful talk embellishes the marital relationship and makes it appear to conform to the Islamic norm. Keeping up appearances is not a stage set to hide the reality, but the way the norm is respected. Indeed, it is the relationship of the discourse to the norm that is valued, not the relationship of the discourse to the reality of the financial relationship between spouses.

Because of economic difficulties and women's necessary involvement in income-generating activities, they also participate in domestic finances. Herein lies the paradox: because the form of the discourse is given and does not change, the gap between the financial aspect on the one hand and stereotypical discourse and rhetoric about the authority of the husband on the other widens and becomes more obvious. In other words, the greater the importance of women in the domestic economy, the more it is minimised, at the expense of increased formalism. This gap and this formalism are not, however, a sign of increased symbolic violence against wives as they participate in the domestic economy, but of the aesthetics of norm-adherence. They tell us nothing of men's and women's agency or of power relations between spouses.

The limits of discretion (*sutura*) and formalism are very clear: not only is it still difficult for a man without resources[12] to get married, but above all, financial problems put a strain on couples. Muslim marriage is not a sacrament. Divorce is not an impossible prospect and occurs frequently. In the early 1950s, Ames David reported an apparently high rate of divorce among the Wolofs of Gambia (1953: 135). As far as Dakar is concerned, the 1955 census indicates that out of 100 married men, nearly half later divorced at least once and half of the women were married twice. Five years later, Luc Thoré (1964: 531) found a similar figure (44.5% of marriages in his sample ended in divorce). According to Abdoulaye Bara Diop, in the 1970s, in rural areas, nearly half of all unions ended in divorce, mainly for economic reasons (1985:

[12] An individual's income is not his or her only resource because of the importance of family solidarity.

212-217). In 2001, according to a survey conducted in Dakar, a quarter of marriages failed to last ten years and a third failed to reach twenty (Adjamagbo, Antoine, 2002). In more than 80% of cases, whatever the generation, divorces are initiated by the wife. And the reason most frequently given is lack of maintenance by the husband. The frequency of divorce contradicts the image of submission displayed by women in marriage if it were essentially about power. In a context where a minority of men manage to assume financially their essential duty as head of the household by themselves, the relationship between spouses has not changed in principle. The alternative is either to respect the forms or to end the marriage by divorce without at any time explicitly and permanently calling into question the principle of the husband's authority.

Speaking out publicly to describe the actual distribution of domestic expenses is not a mere description of the facts. It is tantamount to denouncing the husband's inability to support his wife and jeopardising the marriage. The answers given by woman to outsiders' questions about the household finances (such as those posed by anthropologist) should not be understood as the effect of a relationship of domination, but as a deliberate choice that amounts to simply saying whether financial arrangements within the household are satisfactory or not. The formal deference of wives to their husbands should not be taken to mean that the husband is free to spend his money, maintained in any case by a wife who respects his authority. The husband must, when he has resources, provide for his wife or wives and their children. Running a household is not a particularly secretive business. Although there is no joint budget and spouses generally have only partial knowledge of one another's resources, this knowledge is far from zero. It is not uncommon, when the husband keeps money for his own use, gives more importance to his mother than to a wife or, above all, favours a co-wife to her detriment, to see a wife firmly demanding her due, whether for expenses or personal needs. The request is sometimes very explicit: the left hand on the hip, the right extended open in front of the husband: 'give me my share' (*jox ma sama wàll*).

Beautiful talk and autonomy

Discretion and rhetoric preserve the husband's position of authority and lead to the downplaying of the crucial economic role of women in the household. But the Islamic norm governing the relationship between spouses and assigning the wife a subordinate status also gives her real autonomy in financial matters, just as disciples act as they please.

This phenomenon is not new. In her work on female fishmongers, Colette Le Cour Grandmaison showed that in the early 1960s, 'the Islamic principle of assigning to the husband full responsibility for the upkeep of the family and making this obligation unconditional, strengthened the independence of women in the use of their earnings or of the property acquired through their work' (Le Cour Grandmaison, 1969: 148). Thanks to their substantial earnings from trade and the absence of domestic expenses, some women even became owners of *pirogues* (fishing boats), which they eventually entrusted to their husbands as their employee. They then applied the usual rules for sharing the product between boss and employee without, however, calling into question the statutory relationship between spouses

(Le Cour Grandmaison, 1979). These are undoubtedly extreme cases. However, today, in urban areas, all or at least a large part of the sums allocated to domestic management are in practice in the hands of women and are added to the income they earn from their labour. They have cash at their disposal and thus have considerable latitude to manage it as they please. Men's control over the domestic economy is very limited and almost non-existent, in terms of the use women make not only of their own money, but also of the money put into circulation in the domestic context. Women are the main facilitators of informal savings networks, particularly tontines (rotating credit societies), which gives them a considerable capacity for autonomous action (Guérin, 2003; Moya, 2017).

Thus, if a man does not have the means to meet domestic expenses alone, his position is formally preserved, but he is then, to use the wonderful phrasing of one of my interlocutors, 'but a king without an army'. The preservation of his status is accompanied by an absence of control. On the other hand, if an husband's income enables him to meet his obligations, his wife will be relatively free to use her personal resources for her own purposes while managing the cash available for household expenses. Many women, for example, fiercely reject the idea of pooling resources, and some even go so far as to make a small profit on the money spent on domestic management by playing on the difference between retail and wholesale prices. Ultimately, that which is *a priori* the most obvious expression of men's 'power' - the recognition of the husband's authority - is precisely that which allows wives to act beyond the husband's control, and this manifests itself most spectacularly in family ceremonies where women display unparalleled wealth and indulge in financial excesses (*ëpp*) and waste (*yaax*) condemned by all in the name, inter alia, of Islam (Moya, 2015). This is what I call 'the paradox of Islamic norms'.

But is these women's agency obtained at the cost of their subjugation? The paradox of Islamic norms would then echo many works by anthropologists or Africanist political scientists on 'subjectivation' (Audrain, 2004) or the emancipation of what Alain Marie, following Marc Augé, has gone so far as to call 'lineage totalitarianism' (Marie, 1997). I am tempted to say that the question is badly posed. Women's relative autonomy (which can be very important) under the cover of an authority relationship is not the sign of the liberation of a (previously hindered) subject or a kind of counter-hegemonic strategy (Heath, 1992). While the question of individualism is of course worth addressing, it is doubtful whether it can be satisfactorily answered in this way. It is primarily a question of values (Dumont, 1986). The refusal to consider the religious values that institute the relationship of authority and to recognise the value of appearances and beautiful talk leads instead to the fabrication of two erroneous representations of power that correspond to one-another: those of the subjugation of women and disciples (declarations of the husband's authority, formal deference, etc.) and, by a mirror effect, that of their emancipation (financial autonomy in particular).

Discourse, power and truth

There is a current of contemporary anthropology that has taken an interest in 'linguistic ideologies' and has shown that both Melanesian or Indonesian societies marked by massive

conversions to Pentecostalism as well as Western critical thinkers (Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas...) are haunted by the privileged relationship between language and truth (see e.g. Robbins, 2001). In the context of the marital relationship or that between marabout and disciple, the value of discourse does not lie in its propositional force (its ability to describe - or not - reality). On the contrary, in this case, the relation of the discourse to the truth, to put it briefly, its conformity to the state of the world, to the action or opinion of people (if they say what they think, if they do or do not do such and such a thing really) is subordinated to the conformity of the discourse to the values that order the relations and to the respect of the aesthetics that preserve these values. In Boubacar Ly's beautiful phrase, 'the social lie is [a form of] politeness and social beauty, and as such, it prevails over realism' (1966: 361).

The role of lies and unspoken words in Muslim societies marked by values of honour is well known (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Gilsenan, 1976; Jamous, 1993). It seems to me, however, that in Dakar, the phenomenon is of a somewhat different order. The morality of *sutura* (discretion), *kersa* (modesty, sense of self) and the art of accommodation (*maslaa*) determine discourse. They consist in keeping up appearances and proposing 'beautiful talk' under all circumstances. These embellishments (*rafetal*) through discourse may appear at first sight to be a performance intended to deceive by concealing objective reality (whether that be power or simply the financial reality of domestic management). Yet they are precisely what is valued. In many circumstances, lies, in the sense of assertions contrary to reality (*fen* or *nar*), are condemned and denounced. Beautiful talk, conspicuous declarations of the husband's authority, stereotypical discourses about household finances or submission to the marabout, as well as the morality of discretion (*sutura*) are not intended to deceive or mislead. They do not fall into the category of lying, but into that of beauty (*rafet*). In other words, the privileged mode of being of the hierarchical relations established by Islam is not action (maintaining one's wife, obeying one's husband...), but the aesthetics of discourse.

Bibliography

Abu-Lughod, Lila 1986. *Veiled sentiments: honor and poetry in a Bedouin society*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Adjamagbo, Agnès and Philippe Antoine 2002. Le Sénégal face au défi démographique, in Momar Coumba Diop (ed.), *La Société sénégalaise, entre le local et le global*, 515-548. Paris: Karthala.

Adjamagbo, Agnès, Philippe Antoine and Fatou Binetou Dial 2004. Le dilemme des Dakaroises: entre travailler et 'bien travailler', in Momar Coumba Diop (ed.), *Gouverner le Sénégal: Entre ajustement structurel et développement durable*, 251-276. Paris: Karthala.

Ames, David W. 1953. Plural marriage among the Wolof in the Gambia, with a consideration of the problems of marital adjustment and patterned ways of revolving tensions, Northwestern University: PhD dissertation.

Audrain, Xavier 2004. Du '*ndigël*' avorté au Parti de la Vérité, *Politique africaine*, 96/4, 99-118. doi: https://doi.org/10.3917/polaf.096.0099.
Bourdieu, Pierre 2001. *Masculine domination*, Stanford : Stanford University Press.

Copans, Jean 1980. *Les Marabouts de l'arachide*, Paris: Sycomore.

Cruise O'Brien, Donal B. 1975. *Saints and politicians: essays in the organisation of a Senegalese peasant society*, London: Cambridge University Press.

Dahou, Tarik and Vincent Foucher 2004. Le Sénégal, entre changement politique et révolution passive, *Politique africaine*, 96/4, 5-21. doi: https://doi.org/10.3917/polaf.096.0005.

Diop, Abdoulaye Bara 1981. *La Société wolof. Traditions et changements. Les systèmes d'inégalité et de domination*, Paris: Karthala.
--- 1985. *La Famille Wolof. Tradition et changement*, Paris: Karthala.

Dumont, Louis 1986. *Essays on individualism: modern ideology in anthropological perspective*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fapohunda, E.R. 1988. The nonpooling household: a challenge to theory, in Daisy H. Dwyer and Mead Cain (eds.), *A home divided. Women and income in the Third World*, 143-154. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Foucault, Michel 1971. *L'Ordre du discours*, Paris: Gallimard.

Gilsenan Michael 1976. Lying, honor, and contradiction, in Bruce Kapferer (ed.), *Transaction and meaning: directions in the anthropology of exchange and symbolic behavior*, 191-219. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Guérin, Isabelle 2003. *Femmes et économie solidaire*, Paris: La Découverte.

Guyer, Jane 1981. Household and community in African studies, *African Studies Review*, 24/2-3, 87-137. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/523903.

Heath, Deborah 1992. Fashion, antifashion and heteroglossia in urban Senegal, *American Ethnologist*, 21/1, 88-103.

Irvine, JudithT. 1990. Registering affect: heteroglossia in the linguistic expression of emotion, in Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod (eds.), *Language and the politics of emotion*, 126-161. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jamous, Raymond 1993. Mensonge, violence et silence dans le monde méditerranéen, *Terrain*, 21, 97-110. doi: https://doi.org/10.4000/terrain.3075.

Lecarme-Frassy, Mireille 2000. *Marchandes dakaroises entre maison et marché*, Paris: L'Harmattan.

Le Cour Grandmaison, Colette 1969. Activités économiques des femmes dakaroises, *Africa*, 39/2, 138-151. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/1157846.

--- 1979. Contrats économiques entre époux dans l'ouest africain, *L'Homme*, 19/3-4, 159-170. doi: https://doi.org/10.3406/hom.1979.36800.

Ly, Boubakar 1966. L'Honneur et les valeurs morales dans les sociétés ouolof et toucouleur du Sénégal. Étude de sociologie, Université de Paris (Sorbonne) : Thèse de doctorat de troisième cycle.

Marie, Alain (ed.) 1997. *L'Afrique des individus*: *itinéraires citadins d'Afrique contemporaine (Abidjan, Bamako, Dakar, Niamey)*, Paris: Karthala.

Moya, Ismaël 2015. Unavowed value. Economy, comparison and hierarchy in Dakar, *HAU, Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 10/1, 151-172. doi: https://doi.org/10.14318/hau5.1.008.
--- 2017. *De l'argent aux valeurs. Femmes, économie et société à Dakar*, Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie.

Robbins, Joel 2001. 'God is nothing but talk': modernity, language and prayer in a Papua New Guinea society, *American Anthropologist*, 103/4, 901-912. doi: https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2001.103.4.901.

Samson, Fabienne 2000. La place du religieux dans l'élection présidentielle, *Afrique contemporaine*, 194, 5-11.

The Holy Qur'an, 1989, trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Medina: King Fahd Holy Qur'ân Printing Complex.

Thore, Luc 1964. Mariage et divorce dans la banlieue de Dakar, *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 4/4, 479-551. doi: https://doi.org/10.3406/cea.1964.3724.

Villalón, Leonardo A. 2006. *Islamic society and state power in Senegal: disciples and citizens in Fatick*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

REFLECTIONS ON MODERN SOVEREIGNS

REVIEW ESSAY: JOSEPH TONDA. *THE MODERN SOVEREIGN: THE BODY OF POWER IN CENTRAL AFRICA*, TRANS. CHRIS TURNER. LONDON: SEAGULL BOOKS 2021, 456 P. ISBN 9780857426888.

FELIX ROLT[1]

Max Weber defines the state as a human community which successfully lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate violence within a certain territory. In *The Modern Sovereign* (2021, originally published in French in 2005), Joseph Tonda asserts that this definition is not applicable in central Africa. For Tonda, one cannot speak of states like Gabon, Congo, or Congo-Brazzaville as having monopolies on violence (pp. 13-14). Rather, violence is endemic. Rogue militias and criminal gangs claim to be the 'legitimate' dispensers of violence as much as the state's military and police. And the latter, Tonda notes, are as likely to wantonly attack the populace as the former. Indeed, it is often the militias and gangs to whom the general populace turns for protection from the military and police (p. 14).

Tonda finds further reason to challenge Weber's definition of the state. Central African states, he observes, are not merely 'human' communities, they are places populated by vampires, zombies, ghosts, demons, ancestors and all manner of other phantasmagorical creatures. These non-human entities are as capable of causing violence as the weapons used by militants, soldiers and police. And by 'violence' Tonda is not speaking of symbolic violence, but real, physical violence (pp. 43-44, 219, 221). A tragic episode he recounts in the book stands as evidence to this: in 1994, 114 people died as the result of a stampede in a church in Brazzaville after the sighting of a phantom snake (p. 242). Tonda's book is full of such examples. Quite simply, in Africa spirits can kill.

It has been said that the Weberian theory of the state only applies to modern, capitalist states (pp. 16-17) and that for this reason it does not work in Africa, the continent where missionaries and modernism 'failed' (pp. 22-23). This is an argument Tonda seeks to explode with his idea of the Modern Sovereign.

The violence of central Africa, ordinary and occult, is not a sign that the projects of modernism and modernity (manifested through democracy, rationalism and capitalism) have

[1] Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford. Email: felix.rolt@anthro.ox.ac.uk

failed (pp. 19, 22-23) Nor is it a sign of the persistence of African traditions from a pre-colonial, pagan past (pp. 16-17). Tonda writes that such ideas, once widely held by anthropologists, are utterly fallacious (pp. 19, 226). Central African culture is not something set against modern projects but a fully-fledged part of them (p. 237). It is for this reason that Tonda gives his African notion of sovereignty the epithet 'Modern'. He seeks to illustrate how the idea of sovereignty in central Africa is hybrid or, perhaps in a term more suited to Tonda's tone, syncretic.

In one of the most compelling passages of the book, Tonda suggests that European missionaries did in fact succeed in converting Africans to Christianity. However, rather than converting them to the Christian God, they succeeded in converting them to the Christian Devil. In other words, the missionaries effected a 'negative conversion' (p. 23). Christianity was not a force that 'tamed' or 'civilised' Africa; in fact, it was, and is, as much a cause of the proliferation of beliefs in vampires, zombies, witches, demons, and so forth, as any traditional beliefs (pp. 19, 22).

Missionaries came with a proposition—'accept our Christian God'. But as Tonda points out, this proposition of faith was accompanied by a prerequisite material proposition (p. 108, 166). That is, access to literacy, numeracy and other skills necessary to understand the proposition of faith. These self-same skills were those which permitted entry into the sphere of capitalist commerce. According to Tonda it is this fact which explains why many Africans were so keen to accept missionary education for themselves or their children (pp. 166-167). The missionaries, in educating Africans, familiarised the latter with the signs and values of the West—namely money and capitalism (p. 107)

Tonda goes on to suggest that Africans conceived of conversion as a sacrifice; a sacrifice in which they offered up their old gods and ancestors to the new God of the missionaries. And as in all sacrifices, the sacrificers expected something in return. The thing expected in this case was the products of capitalism, namely, boundless riches and material wealth, or to put it in other words, the Devil's bounty (pp. 106-109).

The other thing to remember about sacrifices is that, according to their logic, they create ongoing and oftentimes unceasing obligations—hence the central African maxim: 'a white man's work is never done' (p. 194). For Tonda it is no coincidence that the word for 'white man' in certain central African languages means 'one who counts' or 'keeper of accounts'. 'White man' is equivalent to 'creditor', or one who gets one into debt (p. 119). Here Tonda draws on the work of the linguist Émile Benveniste to note the etymological overlap between *croyance* ('belief') and *créance* ('debt'): the heavenly, incorporeal domain of religion and the spirit is linguistically tied to the dirty, earthly world of capitalism and commerce. This linguistic fact, also seen in the English 'creed' and 'credit', gestures to Tonda's contention that spiritual transactions cannot help but be accompanied by material ones. Belief entailed debt, spiritual agencies entailed merchandise, Christ entailed the Beast (p. 166).

The regime of the Modern Sovereign is one wherein spirit and thing, ideology and material are intermixed (p. 112). This intermingling can help our understanding that symbolic violence is also physical violence. Tonda gives two examples of this: a Jehovah's Witness who dies after he refuses a life-saving blood-transfusion following pressure from his church who see the blood of an 'Other' as diabolical; and a Pentecostal who refuses all traditional medicine

on the grounds that its efficacy derives from evil pagan spirits—i.e. the Devil (p. 34). This kind of violence, where spiritual agencies and diabolical monsters cause empirical harm, Tonda labels the 'violence of the imaginary'. Here the imaginary does not mean the unreal but rather that domain in which the real and the unreal are indistinguishable (p. 45). These imaginaries, of which Tonda speaks, are as much Western in origin as they are indigenously African (p. 215).

Tonda proposes that we should understand this 'violence of the imaginary' through the notion of the fetish. Fetishism, as Tonda notes, fell out of favour with anthropologists in the first decades of the twentieth century. Its demise was expedited by Marcel Mauss who denounced the concept as a gross misunderstanding. Yet this, Tonda argues, is precisely what fetishism is—a *misunderstanding*, an analytically useful misunderstanding (pp. 24-25).

Tonda starts to flesh out his particular idea of the fetish by turning to its original main theorists: Charles de Brosses, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud (p. 25). After examining their uses of the notion, Tonda proceeds to synthesise what he sees as the essence of the fetish. (Auguste Comte is a curious omission given that Tonda is a francophone sociologist.) This essence is ultimately misunderstanding—it is mistaking the natural for the supernatural (de Brosses), it is mistaking exchange value for use value (Marx), it is mistaking another object for the proper object of sexual desire (Freud). Fetishism refers to the manner in which the inanimate and the animate, the material and the immaterial, the signifier and the signified, the real and the imaginary intermingle and become confused. Fetishism is the term used by Tonda to refer to this confusion (p. 29, 31, 55-56).

Thus, the 'violence of the imaginary', which is precisely that violence wherein the real and unreal compound, is equivalent to the 'violence of fetishism' (p. 13). It is fetishistic violence which is wielded by the Modern Sovereign, a violence predicated on the indiscernibility of the world of matter and the world of ideology, of things and of spirits (pp. 111-112).

The fact that the fetish is both tangible and intangible results in the peculiar quality that it can never truly be obtained. It is for this reason that fetishists go on acquiring more and more things as the desire to obtain the fetish can never be truly satisfied; hence why all fetishists are collectors, and all collectors fetishists (p. 31). In the central African context, this explains why the man of power is one who accumulates and collects in superabundance, be it money, clothes, cars, commodities, women, children, etc. (pp. 32-33).

Much of Tonda's book is concerned with putting his notion of the 'violence of the imaginary' or the 'violence of fetishism' into action to describe how the Modern Sovereign secures his suzerainty over certain central African states. Tonda's examples of the 'violence of fetishism' range from statues and portraits of presidents (p. 37), magical philtres (p. 81ff.), outlaw gangs who draw inspiration from cinema (p. 139ff.), to the human body itself (p. 175ff.). Common to all these examples of the 'violence of fetishism' is their visibility—they are all spectacular (p. 233). An extreme example of this quality is the belief that Gabonese president Omar Bongo Ondimba possessed a magical pair of spectacles that afforded him the ability to see his citizens naked, that is, the capacity to perceive and pre-empt the secret desires, plans, and motives of his enemies—he possessed a kind of preternatural panopticism as Tonda conceives it (p. 195).

In contrast to the spectacular violence of the Modern Sovereign stands the invisible, clandestine violence of traditional, ancestral sovereign power in central African societies. The latter is a violence characterised by the night, masks, spirits and secrecy (p. 233). Tonda repeatedly iterates that the beliefs and imaginaries which we find today in central African countries are not a result of any lingering pagan past. Today's imaginaries, which are capable of causing very real violence, are fully contemporary and modern—hence the Modern Sovereign's visibility in contrast to the subtler forms of pre-colonial sovereignty.

The very notion of the fetish also highlights this modern character. The term was used by European traders to refer to 'primitive' African religion, specifically the African's mistaken belief that divinity was material. As mentioned, for Tonda, the essence of fetish is that it is a kind of misunderstanding. Here is the irony: it was not the native Africans who had a mistaken understanding of divinity, rather it was Europeans who misunderstood African religion. Even if we think of fetishism in terms of lusting after an unobtainable object, the early European traders were far more guilty than the supposedly mistaken natives. While European traders may have chided Africans for trading gold for mere trifles, it was they who greedily sought a wealth believed to be contained within a particular shiny substance.

For Tonda, the fetish is crucially not an indigenous phenomenon. It is a European concept that took root in the syncretic environment of nautical trade. As such, the 'violence of the fetish' expresses the syncretic nature of the Modern Sovereign's power. Throughout his book, Tonda aims to dispel the old-fashioned, yet surprisingly tenacious view which seeks to explain the root of all the current ills of central African states by reference to their pre-colonial, traditional, witchcraft-infused past. This view must be extirpated: so Tonda thinks, and quite rightly too. It is a mindset that blames the political failings of African states on their very African-ness. For Tonda such an ideology is tantamount to a kind of 'theodicy', a theodicy which seeks to exonerate colonialism, imperialism and capitalism (p. 226). His notion of the 'violence of fetishism' certainly succeeds in dealing a stout blow to this view. Tonda's Modern Sovereign emerges as something that is particular to central Africa and yet not indigenously African in origin. It is something truly modern in the sense that it is a kind of sovereignty which is a part of the global capitalist world of the here and now.

Those readers who seek a neat summary of Tonda's conception of the Modern Sovereign will be disappointed: nowhere does he explicitly define the concept. Indeed, Tonda warns his reader (particularly Anglophone ones) against searching for definitions—such a search, he says, will be in vain (pp. 66-67). Instead, the amorphous figure of the Modern Sovereign slowly emerges over the course of the book. At times one does feel that Tonda's subsidiary concepts are a little too open. It is, for instance, unclear where the distinction between ordinary violence and 'violence of the fetish' exactly lies. Nonetheless, his central concept of the Modern Sovereign emerges in refreshing contrast to the classic formulations of Bodin or Hobbes. The Modern Sovereign of central Africa is not a unified power which is antithetical to the state of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. It is a kind of sovereignty sustained by this very state—civil war (p. 307).

One should note that his book is decidedly Francophone in its outlook. For instance, by 'central Africa' Tonda really means francophone central Africa—Gabon, Congo, and Congo-Brazaville. This is not intended as a criticism—rather it is to wonder how Tonda's

Modern Sovereign concept might hold up when applied to Lusophone and Anglophone central African states. It is also to wonder whether his concept might not be extended more broadly still to other sub-Saharan African states, particularly as most, if not all, do not possess a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within their territories. While the original French is sometimes rendered into clumsy phrases (e.g. 'des lieux non-lignagers' is translated as the confusing 'lineal non-places' rather than 'non-lineage places'), the translation on the whole succeeds in capturing Tonda's enigmatic central figure—*le Souverain moderne*, the Modern Sovereign.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

LILIA MORITZ SCHWARCZ. *BRAZILIAN AUTHORITARIANISM: PAST AND PRESENT*. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS 2022, 328 P. ISBN: 9780691210919

SEBASTIAN ANTOINE[1]

> Brazilians, dogged by their past, are still engaged in the task of expelling ghosts that continue stubbornly to cast their shadows (p. 29).

In *Brazilian authoritarianism*, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz presents eight types of ghosts haunting contemporary Brazil. She describes how these ghosts came into being and morphed through the nation's short history, finally outlining the shadows they continue to cast. Schwarcz wrote *Brazilian authoritarianism* in the wake of far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro's election victory in 2018 which symbolised a hard shift to authoritarianism in Brazil. Her aim was to survey Brazil's histories of oppression and authoritarianism to begin to contextualise his win. After nearly four years of President Bolsonaro, the publication of Eric M.B. Becker's English translation (2022) is similarly timely, as the leftist Lula Inácio Lula da Silva won the Brazilian Presidential election in October 2022. The ghosts of authoritarianism will continue to shape Brazilian society and politics into Lula's presidential term and beyond, and Schwarcz's text will remain highly relevant. *Brazilian authoritarianism* offers a compelling narrative of the historical roots of authoritarianism in Brazil and of how they influence its contemporary forms. Schwarcz moves deftly between complex issues, drawing on a raft of evidence to craft a highly readable and accessible text.

Schwarcz is professor of anthropology at the University of São Paulo and a visiting professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Princeton University. *Brazilian authoritarianism* has a more historical bent than conventional ethnography, drawing on historical documents, engagements with historians, statistics, and contemporary social commentary to support her arguments rather than traditional ethnographic data. This approach provides a broad summary of the ghosts of authoritarianism, giving context to the many interwoven social forces shaping people's lives in Brazil. Throughout her analysis, Schwarcz's tone is always analytically incisive and sometimes polemic. In some beautiful passages, Schwarcz's prose is highly poetic and sensitively translated. Any writing about a topic as troubling as authoritarianism would be forgiven for being depressing or dense, but Schwarcz's energetic analysis and arguments for hope make for a gripping read. She reminds us that authoritarianism in Brazil is 'not a story of continuities alone' (p. 99) and includes examples where people have disrupted authoritarian attempts (p. 98).

Schwarcz identifies eight dynamics of authoritarianism in Brazil and covers each in a chapter: racism, bossism, patrimonialism, corruption, inequality, violence, gender issues, and

[1] MSc candidate in Social Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford. Email: sebastian.antoine@anthro.ox.ac.uk

intolerance. Each chapter explores the long history of these trends to help contextualise their continued relevance in Brazilian society today. Their sequence provides for a great sense of momentum; each chapter builds on the arguments, evidence, and social dynamics of the previous. There is so much to say about each of the eight dimensions that each chapter could easily be expanded into a monograph-length text. By bundling them together and presenting them as parts of a larger whole, Schwarcz's analysis shows how each theme interacts with others, mapping the broad interconnections between them. On the other hand, the inclusion of such a broad range of ideas and types of evidence may give the reader the sensation of whiplash. The text moves quickly across time and between different ideas and types of evidence. Readers interested in a deep analysis of just one element of Schwarcz's puzzle might be disappointed, but the decision to include the many facets of authoritarianism has resulted in a comprehensive summary and an effective introduction to readers interested in a broad perspective.

Brazilian authoritarianism would appeal to aspiring ethnographers of inequality, authoritarianism, and oppression in Brazil, as well as those with an interest in the complexities and historical origins of its contemporary political and social dynamics. Schwarcz's focus on historical currents and their ghosts is illustrative for students of Brazilian society and politics. Indeed, her interest in the historical and interwoven threads of authoritarianism, as well as her focus on the *longue durée,* are analytically illuminating and should inspire similar studies of other contexts.

Schwarcz (p. 13) explicitly frames her text as disrupting the crafted history of Brazil espoused by nationalists which suggests that Brazil has dealt with issues of injustice and authoritarianism. In response, Schwarcz aims to highlight the connections between Brazil's history of authoritarianism and its enduring current form. She writes to address inequality and authoritarianism:

> '[T]o question is a form of resistance. I am of the mind that a critical historical practice is one that knows how to 'de-normalize' that which seems ordained by biology and is consequently presented as immutable' (p. 13).

Schwarcz's intention is laudable, and she certainly succeeds in demonstrating the historical roots of authoritarian social forces and structures and that they should not be taken for granted. While she does include some references to cases where this status quo has been disrupted, her analysis suggests that while authoritarianism has been intentionally constructed, its hold on the social and political landscape in Brazil is powerful. It remains to be seen whether Brazil's change in leader, from the far-right Bolsonaro to the leftist Lula, will influence the dynamics of authoritarianism. Schwarcz's analysis suggests that while leadership might change, the ghosts will continue to cast their shadow.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

EVE DARIAN-SMITH. *GLOBAL BURNING: RISING ANTIDEMOCRACY AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS*. STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2022, 230 P. ISBN: 9781503631083

ELAINE (YILING) HU[1]

Global burning: rising antidemocracy and the climate crisis, written by Eve Darian-Smith, addresses contemporary environmental issues and political dynamics through the perspective of the catastrophic wildfires in California, Amazon and Australia. Darian-Smith dives deep into the political, ecological and social aspects of environmental justice and crisis preventions. She calls out governmental powers and companies for being the centre of the issue, abusing their leadership and social influences to promote anti-environmentalism. The fire is seen both as a literal threat to life, but also a metaphor for the damages brought by the growing of far-right government, ultranationalism, and anti-environmentalism. Through breaking down each case of wildfire outbreak, Darian-Smith challenges the human/nature boundary that portrays the environment as disconnected from people and their lives.

Each chapter of Darian-Smith's book is founded on the idea that fire resembles and reveals problems hidden deep in our social systems. She first describes fire as an omen, discussing the future consequences of wildfires in the United States, Australia, and Amazon forests. In chapter two, it is described as a profit, where the government's lack of actions and the promotion of anti-environmental laws are strongly tied to capitalism. Capitalist solutions, such as promises of technological interventions, to the climate crisis, are criticized as justification for the lack of action from our political, economic and social system. In chapter three, fire is seen as a weapon, and the author dives deep into the global rise of authoritarianism and ultra-nationalism. Darian-Smith further breaks down the false illusion of nationalism and sovereignty that governments portray when establishing laws that go against previous measures put in place to protect lands and ecosystems. She criticizes countries for ignoring and violating the Paris Peace Treaty in the name of providing the greater good for the country, where in turn, these violations benefit capitalists and broaden inequalities instead. In this case, the promise of a better country is used to justify actions that destroy the land and risk the lives of the very citizens that environmental laws are protecting.

In chapter four, fire is seen as a type of violence where certain populations of our society are made more vulnerable to harm from fire, and their rights are significantly ignored. The author encourages readers to think beyond the financial consequences of wildfires and natural disasters. The book highlights the 'slow violence' that racial minorities and indigenous population face, such as depression, higher rates of incarceration, shortened lives, and unemployment, due to land loss or heightened vulnerability. The author emphasises the importance of recognizing that culture and identity burn with wildfires as they spread through

[1] MSc candidate in Medical Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, St Cross College, University of Oxford. Email: yiling.hu@stx.ox.ac.uk

lands filled with memories and spiritual meanings. Yet, the psychological, cultural and spiritual sufferings from these wildfires are ignored by governments, who are instead more interested in economic and technical developments. It is argued that the voluntary ignorance towards these intergenerational consequences further heightens the escalating inequality, such as poverty, we see in our society today. Lastly, in her final chapter, fire is seen as a disruption where our lives, regardless of our backgrounds, will be severely impacted in the future by the ongoing climate crisis. Darian-Smith suggests that rather than waiting for programs rooted in colonialism and structural violence, and racism to address climate concerns, people need to rethink their roles and obligations as citizens of the planet. She mentions some great existing organizations and role models, such as Greta Thunberg, Tokata Iron Eyes, and NGO Global Witness.

Eve Darian-Smith makes powerful points in her book by calling out specific cases, countries, corporations, and politicians to fully engage and inform her readers of the current climate issue. Through the metaphors used to describe fire, she challenges the current trend of downplaying wildfire as merely a 'natural' disaster. She successfully breaks down each of the components and actions behind climate crises, such as the voluntary violation of policies on behalf of corporations and the ignorance and tolerance from government bodies. The examples and arguments made in the book are clear, straightforward, and in-depth. It is a great book for readers of all backgrounds, regardless of their level of knowledge in historical or contemporary climate issues. Readers will walk away from the book with much more knowledge about not just wildfire cases worldwide but also about the power dynamics at play behind environmental issues and climate crises. One recommendation would be to add in some examples of positive corporations and governmental management so readers can gain a better picture of a future to work towards. Overall, I found the book to be very informative and full of innovative insights to view the climate crisis from multi-angle perspectives, and I would highly recommend it for all readers.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

PASCAL MÉNORET. *GRAVEYARD OF CLERICS: EVERYDAY ACTIVISM IN SAUDI ARABIA*. STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2020, 264 P. ISBN: 9781503612464

FREDERIKE BROCKHOVEN[1]

In *Graveyard of clerics: everyday activism in Saudi Arabia*, French anthropologist Pascal Ménoret presents a bottom-up view of Islamic activists connected to the Islamic Awakening (*al-sahwa al-islamiyya*) movement, which emerged in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and has faced mass repression since the 1970s. Ménoret conducted his ethnographic fieldwork between 2004 and 2007, with additional visits that inform his analysis in 2001 and 2016, in what he describes as a 'graveyard of clerics': a society in which clerics are jailed and tortured, or at least 'buried alive in a bureaucratic maze' (p. 8). In this graveyard, Ménoret encounters young men who lead and participate in Quranic memorization circles, Islamic awareness groups, summer camps and other group activities organized by either the Salafi or Muslim Brotherhood branches of the Islamic Awakening. Decisively going against common Western narratives of Islamists as the 'evil Muslims', Ménoret honestly and sympathetically engages with these young men as exactly that: teens and young guys who want to engage in fun leisure activities, take part in meaningful group discussions about politics and religion, and who are searching for glimpses of freedom in a repressive social and political environment. With this focus on the 'daily lives of ordinary activists' (p. 11), Ménoret also departs from influential works by Talal Asad (2009) and Charles Hirschkind (2006), among others, who focus on doctrinal tradition and how Muslims cultivate themselves within this tradition.

The monograph's twenty-four chapters are loosely chronological, tracing both the emergence and subsequent repression of the Islamic Awakening in the context of transformations in the post-oil Saudi state, as well as Ménoret's subjects' experience of entering, being in, and leaving Islamic activism. Some chapters have a more explicit argument than others but overall, the chapters lack clear organization. However, the fluid manner in which Ménoret paints a vivid painting of Islamic activism through conversations, historical developments, verbal portraits of individual activists, and self-aware anecdotes of his own experiences as a Western researcher in Saudi Arabia in the 2000s, is fitting for the book's subject matter: the Islamic Awakening is messy and 'lacks stable leaders, a known ideology, a defined program, or regular slogans' (p. 27). A general sense of disorganization also comes through in Ménoret's descriptions of the chaotic summer camps, tumultuous and often confused bureaucratic processes, and disorderly interviews with interlocutors. Rather than losing the reader in this chaos, Ménoret succeeds in demonstrating the messiness and inconsistency of ordinary humans engaging with great ideas and ideologies, as well as the messy reality of conducting ethnographic fieldwork.

[1] DPhil candidate in Migration Studies, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, Keble College, University of Oxford. Email: frederike.brockhoven@keble.ox.ac.uk

As a result of this diverse collection of descriptions and analyses, *Graveyard of clerics* offers insights into much more than just Islamic activism. The book is full of small but fascinating observations on other aspects of life in contemporary Saudi Arabia, such as citizenship, racism, American imperialism, class difference, urbanism, homosexuality, intergenerational struggles, and the central role of cars (which echoes Ménoret's earlier work *Joyriding in Riyadh*). Ménoret also dedicates large parts of the book to the analysis of Saudi suburbs, from their Western-influenced development to the role of suburban sprawl in deterring politicization and pacifying society. It is these suburbs, which were supposed to turn Saudis into 'responsible homeowners, repaying their loans and living quiet, dull, controlled lives' (p. 65), that have both enabled the Islamic Awakening to flourish and have shaped its fragmented organizational form. While Riyadh's suburbs and long avenues make it difficult to organize demonstrations or other politicized events, the endless suburbs are also hard to monitor, making them ideal spaces for recruitment. The Islamic activists, Ménoret argues, have 'an ambiguous relationship with the suburbs' (p. 205): they warned against the individualization of society and the perils of free time that the suburbs brought, yet they used suburban resources to combat these risks. For example, suburban schools and mosques were key in organizing events that familiarized youth with Islamic Awakening teaching, and the organization's smallest unit was the car.

Further highlighting the key role of suburban sprawl, Ménoret also argues that the popularity of Awakening-run groups was contingent on the widespread ennui youth felt in the spiritless suburbs, which drew them to the football clubs and discussion groups used for recruitment. One of Ménoret's most interesting anthropological contributions is this concept of apathy felt by youth that, rather than leading them to inaction, leads them to resist the repressive government. For his subjects, apathy (*lamubala* in Arabic) paradoxically spurred action, as it was this absolute lack of caring that led the young activists to political action. The 'suburban condition' (p. 206) of *lamubala* would benefit from further exploration, especially in the context of post-2016 Saudi Arabian policies on leisure, which promote entertainment at the expense of political awareness through the General Entertainment Authority.

Graveyard of clerics provides valuable insights into Islamist organizing from a grassroots perspective that foregoes dramatic top-down narratives and renders the activists human, almost relatable. Unfortunately, due to the author's gender in a highly gender-segregated environment, what is missing is the perspective of the female Islamic activists, whose experiences undoubtedly would have provided different perspectives on the Islamic Awakening and Islamic activism in Saudi Arabia. Despite this, *Graveyard of clerics* is a must-read for those interested in the anthropology of Saudi Arabia and ethnographies of Islamic activism in and beyond the Middle East.

Bibliography

Asad, Talal 2009. The idea of an anthropology of Islam, *Qui Parle*, 17/2, 1-30.

Hirschkind, Charles 2006. *The ethical soundscape: cassette sermons and Islamic counterpublics*, New York: Columbia University Press.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

SONIA AHSAN-TIRMIZI. *PIOUS PERIPHERIES: RUNAWAY WOMEN IN POST-TALIBAN AFGHANISTAN.* STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2021, 256 P. ISBN: 9781503614710

JULIETTE FOULON[1]

Set in post-2001 Afghanistan, *Pious peripheries* provides a characterful account of womanhood in between the spaces of religious piety, the label of 'promiscuity', and ideals of freedom. Through poetry, wilful decisions and cunning tactics, the women of the *khana-yi aman* (shelter) subvert the moral agendas imposed on them by men, ideals of chastity and God. This work documents the hardship of Afghan women's daily lives, morally shadowed by an omnipresent Taliban and reveals an ethnographer capable of effortlessly switching between authorial presence and effacement to give voice to brave, pious women.

The first and second chapters set the scene: a shelter outside Kabul which provides refuge to women who have run away from their husbands and families. No woman has the same story at the shelter: some are fleeing physical and sexual abuse, some want an education and some simply do not want to marry – all of them have made the decision to run away and await court decisions about their cases. In the Kabul imaginary, the shelter is seen as a brothel; it follows that any woman headed there is labelled as 'promiscuous' and unchaste. Ahsan-Tirmizi aims to explore how women inhabit this label and use it to their advantage.

The concept of 'promiscuity' is thus explored in chapter 3, through the singing of *landay*, Pashtun poems which explicitly express feelings of lust, desire, sorrow and death. Through the performance of these emancipatory poems, Ahsan suggests that runaway women inhabit a 'promiscuous modern' self (p. 78), as they root their poetry in the norms of Islam and Pashtun identities while emancipating themselves by singing sexually explicit sentiments that violate honour. This idea of 'promiscuous self' is a way to bridge the sometimes complementary and contradictory positions that women inhabit: *landay* is a careful weaving of piety and promiscuity and a mirror for the complex power dynamics which shape womanhood.

Chapter four delves into the Taliban's place as a parallel, 'shadow' government in Afghanistan since 2001, and further defends that they have played, and still play a major role in shaping the rules of ethical behaviour for pious women. Women should not laugh in public, women should not go to school, women should sexually satisfy their husbands before even satisfying God. Adultery is a crime against the social order – and is punishable by death. When women's bodies are the Taliban's vehicle for social obedience, the risk of being seen as promiscuous is high, and running away could easily result in death. These women are not simply subjugated, they actively defy the status quo in their own way.

[1] MSc candidate in Social Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, Wolfson College, University of Oxford. Email: juliette.foulon@wolfson.ox.ac.uk

In the fifth and sixth chapters, Ahsan-Tirmizi reviews an impressive body of Islamic texts to show how notions of piety and chastity are deeply entrenched within Islamic history, both local (Pashto) and global (across the Muslim world). This chapter highlights that an understanding of identity is indissociable from historical processes, and that womanhood cannot be studied without understanding the scriptures, the legends and the laws that inform ideals of honour and closeness to God.

Pious peripheries reminds us that a submission to religious authority is not necessarily subjugation, and that even the harshest conditions of existence allow space for individuality. Ahsan uses Foucault's later work on power and the ethical making of a subject to analyse the women's careful weaving of patriarchal rule and emancipation: one is not always resisting a structure directly, but rather inhabiting the norms in place to create new possibilities. For example, when singing *landay*, women often refer to the veil, which is indissociable from the feminine moral self in Islam. Simultaneously, *landay* are often on the themes of desire and lust: veiling which is associated with sexual obedience is thus inverted through poetry. This in turn shows that an understanding of womanhood is a constant negotiation between promiscuity and piety rather than a resistance to top-down power dynamics. Ahsan-Tirmizi further reminds us that the runaway women do not condemn the norms holding their lives in place: they accept the stoning of women who have committed adultery and support the fact that men can have up to four wives. Liberal feminists would probably disagree, but Ahsan-Tirmizi makes a strong case: the women of the shelter are not subjugated, their ideas of freedom are simply tied to different histories and notions of honour.

Pious peripheries forces the reader to engage with these women's hard lives in a humbling way: the point is not for us to be outraged at the shackles of patriarchy, but to witness how women are able to navigate the harshest of circumstances. At times, this can be quite challenging. Descriptions of domestic violence and repeated sexual abuse push us to approach this monograph analytically rather than emotionally. For many women in the world, this ethnography's absence of clear political stance can be seen as reinforcing structures of oppression. The author herself does not know how to reconcile this: how do we achieve a universal sisterhood without flattening difference?

Ahsan is clear though, she is not retelling these stories for the purpose of a war to be waged through Muslim women's bodies. She is not interested in talking about these women through the goals of Western feminism. She seeks instead to create an independent space in academia where Muslim women can have a conversation without narratives being thwarted, or used as vehicles for Western political agendas. *Pious peripheries* recalls that the aesthetically pleasing narratives of Western saviourism have long acted as a justification for the invasion and destruction of Afghanistan. Ahsan-Tirmizi's fieldwork reveals that nothing has changed for Afghan women since 2001; the Taliban never ceased holding control over moral codes. Despite the hardship, violence and loss this hold has caused and continues to cause, the women of the *khana-yi aman* are able to express themselves within corrupt systems and create their own ideals of chastity, care and femininity. While this book will perhaps stir human rights activists and ruffle the feathers of anthropologists nostalgic for cross-cultural comparisons, the possibility for an independent and academic conversation around feminism, piety and freedom is not only timely, but necessary.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

LEAH ZANI. *STRIKE PATTERNS: NOTES FROM POSTWAR LAOS*. STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2022, 208 P. ISBN: 9781503611733

LUISE EDER[1]

In *Strike patterns* (2022), Leah Zani takes the reader on her journey through Laos, exploring the remnants of the Secret War waged against communism. Between 1964 and 1973, the United States dropped more than 2 million bombs in the small Southeast Asian state, making it the most heavily bombed country in the world per capita. Through her ethnographic fiction, Zani skilfully captures its impact and implications on present day lives. In the first chapters, we meet Chanta, an employee at a clearance operator in Laos where Zani begins her journey to study post-war reconstruction. As Chanta invites the researcher to her home town to join her family for the *Fireboat Festival,* the reader catches a glimpse of an evolving friendship that sets the poetic tone for a thoughtful story about violence and war in everyday life. Quickly, however, Zani brings attention to the reality of cleaning up after a war that has been over for almost half a decade. Craters from cluster bombs, still holding unexploded missiles, are no longer easy to spot. With the help of Channarong, a field manager surveying former battlefields, the protagonist learns to recognise their patterns, but also learns about their histories entangled with her own. Growing up in California, her experience of war was remote, yet was carried by an air of familiarity for a family of soldiers. In Laos, the war is brought into the everyday through stories such as that of Dao: losing her leg to a bomb explosion while repairing her house. Rather than dwelling on the tragedy of such a loss, Dao takes the reader on her journey of finding her new leg. From uncomfortable prosthetics made out of bamboo to a high-tech one given to her by a foreign doctor before being taken away for fear of her breaking it, to her current leg suitable for clearing the explosives to which she has devoted herself since then. It is these stories of explosions, clearance operations and historical narratives woven into a cultural context of rituals, ghosts and ceremonies that allow the reader to gain a holistic insight into the remnants of a war that seems to be 'secret' to this day.

Throughout the book, Zani neatly inserts herself into the story in a way that opens up valuable questions about anthropological knowledge, subjectivity and the ethnographic fiction itself. She paints a story of the realities of anthropology in the field: misunderstandings, language barriers, and unfamiliarities that all feed into what one could call the 'product' of anthropological fieldwork, but are rarely spelled out so clearly. The medium of ethnographic fiction makes particular space for these kinds of questions. The researcher, for instance, has been offered the chance to learn about *blood blowing,* a local medicine of breathing only accessible through a spiritual doctor. Yet, the doctor, Silavong, warns her: if she doesn't believe in it, if she is not a good Buddhist, 'it is worse than dangerous' (p. 47). Zani

[1] MSc candidate in Social Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, Linacre College, University of Oxford. Email: luise.eder@linacre.ox.ac.uk

contemplates this decision: should she follow her yearning, take this unique chance of a research opportunity? Or does she respect Silavong's warning and turn her down? Such reflections illustrate the double nature of ethnographic fiction of which Zani's book is an excellent example. On the one hand, it provides an opportunity to illustrate relationships and stories that illuminate a subject from different angles. On the other hand, ethnographic fiction reveals the ramifications that anthropological research in the field entails. Previous experiences, histories and prior knowledge of the researcher influence fieldwork as much as the relationships the anthropologist is capable of forming and the obstacles standing in the way of that formation, whether through language, belief or other assumptions. The anthropologist, whether recounted through fiction or classic ethnographic works, is inevitably situated in the midst of this tension between essence and subjectivity. Zani's *Strike patterns* illustrates this tension beautifully: the story is as much about the remnants and relations that war and violence leave behind as it is about an American anthropologist exploring these relations.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

APARECIDA VILAÇA. *PALETÓ AND ME: MEMORIES OF MY INDIGENOUS FATHER*, TRANS. DAVID RODGERS. STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2022, 232 P. ISBN: 9781503629332

NIKLAS HARTMANN[1]

'The Indians cease to be symbols in kinship diagrams, and become human beings', Emilio Willems wrote in his review of Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes tropiques* for *American Anthropologist* in 1956. Since then, and, partially as a result of Aparecida Vilaça's work on the Wari' of the Brazilian Rio Negro, kinship diagrams have become unfashionable. It has long been established that, as she wrote in 2002, 'a true process of consubstantialization, generated by proximity, intimate living, commensality, mutual care, and the desire to become kin.' ('Making kin out of others in Amazonia', 352) The M*emories of my indigenous father* that the subtitle of *Paletó and me* refers to, are the memories of such a process and desire to become father and daughter. If *Tristes tropiques* made humans out of symbols in kinship diagrams, then P*aletó and me* makes the process of becoming kin a personal one. Much like with *Tristes tropiques,* consequently, the reader in search of purely scientific insights will be left disappointed. The general themes the book touches on, from the first encounters the Wari' had with white people, to their concept of kinship, funerary cannibalism and Christianization, were already the subject of the author's scientific work. Equally disappointed will be those who are hoping for a book more self-aware of the power relations between anthropologist and informant than Lévi-Strauss' was. In one episode, for example, Vilaça remembers how, 'with the help of a lawyer friend from the Public Prosecutor's Office', she helped the brother of one of her Wari' friends to be released from prison after he had been wrongly accused of rape (162). Not a word is spent contemplating the social structure that grants access to justice, or, in a similar situation, to medicine (177), to Vilaça, and denies it to her Wari' friends.

The strength of the book, rather, lies in the way it arouses emotions in the reader. Written in simple prose that never distracts from the book's content and with a sober style, one wonders why one feels anything at all. Many of the memories the book recounts have nothing particularly extraordinary about them. At the beginning of the 21st century, trekking through the jungle and living with those who inhabit it does not anymore have the same air of excitement and mystery around it that it once did; and Vilaça never presents it as if it should. But neither is it the sense of familiarity in the unfamiliar – seeing oneself in the other –, which once accompanied the mysterious, that the book evokes: Vilaça does not need to 'humanize' the Amerindians, as Lévi-Strauss had to in 1955 – this, she takes for granted. Rather, by recounting the story of how two people from different 'worlds' became kin, *Paletó and me* overcomes both these forms of narcissism that maintain the self either by denying all similarity with the other, who is regarded as nothing but a 'savage', or by seeing in him only a

[1] MPhil candidate in Social Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, St Antony's College, University of Oxford. Email: niklas.hartmann@sant.ox.ac.uk

mirror of the self. Vilaça achieves this by writing a book not only from *her* 'memories of [her] indigenous father', but also from *the* 'memories of [her] indigenous father', letting them speak directly from transcripts of voice recordings she made of Paletó.

The book is certainly more about Paletó than about Vilaça herself. While never feeling like a biography, it narrates his life from growing up in a time before the Wari' encountered white people, through massacres and epidemics that followed the first violent encounters, all the way to visiting Rio de Janeiro. But despite this, it is the process of becoming kin that the book captures so intimately and of which it is itself an expression, that most arouses the reader's emotions, almost as if he became part of the same kin group. But in remembering, Vilaça also offers the reader insights into Wari' social life and how it changed since contact with white people that make up for what they lack in scientific rigour by the liveliness with which they are presented. Indeed, I think that *Paletó and me i*s best understood in the company of *Tristes tropiques a*nd Philippe Descola's *Les lances du crépuscule.* What it adds to this small genre of literature that Amazonian anthropology seems to produce periodically, however, is a second perspective: among the most fascinating passages of the book are those in which Vilaça presents us Paletó's impressions and analyses of Rio de Janeiro during his visits there. While, like its predecessors, the book is unapologetically written for the 'interested public', it is these passages that might also be of interest to the specialist as specialist, particularly because Vilaça often gives the transcription of the original recording directly.

With *Paletó and me,* Aparecida Vilaça has written a book of a sort that we can only hope is more frequent, bringing anthropology to a wider audience without the pseudo-philosophical megalomania so many 'anthropological' best-sellers exhibit today. Relying neither on pretentious prose nor speculations so fantastic they rival the worst of late 19th century diffusionism to entice the reader, Vilaça manages to captivate us by letting her and Paletó's memories speak for themselves. Beautifully written, *Paletó and me* is not only a joy to read, but should become the model for anthropologists wishing to express the personal aspects of their fieldwork.

Bibliography

Descola, Philippe 1993. *Les lances du crépuscule: relations Jivaros, Haute-Amazonie*. Paris: Plon.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude 1955. *Tristes tropiques*. Paris: Plon.

Vilaça, Aparecida 2002. Making kin out of others in Amazonia, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 8/2, 347-365.

Willems, Emilio 1956. Review. Tristes Tropiques. C. Lévi-Strauss, *American Anthropologist*, 58/5, 928-929.

JASO Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford

SOPHIE CHAO. *IN THE SHADOW OF THE PALMS: MORE-THAN-HUMAN BECOMINGS IN WEST PAPUA*. DURHAM: DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS 2022, 336 P. ISBN: 9781478018247

SEBASTIAN ANTOINE[1]

Based at the University of Sydney, Sophie Chao is an environmental anthropologist interested in more-than-human worlds. *In the shadow of the palms: more-than-human becomings in West Papua* (published in June 2022) describes the multispecies entanglements generated by expanding palm oil plantations in West Papua. She focuses on Indigenous Marind people's understanding of the plant and how it is negotiated in terms of political, social, and environmental changes. *In the shadow of the palms* is Chao's first book-length ethnography, and it is ethnographically rich, analytically incisive, and politically engaged. The book comes at an important time. The expansion of palm oil in West Papua continues apace and political upheaval in the region remains a constant force. In the Global North, campaigns have steadily increased public awareness of the social and environmental costs of palm oil. This book demonstrates the value of an anthropological perspective on these complex dynamics by centring Marind perspectives and experiences. The stories that Chao relates add a richness of detail and complexity to other studies that foreground region-wide dynamics at the expense of local specificity, or that centre environmental change at the expense of understanding human and more-than-human entanglements. Instead, Chao brings people, plants, and animals into a muddled assemblage to explore relationships, interdependencies, oppression, and generation with great effect.

The book begins with a lengthy introduction incorporating Chao's conceptual frame and methodological approach, a discussion of the geo-political and social history of palm oil and West Papua, and Chao's positionality. As there is much to discuss on each of these points, dividing the introduction into several, more distinct parts might have allowed Chao to explore each of them in more depth. For example, Chao gives a tantalising peek at the process of co-production with her Marind interlocutors (p. 27). As an anthropology student, I wished to read more about the mechanics, politics, and complexities of this activity and I hope that Chao explores this process in further publications. Following the introduction, the book comprises eight concise chapters arranged in four pairs. Each pairing places two concepts in productive dialogue: socio-political challenges followed by mapping; skin and wetness followed by the relationship between a domesticated rescue cassowary called Ruben and Marind villagers; their encounters with sago followed by their encounters with oil palm; and, finally, time stopping due to palm oil expansion followed by Marind dreams of being eaten by palm oil.

The central themes of the text are Marind conceptualisations of more-than-human worlds and relationships between humans, animals, and plants. Chao explores these

[1] MSc candidate in Social Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford. Email: sebastian.antoine@anthro.ox.ac.uk

conceptualisations by following a range of practices and events including Marind relationships with sago, a biography of the rescued cassowary and stories of Marind who can shapeshift into animals. By tracing these practices and ontologies, Chao crafts a rich, complex description of the more-than-human world and makes a substantial contribution to the growing body of literature on this topic. Chao demonstrates the real value of broadening the scope of anthropological enquiry and, following Marind, seeing plants and animals as truly social actors. Aside from her contribution to research on more-than-human worlds, the most exciting analytical tool in the book is the emic concept of *abu-abu*. Translated from Bahasa Indonesia as grey, *abu-abu* is used more broadly by Marind to describe abstract greyness and uncertainty. The concept is applied liberally, to a range of issues, and comprises a sub-theme of the text. Thinking with *abu-abu* proves particularly interesting in relation to the political, social, and environmental transformations that Marind negotiate. Chao charts an increasingly *abu-abu* world and Marind attempts to negotiate and understand these developments. True to form, the concept of *abu-abu* remains somewhat amorphous, allowing for its application to a broad range of issues without diminishing its analytical precision. *Abu-abu* as an analytical tool could easily travel to future ethnographies in Indonesia and, perhaps, beyond.

Chao's prose is clear and precise. She revels in wielding complex words to craft dense and vivid sentences. Her clever employment of play-on-words that are sprinkled throughout the text is not only enjoyable to read but analytically revelatory. It takes great skill to balance poetic prose with analytical incisiveness, and, in doing so, Chao demonstrates her grasp of the craft. Her proposed concept of 'multispecies skinship' (p. 82) and her comparison of 'multi-sited' and 'multi-sighted' maps (p. 66) are brilliant and, I expect, will be analytically useful beyond the Marind. Chao appears to enjoy pushing the linguistic boundaries of the ethnographic form to create something a bit unexpected, like separating the pairings by raw, unanalysed descriptions of dreams about palm oil eating people. These playful moments contrast with the content of the stories she tells. One reaction to this disjuncture might be discomfort, but I consider these moments important to the telling of the story itself. They emphasise a sense of complexity and create an ethnographic *abu-abu*. Importantly, given the content of the stories Chao tells, her prose is sensitive to the political and social dynamics. Chao recognises the limits of the written word to convey the sensorially rich experience of being with Marind in villages and in forests. To address this, she describes sonic textures and includes some illuminating photographs she took in the field. Chao has uploaded some great footage to YouTube which provides another way of understanding Marind practices and entanglements with both palm oil and sago (see Chao 2018).

Chao's commitment to doing 'political engaged anthropology' (p. 25) is present throughout the book and is a welcome position on a complex topic. It is not only the stories that she tells of Marind negotiation of capitalist-driven palm oil expansion, but the theoretical debates she furthers, such as multi-species entanglements, that are critically rich and politically radical. This book will appeal greatly to scholars of more-than-human worlds and global capitalism, especially because of its radical centring of Indigenous Marind conceptualisations of the political and social entanglements of human, animals, and plants. The location of the field site in the murky space between Southeast Asia and Melanesia means scholars of either region would appreciate the ethnographic detail. *In the shadow of the palms* is an excellent debut ethnography and I am excited to read more from Chao, especially as she adds texture and depth to the ideas captured here.

Bibliography

Chao, Sophie 2018. *Declaration of land as our spiritual mother*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74Zo-cNY8U8.