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IDENTITIES: POWER AND POLITICS

VOLUME 9

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A NOTE FROM THE RESEARCH STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to Volume 9 of the SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research. This particular Volume has taken a great deal of time, two teams, and a global network of communications to bring to fruition. We are proud the present Volume represents the high quality of doctoral research at SOAS, not only in the scholarship that is showcased here, but in the teamwork, commitment and dedication that has brought this into being.

The Research Student's Association (RSA) at SOAS exists to represent the interests of MPhil and doctoral researchers, as well as provide social activities and events throughout the year. This Journal is very much the pinnacle of RSA achievements throughout the year, and it is with great pride in the Journal team's efforts that we welcome you to this Volume. Completed over two academic years, Volume 9 was originally collated by Roshni Menon in 2015-16 who spent time and careful thought on the theme, the call for papers, and worked with the authors across the year to put together a collection that focused on Identities: Power and politics. In October 2016, Monika Hirmer and Romina Istratii were elected as the new Journal Editors, and not only began their own endeavours to put together Volume 10, but took over the completion of Volume 9. Despite both being on fieldwork, in India and Ethiopia respectively, Monika and Romina, along with a team of editorial support based in the UK dedicated themselves to bringing about both editions, and we would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to Roshni, Monika and Romina, and the editorial team Iris Lim, Juliana Cordeiro De Farias Bosslet, and Jay Carr.

This year marks a particular expansion and renaissance in RSA activity, and this is mirrored in a similar expansion of the Journal's reach and visibility. While the Journal is primarily an electronic Journal, accessed through the SOAS website, this year has seen the extension of cataloguing the articles and collection, working in collaboration with Helen Porter in the SOAS Library. For the first time, the papers are now assigned a Creative Commons (CC) copyright license, along with a DOI catalogue number, making the papers available through the library search function, as well as more widely accessible online. This year has also seen the Journal team explore print options, and we are delighted to be able to offer the authors, editorial team and the Doctoral School a limited print edition of the Journal. This has been achieved with the help and assistance of Steve Redding in the SOAS print room, and with the kind funding of the SOAS Student Union.

Thus it is with great excitement, tinged with no small degree of pride in the achievements of the team this year, that we welcome you to Volume 9, and encourage you to turn the page and dive into the wonderful world that comprises current doctoral research at SOAS. We look forward to the continued success of the SOAS Post Graduate Research Journal.

Clare Williams (RSA Communications) on behalf of the RSA

INTRODUCTION TO EDITION 9

We deemed it necessary to provide this edition of the SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research with an introduction, in order to explain the changes that occurred over the past and current academic year, fundamentally shaping the present publication.

The completion of this edition faced several challenges, which cumulatively led to a delay in its final publication date. One of the reasons for this was a change in the editorial team that occurred in late 2016, and brought about also a reorganisation in the Journal's processes and operations.

The review process and the selection of papers of this edition were conducted under the editorial leadership of Roshni Menon, who worked remotely and dedicatedly from her field site in India to coordinate the review process of the year's submissions to the Journal. The editing of the selected papers and the operations leading to the final publication were undertaken by the new editorial team, led by Romina Istratii and Monika Hirmer. Romina acted as reviewer for the first round, while Monika had submitted her own article for review.

When the new editors took over, by fair and transparent election process as conducted by the RSA (Research Students' Association), the new editors were called to work first on completing edition 9, which had not been completed within the timeframe of the academic year 2015-16. This inevitably included editing and proofreading the papers for publication. This final editing was done with the support of a professional service. It should be clear that Monika served as editor-in-chief only after the review process had been completed by Roshni Menon, and she was in no way involved in the paper selection and particularly in the acceptance of her own paper. It should also be mentioned that Romina's role as reviewer for edition 9 was completed before she ran in the elections as editor-in-chief; the two roles are in no way linked to each other, nor did the former in any way lead to the latter.

We also want to bring to the attention of the reader that this year the Journal is published with a new layout. The current PDF publication will also be accompanied by its limited printed version, for the first time in the history of the Journal. It is equally noteworthy that the papers are published under the Creative Commons copyright licensing, and have been given permanent URLs, which will enable them to become visible in library search engines, making them accessible to a larger readership of the student and academic community.

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

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Editing and Publication: Romina Istratii and Monika Hirmer

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers:

Since 2005, the SOAS Journal has been dedicated to showcasing the talent and diverse specialties of SOAS doctoral researchers. This year's theme has been 'Identities: Power and politics' and its aim has been to attract papers that particularly transcend boundaries of conventional approaches and disciplines to assess questions around power and identity formation. Power is a multifarious, multidimensional concept that is increasingly conceived as fluid and ubiquitous under Foucauldian thinking. In this edition, young researchers explore questions and issues of power and identity in politicised discourse, and articulate and interpret these issues through their different positionalities and in different knowledge systems. We believe that the articles that follow cumulatively offer different appraisals of power-laden discourses and practices that enrich our thinking concerning the intersection of global and local feminisms, global and local notions of personhood, the creation of hierarchies through the symbolic manipulation of food supply, the politics underlying the branding of national identity in changing contexts, ideals of personhood and morality as reflected in children's tales from different cultures, as well as cross-cultural thinking around ubiquitous power differentials between men and women.

In her article 'Looking for the Indian woman's identity: Discrepancies and power imbalances across theory and popular culture' Monika Hirmer provides us with a literature review that spans second- and third-wave feminism in the West and the manner in which these waves influenced the representation of Indian women. The author observes that, while in scholarly literature there is a discursive shift from dichotomous notions juxtaposing 'woman as goddess/woman as whore', to a more fluid and complex image of women who do not conform to the mainstream value system, a similar shift could not be traced in Indian popular culture, which responds to demands of collective imagery. The originality of her submission lies in the query whether shifts in discourse represent actuality or simply changes in academic paradigms reflecting vested interests. The paper traces discursive change and asks important questions that everyone in cross-cultural, feminist and agency studies in both the West and in India should reflect on.

In 'The meaning of *Adabu* and *Adhabu* for the 'child protection' discourse in Zanzibar' Franziska Maria Fay relates the concepts *adabu* (manners/discipline) and *adhabu* (punishment), which constitute local notions of child socialisation, to the 'child protection' discourse in Zanzibar, Tanzania. She argues that the two concepts, which are ultimately interwoven, are considered within the research community to mutually contribute toward achieving children's social personhood. International child protection discourses that forbid corporal punishment, however, have generally ignored such local concepts. The author concludes by calling for 'the need for child protection policy and practice [to move] beyond universalised ideas of well-being and towards more meaningful approaches of protecting children in their everyday environments.' We believe that this submission makes an invaluable contribution to the literature that deals with development practice in the cross-

cultural context. It could provide particular guidance to development organisations that work to adjust their methods and approaches to local knowledge systems.

Building upon Marcel Mauss' work on gift economies, in 'Foodways and Empire in Asante History, Ghana', Brandi Simpson Miller innovatively explores the far-reaching power dynamics that underlie and define food exchange. The paper convincingly demonstrates that rituals of commensality are symbolically laden means, endowed with a type of soft power that wields repercussions reaching far beyond the gastronomic experience, extending into socio-cultural, political and economic domains. In particular, the author analyses state dinners hosted by two different Asante kings in the nineteenth century and decodes how the symbolic use of food was deployed as diplomatic device with the purpose of establishing specific relationships of superiority and inferiority between the hosts and their European guests.

In her article 'Mankurtism, monuments and marketing: Identity and power in post-Soviet contemporary art of Central Asia', Kasia Ploskonka analyses how notions of identity are articulated in post-Soviet nations through contemporary art. Subsequent to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 the need emerged for nations of Central Asia to build new identities, on a local as well as an international level. With a focus on Kazakhstan, the author explores how the nation has been repositioned in the present through the evocation of specific elements from its past. This nation branding is expressed through the phenomenon of *mankurtization*, the erection of new monuments and strategies of marketing. The author argues that in these processes of identity deconstruction and reconstruction at the intersection of complex contradictions, including social structures, religious traditions, and contemporary globalised desires, there has been a selective forgetting and privileging of specific elements guided by the new elites in their attempts to consolidate their positions on international platforms.

The volume concludes with two translations. Nadežda Christopher's translation of two children's stories, also from Kazakhstan, provides unique insight into what could be described as Kazakh ideals concerning personhood and morality. The author's translated stories, as she herself states, are driven by a primary desire to 'provide some insight into the culture and the mentality of the Kazakh people' with whom she conducted her PhD research. While these stories are children's tales, they should be approached as building blocks of socialisation that influence adults and entire cultural mentalities, and can therefore serve as crucial analytical frames for cross-cultural understanding.

The second work of translation by A. Ebru Akcasu, is a series of letters from the early 1900s composed by various literati regarding gender equality within Islam. Their authors ponder the possibility of equality considering biological, social, cultural, and religious parameters that are salient in the equality discourse within the societies they know. Through letters, they express their own speculations about reasons that continue to contribute to the unequal status of females and males, but also rationalisations as to why equality is rightful and desirable. It is especially gratifying to see how these authors juxtapose local problems of gender inequality to those of Western societies and societies of other times, reminding us that attitudes and norms that propagate gender inequalities are not unique to a specific religio-cultural context or historical moment, but are transnational and require attention by everyone throughout the world.

It is our hope that the readers of this volume will benefit from and enjoy the carefully selected publications as much as the Editorial team did in the process of reviewing and editing them.

With best wishes,

Romina Istratii and Monika Hirmer

LOOKING FOR THE INDIAN WOMAN'S IDENTITY: DISCREPANCIES AND POWER IMBALANCES ACROSS THEORY AND POPULAR CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

After providing a brief account of the evolution of the Indian feminist movement, I move on to analyse the development of the perception of Indian women, first through the lens of scholarly writings, and then through Indian films and TV series. Identifying distinct trends in the academic analyses of Indian women from the 1980s onwards, I collocate these writings within the larger framework of feminist discourses. The pervasive influence that scholars exert on the perceived identities of Indian women, shaping them in accordance with their own theoretical frameworks, becomes thus evident. Earlier studies, mainly adopting a structural paradigm and assuming the image of the Brahmanical woman as point of reference, allude to the dichotomy of 'woman as goddess/woman as whore', and can be associated with second-wave feminism; studies from the '90s onwards, endorsing an increasingly complex framework, have given voice to those women who do not conform to the Brahmanical value system, and have been correlated to third-wave feminism. While scholarly writings departed from the binary framework within which the image of Indian women is often caught, a similar shift cannot be distinctly observed in the film industry, which responds to the demands of the collective imagery. This poses queries about the extent to which academic discourses are representative of Indian women's identities or rather of the current Western zeitgeist, and about the power imbalances that are perpetuated by 'othering' Indian women through making them repeated objects of study.

¹ The author is grateful to the V. P. Kanitkar Memorial Scholarship, through which her studies are generously funded.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since women's social position became of interest to the elites during the colonial era, the perception of Indian women has undergone a substantial, albeit slow, evolution. From conforming to the ideal of womanhood promoted by a primarily Brahmanical-Victorian outlook, the image of Indian women has today become increasingly heterogeneous, allowing for the voices of women from different backgrounds to be heard—at least within academic literature.

By observing the evolution of scholarship on Indian women through time, it appears that it progressed in conjunction with the development of larger, essentially Western, feminist discourses. The mainly monolithic Brahmanical-Victorian image of the Indian woman, protagonist of academic writings from the '70s and '80s, was prominent when second-wave feminists promoted a universal ideal woman (very different from the Indian model, but equally unquestioned in her universality); then, as the feminist movement started to progress towards its third wave in the '80s and '90s, with a more comprehensive and multifaceted image of women, also Indian business-, fisher- and Dalit-women became protagonists of scholarly analyses. However, despite a shift in the perception of Indian women in academic literature towards an increasingly heterogeneous outlook, a similar trend is not always reflected in everyday social contexts, where women who do not conform to dominant models of chastity and purity, are still often repudiated.

After providing a brief outline of the major trends of feminism in India in the following section, in the third and fourth sections I will illustrate how the perception of the Indian woman developed within scholarly literature. In doing so, I will first examine the works of Susan Wadley (1977, 1980a), Margaret Egnor (1980) and Holly Reynolds (1980), presenting them as representative samples of second-wave feminism. Next, in the fourth part of the essay, I concentrate on the demise of the monolithic ideal Indian woman, and on what can be considered an expression of third-wave feminism within the Indian context. I present the increasingly composite image of Indian women through works such as those of Sarah Lamb (1997, 2000), Frédérique Apffel-Marglin (2008) and Sudhakar Rao (2007). In the fifth section, I will briefly reflect on the Indian woman as she is perceived in cinematic productions, rather than in academic literature.

The evolution from a uniform imagined identity of the Indian woman towards a heterogeneous one can be collocated within the larger shift that occurred across the social sciences and humanities, from a considerably rigid and dichotomous structuralist paradigm towards an increasingly fluid and complex postmodern approach. It appears that the changes in the manner in which Indian women have been depicted throughout time may be as much a result of the impact that prevailing theoretical frameworks exert on the representation of identities, as of an actual change in the identities of Indian women. Crucially, it has to be asked what power dynamics underlie, and are furthered by, the 'othering' of Indian women that occurs in making them repeated objects of study.

THE ORIGINS OF FEMINISM IN INDIA

The Devī is a woman with a large *bindi* on her forehead, wearing a *saree* and fair in complexion. She is sexually passive, gentle and self sacrificing, monogamous,

looking upon the face of the only one man in her life, her husband, and she is the repository of the honour of the family.

– Subhadra Channa 2007, 37

The above image of the Indian woman is diametrically opposed to what Channa (2007) terms a *dāsī*, a woman who has none of the *devī*'s qualities, and is instead tribal or from a low caste, working, sexually active, independent and dark. The first image is the portrait of the ideal woman, while the latter depicts a woman who is often considered to be disrespectful towards Indian tradition and deserving of punishment for her boldness. That the two opposite images represent extremes of a spectrum, which in fact contains an array of innumerable expressions of womanhood, is seldom recognised, and popular discourse around the Indian woman continues in great part to focus on these dichotomous poles.

The formulation of an ideal Indian womanhood gained momentum during the colonial era, when feminist ideas, which started to be heard in Europe in the 19th century, became part of the vocabulary of a minority of literate elite Indian women. Along with the pure, chaste, homely Brahman women, influential men from the Indian elite and exponents of the nationalist movement also endorsed the cause for the affirmation of an Indian womanhood, deeply linking it with the development of a national identity. In a time when India was looking for an identity around which to shape her fight for freedom, it was possible to observe 'the construction of a particular kind of past that provided the context for a particular kind of womanhood' (Ghosal 2005, 796). As Uma Chakravarti observed, 'the past itself was a creation of the compulsions of the present and these compulsions determined which elements were highlighted and which receded from the conscious object of concern in historical and semi-historical writings' (quoted from Ghosal 2005, 796-797). Selectively, only texts from the 'Great Sanskrit Tradition' such as the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* were promoted as the bearers of a pure Indian tradition by the Indian elite and Western scholars alike, contributing to the emergence of a monolithic Indian identity that was in stark contrast with what was expressed in tribal myths or village folklore as well as in everyday practices.² As a result, the ideal Indian womanhood was one reflecting exclusively the value system of upper-castes and the Vedic concept of purity; along with those came the image of an extremely fragile woman, who had to be constantly protected by her male relatives, and who was to be preferably veiled or otherwise covered, in order to preserve her modesty.³

The link between a 'rediscovered' national Indian-ness and an 'indigenous' womanhood dissolved when the British assumed a position of sympathy towards the women of India: due to the fact that the nationalist public agenda lost a motive of opposition to the colonisers, the cause for women receded to the background. This would be the state of Indian feminism well into the first decades of Independence, due to a general belief that, with time, through Nehru's emphasis on egalitarianism, secularism and democracy, all social—thus also gender—adversities would be overcome.⁴

² See Channa 2007 for a more detailed overview.

³ In this regard the passage from the *Manusmṛti* '[i]n childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, and when her lord is dead, to her sons; a woman must never be left independent', invariably comes to mind (quoted from Bolich 2008, 281).

⁴ See Sarbani Ghosal 2005 for an overview of trends in Indian feminism.

It was only in the 1970s that specifically women's issues became more prominent, as many political parties institutionalised women's wings, and indigenous movements led by women, such as the Chipko protest,⁵ arose at the grassroots level.

THE IMAGE OF THE INDIAN WOMAN IN ACADEMIC WRITING OF THE 1970S-'80S: THE IDEAL DEVĪ

The academic study of the Indian woman developed as an aspect of the wider growing interest in gender issues, which proliferated in the West from the 1970s onwards. Western scholars were fascinated by fierce, exotic goddesses such as Kālī and Durgā first, and by the more docile and benevolent characters of consort goddesses such as Lakṣmī, Sītā and Rādhā successively, before shifting their attention to Indian women.⁶ However, despite concentrating on the *human* female, both, fierce and benevolent goddesses remained the implicit models against which anthropologists evaluated women. The contributors to *The Powers of Tamil Women* (1980), one of the most influential works on Indian women of that time, presented almost exclusively the image of the ideal Indian woman that was promoted by the elite, defined by her resemblance to chaste goddesses on the one side, and her opposition to independent, sexual goddesses, on the other.

While these works offer invaluable insights into various aspects of Indian women, which are in great part still applicable today, it appears that they are mainly confined within a Brahmanical outlook, neglecting a majority of Indian women who are not the wives of a *pandits*, nor spend a considerable amount of time in their homes, but are instead tanned from working in the fields, mingle with men, and may publicly display a self-willed character—in one word, the *dāsīs*, as per Channa's (2007) definition. Accounts that take into consideration almost exclusively the image of the *devī*, elevating it to represent the prototype of the Indian woman, cannot render a satisfactory picture of Indian women in general. However, when viewing these early studies in relation to the specific timeframe in which they were written, it becomes possible to shed some light on their partiality. Firstly, they can largely be collocated within the paradigm of second-wave feminism, which, initially appearing in Europe and America in the 1960s and '70s, tended to search for, and emphasise, a universal character of women, envisaging them as being equally burdened by, and unified in, the opposition to patriarchal systems across the world. Secondly, the dichotomous relationship between 'woman as goddess/woman as whore' that underlies many of these writings reflects the emphasis on opposites introduced by Lévi-Strauss' Structuralism (1963), and which constituted one of the dominant theoretical frameworks throughout the 1970s.

It is thus that Margaret Egnor (1980), Holly Reynolds (1980) and Kenneth David (1980) similarly identify as a prototype a woman who is either, on the one side, dangerous, inauspiciously powerful, single, hot and with an insatiable sexual appetite, or, on the other

⁵ The Chipko (from *chipko*, 'hugging' in Hindi) movement is considered to be one of the first exemplars of ecofeminism in practice: in the 1970s, women in the Garhwal region hugged trees to protest against industrial deforestation and to protect the source of their livelihoods. Feminism and ecology, Vandana Shiva points out, are interconnected, as the worldview that generates environmental degradation is the same that promotes male domination (Shiva 1988).

⁶ See Wadley 1980a.

side, tame, cool, married and auspicious—thus recreating in the human domain the binary opposition that Lawrence Babb (1975) had applied to the goddesses of the Indian pantheon.⁷ What follows within the given framework is that, in order for the dangerous power of Indian women (or goddesses) to be transformed into fecund auspiciousness, women have to be cooled by the control and protection of husbands. Should they not yet be ripe for marriage, the inauspiciousness of women has to be controlled by their fathers, or, in the case of widows, by their sons.

The dangers and powers of women are not always consistent throughout their lifetime. As Reynolds (1980) and David (1980) observe, their powers increase during puberty and culminate with motherhood: in highly auspicious forms in the case of married mothers, and in distinctly inauspicious forms in the case of unmarried mothers. A married mother is considered to be the most powerfully auspicious woman and enjoys the highest social status that is attainable by women.

Conversely, the dangers of women are minimal before puberty and potentially destructive during their fertile age, if they are unmarried. Once women get married, men can safely control their latent threats. Accordingly, at menarche, severe social restrictions are imposed upon girls,⁸ who are formally initiated through marriage-like rituals. These restrictions are at their most stringent up to the time that a girl is wed to a man. In the case of menopausal women, the dangers diminish, and so do the social restrictions.

As a widow, a woman again becomes highly inauspicious and dangerous, and has to be rendered sexually unattractive through the shaving of her head and the abandonment of all her jewellery. With the exception of widowhood, where women are to a great extent marginalised by society regardless of their age (and, thus, of their biological fecundity), it appears that the powers and dangers of women are intrinsically connected with their fertility, more specifically indicated by their menstruation.

The capacity to menstruate, in its ‘controlled’ or ‘uncontrolled’ presence or absence, is the most prominent phenomenon determining the social status of Indian women. While often labelled as simply unhygienic, Mary Douglas’ elaborations in *Purity and Danger* (1966) suggest that the nature of menstruation, in its profoundest essence, is actually ambiguous; as such, not being liable to classification, and thus posing a threat of transgressing the boundaries that uphold social order, menstruation has to be either controlled or banished.⁹ Ultimately, it is the command over female *fertility* and *sexuality* that is prohibited to women.

The overall image which is meant to be conveyed is that of a woman whose natural condition is clearly inauspicious, or at least dangerous; this danger derives from the woman’s potential control over her own body’s fertility and sexuality. Only through union with a husband can this underlying threat be transformed into auspiciousness. The highly venerated and benign powers of married mothers are thus only *derivatives*: while power, or

⁷ The focus of this paper is on women rather than on goddesses, therefore I cannot here expand on Babb’s classification. For a critique of the same, see for example Stanley Kurtz (1992, 20-21).

⁸ Restrictions range from tying their hair up, to wearing more constrictive clothes and, obviously, to limitations in their interactions with men, especially with those to whom they are not related.

⁹ For an analysis of how the values of purity/impurity and auspiciousness/inauspiciousness interact see Apffel-Marglin’s eminent ethnography *Wives of the God-King: Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (1985).

śakti, is internal to women, it is the connection with men, which determines whether this power is primarily auspicious or dangerous. Men, however, do not have such powers, nor can they appropriate them through marriage; they can only control them.¹⁰

The necessary connection between women and men in everyday life is directly correlated in the Indian philosophical domain with the concepts of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. *Prakṛti* represents nature, femininity, active force and undifferentiated matter; *puruṣa* is its counterpart, the inactive male aspect and differentiated spirit. As Wadley observes, '[t]he union of Spirit and Matter, code and noncode, inactive and active, leads to the creation of the world with all of its differentiated forms; no life exists without both, Matter and Spirit, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*' (1977, 114). This philosophical union pervades much of Indian thought, and can be traced at most levels of gender relations. While Wadley states that in the Indian realm the seed of men is more important than the receptors (women), and much of the literature concentrates primarily on the domination of men over women, the *prakṛti-puruṣa* relation allows for at least three interpretations: a) the female and the male principle being equally important and deserving equal respect and veneration; b) the male principle being more important than the female principle and dominating the relationship; and c) the female principle being more valuable and deserving higher respect than the male principle.

Elaborating on these typologies of partnerships, Sheryl Daniel (1980) observes that the second model reflects an outspoken dominance of the husband over the wife, based on the man's assumed superiority: it is the man's control over the woman that assures the prosperity of the family, and it is the union in marriage to a man, which confers respectability to the life of a woman, as long as she worships him as her primary god. The third model, instead, while publicly presenting a power-dynamic similar to the second, conferring the husband an apparent authority over the wife, privately relies upon the wife's control of the husband: '[n]ot only is the woman...capable of managing her own *śakti*, but women must also manage the affairs of men especially as they effect the honour and prosperity of the family. Thus it is the duty of the mother and later the wife to restrain, reform and protect men from their uncontrolled propensities' (Daniel 1980, 72).¹¹

Throughout most of the recounts in Wadley's collection (1980), a relationship dynamic emerges wherein men are dominant and women submissive. In particular, Egnor and Reynolds focus on the suffering of women as a direct consequence of their subordinate status, and on the seemingly contradictory *śakti* that derives thereof. Women, through their subordination, gain a power that is superior to that of the very men oppressing them: from the *śakti* that the ideal wife thus acquires, depend the prosperity of the family in general, and the life of the husband in particular. Thus women, through their *tapas* (self-sacrifice and

¹⁰ The recent study by Joyce Flueckiger shows alternative ways in which men aim at experiencing and gaining access to *śakti* (2013).

¹¹ This case is illustrated by David (1980) in his recounts of Hindu Jaffna women, where he shows how they, despite being officially oppressed and subservient to men through a complex series of rituals, actually have tangible powers (as opposed to rather metaphysical forms of *śakti* described below), which they subtly deploy to influence daily events in their favour. Whether through participating in the system of production by imparting orders to labourers from their back verandas, through influencing crucial wedding alliances, or by asserting their inheritance rights, these women are far from the 'public image of feminine ignorance, subordination, modesty, and deference to males' (David 1980, 106).

austerity practices), become the repositories of the family's wellbeing and honour and, at the same time, become responsible for their misfortunes. As David states: 'To the Tamil, actions of suffering are not derogated as actions of the weak, but are perceived within a religious framework wherein suffering leads to powers (*śakti*)' (1980, 104). This is how Reynolds and Egnor explain the fact that it is women themselves who are the most ardent supporters of a tradition based upon their own suffering: '[w]omen need be subordinate to men, and such subordination endows women with a power that is superior in intensity, range, and effect than that which led to their subordination in the first place. Subordination, therefore, becomes not merely tolerable but providential. A subordinated woman, an auspicious woman, emerges as the most powerful female being, and, indeed, in certain circumstances, as a female being more powerful than men' (Reynolds 1980, 57). The image that emerges is that of a woman who is immersed in a circular nexus of causality, wherein suffering and power continuously reinforce each other: without oppression, *śakti* cannot unfold and, in turn, the power supports the oppression. The gender relation of type b) delineated above is thus brought to its utmost expression: *śakti* is no longer an innate part of women, as it manifests through self-sacrifice and submission to men. While the attitude of Tamil women of reinforcing the connubial relationship between power and suffering may seem dissonant to Western sensibilities, Egnor observes that 'these actions and ideas are both logical and natural within the Indian framework' (1980, 4).¹²

Throughout Wadley's collection, the authors seem to be chiefly concerned, on the one hand, with the apparently paradoxical link between *śakti* and oppression—mostly attributing it to a dichotomous conception of the Indian woman as either pious and tame or inauspicious and independent; and, on the other side, with the question about why this contradiction persists—finding the answer in the women's own desire to persevere it. As will become clear in the next section of this paper, more recent studies have shown that the realm of Indian women is vastly complex, and a compliant behaviour can neither be straightforwardly interpreted as an acceptance of the status quo, nor as the adoption of a false consciousness. With the rise of third-wave feminism, the unified, crystallised vision of the Sanskritised Indian woman, the *devī*, is re-evaluated and juxtaposed with the alternative, at times dissident voices of Dalit-, fisher- or business-women, enabling an increasingly variegated understanding of the multifarious expressions of Indian womanhood.

THE IMAGE OF THE INDIAN WOMAN IN ACADEMIC WRITING OF THE 1990s-2000s: TOWARDS A MORE COMPLEX IDENTITY

Whereas one of the primary aims of second-wave feminism, as it was conceived in the West, was to make the private lives of women public, from the 1990s onwards it was women who were not secluded in their homes, and often understood to be endowed with various forms

¹² It may be useful to remember that Christianity is also pervaded by similar promises of redemption and future glory made to the poorest and most oppressed of people, precisely *because* of qualities inherent in the latter's subaltern conditions.

of agency, who became the protagonists of numerous ethnographies.¹³ This shift of interest in the perception of women can be viewed as a product of changes occurring in the theoretical landscape: on the larger scale, the rather fluid and practice-oriented approaches of Foucauldian discursiveness and Bourdieuan Practice Theory gained increasing influence, questioning the rigid tenets of Structuralism; with regards to feminism in particular, Chandra Talpade Mohanty's influential work (1984), denouncing the Western projection of a monolithic 'Third World Woman' (1984, 333), called for the acknowledgement of the distinctive and potentially conflicting interests and desires of women inhabiting heterogeneous Western and non-Western landscapes.

These factors contributed to the demise of one of the chief premises of much early feminist theory, consisting of the distinction between anatomical sex and social gender. The separation of the materiality of the body from culture, as suggested by Sherry Ortner (1974)¹⁴ and others, underlay the hope that, in reforming culture, women could be freed from biological determinism, which emphasised their reproductive functions and positioned them closer to nature than the allegedly physiologically autonomous men, thus precluding them from the domain of culture. As pointed out by Mohanty, despite their good-hearted intentions, Western feminists, by universalising Eurocentric concepts of sexuality and imposing upon them a certain fixity, promoted imperialist hierarchies that reaffirmed the superiority of first-world women. By the early 1990s, the sharp distinction between sex and gender had become untenable and was in great part replaced by the advent of gender performativity, which was to become a major component of third-wave feminism. Applying Foucault's discursiveness and J. L. Austin's performative speech act theory to gender, Judith Butler (1990) suggests that not only gender, but also sex, despite appearing essential, is an arbitrary product of specific historical and political discursive frameworks: the apparent naturalness and legitimacy of heteronormativity are but consequences of the subjects' continuous reaffirmation of the prevailing regulatory matrix through their performative actions.

While in the West this theoretical evolution led to an increasingly dynamic approach to gender and sexual identities,¹⁵ ethnographic studies soon revealed that in the Indian context the materiality of the body cannot be perceived as purely performative, but has to be understood as the product of an ontological substantiality that, at least in part, determines the genders and roles of social actors.

Directly referencing Butler's theory, Cecilia Busby, in her study of a South Indian fishing village (2000), looks at how women and men perceive their gender roles, and how these are shaped based upon the relationships between wife and husband. Busby observes that, on the

¹³ Among several works, figure Karin Kapadia's *Siva and her Sisters. Gender, Caste and Class in Rural South India* (1998), presenting women who sustain their families by working in the fields; William Sax's *Mountain Goddess. Gender and Politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage* (1991), which concentrates on women (and men) accompanying their goddess on a pilgrimage; and Cecilia Busby's *The Performance of Gender: An Anthropology of Everyday Life in a South Indian Fishing Village* (2000), looking at women active in the fishing business.

¹⁴ The author re-evaluated her stance in a later publication (see Ortner 1996).

¹⁵ See, for example, Beatriz Preciado's experiments with testosterone narrated in *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (2013) and Patrick Califia's considerations on gender reassignment in 'Manliness' (2006).

one side, substantial bodily differences inform and govern the complementary divisions of labour between wife and husband as well as other marriage patterns; on the other side, however, culture plays a fundamental role in construing corporeal identities too, as the respective activities of wife and husband not only build upon, but also affirm and reinforce the constitutive realities of their bodies. Through the attribution of fishing to men and of household and financial matters to women, the gender distinctions that are inherent in substantial bodily differences are expressed and reaffirmed. Conversely, the performative nature of gendered activities shapes bodies by conferring them specific musculatures and habits. Gender, and therefore womanhood, is simultaneously substantial and performative.

In her study on ageing and gender in rural Bengal, Sarah Lamb (1997, 2000) also identifies a degree of gender fluidity that is nevertheless built upon an essential predisposed material substantiality. Conceiving personhood as relational, Lamb's informants shape their gendered identities through emotional and substantial exchanges (such as sexual fluids, food, or material possessions) with others and their environments. Crucially, while the making and unmaking of such ties at key moments in their lives underlie the gendering of persons in rural Bengal, the quality, frequency and direction that such ties can take in the development of identities, are predetermined and specific to a person's biological sex. Lamb, similarly to Busby, thus reaffirms a model of gender that is at the same time processual and performative on the one side, and material and essential on the other.

Whereas Foucault's discourse analysis, with its emphasis on historicity and contextuality, influenced the development of new approaches to gender and sex, which enabled an understanding beyond dichotomous sex-gender models and offered instead more comprehensive and variegated images of women, the emphasis on agency, which was driven by the increasing relevance that actions and subjects assumed in Pierre Bourdieu's Practice Theory, led to a more nuanced awareness of the desires and interests of women and their capacity to influence the world.

The turn to agency was often led by a concerted effort to look beyond dominant—mostly male—interpretations of gender roles and behaviours, in order to uncover the heretofore-unheard voices of women. Julia Leslie's edited collection of essays titled *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women* (1992), for instance, aims at documenting how women 'see themselves not as victims of their culture but as active agents in the creation of their own identity' (1992, 3).

Embracing James Scott's (1990) notion of subtle, everyday forms of resistance, a number of studies directed their focus on the analysis of women's songs, which, since frequently falling outside the domain of public practices, had so far remained largely unexplored. In the women's songs that Gloria Raheja and Ann Gold (1994) recorded during their separate fieldworks in Rajasthan, emerge the alternative and subversive voices of women that vividly criticise dominant male ideologies and the power structures in force. Similarly, analysing the poetic productions of Dalit women in rural Andhra Pradesh, Sudhakar Rao (2007) observes that his informants internalise neither their subaltern status as outcastes, nor their oppressed condition in the purview of their female identity. Expressing their sorrows as doubly exploited human beings in their songs, Dalit women, far from voluntarily perpetuating current social relations, conform to exploitative systems solely due to their lack of influential means of resistance.

Through his participation in a Himalayan pilgrimage for the goddess Nandā, William Sax (1990, 1991) acquires insight into the gender narratives that are adhered to by women and men respectively. Crucially, women's understanding of their gendered selves starkly contrasts with the image of women that is propagated by men. Bringing to light women's otherwise subdued interpretation, Sax's study reveals female identities that are decidedly more rooted in their natal places and bound to their blood families, compared to how male—and thus official—recounts portray them: the immediate and complete transformation of a woman's identity that is thought to occur right after marriage as the bride moves to the husband's family house, is contradicted by the brides themselves, who maintain that there is a gradual change, which furthermore is never complete, as their ties to their natal place never entirely dissipate.

Contrary to what had previously been suggested,¹⁶ the idea that the public enactment of patriarchal and upper-caste values through ritual performances in everyday life by oppressed groups indicates their acceptance of dominant power structures, is thus strongly rejected. Indian women, who in the 1970s and 1980s were still primarily viewed in the context of their subaltern condition, emerge in the 1990s and 2000s as the conscious proponents of alternative narratives and desires that question the fundamentals of patriarchy.

An assumed conflation between agency and resistance runs implicitly throughout many of these writings, suggesting that where some form of resistance is displayed, there is agency and, conversely, where there is some amount of agency, oppressed groups ought to exhibit resistance. It can be argued that, on the one hand, the emphasis upon acts of resistance—be it in the form of songs, alternative narratives, or more overt protests—has often been motivated by an intention to atone for the resilient omission of women's voices across influential past writings. On the other hand, in the absence of discernible acts of opposition, it has been postulated that the acceptance of the status quo by women and other exploited groups is to be ascribed to their subscription to a false consciousness, which leads them to mistake the interests of dominant groups for their own.

In both cases, it transpires that Indian women's desires and interests have been illustrated by inscribing them within primarily modern Western frameworks of reference, revolving around the concept of individual, independent, subject agents. Both the search for women's faculty to act upon the world on the one side, and, on the other side, where this ability is instead not discernible, the recourse to the idea of a false consciousness that masks one's innermost desires, rely upon the assumption of a self that is moved by a natural desire for

¹⁶ Michael Moffatt, in his study of Harijan religion in South India (1979), implied that the following of unfavourable social norms meant the acceptance of one's lower status. Adhering to the structuralist Dumontian vision of a general acceptance of the Brahmanical worldview, Moffatt argues that the lowest castes, in replicating their oppression, consent to it.

freedom and self-determination.¹⁷ As Frédérique Apffel-Marglin and Purna Chandra Mishra (2008) argue, the rise of a thus identified concept of the self can be associated with the advancement of capitalist modes of production and of dichotomous modes of thinking, which concomitantly characterised the West from the 18th century onwards. While the requirement of readily available labourers presumed a particular relationship of the self with mind and body—postulating an individual responding to the linear timings of industries and markets, rather than to the cyclic rhythms of kin and nature—, the Cartesian mind-body dualism elevated rationality over passions—promoting the rational and self-determining subject as the utmost expression of the modern self.

Setting aside the arbitrary ideal of individual, self-determining subject agents, Apffel-Marglin (2008), in her analysis of the Oriya Rāja Prabhā festival, documents how women and men lead lives that are determined by the cyclical rhythms of goddess Thakurani and of nature, rather than by linear time. The simultaneous celebration of the goddess' and the earth's menstruation is an event where women and men alike are required to participate in their distinctive gendered roles, so as to maintain the cosmic order and allow for the renewal of a fecund life. Through the festival, the Oriya women Apffel-Marglin lived with affirm their positive connection with their fertile bodies and their own and the goddess' *śakti*, while at the same time being perceived as auspicious by Oriya men. Rather than seeking autonomy, equality and self-determination, these women (and men) pursue complementarity between genders, as prescribed by their cosmic order. The image of woman that emerges can neither be reduced to the dichotomy sexual-inauspicious/asexual-auspicious woman, nor does it conform to the Western notion of realisation through self-determination.¹⁸

From an image of Indian womanhood that either corresponds to the inauspicious *dāsī* or to the tame *devī*, to the current appreciation of women in their full-fledged complexity, it appears that the understanding of Indian women's identity has gained considerably in accuracy, reflecting the ever more decentred quests of postmodern academia.

THE PERCEPTION OF WOMEN IN POPULAR CULTURE

Whereas in academic writings there has been a fundamental shift from a dichotomous towards an increasingly composite outlook in the apperception of Indian women, when looking at popular culture it appears that the *devī/dāsī* opposition still figures prominently.

¹⁷ These primarily Western frameworks are today heavily criticised also within Western scholarship, especially in feminist literature on autonomy and on the self. While early feminist literature mostly regarded the idea of autonomy with suspicion, as it was associated with 'masculinist' concepts of independence, rationality and atomistic selves (Stoljar 2015), recently there has been a shift towards re-evaluating autonomy by highlighting the relational nature of selves. In particular, feminist philosophers Diana Meyers and Marilyn Friedman support a value-neutral position, suggesting that autonomy is determined by the circumstances of the *process* through which a subject finds herself in an oppressed situation (or not), more than by the sole conditions of her situation (see for example Friedman 2014 and Meyers 2014).

¹⁸ Focusing on the Piety movement in Egypt, Saba Mahmood (2005) similarly exposes the arbitrariness of independence and self-determination as values underlying self-fulfilment.

The tendency to perceive Indian women in binary terms emerges perhaps most prominently in Indian films and TV series. Among the female characters, the housewifely, caring, chaste mother and the young woman, mostly devoted to one single man who at the end of the film becomes her husband, still largely pervade.¹⁹

The few exceptional women who are economically independent and in control of their sexuality are still often portrayed as ambiguous, predominantly negative characters. Such is the case of Silk Smitha in *The Dirty Picture* (2011), who is, ultimately, destroyed by her own sexuality; the film seems to suggest that a woman who has access to, and independent control over, her sexuality is not legitimate and will, eventually, succumb.

A subtler yet similar message comes from *Inkaar* (2013), where the main female character, ambitious, beautiful and hardworking, has to go through almost interminable ordeals to prove her capability as a good worker. Towards the end of the film, she almost resorts to her sexual appeal to advance her career. Again, the success, or even existence, of a woman outside the domestic sphere is intricately linked with her negatively charged sexuality and lust, reaffirming the connubial relationship between female sexuality, independence, and inauspiciousness.²⁰

While there seems to be a substantial presence of women on screen who, at first sight, appear modern and independent, at a deeper level of inspection it becomes evident that the *devī/dāsī* dichotomy still underlies the plot of many productions. The currently running TV series *Jamai Raja* (airing since 2014) presents a similar pattern, with the antagonist being a greedy businesswoman who chooses her career over a loving relationship with her daughter, and the heroine, her gentle daughter, who wishes to marry the caring male protagonist and showers the children of an orphanage she runs with motherly love. The ideal woman is still motherly, wifely and gentle, whereas the business-oriented, independent woman is the flawed character. Interestingly, in this production, it is the younger generation which advocates the traditional values more strongly.

While films and TV series almost exclusively portray the lives of the elite—just as the ideal national womanhood of colonial times was intricately linked to upper caste women—, despite these being unrepresentative of the entire country, it has to be remembered, as James Lindholm (1980) observes, that directors and producers need to respond to the expectations of the public, which today encompasses an increasingly large spectrum of the Indian society, especially as TVs and cinemas reach both urban and remote areas. It is thus difficult to establish whether the dichotomous image of Indian women is still primarily driven by the

¹⁹ See for instance the overtly misogynistic *Dabangg* (2010), wherein the hero conquers his future wife by insistently harassing her and displaying his aggressive masculinity, until she has no choice but to surrender to him; or *Namastey London* (2007), which ends with the heroine's marriage to a suitable Indian man, who reintroduces her to the traditional Indian lifestyle after her upbringing abroad.

²⁰ In contrast to the films above, *Queen* (2014) is one of the few movies that present a positive portrayal of a young woman who explores her independence.

values held by the upper classes or rather the result of a mutually reinforcing ideological exchange between the elite and the common classes.²¹

CONCLUSION

From a brief overview of some popular Indian films and TV series, it appears that the dichotomously constructed image of Indian womanhood, as suggested by anthropologists during the 1970s, remains a prominent feature in popular culture. This is in stark contrast with the images of Indian women that emerge from recent ethnographies on India.

Because the image of women in films and TV series on the one side, and the scholarly perception of Indian women on the other occupy to a great extent parallel, non-converging planes, it becomes necessary to ask how much the shift in anthropological thought, from a universal womanhood to a complex portrayal of women, is indeed representative of transformations in the identities of Indian women in everyday life.

Furthermore, is the shift in the perception of Indian women the outcome of an increased accuracy in their understanding, or could it be a product of changing theoretical paradigms in Western academia, ultimately reflecting the contemporary Western zeitgeist? It should not be forgotten that, despite its acceptance of multiple viewpoints, the postmodern framework is, essentially, the outcome of an intellectual crisis that arose and developed in the West,²² and continues to be rooted in Eurocentric preoccupations.²³

Finally, it is necessary to reflect upon the systemic power imbalance that underlies, and is perpetuated by, the interest in studying (and defining) Indian women's identities that emerged from the 1970s onwards, despite fundamental changes in the nature of their portrayals: Western scholars perpetually reaffirm Indian women's marginality, as they identify them as the 'other' to the scholar's 'self', the 'object' to the observing 'subject', the 'exotic' to the Western 'default'. Have Indian women become 'second women' to Western women, as the latter used to be the 'second sex' to men?²⁴

²¹ Also in everyday life, the image of the pure *devī* appears to still occupy a prominent position. Despite having mobilised innumerable protests for women's rights, the infamous Delhi rape case of December 2012 has yet again brought to the fore the idea of women being the repositories of, and responsible for, society's dignity and wellbeing. Influential public figures proclaimed that the rape occurred because the victim failed to pray ardently enough or to call her molesters "brothers" (Gye and Hills 2013; Nelson 2013). The young woman had been ascribed an almighty *śakti*, which could have stopped even the force of five criminals (and ultimately murderers), if only she had been a pious, pure, auspicious wife.

²² Non-Western scholars, having often been trained in the West, frequently also advocate a postmodern approach, contributing to the illusion of its ubiquitous prevalence.

²³ The preference for relativity and deconstructionism, which has become a significant leitmotif of Western existence, is to a large extent not applicable to the Indian context.

²⁴ Here, I allude to Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1988 [1949]).

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THE MEANING OF *ADABU* AND *ADHABU* FOR THE 'CHILD PROTECTION' DISCOURSE IN ZANZIBAR

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the relevance of the concepts of *adabu* (manners/discipline) and *adhabu* (punishment/chastisement) in the discourse concerning child protection in Zanzibar. It builds on data gained during 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Zanzibar Town between January 2014 to July 2015, which explored children's and teachers' ideas around personhood, protection and punishment in primary and Qur'anic schools partially involved in (inter)national 'Positive Discipline' (*adabu mbadala*) programmes. Recent efforts by international NGOs in cooperation with the Zanzibari government to forbid corporal punishment in schools are repeatedly rejected by students and teachers, as universalised child protection approaches fail to pay adequate attention to the socio-cultural and religious meanings of child disciplining practices. I argue that the notions of *adabu* and *adhabu* are central to understanding children's and teachers' attitudes towards seemingly protective interventions in Zanzibari schools. This article offers an exploration of the meanings, (mis)translations and uses of the concepts within the child protection discourse. By illustrating how these interventions may translate locally as an interference with children's journey towards full social personhood (*utu*), a call emerges for a re-evaluation of globalised protection programmes. Taking Zanzibari children's and adults' perceptions as a point of departure, this article suggests the need for child protection policies and practices that move beyond universalised ideas of well-being and towards more meaningful approaches of protecting children in their everyday environments.

INTERLUDE: UNIT FOR 'ALTERNATIVE PUNISHMENT'

"*Kitengo cha Uhamasishaji wa Utumiaji wa Adhabu Mbadala Maskulini - Unit for Alternative Forms of Discipline*" is printed in black and blue letters within a red frame on the sign outside the old Majestic Cinema in Stone Town's Vuga neighbourhood. It is a sunny morning in February 2014 and I'm standing outside one of Zanzibar's central child protection institutions staring at the sign and playing the Swahili and English terms back and forth in my head. Contemplating, I keep stumbling over the translation of *adhabu* (punishment) as "discipline." At the end of my interview with Khalid, the Unit's coordinator, I ask him why the Swahili name of the Unit calls for the promotion of *adhabu mbadala* – "alternative punishment", while the English translation right underneath it talks about "alternative discipline". Keeping in mind that Save the Children officially refers to their Positive Discipline programme as *adabu mbadala*, I ask him if this different terminology – the use of *adhabu* instead of *adabu* – was intended. "It's a mistake", Khalid responds, "but we haven't corrected it yet. When the name was agreed we couldn't decide whether to use *adabu* or *adhabu*, and only later realized that we should have used *adabu*, because that's what Save the Children staff use and because it's a more positive term for discipline than *adhabu*." When I follow up a year later the sign remains unchanged, advertising a government-led, donor-funded unit that promotes alternative forms of punishment in schools in Zanzibar.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the fine line between the concepts of *adabu* (manners/discipline) and *adhabu* (punishment/chastisement) in the context of children's everyday lives in schools in Stone Town. It considers specifically the tension between these two entangled ideas, and their impact with regard to child protection interventions that aim to improve child safety in Zanzibar. This article builds on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in four primary and two Qur'anic schools (*madrasas*) in Zanzibar Town. My key research interlocutors included 60 children between the ages of 9 and 16, teachers, parents, religious leaders (*sheikhs*) and institutions, community leaders (*shehas*), child protection policy makers (Save the Children, UNICEF), Zanzibar government officials, and university students. Through a combination of participatory visual research tools (Photovoice and Draw & Write) with ethnographic methods (participant observation, interviews), as well as Swahili discourse analysis and translation, I gained valuable insight into the minutiae of conflicting understandings regarding children's safety.

In exploring children's and teachers' perceptions of protection, personhood, and punishment, it emerged that the concepts of *adabu* and *adhabu* were of great importance to my research participants. Child protection programmes in Zanzibari schools currently focus on replacing the ordinary use of corporal punishment with what is referred to as 'alternative' or 'positive' forms of discipline (*adabu mbadala*). Yet, such efforts to decrease corporal punishment in schools have often been rejected and said to conflict with Zanzibari ideas of child-rearing that link disciplining practices to cultural and religious values. These values have been largely neglected by universalised approaches to improving child safety. Young people's manners are of critical importance in many cultural settings, so the question here is how this fundamental building block of personhood should be achieved – that is, through instilling discipline, or manners (*adabu*) or through punishment (*adhabu*)?

I argue that, despite their claim to protect, (inter)national child protection activities have the potential to interfere with children's achievement of full personhood (*utu*) as it is conceptualized in Zanzibar. This eventually leads people to contest institutionalised protection approaches, as they see their social realities and complexities being simplified and undermined. I claim that people do not reject child protection activities because they actually disagree with subjecting children to violence, but rather because the language employed to define and implement these processes suggests an alternative morality that cannot be simply adopted, as it emanates from and might even be considered as owned by the 'west'. In this article, I focus on this aspect of productive mistranslation of *adabu* and *adhabu* that allows for a better understanding of the nuances and contradictions in what is considered the child protection discourse in Zanzibar. I begin my analysis from a Zanzibari point of view, with an attempt to clarify the interrelation between the two concepts, in order to establish the broader moral and social universe in which chastisement takes place. Exploring the meanings of these ideas helps to improve protection interventions which have the aim of bettering children's lives, but practically often fail to do so.

CHILD PROTECTION AND CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN ZANZIBAR

Child protection policy aims to improve the quality of children's lives by restricting practices which are considered harmful or abusive (*udhalilishaji*) according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). 'Abuse' can be divided into four sub-categories: physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect¹ (UNICEF 2011, 7). Physical abuse includes hitting (*kupiga*) as a punishment (*adhabu*): it is the most common form of violence experienced by Zanzibari children on an everyday basis in schools (UNICEF, 2011). Child protection efforts in educational settings aim to decrease this ordinary use of corporal punishment as an accepted form of chastisement and instead try to establish alternative or positive forms of discipline (*adabu mbadala*). Child protection interventions on the islands are led by Save the Children and UNICEF who work in cooperation with the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar².

Corporal punishment remains legally sanctioned in Zanzibar and can be considered as equally socially accepted. The chastisement of children in public only seldom appears to cause visible distress to a child and adults do not usually intervene. Children can be seen playfully hitting each other in the streets, after school or *madrasa*, imitating their adult environment by smacking each other with smaller versions of the canes (*bakora*, *viboko*, *fimbo*) their teachers use to physically correct them in the classroom. The Education Act of 1988 includes special *Regulations for Corporal Punishment*, which grant the administration of caning by the headmaster only, for up to three strokes. The Zanzibar Children's Act of 2011 states that children should not be "subjected to violence, torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment", but at the same time allows parents to "discipline their children in such manner which shall not amount to injury to the child's physical and mental wellbeing." There is no legal prohibition of chastisement of children. Attempts to regulate it as expressed

¹ *Udhalilishaji wa kimwili, wa kihisia, wa kingono, na utelekezaji.*

² Child protection interventions in mainland Tanzania are coordinated separately and work with other programmes, in contrast to Zanzibar, where the socio-cultural makeup is different.

within the Children's Act remain vague suggestions that are left to individual interpretation, and do not overrule older clauses such as the Education Act's corporal punishment regulations. From a child rights perspective, caning is considered violence against children, but I suggest that violence as a category takes a more nuanced definition in Zanzibar and to some extent must be considered as "culturally normative" (Wells 2014, 263).

DISCLAIMER: A THREE-FOLD DISCURSIVE TERRAIN

Prior to exploring the ideas of *adabu* and *adhabu* in more depth, I lay out the discursive terrain in which the concepts are embedded across the Indian Ocean archipelago. Instead of one coherent discourse of child protection in Zanzibar, a symbiosis of three different discourses defines children's lives: a) *kisiasa/kiserikali* – used within the context of development and aid intervention and on the governmental level, b) *kidini* – used within the religious realm of Islam, and c) *kitamaduni/kienyeji* – within the cultural, or 'traditional' domain of the Swahili people. The *kidini* and *kitamaduni* discourses are often too interwoven to be considered separately, but as my interlocutors stressed the importance of both as independent systems of thought, I hereby follow their preference. This three-fold discursive sphere produces a multidimensionality of concepts such as *adabu* and *adhabu*, which is often inherently contradictory, but remains inevitable. While definitions of abuse include corporal punishment according to the *kisiasa/kiserikali* discourse, this is neither immediately so in the *kitamaduni/kienyeji* nor in the *kidini* sphere. Later, I illustrate this tension with examples from these theoretical realms.

ETYMOLOGIES OF ADABU AND ADHABU

"*Huna adabu!*" (You have no manners!) or "*Nitakutia adabu!*" (I will teach you manners!) are frequently overheard expressions in parent-child interactions in Zanzibar. Derived from the Arabic term *adāb* أدب (customary practice, or habit),³ the Swahili term *adabu* (manners/good behaviour), particularly in the context of Islam, refers to good manners or courtesy, morals (*maadili*), discipline (*nidhamu*), respect (*heshima*), and humaneness (*utu*). Interestingly, in early Islam, the verb *addaba* was used to indicate punishment (Stepanjanc 2007, 247). There are various types of *adabu*: manners for eating, praying, speaking, greeting, entering a house, helping the elderly, etc.⁴

Children's photographic depictions of *adabu* show, for example, children greeting each other and older people, carrying things for an elder person, or acts of cleaning. One child's explanation, on the back of their drawing of a child and an adult, reads that having manners (*kuwa na adabu*) is "when you are sent somewhere by an older person to get it for them" (girl, 12), i.e. to the shop.⁵ Another photo shows a girl and a boy taller than her shaking each other's hands with the young photographer's explanation reading "the child has to greet the

³ See *Oxford Islamic Studies Online* http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e1008?_hi=1&_pos=2

⁴ *Adabu ya kula [na mkono wa kulia], adabu ya kusali, adabu ya kusema, adabu ya kuamkia, kupiga hodi, kusaidia wazee na kadhalika.*

⁵ *Mtoto au mdogo anapotumwa na makubwa wake anapaswa kumtumikia. Mtoto anaweza kutumwa dukani, au popote pale.*

one that is older than him, she has good manners. You have to love the child and the child has to love you. It is not good to hit the child all the time as the child will not respect you and will not have good manners and will not love you”⁶ (girl, 14). A manual for good behaviour by the East African Literature Bureau (1962) states: “There is nothing else that makes the child lovable like good behaviour/discipline. It is our responsibility to teach this to our children, so as to build and form them for their future life. Manners/discipline are to be taught to a child, so they will have good behaviour in the future” (ibid: 1, my translation).⁷

Adabu is also part of the Islamic concept of *akhlaq* (ethics), which in singular form, *khulq*, means character, nature, or disposition. In Swahili, it is often translated as *tabia* (character, behaviour). A Sheikh told me, while *akhlaq* is “the behaviour of the whole society” (*tabia ya kijamii*), *adabu* is the “behaviour of each individual person” (*tabia ya kila mtu mwenyewe*). Therefore, *adabu* is a concept of morality and manners so fundamental to existence, that a single translated term would be too restrictive in encompassing its full meaning. In this regard, the notion of good manners can also be understood as an embodied practice consisting, to a large extent, of the physical display of respect towards others.

While *adabu* as a category describes a concept or a state of being (having *adabu*), *adhabu* is the tool to establish and reinforce it. *Adhabu*, Swahili for punishment, penalty, chastisement or correction, is derived from the Arabic *adhāb* عذاب (punishment) and in an Islamic context refers to God’s anger and torment upon mankind for disobedience⁸ (*mateso anayopewa kiumbe, mateso ya Mwenyezi Mungu*) (BAKIZA, 2010). The Guide for Alternative Discipline⁹ by the Zanzibari government and Save the Children explains that “punishment [*adhabu*] is an action done to a person when they break the law or for ethically unacceptable behaviour. Discipline [*adabu*] is the action of teaching a person to obey the law or moral values in both the short- and long-term”¹⁰ (25, my translation).

Children’s visual portrayals of *adhabu* included, amongst many others, a drawing with the title, “A child is being punished” (*mtoto anapewa adhabu*) that shows a boy being hit with a stick by a woman, and a man approaching the two with his hand raised high in the air. An explanation was added to the picture saying, “a child has the right to be protected against abuse like being hit”¹¹ (girl, 12). Various photographs show children being caned: a boy being hit with a stick by his teacher in the *madrassa*, a father caning his daughter outside their house, an older boy hitting his younger brother with an upturned broom in their living room. One boy (14) presented a photograph showing a student being hit with a stick by another student with the caption: “this picture shows that a student is being punished by being hit”¹².

⁶ *Mtoto anamsalimia mkubwa wake hii ndio adabu lazima umpende mtoto naze akupende ikiwa unampiga kila wakati hatokuheshimu na atakuwa hana adabu na weve hakupendi labda.*

⁷ *Hakuna jambo jingine linalovuta ili mtoto apendwe kama adabu njema. Ni wajibu wetu kuwafundisha watoto wetu hivi ili kuwajenga kwa maisha ya mbele. Adabu ni mafunzo ya kupewa mtoto, ili awe na adabu nzuri wakati wa baadaye.*

⁸ عذاب القبر *Adhāb al-Qabr* – the Punishment of the Grave, as mentioned in the Hadith.

⁹ *Muongozo wa Mafunzo ya Adabu Mbadala na Kumkinga Mtoto*

¹⁰ *Adhabu ni kitendo ambayo anapewa mtu kwa kuvunja sharia au kwa kufanya maadili yasiyokubalika. (...) Adabu ni kitendo cha kuelimisha kumfunza mtu kutii sharia au maadili ya kitabia kwa muda mfupi au mrefu.*

¹¹ *Mtoto ana haki ya kulindwa dhidi ya udhalilishaji kama ile kupigwa.*

¹² *Picha hii inaonesha kuwa mwanafunzi anapewa adhabu ya kupigwa.*

In Zanzibar the ideas of *adabu* and *adhabu* – manners/discipline and punishment/chastisement – are inevitably interwoven. Even though they are distinct concepts, they are largely interdependent. If a child lacks and therefore exhibits a lack of *adabu*, for example through disobedience or bad behaviour, there is a need for being corrected (*kurekebisha*) through punishment (*adhabu*). One of my interlocutors explained to me that the basic connotation of *adabu* is positive (*chanya*) as “it puts the child in a state of safety/a state of following instructions”,¹³ while the connotation of *adhabu* is negative (*hasi*) for “it puts the child into a state of danger”.¹⁴ Hence, on the one hand, we are talking about refinement and humaneness (*adabu*), and on the other hand about pain and affliction (*adhabu*) – two ideas that seem opposing, but in everyday child-rearing practice, operate side by side.

DISCURSIVE DISSONANCE

Having offered some insight into the diverse meanings attributed to *adabu* and *adhabu* in Zanzibar, I now take a closer look at where these ideas intersect and collide. There is discursive dissonance when considering that *kutia adabu* can be translated as both ‘to punish’ or ‘to teach good manners’, while *kuadhibu*, from *adhabu*, can be translated to mean ‘to punish’, as well as ‘to correct, chastise, persecute, torment’ (TUKI 2001, 2). Caning can be both translated as *adabu* or *adhabu ya bakora* – the discipline or the punishment of the cane. We see *adabu* as interchangeable with *adhabu*, despite their inherent contrast in positive and negative connotations. Further, and despite CRC-based attempts to eliminate corporal punishment, according to one hadith¹⁵ (Sahih by al-Albani in *al-Irwa’*, 247), parents are advised to “instruct our children to pray from the age of seven, and beat them if they neglect their prayers from the age of ten”¹⁶ (Mswagala 2014, 30). Furthermore, with regard to correcting a child upon making a mistake (*jinsi ya kumrekebisha mtoto anapokosea*) it states that, “the parent should not immediately beat the child, but instead if the child has made a mistake, first explain to them gently,”¹⁷ yet, it follows, “if the child is resistant/shows ‘chronic’ behaviour” (*kama huyo mtoto atakuwa sugu*) and “all these ways do not work/are not sufficient, then the parent shall use the stick to hit like the teacher”¹⁸ (ibid, 28). According to another hadith the Prophet (saw) the instruction is to, “discipline him/her [the child] but do not punish” (*umtie adabu usimadhibu*) alongside other instructions like “do not hit in anger”, “do not hit more than three strokes”, “do not raise your arm when hitting”, and “do not hit with a stick bigger than a tooth brush”. Nevertheless, teachers seldom adhere to these instructions for the administration of corporal punishment. Another research participant tells me that “a house that has a stick (*bakora*) hanging is merciful,”¹⁹ and even just to place a stick as a sign of warning (*kuiweka tu kama alat au onyo*) for the children is a recommended action

¹³ *Inamweka mtoto katika hali ya usalama/hali ya kufuata maelekezo.*

¹⁴ *Inamweka mtoto katika hali ya hatari.*

¹⁵ The *hadith* include the collected traditions of the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (saw).

¹⁶ *Waanrishiwa watoto wetu kuswali wakiva na umri wa miaka saba, na wapigani wakizembea kuswali wakiva na umri wa miaka kumi.*

¹⁷ *Mzazi asianze kupiga kwanza, bali mtoto anapokosea amweleze hilo kosa lake kwa upole.*

¹⁸ *Njia zote hizo hazikufaa ndipo atapotumia kiboko kumpiga kama mwalimu.*

¹⁹ *Nyumba yenye kuninginia bakora imerehemewa.*

to ensure discipline in regular prayers and religious teachings. This religious instruction is often taken literally and commonly referred to as a justification for *adhabu* – but may also, as another Sheikh told me, be considered a misinterpretation of *adabu*.

Students and teachers argue equally that alternative forms of discipline – *adabu mbadala* – are not sufficient to correct a child, as they do not affect the child directly, but often even rather extend the 'punishment' to the parent, if, for example, a financial compensation is demanded as a substitute for physical chastisement. One research participant complained to me, "if a child has to bring a broom as a form of alternative discipline, the child's mistake extends and the punishment will go back to the parent,"²⁰ and added "stroke them once or twice and the punishment could already be finished."²¹ Others told me that, "discipline without pain does not help the child, it has no effect."²² The overwhelming majority of my research participants supported the necessity of *both* corporal punishment and alternative forms of discipline in schools – *adhabu* and *adabu mbadala* together – but barely anyone considered *adabu mbadala* a sufficient replacement for *adhabu*, as child protection programmes had intended. Therefore, the rejection of such a full substitution only becomes meaningful when considered alongside the deeper meanings of *adabu* and *adhabu*, and equally in relation to the concept of personhood.

ADABU AND ADHABU AS MAKERS OF PERSONHOOD

Adhabu builds and establishes *adabu* and thereby assures *tabia/akhlaq* which is essential to the acquisition of social personhood (*utu*). Discipline is achieved through punishment, and personhood through discipline. In other words, in Zanzibar, personhood (*utu*), or "how human beings ought to behave" (Kresse 2007, 139), is dependent on having manners/discipline (*adabu*), which in case of absence is (re-)established through punishment (*adhabu*). Concepts of personhood are central to the creation of a human being, or making a child into a full social person. A child cannot yet possess *utu*. It is semantically impossible to express that a child does not have *utu* (*mtoto hana utu*). Such a remark, on the other hand, can be directed at an adult (*mtu hana utu*) to indicate that their behaviour is poor and hence considered not humane. Conversely, it is common to say that a child does not have manners/discipline (*mtoto hana adabu*) but unlikely that anyone would use this expression to comment on an adult's behaviour.

Not having *utu* can be considered as losing "the right to be morally respected by others" (Kresse 2007, 150). Children are therefore not considered full people through this differentiation, as their personhood – their *utu* – is still in the process of being established/created through *adabu*.²³ As one of my interlocutors told me, "we are giving the child their right to build their humanity/morality/personality."²⁴ An adult, consequently,

²⁰ *Ikiwa mtoto analazimishwa kuleta fagio kwa ajili ya adabu mbadala, kosa inaextend na adabu itarudi kwa mzazi.*

²¹ *Tumia bakora moja mbili na adhabu ishamaliza.*

²² *Adabu bila maumivu haimsaidii mtoto, haina athari.*

²³ *Adabu zinatumika kujenga utu/ubinadamu.*

²⁴ *Tunampa haki yake ya kumjengea utu wake.*

can be considered a full social person, but only by possessing and visibly enacting *utu*, illustrated by the proverb *asiyejua utu si mtu*, which literally translates as 'a person who does not know how to be humane is not human'. Since full personhood/humaneness can only be achieved in adulthood, it follows that children in Zanzibar must be considered as people in the making – as both 'beings' and 'becomings'.

It is here that I see a direct association with the concepts of *adabu* and *adhabu*. I suggest that in Zanzibar, alongside other factors, children are cultivated or 'made' into social people through the application of *adabu* and *adhabu*. Children are considered to be in need of formation – through *adabu* and *adhabu* – to achieve full social personhood and become good adults. If *utu* depends on *adabu*, a child that lacks *adabu* cannot build or achieve *utu*. Hence, it becomes necessary to instate *adabu* through *adhabu* to assure *utu*. Otherwise, the interference of establishing a child's manners would also imply an interference with the entrenchment of a child's personhood. This, I argue, is precisely what happens when child protection programmes promote the use of *adabu mbadala* as a substitution for *adhabu*, and find themselves rejected in the Zanzibar context. Hence, I argue that the social acceptance of corporal punishment, and its perception as necessary, together with the rejection of programmes attempting to replace it with alternative forms of discipline, are partially grounded in the Zanzibari conceptualization of personhood. It therefore becomes necessary to acknowledge that, at the local level, global protection programmes may be perceived as interfering with children's achievement of full social personhood (*utu*).

This supports the need for child protection policy and practice that moves beyond universalised ideas of wellbeing and towards more meaningful approaches of protecting children in their everyday environments taking into account vernacular concepts of being-in-the-world. In Zanzibar, contrary to child protection policy makers' view of *adhabu* as punishment, the concept itself is in fact considered a tool for protecting children, as it will ensure that they will become good people. Or, as one of my interlocutors explained, "society raises a child to be on the right path. So, if a child goes astray, manners, discipline/punishment is used to bring them back on track, so they will again have humanity. If we don't build their humanity (through the use of discipline) we are depriving them their rights."²⁵ The link between the child's perceived 'right' to be raised properly and the adult's responsibility to ensure this in a protective manner, if necessary through the application of discipline, mirrors the complexity inherent in the process of becoming a social person in Zanzibar's society.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have explored the ways in which the concept of child protection in Zanzibar is influenced by the ideas of discipline (*adabu*), chastisement (*adhabu*) and personhood (*utu*). Children's and adults' perceptions of the notions of protection, personhood and punishment have served as the foundation of this exploration. This exploration has highlighted the frequent rejection of the development approach that requires the adaptation of social norms,

²⁵ *Jamii inamlea mtoto ili aishi katika njia sahihi. Hivyo akitoka katika ile njia sahihi adabu/adhabu inatumika kumrejsha katika ile njia sahihi ili awe tena na utu/ubinadamu. Ikiwa hatujenga utu/ubinadamu wake (kwa utumiaji wa adabu) tutamkosesha haki yake.*

while considering the fluidity between concepts and their meanings connected to child protection. Recognizing the interchangeability of *adabu* and *adhabu*, I suggest that there actually is *adabu* within *adhabu*. None of my research participants agreed that it was possible to fully replace the notion of *adhabu* with *adabu*, for the notion of correction, or punishment, was not sufficiently reflected in the latter. This is much like in magic where there are no substitutes or alternatives²⁶ for the essential ingredients that need to be used as the idea itself is in the thing. The challenge became to create such an essence in a living world, in Zanzibar, and through the means of policy. Central to this undertaking was achieving this without eventually suggesting the substitution of *adabu* – a complex concept of manners and morality – and in that sense the disposal of Zanzibari modes of child rearing, personhood and ethics.

Attempts to eradicate violence against children must do so in a way that does not run contrary to essential tenets of Zanzibari society. Programmes against corporal punishment may very well continue to be rejected in light of the enduring misconception that they somehow promote the opposite of protection, which consequently jeopardises the achievement of personhood. It remains a challenge to find ways of linking or bringing into some kind of symbiosis Zanzibari-Swahili vernacular modes of thinking about child protection and punishment (*kidini* and *kitamaduni/kienyeji*) and international and political (*kisiasa/kiserikali*) objectives. Returning to the confusion over the name of the *Unit for Alternative Punishment* it has become obvious that the choice of words – *adhabu* instead of *adabu* – simply indicated the repackaging of an old option into a new model.

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²⁶ While no one I spoke to would accept child protection activities as a wholesale replacement of existing practices, many of my interlocutors were in favour of limiting the use of corporal punishment. A point that was repeated by several of my research participants was that the discussion about child protection in schools should not focus on whether adults continue to use corporal punishment as a means of discipline, but rather about how it is being done. Simply forbidding the use of corporal punishment was overwhelmingly considered unthinkable, as there were no widely accepted valid alternatives which would carry the same meaning and/or have the same effect. Therefore, continuing to use corporal punishment but regulating it more strictly was often suggested as the only acceptable option for change.

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FOODWAYS AND EMPIRE IN 19TH CENTURY ASANTE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the foodways of the Gold Coast and Ghana in the nineteenth century. Foodways are defined as the cultural, social and economic practices relating to the production and consumption of food. Everything about eating including what we consume, how we acquire it, who prepares it and who's at the table – is a form of communication. The methodological approach of this paper compares the firsthand accounts of two state dinners for Thomas Edward Bowdich, English Envoy in 1817 to Osei Bonsu, and Thomas Birch Freeman, Methodist missionary to Kwaku Dua I, in 1838. This paper is part of a larger project meant to establish the requisite historical basis for the foodways and cultural changes in the Gold Coast and in what would later become Ghana in 1957. The main questions to be addressed in this paper include the following: How did foodways shape inter and intra-regional cultural adaptations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? What is the history of the ritual significance of food in these regions and how does it relate to structures of power and state building? What do food production, transport, consumption, preparation, and food technology reveal about migration and about identity in Ghana? Using foodways as an approach to this topic will fill a gap in the coverage of the neglected nineteenth century by utilizing overlooked primary sources and interrogating known primary sources in a different way. Sources used include accounts of merchants, ethnographies, and colonial and missionary archives.

INTRODUCTION

When a chief has plenty of milk, then all people drink of him.

(Asante proverb)

The Asante or Ashanti are a nation and an ethnic group that inhabit the central forest zone of what is now Ghana. The growth of their empire beginning in the 17th century was largely achieved through the adoption of new starches that were introduced via the transatlantic slave trade. These starches, which included maize, plantain and cassava, prompted a massive internal migration of labour from the northern regions. This, in turn, allowed for the clearing of land and the production of a surplus for an army that began its military expansion to the south, north, and east from approximately 1700 to 1750. Europeans had a longstanding trade presence on the coast. The Dutch and Danes built forts on the coast from as early as 1593, to trade with populations on the coast as well as those inhabiting the forested interior for items such as gold, ivory, and then slaves.

Transition away from the slave trade began in earnest in 1807 with the British abolishment and successive enforcement of the ban on the trade. Subsequently, populations on the coast and the Asante searched for a more secure trade relationship with Europeans in the coastal forts. Asante problems with breakaway republics seeking independence—the Gonja in the north for example—triggered widespread conflicts, which disrupted trade. Thus, in the early 19th century, Europeans changed their focus from the slave trade to exploring ways in which to trade directly with the northern and forested regions. They also had a vested interest in creating new customers for manufactured goods. This new mandate caused Europeans to look for residencies in Kumasi to establish direct trade contracts with the Asante, and to resolve issues of sovereignty on the Gold Coast that were the result of the internal power struggles and subsequent warfare. Between May 1816 and March 1820, the paramount chief of the Asante, Osei Tutu Kwame Asibey Bonsu, or Osei Bonsu (r.1800-24), received no less than nine representatives of the British and Dutch trading companies based respectively at the Cape Coast and Elmina forts, at his capital Kumasi.¹ These diplomatic missions were followed by missionary and other visitors in subsequent decades, all of which resulted in valuable accounts of interactions with the Asante. The resultant documented diplomatic relationships and protocols followed an etiquette which will be analysed in the following sections.

The topic of this paper concerns the interface between Europeans and their Asante hosts in the context of commensality and the exchange of food. When the Asante sat with their European visitors over a meal, more than words were being communicated. The state dinners of the Asante had at times the ceremonial splendour and protocol of formal dinners, while at others, the quiet power of a more intimate meeting. Both approaches were intended to impact political issues and to communicate messages of symbolic kinship and/or to define relationships of superiority and inferiority. As an ubiquitous tool in the art of Asante statecraft, the symbolic use of food was mobilised as a diplomatic tool whose impact can be decoded and analysed.²

¹ Fiona Sheales, "Sights/Sites of Spectacle: Anglo/Asante Appropriations, Diplomacy and Displays of Power 1816-1820" (doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2011), 3 <https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/48152/>.

² Linda Morgan, "Diplomatic Gastronomy: Style and Power at the Table." *Food and Foodways* 20, no. 2 (2012): 146.

This work explores the multifarious nature of signs and symbols associated with diplomatic gastronomy by examining three state dinners and several diplomatic residencies, hosted by two Asante kings in the capital of Kumasi during the 19th century. The first section maps the underpinning beliefs surrounding the food culture of the Asante, including the history of food in folklore and ritual. This same section discusses the food security issues Europeans faced in the coastal zone, to provide context for their diplomatic encounter with the Asante in the forest zone. Lastly, specific encounters taken from primary sources will show how the Asante mobilised food as a diplomatic tool through setting, choice of meal, and seating, by carrying out a comparison with another contemporary African empire: Ethiopia.

MISSIONS TO KUMASI: DIPLOMATIC FOOD GIFTING, EXCHANGE, AND DEPRIVATION

Gift-giving may seem a voluntary, innocent, and non-partisan act when, in fact, it comes laden with expectations and is often based upon economic self-interest. Hierarchy is established by means of gifts, for to give something is to show one's superiority. Conversely, to accept gifts without reciprocation or repayment is tantamount to subordination in a relationship. Marcel Mauss' work on gift economies and comparative ethnology is the foundation for social theories of reciprocity and gift exchange. His original work entitled "An essay on the gift: the form and reason of exchange in archaic societies" was originally published in *L'Année Sociologique* in 1925. Mauss' essay analyses the economic practices of societies that are centred on reciprocal exchange and shows that early exchange systems centre around the obligations to give, to receive, and, most importantly, to reciprocate. This reciprocation circulates wealth and goods as well as building solidarity among humans. The Asante were using this economic principle to manipulate their relationships with their neighbours, defining their connection with food gifts that Europeans would find difficult to repay. This, in turn, created an affiliation whereby the Europeans were considered clients, while the Asante positioned themselves as magister.

Between May 1816 and March 1820, Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame (a.k.a. Osei Bonsu, r.1800-24) received no less than nine representatives of the British and Dutch trading companies based respectively at the Cape Coast and Elmina forts, at his capital, Kumasi.³ Later in the 1830s, Kumasi received various missionary representatives, all with the aim of furthering European objectives in the region. This section tells the story of the Asante response to these diplomatic missions with emphasis on foodways. At this time, European relations with the Asante were dictated first by the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, but also by a sequence of Asante military invasions of the Gold Coast in 1806, 1811 and 1816. The Asante's partial northern absorption of the Fante in 1816 and their subsequent demands for rents (notes) that were formerly paid to the Fante, along with the shift in trade priorities by European traders, marked the beginning of the transition to legitimate trade.⁴

³ Sheales, "Sights/Sites of Spectacle", 3.

⁴ Edmund Collins, "The Panic Element in Nineteenth-Century British Relations with Ashanti", *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 5, no. 2 (1962): 79.

Inhabitants of the Gold Coast soon found that the cessation of the slave trade up-ended the local economy. Relations with the towns surrounding the forts became volatile and it was increasingly difficult to maintain order. Robberies were becoming more commonplace. Governor Meredith of Winneba was killed in 1812 over abolition-related discontent. European powers sought stability by signing a trade treaty with Asante for goods, such as palm oil, to forestall the resumption of the slave trade with other nations like the French. In 1815, the Dutch Governor Daendels cooperated with the British in a three-pronged strategy of pacification that included education, Christianity, and spying on the interior.⁵ Daendels had large scale plans:

Namely, to open from the West African coast ways of communication with the powerful empires of Bornou and Congo, and with the opulent cities of Timboctou and Housa; to reveal the secrets of the source and the mouth of the Niger, and to employ the resulting knowledge in bringing about the increase of commerce, and taking it away from the caravans of Tripoli, Mensurata, and others, to the extent of more than 100 million new customers.⁶

With this stated objective, Daendels surprised the English by deploying Willem Huydecoper to Kumasi to begin negotiations for a treaty with the Asante. This section will deal primarily with the experiences of English envoy Thomas Edward Bowdich in 1817, Methodist missionary Thomas Birch Freeman in 1839 and their encounters with Asante diplomacy, especially with regards to food and its role in the expression of Asante power and style.

BOWDICH

Bowditch's account of his party's official reception in Kumasi in 1817 has long been used by scholars to make observations about Asante culture and customs. The British envoy's goal was to create a treaty and to establish a road to the coast that would allow the Asante to bypass the Fante and trade directly with the English.⁷ Fiona Sheales' historical ethnographical approach uses material history to examine displays of diplomacy in the Anglo-Asante relationship. She notes that during official state receptions, envoys were subjected to incapacitating sensory manipulation: "The effects of sensory over-stimulation and deprivation were also accentuated through the withholding of food and, more importantly fluids in temperatures that probably exceeded 90 c."⁸ The absence of offers of food and water at official receptions that exceeded five hours in length suggests a conscious effort at manipulating envoys and impressing upon them their powerlessness in Kumasi.

The official state dinner on Monday 25th August was announced at 2 o'clock. Bowdich stated, "we were taught to prepare for a surprise, but it was exceeded." This was after the

⁵ Collins, "The Panic Element," 99.

⁶ H. W. Daendels, "Letter from Governor H. W. Daendels to Simon Cock, Secretary to the African Committee" (dated Amsterdam, 14 August 1815), *Journal and correspondence of General H. W. Daendels, Governor-General of the Netherlands settlements on the coast of Guinea* (Balme Library, University of Ghana, Legon, 1964).

⁷ Collins, "The Panic Element," 99.

⁸ Sheales, "Sights/Sites of Spectacle", 93.

day started with a sumptuous breakfast in a building purpose-built for this meal. Expertly cooked soups, stews, plantains, and rice were served at breakfast, along with wine and fruit. Bowdich noted that the servants and messengers were “distinctly provided for.”

The dinner was held in the king’s garden, described to be about the size of one of London’s larger squares. Four large scarlet state umbrellas protected the king’s elevated feast table, giving the occasion a feeling of solemnity and pomp. The Asantehene did not sit with his guests, but a short distance away with his captains, although he visited his guests frequently, conversing and enjoying their ribald toasts. Although he did accord the guests the honour of being on the elevated feast table, seating himself apart indicates that the king wanted a level of separation and formality. Not only were their eyes feasting on sumptuous roast pig, duck, and other fowl, English pease pudding, port, Madeira, and Dutch cordials, in addition, the king himself presented them with gifts of gold, sheep, and a hog before they were even seated. Tables were elevated and laden with silver-gilt plates containing European and local food for the guests. The native food such as soups, fruits, dessert, and spirits were served on either side of the elevated central table, on the ground or on low tables. This picture of overflowing abundance was designed to impress, and it succeeded. Bowdich related: “We never saw a dinner more handsomely served, and never ate a better. On expressing our relish the King sent for his cooks, and gave them 10 ackies.”⁹ He retired after the feast to allow his servants to clear the table, and then returned to send them home with the leavings of the feast. The entire dinner lasted approximately three hours, but included no entertainment. After dinner, the King gifted the guests’ servants the remainder of the wine and cordials, along with the tablecloths and napkins, and sent them all home with cold pork and fowl for their supper. Although generously providing for the requirements of his guests and their servants, the king did not spend much time getting to know this party on a personal level. The purpose of the abundant feast for the envoys and their retainers was to demonstrate the Asantehene’s social position in relation to the English.

FREEMAN

By the time English Wesleyan Methodist missionary Thomas Birch Freeman undertook his first mission to Kumasi in 1839, the political climate had changed somewhat. Freeman was born in Hampshire in 1809 to a British mother and an African freed slave. Fervent about his faith, he lost his post as head gardener on a Suffolk estate due to his Methodist activism.¹⁰ The changed political reality Freeman encountered was due in part to the first Asante military defeat, which took place at Katamanso on the Accra plains on 7th August 1826. In contrast to Osei Tutu Kwame, Asantehene Kwaku Dua I (1836-1867) used a different approach with his guests. Per Freeman’s account of his first visit, the official reception only lasted an hour and a half, and he was refreshed: “While I was sitting to receive the compliments of some of the first chiefs who passed, His Majesty made me a present of some

⁹ Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, 130.

¹⁰ Boston University, “Freeman, Thomas Birch (1809-1890): British Methodist missionary to West Africa,” Boston University School of Theology, History of Missiology, <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/e-f/freeman-thomas-birch-1809-1890/> (accessed 3 March 2016).

palm wine.”¹¹ Indeed, while en route from the Cape Coast fort to Kumasi, stopping at Korinchi, Freeman received a gift of gold from the king via messenger, ostensibly for his own and his retinue’s upkeep on the journey.¹²

Much like Huydecoper’s experience, Freeman’s encounter included the receipt of gifts on days that were of significance to him as someone accustomed to European holidays. Huydecoper received gifts on New Year’s Day and Freeman on Christmas Day:

At two, the King sent us a present, consisting of two fat sheep; one for the Princes, and the other for Mr. Brooking and myself. Apoko stated that His Majesty had heard that this was Christmas-day, and that he sent the sheep by way of congratulations.¹³

He followed up this gift later that day with palm wine. Freeman expressed the hope that one day thousands of Asante would celebrate this annual festival too. By ensuring he was kept abreast of English custom, the Asantehene ingratiated himself through a gift of food for Freeman’s party to enjoy during their celebrations.

At seven in the morning on 28th December, Freeman and his party received an invitation to a state dinner. Unusually, the king requested that Freeman loan him his cook to assist in the dinner preparations, which commenced at 2:45 pm. The reason for this request was to become clear later in the day. Freeman’s dinner included kidney beans “well served up in the European style”, roast fowl, roast mutton and fish. In a reversal of the dinner Bowdich was witness to, the King ate with his guests. The Asantehene’s table was lower to the ground and bedecked with Portuguese silverware. Freeman was placed at the head of the high table, flanked by the repatriated nephews of the Asantehene, William Quantamissah and John Ansah. (Part of Freeman’s mission, apart from sharing the gospel, was to escort the two nephews—who had been receiving an education in England—back home.) The king sat at the head of the lower tables, facing Freeman. This was a singular honour.

The tables were in a spacious yard measuring 80 by 45 feet, shaded by several large state umbrellas. This sounds similar to the space in which Bowdich was entertained. Instead of being presented with gifts as Bowdich’s party was, Freeman requested they give thanks before they sat down to dinner, a request to which the Asantehene happily acquiesced. The Asantehene was attended by linguists, the heir apparent, and another prince, all of whom sat near the table. The captains from the king’s own house sat behind the princes. Most remarkable was the band at the far end of the yard playing familiar music with European instruments. Asking a question that he well knew the answer to, the Asantehene inquired whether musical accompaniment was a feature of European dining.

When a roasted sheep was placed before him during the main course of the feast, the Asantehene asked another question of Freeman’s party, enquiring whether sheep were indeed roasted whole in Britain. Subsequently, the Asantehene cut the sheep with the assistance of his servants and doled it out to his guests. Indeed, this feast was unusual for the level of commensality taking place. Freeman had some soup and plum pudding prepared

¹¹ Thomas Birch Freeman, *Journal of Two Visits to the Kingdom of Ashanti, in Western Africa* (London: J. Mason, 1843), 48.

¹²Ibid., 22.

¹³ Freeman, *Journal of Two Visits to the Kingdom of Ashanti*, 134.

from his own stores. (At this point, the request for Freeman's cook becomes clear, in that the host was keen to produce food customary to European feasts.) The Asantehene gladly tasted these foods and doled them out to his entourage.¹⁴ After dinner, Freeman drank to the Asantehene's health, the auspicious return of the princes, and to the hope that the Asante and the English would become one in spirit.

The entertainment at this official dinner did not stop with European music, but continued with a tour of the "stone house" where the collection of the Asantehene's European (and other) treasures were contained. Built by Osei Tutu Kwame as an "edifice of accumulation", foreign and domestic objects (principally of gold) were stored here. Gold, the yardstick of wealth against which all other objects were measured, was prominently featured.¹⁵ After allowing the Asantehene to proceed, Freeman's party passed through a courtyard and an anteroom that was tastefully decorated with all manner of local and foreign manufactures, all adorned with gold or silver. No doubt, this display was intended to impress, as Freeman remarked, "The weight of pure barbaric gold which we saw, would probably be from eight hundred to one thousand ounces."¹⁶ After a tour and a return to the courtyard for a fruit course, the guests were sent home with the band as escort, playing European tunes for them all the way back to their lodgings.

Freeman later reflected on the extraordinary events of the day, marvelling that the king of Asante who holds the power to influence life and death with his smile or frown, sat at the table with Christian Englishmen. Indeed, the circumstances were extraordinary, especially when a comparison of commensality is made between the official dinner in Bowditch's account and that of the Freeman party. Commensality, and its transmission of symbolic meaning, defines relationships, status and symbolic kinship. In both instances, the choice of location, in the king's private courtyard in Kumasi—the centre of Asante power—, was emblematic of the status of both parties in relation to each other. The official dinner in honour of Freeman, despite, as it seems, being held in the same venue, came across as more intimate. Seating indicates the level of intimacy desired—socially intimate or distanced—to either facilitate conversation or to keep the protocol by rank.¹⁷ The layout of the table, with the Asantehene eating with his guests and in the presence of his family members, gives an indication of the more intimate and relaxed tone of the proceedings. At the official dinner attended by Bowditch, the two parties sat apart; a deliberate power play and an obstruction to conversation. At Freeman's dinner, the Asantehene's choice of food and entertainment were both the focus. The king was comfortable eliciting contributions from his guests as to the menu to ensure they felt welcomed and were satisfied with the manner of food preparation. The Asantehene cut meat for the main course with his own hand, signifying that he desired a closer connection with his guests, while simultaneously emphasising his status as host. Not to be overlooked are the two instances whereby the Asantehene tasted the English food he was offered. This offers up yet another theme of the "self" and "other", as well as the relationship between the two. To eat food produced by another person is to

¹⁴ Freeman, *Journal of Two Visits to the Kingdom of Ashanti*, 140.

¹⁵ T. C. McCaskie, "Accumulation, Wealth and Belief in Asante History: I. To the Close of the Nineteenth Century", *Africa* 53 (1983): 28–9.

¹⁶ Freeman, *Journal of Two Visits to the Kingdom of Ashanti*, 142.

¹⁷ Morgan, "Diplomatic Gastronomy", 146.

experience that person both physiologically and emotionally. Food contains the self and the feelings of its producer, and by demonstrating he was sharing his guests' food with them at the same table, this is indicative of a specific behaviour used as a political tool in the deliberate construction of social solidarity.¹⁸

ANALYSIS

Using the firsthand accounts from Bowdich, Freeman, and Winniett, it is possible to construct a normative Asante court food culture. It is also possible to consider the change in style between Osei Tutu Kwame Asiba Bonsu and Otumfuo Nana Kwaku Dua I in their dealings with their European neighbours from the coast. In each account, the Asantehene would leave after the banquet so that his servants could clear the tables. In the case of Freeman and Winniett, Kwaku Dua would retire to another area to receive his guests again in another part of the palace complex and thus continue the evening's entertainment. Both Bonsu and Dua took great care to ensure the servants of his guests were well fed, either at the time of the feast, or by sending food for the servants from the feast with his departing guests. At each banquet, the king's food was customarily served at a table lower to the ground, and the display of elaborate silverware was remarked upon by each guest. The Asantehene also took great care to dress the part, usually donning European military attire at each banquet.

On each occasion the king had an entourage, although its makeup did change from captains and officials with Osei Bonsu, to the inclusion of family members during and after the feast with Kwaku Dua. There was only one occasion in which the Asantehene sat at the table and ate with his guests. Kwaku Dua sat facing Freeman at the end of a long table. He tasted the foreign food offered and then gave it to his retainers. With Winniett, he sat directly across from his guest at the latter's table and consumed wine, but did not eat. The traditional arrangement of matrilineal Akan culture dictates that men usually ate alone.¹⁹ Eating separately to the guests can be considered part of the normative palace food culture. Therefore, the fact that Kwaku Dua sat with Freeman with his family members in attendance meant that this occasion was a singular honour designed to imitate European and/or Christian commensality customs of which he must have been aware. It could be argued however, that Kwaku Dua never actually ate any food, but simply tasted it and passed it on to his attendants:

On sending the soup round, I asked, whether the King would take any, to which he answered, "Yes;" and when it was placed before him, he tasted it, and then, according to Ashanti custom, gave the remainder to some of his attendants who were near him. Osai Kujoh also tasted it. While we were taking our portion, a bountiful supply of native soup was placed before the King, which he sent round to his Captains and people.²⁰

¹⁸ Anna Miegs, "Food as a Cultural Construction" in Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds. *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 103.

¹⁹ Gracia Clark, *Onions Are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 346.

²⁰ Freeman, *Journal of Two Visits to the Kingdom of Ashanti*, 140.

Kwaku Dua's approach to commensality was in marked contrast to Osei Bonsu's attempts to overwhelm his guests with conspicuous displays of giving before, during and after banquet at every level of participant from the cooks to the carriers. He kept his distance during dinner and after the banquet, avoiding the provision of escorts for his guests on their way back. Osei Bonsu continued this more aggressive approach on other occasions with Huydecoper, Bowdich, and Dupuis. Public gift-giving ceremonies broadcast his power with hours of lavish spectacle, draining his guests, Bowdich and Dupuis, by forcing them to sit through lengthy ceremonies. This could all be reflective of the political situation that existed in Osei Bonsu's council, whereby he was being pressured to adopt more militaristic policies. His support of Dutch Governor Daendels was not popular with his council who were convinced that Daendels was an enemy to the Asante. Pressure from his warlike council also leads us to understand why Osei Bonsu took the field against the rebellious seceding Gyaman state in 1817. Osei Bonsu also had to contend with an abortive coup attempt by several royal wives and princes, whose conspirators he had executed in 1819.²¹ His distant manner could be indicative of ambivalence and anxiety over the internal power struggle and lack of support he was experiencing, which in turn manifested itself in his diplomatic style.

Taking Freeman for a tour of the stone house and Winniett for a tour of the ladies' apartments demonstrated a level of trust on the part of Kwaku Dua, and perhaps a desire to communicate his wish for an increased level of familiarity, that contrasts sharply with Osei Bonsu's approach. He literally closed the distance between himself and his guests by sitting at the table facing them when they dined, attentively catering to their personal culinary tastes, and including his family in the feasts. Kwaku Dua shared his personal living space with his guests and ensured they had an escort after the banquet by providing the band in Freeman's case, or taking the time to escort his guests personally, as in Winniett's example. This new approach is reflective of the consolidation of peace interests on the council at this time due to good relations maintained with McLean's British administration. Ironically, Kwaku Dua ensured 34 years of peaceful reign by eliminating the ringleaders of a plot to depose him led by Gyaasewahene (Head of the Exchequer) Adu Dampite. During Freeman's visit in 1839, the *shaykh* of the Kumasi Muslims was being detained for his role in the plot to depose Kwaku Dua.²² Yet, his commitment to a peaceful administration is reflected in his approach to diplomacy.

Intraregional comparisons can also be made within the same century, which can help decipher the political theatre on display with respect to the Asante feasts, specifically via an appraisal of James McCann's description of Ethiopian Queen (late Empress) Taytu Bital's feast in 1887. Queen Taytu's feast had three objectives: to consecrate the new church, Entoto Maryam, to mark the political ascendancy of her and Menelik's new empire, and to reinforce political ties via a diverse menu that drew from each region.²³ Thus the meal had a ritual, political, and social context. The culture of cooking in Ethiopia was firmly placed in the woman's domain, which was controlled at its summit by the Empress, whose culturally diverse upbringing was reflected in her feast. Food sourced from different regions signalled

²¹ Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, 484-485.

²² *Ibid.*, 488-489.

²³ McCann, *Stirring the Pot*, 65.

their access to historical trade networks, served as a blueprint for a new elite hybrid cuisine and reinforced a new national identity that was becoming part of a centralised empire.

The official dinners recounted by Bowdich, Freeman, and Winniett offer up important differences and similarities to the then contemporary Ethiopia. Although cooking was in the woman's domain, the Asantehemaa (queen mother) who was considered the most powerful woman in their matrilineal society and responsible for the selection of the heir apparent, was not in fact at the apex of the culture of cooking. That dual political and ritual role belongs to the Asantehene and his *soodofoo* in their role as intercessors to their ancestors and gods. This is an important difference in social organisation that was observed in the official reception and during important events such as the Odwira. At the banquet in honour of Freeman, the Asantehene even carved the meat himself and served the food to Freeman's party and his own entourage.

What the Asantehene had in common with the Emperor and Empress of Ethiopia was access to food sourced from different regions. The Asantehene's gifting of bullocks sourced from the northern savannah, as opposed to the forest zone, was indicative of his access to, and absolute control of, trade in this region. Sheep were also sourced from the north and share the distinction of being an important ritual animal. The ability to gift and consume these animals with such regularity signified membership to the elite who dined regularly on meat, fowl and fish from the coast. Pork can be added to the list of meats sourced from the northern regions. As per Bowdich's account, most non-elites found it too expensive to slaughter animals regularly, relying instead upon a diet of starch and game. Eggs are another ritual food "forbidden by the fetish" to Asante, but freely gifted to European envoys.²⁴ Instead of laying out a blueprint for a new national cuisine and a new public political culture, this feasting was a symbol of the extent of the Asantehene's established empire and of the reach afforded to him by his vassals. Like the Ethiopian Queen, the Asantehene was serving his guests food sourced from different regions. This was his way of signalling access to historical trade networks, as well as, it could be argued, serving as a blueprint for a new elite hybrid cuisine in a powerful central empire.

As previously stated, like Queen Taytu, the Asantehene included food at his feast from different regions. Other than meats, the dried fish that Bowdich was served at his breakfast more than likely originated from the coast. The African rice he ate was the dominant cereal in the Volta River delta and in coastal Axim on the farthest western coast, grown along marshy river valleys. Historically, corn (maize) has been most prevalently cultivated on the coastal savannahs of the Gold Coast in the Fante-speaking region, as forest farmers like the Asante found that maize exhausted cleared land rather quickly, and was susceptible to the growth of deadly fungi when stored.²⁵ Before the 1500s, African yams were a staple carbohydrate in the forest zone where Kumasi lay, and remained so throughout the 19th century. Millet (along with sorghum) was a staple in the savannah areas north of the forest and the grassland along the southeast parts of the coast. In the 18th century, millet experienced serious competition from the cultivation of maize, which began over a long

²⁴ Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, 267.

²⁵ J. D. La Fleur, *Fusion Foodways of Africa's Gold Coast in the Atlantic Era* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 94-98.

period of experimentation as of the 16th century with the Fante who called it “overseas millet”.²⁶

Unlike the Ethiopian Queen, the Asantehene surprised his guests with his access to foreign food and style of presentation, including tablecloths, napkins, and silverware. Access to foreign taste is power, and the elaborately presented food and material culture from Europe marked Kumasi and the Asantehene as occupying the peak of wealth accumulation, political power and elegance. The European preparation of food such as roasted mutton, beans, and pease pudding impressed those in whose honour the feast was being carried out. The message being conveyed at these dinners that functioned as political theatre was one of political dominance in the region. The guests’ surprise at this presentation of sumptuous food and style in a remote forest kingdom (items that not even they had regular access to), made known the extent of the Asantehene’s prevailing supremacy and influence.

Food is essential to the dominion held by the Asantehene, as explored by T. C. McCaskie in his analysis of hegemonic structures of power in the Asante state. Theatrical display, gift exchange and control of food supply are vital and neglected components in the exertion of influence on subjects and outsiders alike. The framework which consisted of the power of prestige, manipulation of food supply, food-gifting and diplomatic ceremony served as a barometer for political relationships and as a mirror reflecting the power struggles both within Asante and outside of the state.²⁷ Using soft power and cultural diplomacy to direct behaviour through perception, symbolism, and culture, the Asante mobilised food as a diplomatic tool. In so doing, Osei Bonsu achieved several diplomatic goals, one of which was to secure the rents or ‘notes’ due to them from their subjugation of the Fante on the coast, and another was the stymieing of direct trade between the Europeans and the northern savannah.

Kwaku Dua’s divergent objectives were also reflected in his approach to soft power and cultural diplomacy. His interest in the maintenance of peace and stability in trade and political relations is revealed in his warm treatment of Freeman:

When a commensal event has an overlay of diplomatic intention, such as a state dinner, any messaging takes on a particular importance. A basic example would be an honored guest, who may lack the splendor or power of his host, finding himself on equal footing to his host at a ceremonial meal. And messaging does not necessarily stop there. The elaborateness of a state dinner compared to other ritualized dinners communicates many symbolic messages to guests, such as grandeur and acceptance into a special group.²⁸

Ensuring that Freeman’s personal culinary tastes were catered to, that he made the acquaintance of the important members of his family during the meal, and sharing personal living spaces within the context of the diplomatic meal, was all designed to make sure Freeman felt accepted and safe. This sent the message that Dua desired to continue the propagation of stable, peaceable relations with the English by treating this occasion as a

²⁶ Ibid., 2-3.

²⁷ H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (Peking University Press, 1985, 87).

²⁸ Linda Morgan, “Diplomatic Gastronomy: Style and Power at the Table.” *Food and Foodways* 20, no. 2 (2012): 148.

formal diplomatic meal within which to communicate the presence of significant power relationships. Both Dua and Bonsei both successfully executed diplomatic commensality, achieving their political objectives using food.

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MANKURTISM, MONUMENTS AND MARKETING: IDENTITY AND POWER IN POST-SOVIET CONTEMPORARY ART OF CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT

The following article will cover three contemporary notions of identity and power in Central Asia through the use of post-Soviet contemporary art studies. Case studies will consist of topical artworks on the thematics of *mankurtism*, monuments and marketing within post-Soviet Central Asia. The themes transition from what has been seen as an erasure of long-standing cultural tradition, language and lifestyle by Soviet colonisation, known as *mankurtization* in Chingiz Aitmatov's literary language. After which, crucial in the creation of memory, fostering allegiance and modern credence has been the indoctrination of new identities. Based on nation-building while still under the Soviets, propagandising through monuments has been an example of this. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, borders were drawn for the Central Asian Independents. Nation-building was already complete, having begun under the Soviets. What came next was a repurposing of existing tools by nation-branders left behind by the Soviets and the marketing of new identities both internally and internationally. The practice of nation-branding emerged in the mid 1990s, shortly after Central Asia's independence. Marketing of Central Asia was aimed at building internal and international identities which have been the product of public relations campaigns, as well as government and the elites' exercise in power. Despite the recent shared history of the region, post-independence growth has been uneven, due to the influence of geopolitics and the adoption of international models of state governance. My arguments will stem from the examination of several artist practices from different Central Asian countries coupled with their current political discourse. My aim is to show that complete identity erasure and reconstruction has not happened, but rather there has been a selective forgetting and privileging by the new elites in an attempt to solidify the importance of one's standing on an international platform.

INTRODUCTION

He had become a mankurt, or slave, who could not remember his past life.

– Chingiz Aitmatov¹

Yet the permanence promised by a monument in stone is always built on quicksand. Some monuments are joyously toppled at times of social upheaval, others preserve memory in its most ossified form, either as myth or as cliché.

– Andreas Huyssen²

Personalities are reincarnated throughout Central Asian state institutions – from mythic to real, and ancient to contemporary. A vividly drawn historical persona, usually a male warrior, reinforces notions about the “important history” of the Central Asian peoples. Abylaikhan in Kazakhstan, Manas in Kyrgyzstan, Amir Timur in Uzbekistan, Ismail Samani in Tajikistan, and Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan – all represent masculinities within national ideologies reinforced by Central Asian political elites. Like the “golden ages” of national prosperity and the “glory of the homeland” now found in every Central Asian presidential speech, the legends of a nation’s “great sons” depict qualities and virtues of a genuine national hero.

– Dr. Erica Marat³

The discourse surrounding thematics of identity and power in the contemporary art of Central Asia developed as a symbiotic relationship with the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. It was at this juncture that the individual nations of this region were once again opened to the rest of the world and began to position themselves internationally, ideologically and economically, outside the colonial grasp of the Soviets as they had been in the 19th and 20th centuries. The post-Soviet Central Asian countries developed independently, at different rates. The region I will be discussing consists of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Depending on the circumstances being discussed, Afghanistan and Mongolia can be included under the term Central Asia. For my purposes I will focus on the former five nations and in particular, Kazakhstan.

The case studies presented will discuss aspects of post-Soviet contemporary Central Asian identity and power politics. I will look at themes of mankurtism through *Global Society* (2013) and *Markurt 1 (2011-2012)* by Gulnur Mukazhanova (KZ); monuments through *Family Album* (1978-2009) by Erbossyn Meldibekov (KZ) and marketing through ‘Untitled’ from the *Bus Stops* series by Jamshed Kholikov (TJ), *Racing* (2007) by Muratbek Djumaliev (KG) and Gulnara Kasmaliev (KG) and *Paradise Landscape* (2004-2005) by Alexander Ugay (KZ). The artworks selected will progress through a discussion on identity erasure as introduced in the literature of Chingiz Aitmatov who wrote about mankurtism as the Russification of the non-Russian elite within Central Asia. From erasure to a reconstruction of national identity, monuments in Central Asia were widely used under the Soviets, and the tradition has been kept alive under the new regimes. It was under the Soviets that nation building began, Dr.

¹ Aitmatov, Chingiz. *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, p. 125.

² Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, p. 249.

³ Marat, *National Ideology and State-Building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, p. 25-26.

Erica Marat states, “The impact of Soviet nation-building in the 1920s-1950s is visible in Central Asian national border delimitations, the structure of local languages, and even in material and visual cultural artifacts.”⁴ The new leadership adopted the Soviet strategy of nation-building with the use of public national displays of parades and monuments. Currently, nation-branding is taking place as a way of differentiating the Stans’ historical and cultural legacies. The direction under the Soviets was very forward-looking, the future being of prime importance. Once Central Asia became independent, they went from communism to nationalism and then began looking into their ancient pasts in order to contextualise themselves within an international trajectory with national representation.

The development of what is known within art history as contemporary art begins post World War II within the West. Central Asia, at the time, was being introduced to Socialist Realism. Painting was not a traditional art form in the steppes; utilitarian craft was more commonplace, including decorative tapestries, carpets, ceramics and jewellery. It was from the time of Soviet colonialism and the propagandist-enforced school of Socialist Realism that conceptual art was beginning to be made in secret. Prior to 1991, there was no patronage for the arts aside from all that was government-sponsored. In fact, patronage remains very low for contemporary art in the present day. Under Soviet rule, creating works outside of Soviet ideology would have been seen as a critical stance; as Dr. Aliya de Tiesenhausen explains, “The year 1934 marks the establishment of Socialist Realism as the official Soviet style and therefore the only acceptable style not only in which to write but, crucially, in which to create art.”⁵ The 1920-50s and 1970-80s were periods of influence by the Russian School, while the 1960s and 1990s are described by art historian Valeria Ibraeva, as generating new ideas brought on by fissures in the iron curtain, which allowed glimpses of something beyond the then Soviet condition.⁶ The breakdown of the Soviet Union in the mid 1980s led to the first exhibition of unofficial art “Perekrestok” (1988). It was with independence that artists could begin to examine the current state of events.

MANKURTISM

The mankurt did not know who he had been, whence and from what tribe he had come, did not know his name, could not remember his childhood, father or mother—in short, he could not recognize himself as a human being. Deprived of any understanding of his own ego, the mankurt was, from his master’s point of view, possessed of a whole range of advantages. He was the equivalent of a dumb animal and therefore absolutely obedient and safe.

– Chingiz Aitmatov⁷

⁴ Ibid. p. 15.

⁵ Tiesenhausen, “Socialist Realist Orientalism? Depictions of Soviet Central Asia, 1930s -1950s”, p. 41.

⁶ Ibraeva, *Self-Identity: Futurological Prognosis*, p. 13.

⁷ Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, p. 26.

...mastering Russian was more than just a survival tool; it also became a source of personal and collective empowerment and an emblem of becoming 'cultured' and 'civilized'.

– Bhavna Dave⁸

It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.

– Homi K. Bhabha⁹



Mankurtism is a term deriving from an ancient Turkish legend, which appears in *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years* (1980) by Kyrgyz author Chingiz Aitmatov (1928-2008). He writes the tale of one man's journey to bury his long-time friend in a traditional manner, whilst interweaving his personal narrative with societal and cultural observations, which are themselves interlaced with folklore, custom and science fiction. Aitmatov's Asiatic steppe is transformed into a metaphor for the loss of culture and one's place in a newly formed society. The running theme of the mankurt is a mythical reference that stems from the legend of tribes torturing their enslaved captives by covering a victim's shaved head with camel skin. As the camel skin would dry in the heat of the desert steppe, it would become tighter and tighter around the captive's head resulting in a slow and painful death. Those that managed to survive were said to have suffered complete memory loss, ceasing to be rebellious, but passive and without any knowledge of who they were and from where they had come.

⁸ Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*, p. 1-2.

⁹ Bhabha, "Homi K. Bhabha on 'hybridity' and 'moving beyond'", p. 1111.

¹⁰ Gulnur Mukazhanova, *Global Society* (2013), photographs, Courtesy IADA

¹¹ Gulnur Mukazhanova, *Mankurt 1* (2011-2012), photograph, Courtesy IADA

In contemporary Central Asia, the term *mankurt* can be applied to the inhabitants of those post-Soviet countries that have succumbed to either the inability to part ways with their old Soviet master, as Aitmatov described, “The *mankurt*, like a dog, only recognized his masters”¹², or have become enslaved to a new globalised society in which they’ve substituted tradition for modernisation causing loss of heritage, culture and values. It is a Russification of the non-Russian elites from the region. The works of the artists that will serve as my study on the topic of *mankurtism* in post-Soviet Central Asia come from Kazakhstan. Gulnur Mukazhanova was born in 1984, only seven years before Kazakhstan became independent on 16 December 1991 and four years after Chingiz Aitmatov wrote his novel. This post-independence period was one of great upheaval in Kazakhstan because of the region’s close geopolitical, economic, social and linguistic ties with Russia. Kazakhstan’s history was particularly prone to its people succumbing to *mankurtism*. Language policy became one of the main points of discussion in post-independent Kazakhstan. Kazakhstanis yearned to assimilate into the Soviet order and became very proficient in the use of Russian. The erasure of the Kazakh language, paired with the 1920s-1930s collectivisation drive under Stalin and the consolidation of individual landholdings, destroyed the nomadic pastoral lifestyle, along with a significant portion of the nomadic population. As language and lifestyle were transformed in the mid-19th century, it was in the post-Soviet era that *mankurtism* became stigmatised, following a resurgence of language reclamation. Language, at this time, became an asset and was utilized by the Kazakh population as a means of power:

The Kazakh language proponents expediently argued that the loss of the native language, or *mankurtisasiia*, of their brethren was reversible. The Kazakh language came to be seen as a powerful symbolic resource because only one in a hundred Slavs could claim any proficiency.¹³

President Nurlisultan Nazerbayev made it each Kazakh citizen’s duty to learn Kazakh, which proved challenging because of the wide use of Russian as the lingua franca within the education, job and government sectors. Kazakh was named as the state language in Article 7 of the Kazakhstani Constitution, and within that, Sub-article 7.2 communicated that, “in state institutions and local self-administrative bodies the Russian language shall be officially used on equal grounds along with the Kazak language.”¹⁴ Language proves to be a source of power concludes Paige Brewer after investigating the relationship of power and language by linguist Pierre Bourdieu in her thesis, going on to say: “In this environment, a certain language provides access to power structures, such as education, the political system, and greater job opportunities. A less powerful language is associated with less powerful structures, such as domestic, rural, and uneducated life.”¹⁵ The Kazakh identity becomes bipolar, needing to rely heavily on globalisation, implementing old Soviet strategies and the use of Russian language to progress, but at odds with the ways of Communism which was very forward-looking and futuristic. Now, in contrast, the Central Asian states must look into their past in order to build up their identities and communities.

¹² Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, p. 126.

¹³ Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*, p. 3.

¹⁴ “Официальный сайт Парламента Республики Казахстан”, Article 7.

¹⁵ Brewer, “The Mankurt Remembers”, p. 4.

The fear or accusation of mankurtization becomes a source of national identity formation. The possibility of forgetting triggers the desire to build identity in public spaces through monuments, language, tradition and ethnicity. One of the topics present in Gulnur Mukazhanova's body of work is the recurring topic of identity. This is certainly not unique to her, as the topic is present in the works of many artists working in post-independent Central Asia. We begin with an image from the series titled, *Mankurts in the Megapolis* (2013), *Mankurt 1* (2011-2012), in which a Central Asian woman with dark hair covering her face stands atop a high-rise with a cosmopolitan city for a backdrop. She's wearing a white felt garment, felt being a traditional material used in Kazakhstan. The dress represents a traditional Kazakh wedding garment and the minaret-like feature above her head is representative of a headdress, which is now replaced by modern city architecture. Mukazhanova addresses loss using the notion of a mankurt, in which one becomes enslaved to one's master. Interestingly, the city that is photographed is that of Berlin, the artist's new place of residence. The *Global Society* (2013) series juxtaposes three distinct elements: the person, the mask and the setting, with each of these becoming foreground and background simultaneously. The settings in this series are not of Berlin, but rather of Mukazhanova's native Kazakhstan and there are also elements of trade in a global economy. The covering and uncovering of the face is an almost paradox between mankurtization and self-mankurtization. Having something put upon you by a regime versus adopting it yourself, a type of self-colonisation. At this point in the Central Asian paradox, the independent nations are no longer under Soviet rule, but must now appropriate globalised values and codes of conduct in order to move forward, subjecting traditions to an even higher rate of dissolution. As Alexander Kiossev writes, "the birth of these nations is connected with a very specific symbolic economy. It seems that the self-colonising cultures import alien values and civilization models by themselves and that they lovingly colonise their own authenticity through these foreign models."¹⁶ The adoption of foreign values does not have to culminate in self-colonisation but rather can be a foundation of building one's own structures. It becomes a balancing act between the authoritarian regime of Nazarbayev, who has been the sole president of independent Kazakhstan since 1991, preserving and articulating a cohesive past for nation branding, and creating new opportunities based on geopolitics and natural reserves.

As a Kazakh woman and artist, Gulnur Mukazhanova, adopts a western contemporary visual language, working within the West whilst discussing post-Soviet social issues. Central Asian artists, especially those working within a conceptual contemporary art discourse, struggle to find patronage within their respective countries. There are limited galleries, museums and collectors presenting and collecting contemporary works and government support is also limited. Most successful in the region is Kazakhstan, but - with only few museum and galleries - interest is developing slowly. The height of experimentation within the contemporary arts of Kazakhstan came after independence, when artists felt free to experiment without the confines of creating for the state. In 1998, George Soros founded the Soros Contemporary Centre for Arts (SCCA-Almaty), a place where the promotion of contemporary art within a local setting could be achieved, and with Valeria Ibraeva as its head director it was a success. This was an NGO and NFP initiative that served as a

¹⁶ Kiossev, "Notes on Self-Colonizing Cultures", p. 114.

community centre, based on organic, rapid, non-traditional growth of the arts; all the major actors within Kazakhstan were participating. In 2010, the organisation closed and along with it the excitement of the '90s and early 2000s. There hasn't been anything of the kind to replace the former organisation since. However, international interest grew again around 2005 with the Venice Biennial creating a pavilion for Central Asian arts. As international interest outpaced home interest for contemporary artists, it became easier to work outside Central Asia, making it inevitable that forgetting one's past and adopting an alien way of working became the current paradox of the region.

MONUMENTS

Currently, cultural memory is skilfully used as a tool for building national identity.

– Elena Paskaleva¹⁷

Monuments are applied toward the constant need to reassert claims to territory, resources, and positionality within the local and global arena.

– Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez¹⁸

A society's memory is negotiated in the social body's beliefs and values, rituals and institutions, and in the case of modern societies in particular, it is shaped by such public sites of memory as the museum, the memorial, the monument.

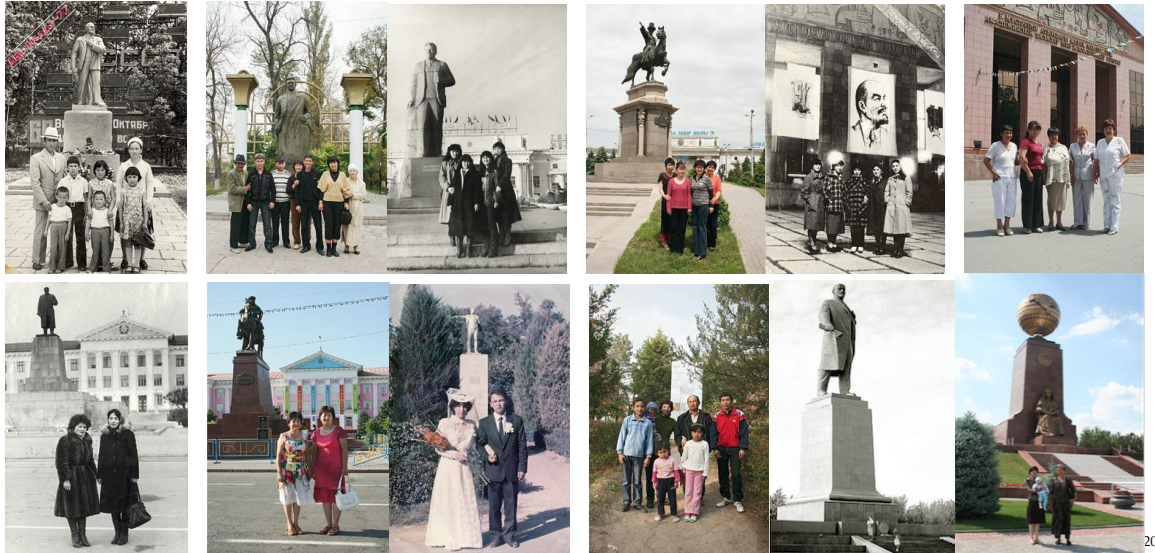
– Andreas Huyssen¹⁹

The monument, a physically dominant public sculptural object, serves to commemorate a great hero or significant event, one that represents important history, which is not be forgotten in the present and the future. The monument lays claim to territory, commemorating and performing the attempted homogenisation of cultural identity from past to present. Its role is twofold: to be didactic and to create a uniform history. As carriers of historical markers and political agendas, monuments also become spaces of questioning through occupation, protest, defacement and artistic appropriation. Each monument, whether in disrepair or newly erected, protrudes from the ground and can hardly be avoided. The etymology of the word monument is based in the Latin *monere*, which means "to warn" or "to remind". It is through their representative nature as a vehicle of power that they become platforms for gatherings and the perpetuation of state-sponsored agendas, markers of time, hegemonic cultivators of solidarity and nationness. They reassert and construct history and identity, whilst positioning both internal and external attitudes towards the current society. It is precisely this construction of the singularity of nationness and identity that Erbossyn Meldibekov of Kazakhstan is reacting to, as he takes heed of the warnings that each newly erected monument presents.

¹⁷ Paskaleva, "Memory and commemoration in Central Asia", p. 30.

¹⁸ Legaspi-Ramirez, "The Monument."

¹⁹ Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 249.



In Central Asia, it is not only the advance of newly-masked agendas that are implemented under the guise of democracy. It is also the voracity with which monuments materialise and are publicly displayed, changing many times throughout a short historical span. The monuments being replaced within post-Soviet landscapes are those of Soviet heroes – Lenin and Stalin. Their replacement comes from an anthropological excavation of so-called indigenous heroes, writers, poets, musicians and present heads of state. This becomes a cultural phenomenon of revival, restoration and reclamation of what has been erased through Soviet occupation. The monuments across Central Asia are numerous: the 97 metre high Bayterek monument (KZ) that embodies the legend in which a mythical bird Samruk laid a golden egg containing secrets; the Arch of Neutrality (TK) erected to celebrate the Turkmenbashi's 1998 policy of neutrality; statues of Lenin and the tiny figure on a very large Central Asian platform surrounded by fountains (TK); commemoration monuments to the Uzbeks who died in WWII (Karimov built similar ones, such at the Crying Mother Monument near most city centres); a 1928 truck on a plinth below a hydroelectric dam commemorates the opening of the Pamir Highway (TJ); a statue of Ismoil Somoni (TJ). The 10th-century founder of the Samanid dynasty; and the many monuments to Timur and especially the Gur-e Amir (UZ). One commemorative site in particular, the Central Park in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, has witnessed ten transformations in the past 100 years.

It is especially difficult within the post-Soviet states to move forward, as the Communist mentality was relatively forward-looking and modern. How can one go 'beyond' if one has already been in the future all this time? Boris Groys gives an account of why a post-Communist state must travel back in time:

...but the Communist community was in many ways more radically modern in its rejection of the past than the countries of the West. And this community was closed not because of the stability of its traditions but because of the radicalism of its projects. And that means: the post-Communist subject travels the same route as described in the dominating discourse of cultural studies—but he or she travels this

²⁰ Erbossyn Meldibekov, *Family Album Series* (1978-2009), Digital Photographs, © Photos: Yerbossyn Meldibekov & Nurbossyn Oris

route in the opposite direction, not from the past to the future, but from the future to the past; from the end of history, from post historical, post apocalyptic time, back to historical time. Post-Communist life is life lived backward, a movement against the flow of time.²¹

As it begins to have universal and homogenising effects, however, globalisation reproduces a single ideological narrative within the 21st century. With the proliferation of virtual traffic and trading among economies newly incorporated into the free market, there is a new engagement and consumption of cultures. In order for culture to be consumed, it must first be produced and disseminated. This is why the post-Communist must travel back into the past because of an external demand for representation, which lies in the time before Sovietisation. It is a fallacy to think that the nation is in *statu nascendi*, a state of being born, for it is not something new that has taken place within Central Asia, but in fact, a mutation.

In the Soviet Union, the monument was an object of ritual, with newly married couples partaking in the tradition of being photographed in front of the local Lenin memorial. All across the vast USSR, family photographs professing loyalty were taken in front of these memorials. The Lenin memorials have since been replaced, but a deeply rooted ritual remains alive with the new wave of nation building. Valeria Ibraeva, the Director of the now closed SCCA-Almaty states, "The Soviet Union is long gone and the elemental force of post-Communist iconoclasm has swept away countless Lenin memorials, but the tradition of paying homage to some symbol of state power remains...."²² Erbossyn Meldibekov, in collaboration with his brother Nurossyn Oris, created *Family Album* (2007-2009). This series of discovered photographs and newly produced digital prints, juxtaposes family and friends' photographs from years past, alongside current re-stagings of the same scenes. The subject is asked to re-perform the ritual aspect of paying homage to the head of power. We can look at the relationship between the two as a stage, asking, who are the actors? What is the backdrop? What happens in the moment of a reversal? As the actors become the constant static entity whilst the stage becomes the active agent in a performance of power. What is there to be said of civic volition when it is the body politic that has become the platform for ideological dissemination through the monumental? For Meldibekov, this ritualistic act between man and monument, with the monument as a symbol of power, becomes a topic of inquiry as he captures the re-masking of the political arena. *Family Album* opens several discussions about the role of the monument within society: a post-Soviet return to the past; the dynamics of the individual in relation to new national ideologies; and the irony found in the repetitious nature of new politics that only offer a re-masking of old political structures. Meldibekov's inspiration for examining the topic further began after discovering that Dzhambul, formerly in South Kazakhstan, had been renamed six times in the preceding 120 years. At the time known as Taraz, it was formerly known as Jambyl or Zhambyl until 1997, Dzhambul until 1993, Mirzoyan until 1938, Aulie-Ata until 1936 and Talas until 1856. *Family album* offers an opportunity to rediscover the site at which the memorial to Lenin once stood in Dzhambul, now replaced with an equestrian statue of a local hero, Bajdibek-batyra (n.d.). By placing the two images side by side, comparison is made between the original from 1978

²¹ Groys, *Art Power*, p. 155.

²² Ibraeva, "Yerbossyn Meldebekov & Nurbossyn Oris: Family Album in 1989-2009: Turbulent World – Telling Time."

and a modern-day restaging taken in 2009. These archival discoveries reveal the repetitive nature with which individuals ritually approach the memorial as an idea, almost unaware or uninterested in the fact that they stand for conflicting ideas.

In Meldibekov's opinion:

... in the conditions of post-Soviet nationalism, all our numerous new heroes are very monotonous: they are heroes of the past, invoked to confirm the historical credibility of our new governmental forms. But since nobody knows what these heroes looked like, there is a mushrooming of ethnic characteristics.²³

For Meldibekov, each of these representations is a fabrication; as he specifically declares, "ethnicity is a story."²⁴ Boris Groys attests to the factitious nature of both Communist and capitalist ideology:

Ultimately, privatization proves to be just as much an artificial political construct as nationalization had been. The same state that had once nationalized in order to build up Communism is now privatizing in order to build up capitalism... The post-Communist state is, like its Communist predecessor, a kind of artistic installation. Hence the post-Communist situation is one that reveals the artificiality of capitalism by presenting the emergence of capitalism as a purely political project of social restructuring and not as the result of a "natural" process of economic development.²⁵

The irony lies not only in the work of Erbossyn Meldibekov, as he captures so directly the histories around him, but also in the fact that he cannot escape the cyclical nature of things himself. When he graduated from the Department of Monumental Sculpture at the Almaty Theatre and Fine Arts Institute in 1992, the need for highly skilled monumental sculptors to be producing busts of Soviet heroes on a huge scale had passed. Today, Meldibekov does not create official monumental sculptures; however, he documents the irony of them. His practice deconstructs the Kazakh identity, one that is a constantly mutating paradox. Interestingly, in the last decade he has had the opportunity to help a friend, an official artist, create a monument of President Nazarbayev. The final cast is not bronze, but a composite of waste material and scrap metal debris.

MARKETING

Since 1991 all Central Asian states have created national ideologies, but only three—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan—have programmes in place to capture the attention of foreign businessmen, politicians and tourists. Following the pattern of crafting national ideologies for domestic audiences in all three states, the ruling elites have led the effort to create a unique national 'brand' identity for their country.²⁶

– Dr. Erica Marat

²³ Raza, Erbossyn Meldibekov: *The (Dis)order of Things*, p. 35.

²⁴ Raza, Erbossyn Meldibekov: *The (Dis)order of Things*, p. 33.

²⁵ Groys, *Art Power*, p. 166.

²⁶ Marat, "Nation Branding in Central Asia", p. 1123.

Heritage is about selectivity and power; it is used to assert local, national and international interests.

– Tomás Skinner²⁷

...paradox – the communist-turned-nationalist phenomenon...

– Bhavna Dave²⁸

In the 1990s, the concept of nation-branding emerged. Countries began to synthesise and disseminate the unique features of their culture, history, people and government into a slogan or image towards both their own populace and that of the greater world. The reliance on nation-branding is to create a perception of one's own government, people and country that will attract business, tourism, and open lines of communication. Central Asian leaders began for the first time making a concerted effort to promote their countries locally and globally through spectacle, expositions, sport, publications and reclamation of long lost histories and heritage. Internal and external perceptions gained increasing importance in order to: position power at 'home', foster a sense of national identity post-independence, and create unity as a nation whilst securing a place in a globalised economy. In a post-Soviet Central Asia, power comes back to a clan-like structure, similar to that which existed prior to Soviet rule. The clans, which now rule the region, are those of the elites or families of authoritarian leaders. It is from the elite that culture is produced and marketed. Dr. Erica Marat expounds when writing of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan:

Central Asian political elites had to create and reinforce the positive image of newly acquired independence, as well as justify their hold on power. With an urge of fostering nationalism in the early 1990s, the elites produced national ideologies based on revised history without allowing any broader scholarly or policy debate. In this way, the elites became the sole producers of national ideologies whilst other public sectors, including academic circles, worked merely in a support role, not putting forth competing interpretations.²⁹

Nation-branding efforts have worked more successfully in some states within Central Asia than others. For each, branding their countries has been the next step after independence that allows for further identity consolidation and the securing of power. In order to discuss nation-branding through globalisation, I will review the work of three artists from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and the approaches they have taken: The *Bus Stops Series* by Jamshed Kholikov, *Racing* (2007) by Muratbek Djumaliev and Gulnara Kasmalieva and *Paradise Landscape* (2004-2005) by Alexander Ugay.

²⁷ Skinner, "Urban Heritage of the Silk Road", p. 44.

²⁸ Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*, p. 5.

²⁹ Marat, *National Ideology and State-Building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, p.29.



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Selective cultural reclamation by the Central Asian nations has been crucial to securing unique identities and creating slogans that can attract international interest within sectors such as tourism, business and international relations. Kazakhstan gave credence to its geopolitical weight to create the slogan ‘Kazakhstan: Heart of Eurasia’. It is the 9th largest country in the world, with a significant amount of natural resources, including coal and oil and it has the most political weight of the countries in the region. In 2006, when the film *Borat*, starring English comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, was released, Kazakhstan was furious over the negative publicity. Robert Saunders synthesises these feelings in his article, “Kazakhstan accused the British comedian of being the agent of foreign powers meaning harm to the country and then removed his website from Kazakhstani servers.”³³ The amount of free press that the country received due to the film’s popularity allowed for Kazakhstan’s nation-branding policies to be even more widely circulated, although it took massive efforts to disassociate itself from the film’s stereotypes. On the other hand, Uzbekistan has taken to promoting its culture and history around the cult of Amir Timur, a 14th century Turko-Mongol leader, and the Tajik government chose to emphasise the period of Ismaili Samani, a Persian ruler of the 8th century. Uzbekistan’s most popular slogan has been ‘Uzbekistan: Crossroads of Civilizations’ and Kyrgyzstan has been mentioned in circulation as a ‘Land of Wonders’. Each country has promoted a historical figure both internally and externally and

³⁰ Alexander Ugay, *Paradise Landscape* (2004-2005), digital print on canvas. Courtesy of AhmadyArts Curatorial and Educational Platform.

³¹ Jamshed Kholikov, ‘Untitled’ from the *Bus Stops* series (2005-2008), Photographs taken in TJ, KG, and UZ. Courtesy of AhmadyArts Curatorial and Educational Platform.

³² Gulnara Kasmaliev and Muratbek Djumaliev, *Racing* (2007). C-print, 40 x 60 cm. Courtesy the artists and Laura Bulian Gallery.

³³ Saunders, “The Winners and Losers of ‘Nation-Branding.’”

it has been in many ways culture that has been leading the branding efforts. Laura L. Adams writes how Uzbekistan specifically used *spectacle* for national cultural production:

While artists resented the state meddling in their creative affairs, the idea of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs playing an active role in the arts was rarely questioned. Because of their desire to renew their national culture, many artists (if they did not give up their careers to earn a living in business) found themselves more invested in the new nationalist states' control of culture than they were during the Soviet period.³⁴

To take the example of Uzbekistan: in its post-Soviet approach to national branding and dissemination of culture, it has not allowed for the creation of a western contemporary art and theory. Artists have found that a western approach to art-making has not been state supported, although individual voices have found means not only to produce works internally and internationally but also to create centres for contemporary art production in environments which still strive to keep a tight control over cultural production.

In Alexander Ugay's *Paradise Landscape* (2004-2005), the Kazakh artist of Korean descent assembles a myriad of juxtapositions for the creation of Central Asian identity and branding. The scene is filled with the promise of what post-independent Kazakhstan should expect or what is expected through following western standards of development. However, oil production, urbanisation, globalisation and the many façades of spectacle in nationalist form have not fulfilled expectations or rapid growth. Instead, images of the post-Soviet nation, which is facing numerous paradoxes, juxtapose the disparity on the local and the global level. There is an element of spectacle and performing nationness of which Laura L. Adams writes with a focus on Uzbekistan:

These mass spectacles allowed periodic, limited mobilization of society to take place within an ideological framework that appealed to both nationalist and cosmopolitans. Political elites were happy with how the tightly controlled spectacle form allowed them to shape and monitor the production of meaning and the participation of spectators in these events.³⁵

The following set of four photographs is by Jamshed Kholikov. 'Untitled' from the *Bus Stops* series (2005-2008), covers three countries and close to 200 bus stops in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, documenting the utilitarian-turned-monumental as representation of history, ideology and tradition. Writing for the 53rd Central Asian Pavilion, Baral Madra says:

He bestows these bus stops with another function; for Kholikov they are like stops in our voyage from birth to death that gives opportunity to pause and think. They are the beginning and the end of our trips, our wasted hopes and wasted illusions and they are the stops when people ask themselves the well-known post-Soviet question: "What to do now?"³⁶

³⁴ Adams, *The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan*, p. 155.

³⁵ Adams, *The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan*, p. 7.

³⁶ Madra, "CENTRAL ASIA PAVILION, 53rd VENICE BIENNALE, 'MAKING INTERSTITCHES.'"

The works encompass not only the comings and departures of those who will be travelling from these points but also the nation's shifts from scientific development, Soviet displays of allegiance and cultural motifs for the local population.

The final series of images are stills from a five-channel video installation, Gulnara Kasmalieva's and Muratbek Djumaliev's *Racing* (2007). This follows a Kyrgyz-Chinese scrap metal trade via truck. The caravans travel through the high mountains as the trade routes of the Silk Road once did. The video installation captures the voyage through a historically significant merchant route - one that has been reawakened for Kyrgyzstan because it lacks the mobility for growth due to limited funding and almost no manufacturing infrastructure. Faced with a crisis of limited possibilities in a newly post-Soviet globalised future, the Kyrgyz struggle for survival using traditional merchant routes in dilapidated Soviet trucks whilst Chinese 18-wheelers roll by, powerfully pushing on. The title indicates, as the installation videos show, that the once famous Silk Route is not intended to cause nostalgia, but rather highlight the difficulties faced by forced collectivisation resettlement under the Soviets, and the current reliance on an old trade for survival. Although not a criticism of nation-branding as seen in previous artworks detailed above, this video installation is a much more sober reality: reliance on the monumental Silk Road is the only option left after the historical disruptions of nation-building.

Nation-branding serves to precede a country by reputation with the hopes that a positive image will attract business potential, tourism, natural wonder and resources and cooperation between governments. However, in the five former Soviet Union countries of Central Asia, the current positive image of culture, energy development and trade is only a façade of the repressive governments under which they live. The five Stans do differ, with

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan being more productive in their nation-branding efforts, although they still have a long way to go.

CONCLUSION

Except in myth, there is no moment when cultures and identities emerge from nowhere, whole within themselves, perfectly self-sufficient, unrelated to anything outside themselves and with boundaries which secure their space from outside intrusion.

– Stuart Hall³⁷

Moorings to the past, spatial markers of identity, and feelings of 'belonging to' or 'owning' a place are processes that can be managed to secure loyalty and assimilate people into imagined communities, as well as to evoke ideas of shared heritage that bridges nations and cultures.

– Tomás Skinner³⁸

The profusion of investigations within Central Asia into one's own identity through the individual and through the nation has been intense post independence. It has been reflected

³⁷ Hall and Maharaj, *Identity and Difference*, p. 36.

³⁸ Skinner, "Urban Heritage of the Silk Road", p. 44.

deeply within the contemporary art of the region. The region was not made to be artificially split along border lines that do not reflect differentiation between the countries on either side. Old heritage has been shared, along with recent history. Artists have been deconstructing their identities, while new ones are currently being formed as part of post-Soviet nation building and branding efforts. Coming from tribal-based organisations of centuries past - neither European nor Asian - Central Asia is attempting to balance its position within a set of complex contradictions including multiplicity of ethnicities, religious practices, social structures and modern day globalised desires. The artists from the former Soviet Republics are performing and exploring identities in the interstices of mutating regimes. In reaction to both soft and hard power plays, artists have been able to document changes with a critical perspective that is not often heard from within their respective homelands, all the while using international interest to their advantage in order to have their voices heard.

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KAZAKH FOLK TALES

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ABSTRACT

These short Kazakh folk tales or fables are popular in modern Kazakhstan – they get published in colourful editions for children. What the publishers probably did not foresee is that they would also attract someone like me – a Linguistics PhD student from London on fieldwork in Kazakhstan. I became interested in these fables for a number of reasons: firstly, they attracted me as good language-learning aids; secondly, they provide some insights into the culture and the mentality of the Kazakh people; and lastly, they also turned out to be useful sources of data for my PhD on the Information Structure of the Kazakh language. I want to share these tales with the readers of the Journal of Postgraduate Research for the second reason. I would like to invite the readers to take a glimpse into the stories that have been told to the children of Kazakhstan for quite some time now. You shall see that each fable ends with a “moral” – the main statement and lesson to be taken away from the story. They teach one not to be greedy or lazy, not to complain about misfortune while enjoying good health, not to look for “easy” money which was not obtain through hard work, and to create one's own luck through honest work and committed effort. These life lessons are as relevant (if not more!) in modern times as they were many years ago when they were first created. I hope you enjoy them.

¹ The author is grateful to the Wolfson Foundation for their generous funding of her PhD studies through the Wolfson Postgraduate Scholarship, which made the fieldwork in Kazakhstan possible.

INTRODUCTION

Short folk tales or fables are popular in modern Kazakhstan – they are often published in colourful editions for children. What the publishers probably did not foresee is that they would also attract someone like me – a Linguistics PhD student from London on fieldwork in Kazakhstan. I became interested in these fables for a number of reasons: firstly, they attracted my attention as good language-learning aids; secondly, they turned out to be useful sources of data for my PhD on the information structure of the Kazakh language; and lastly, they provided some insight into the culture and mentality of the Kazakh people. I want to share these tales with the Journal of Postgraduate Research for this final reason. I would like to invite you, the reader, to take a glimpse into the stories long recounted to the children of Kazakhstan. You shall see that each fable ends with a ‘moral’ – the main statement and lesson to be taken away from the story. They instruct not to be greedy or lazy, not to complain about misfortune while enjoying good health, not to look for ‘easy’ money which has not been obtained through hard work, and to create one's own luck through honest work and committed effort. These life lessons are as relevant (if not more so) in modern times as they were many years ago when they were first created. I hope you enjoy them.

HE WHO COUNTS GOLD, DIES OF HUNGER²

When this happened nobody knows, but there once lived a scrawny pauper named Saġat. One day, he was staggering about aimlessly and could not see straight from hunger. Completely exhausted, he decided to lie down on the sand for a little rest.

Poverty must have followed him even into his sleep, and he dreamt that, as he was running to hide from his suffering, a pale old man with a beard down to his waist stood in his path.

“Wake up! If you take 10 steps to the right from this very place in the sand on which you are lying, you'll see an old shelter in the ground. There is a ruined fireplace in that shelter, and if you dig under it just a little, you'll find a leather purse that once belonged to Sulejmen, the trader. Every time you open and close that purse, a golden coin will appear inside. Then you'll have enough for the rest of your life. Remember, a contented mind makes for a never-ending feast,” – the old man said and disappeared.

With a racing heart, Saġat got up, took 10 big steps to the right of his resting place, and came across the derelict shelter in the ground. As he was digging with his bare hands in the middle of the hearth of a ruined fireplace, he fantasised: “If I find one golden coin, I'll eat till I'm full. If I find two coins, I'll feed my family, and if I get hold of three coins I'll buy a dress for my wife.”

Just as the old man predicted, he found the purse in said place. Open once – get one coin, open twice – two coins... Having opened the purse a hundred times, Saġat sat with his eyes fixed on the pile of coins and dreamt of building a palace with domes as high as those on the king's palace. He forgot all about his hunger, his children, and his wife. With only riches on

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his mind, he opened the purse a thousand, a hundred thousand, a million times, as two weeks went by without him noticing. They say the wretched scrooge's heart stopped, and he bade farewell to this world.

THE MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE³

A long long time ago, when the sheep's wool was grey, the pheasant's feathers were red and its tail long, there were a lot of good-for-nothing youngsters just like the lazy lads of the present day. These lazy ones have a habit for much idle worrying and complaining, don't they? This is how one of them complained:

"Oh God Almighty, since it was You who brought me into this world, why did you not make me a wealthy person? At the age when I should be living a happy life of luxury, I cannot afford to buy food when I'm hungry or clothes when I need them!"

A wise old man overheard this and said: "Hello, my dear, why are you getting so upset? You do have riches right here with you!" The lad thought the old man was mocking him with his words and replied angrily: "Which riches are you talking about?!" The wise man remained calm and asked the young man: "My darling boy, would you please sell me these very two eyes you have? I'll give you plenty of gold and silver!"

The lad replied: "After I lose both eyes, what do I need gold and silver for? Keep those riches to yourself!" Then the old man went through the lad's 12 body parts one by one, asking him to sell each of them, which made the lad very angry. "Even if you offered a piece of gold the size of a horse's head, I wouldn't sell any of my body parts! I have no wish to become a cripple!" – the lad said bluntly. The wise man then said: "Aha, in this case then, a man's most precious treasure is his healthy body. A man like you, who has all four limbs intact, is a rich man. No gold or silver can replace this!"

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LETTERS TO THE AUTHOR: LATE-OTTOMAN DEBATES ABOUT EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES, AN EXTRACT FROM HALIL HAMID'S *MÜSAVAT-I TAMME*¹

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ABSTRACT

The 1908 restoration of the Ottoman Constitution had a transformative impact on the values associated with notions that had long been in circulation and under deliberation. Among them were liberty (*hürriyet*), equality (*müsavat*), fraternity (*uhuvvet*), and justice (*adalet*), along with the constituency's role in their achievement and maintenance. First published in 1910, Halil Hamid's *Müsavat-ı Tamme* [Complete Equality] provides a glimpse into some of the many debates surrounding the implementation of one of these aspirations in a single sphere of Ottoman society: equality among the sexes. Below is the translation of the first three letters by authors and activists that precede Hamid's own thoughts on whether 'complete equality' among the sexes is achievable. These are the perspectives of Emine Semiye (1864–1944), Mehmet Rauf (1875–1909), and Raif Necdet (1881–1936).

¹ Hamid, Halil. *Müsavat-ı Tamme* (İstanbul: Leon Lütfi, 1328 [1912/13]).

LETTERS SENT BY SOME OF OUR REFINED LITERATI REGARDING 'COMPLETE EQUALITY': FEMINISM IN ISLAM

Wednesday, 5 *Mayis* 1326 [18 May 1910]

Those concerned with the progress and development of women, who make up the greatest component of human societies, are currently found to be occupying the highest ranks amongst the civilised nations. Because the soul of the family is woman, the womb of humanity is woman; the treasure of the abundance of hope is, invariably, woman!

At humanity's creation, woman held the rank of a beneficial animal. Nevertheless, life depended on her! In ancient Greece, wives being abandoned to their former status, the beautiful, coy, and guileful among them were elevated to such an extent that gods were virtually made in their names!!

When the Arab peoples appreciated that 'woman' was the most significant segment of the human species, they beamed with honour and glory! We can consider the following names as examples: heroes like 'Umm al-Hakim Makhzumi' who killed seven of the assailants with a tent pole in the midst of a 'battle;' great scholars like 'Umm al-Khayr' whose students, among the greatest of the *ulema*, included the likes of the brilliant 'Ibn 'Asakir' and 'Ibn Shuhnah;' 'Umm al-Khayr bint al-Haris' of Kufa, who, partial to the side of the exalted Ali during the Siffin Incident, impassioned and motivated soldiers with her poignant oratories. Oratory also brought forth those involved in politics, like 'Umm Salma' (of the pure and distinguished wives) under the caliphate of the exalted Uthman, who advised the aforementioned on emerging affairs, and 'Qahraman,' who, being the concubine and slave mother to the child of 'Muqtadir Billah' of the Abbasid Caliphate, achieved considerable dicta and personal influence in judicial affairs.

If we were to additionally consider 'Raziya' Sultan, the eleventh monarch of the 'Ghurid dynasty,' and 'Valide Kösem' of Sultan Ahmed (Khan) I's women, we would likewise be revealing the existence of quite a few politicians, as well as poets and scholars, within the remainder of the Islamic communities. It is precisely these women, in their concordance with men, who proved their feminism—unbeknownst to themselves...

I will presently answer the literary question that has been posed regarding equality between men and women, here: yes, sir, medically, there is no difference at all between the brain of a man and a woman.

"In the schools of America where there is mixed education for boys and girls, the noble teachers—who are careful to see that student numbers are always equal—have given the verdict that among those students who always gain distinction and achieve the highest grades, there is no difference between male and female."

Regarding this, I consulted the opinion of expert doctors at the *Aceze*. It is exceedingly said that ["the intelligence of women is high; their spirit is delicate and polished with transparent compassion." There are those who attribute this to our disposition and to our weakness as well!... With the increasingly established and witnessed proof of those of us who exhibit more courage and determination than men in the moment of necessity, however, we rebut that perspective!

After all, everything on life's path is a matter of habit!

In the eyes of those who have accustomed us to weakness and degradation in a constricted framework—those who have seen us brought up so powerlessly and have put confidence in men—the presumption is that women are the shadow of men!! Oh! Our careless men, showing civilised women who lack the hesitation to sacrifice all peace and welfare for the restoration of personal freedom, the façade of that constrictive framework, trying to put us to sleep—sometimes with threats, other times, with gentlemen’s lullabies!... You are labouring under a delusion... Perhaps today’s mothers will be able to remain this ignorant and numb under your hand of domination. And, perhaps, having been defeated by the embrace of this sweet slumber, others can be kept idle and forget womanhood!... The young ladies who circumnavigate an enlightened civilisation, on the other hand, as they illuminate with the page of knowledge and science which has been laid open before them, they are certainly going to feel the need to finally remove this fanatical and heavy collar forced upon womanhood, the source of humanity! They are screaming so!

Prior to speaking a few words on how feminism can be implemented for the women of Islam, I do not consider silence [e.g. on precedence] as permissible: Islam has not precluded women from commercial, agricultural, and military demands, from going to war to provide encouragement and treatment for the wounded. Mentioning cases pertaining to this would be the subject for a substantial history book. What we are trying to say is that during—and following—the time of the exalted Prophet, women were esteemed and completely free in their honourable conduct. When the age of debauchery that was the reason for the downfall of the Abbasids commenced, ‘womanhood,’ too, began to be shrouded in the adorned and gilded sheet of slavery! It is clear that our present state is a condition that is not religious, but accidental.

What we need is the purified freedom that is permitted by the *Shari’a* [divine law] of Islam. Otherwise, the point of excess (de)generated by civilisation’s exaggerated progress is also being woefully observed and contemplated by moralists in the West!!

To cast aside the benefits of civilisation and to only learn from its vanity will, of course, dim the light of the sanctity of womanhood—we would consider that an equal tragedy. What is ‘civilisation’? For contemporary women who do not yet understand its essence, to civilise irrationally (God forbid!) will add immorality atop immorality!!

Together with education, we need to be inoculated with the true feminism that is productive with virtue—Alas! Contrary to our hopes, since the commencement of our constitutional era, education is not even able to diffuse a light equivalent to its former, dim, intensity!

Seeing the existence of our zealous champions, who, hearing our whimpers from under a shroud of ignorance and fanaticism, pity us (the helpless), and labour towards our progress, we can at least become hopeful of our consolation and future—the venerable feminists in Europe, too, gained great strength from the advocacy of men, and, by those means, tried to prevail over tyrants!

After offering gratitude with the sentence, womanhood, ‘may your favours endure’, across patriots, the champions who are our assistants extend a virtuous hand, and shake.

Emine Semiye

[Undated]

Complete equality... what a splendid, what a great law! Alas, simultaneously, what a lofty, what an unattainable fantasy. Since Adam's creation to our own day, humanity is striving to achieve that fantasy. Despite the succession of so many centuries, and so much progress, however, humanity is unable to attain it—is it even possible for it to?... When considered from the perspective of ignorance, which will always govern amongst people to some extent, nature, and human nature, the answer that can be given to this question is reduced to a howl of anguish. The implementation of complete equality is impossible. But let us forget this sad truth; let us try to forget. With the ambition of reaching the mirage of gardens that form true civilization, if we were to speed up our pace a little more every day and demonstrate a little more devotion, perhaps we will come close; we may be able to come close... Human history will deliver us. The hard obstacles that have arisen (in my path) until now, like slavery, *derebey*-ism, oppression, and war, have sequentially collapsed, and are collapsing... Socialists, feminists, and suffragettes, in various groups, are battling and labouring inexhaustibly to neutralise economic and sexual domination. Even if their triumph is impossible, the smallest achievement they will attain will carry the same value as the most glorious victory. Woman should be entitled freedom to the extent permitted by the capacities of her particular natural constitution and setting. Neither must we forget these two conditions. The consequence can be more calamitous, because women are not identical in natural disposition, nor are they subject to the same social conditions everywhere. Not even an English or a German woman has yet been able to arrive at the point of maturity of being able to demand her right.

The screams echoing in our ears are not in the service of the present, but of the future. Even in the most advanced states, men are not equipped with an intellectual discipline that will defeat personal interest. Before our eyes are men who, having affixed parties to themselves, will also frequently give cabinets for the sake of securing their positions and the ambition of fame; men who raise hell; deputies who seduce clients with feasts, gifts, rhetoric, and charlatanry to attract their votes; ministers and prime ministers who, having been a socialist deputy, suddenly become conservatives with the aim of strengthening their position... The drolleries and tragedies that occur in the election field are also observed daily... When the state of affairs is such, always, how can we give the women who just yesterday appeared at the cultural stage the right to vote and the right to civil officialdom?

As for the hope of the immediate implementation of 'feminism' in our nation, it is a poisonous and dangerous vision, replete with demise and decline.

Regarding complete equality, even the progressive nations before us, whose monuments we have not been freed from being observers of, can presently only demonstrate sincerity and good intention. And there are still many successive periods of development that will pass with the slavery of women intact, because this slavery is under the provision of the helping hand a father extends to his child. As generations follow, however, and the light of knowledge wipes the records, like age and frailty, similar to the children freely able to attend their schools today, women, too, will be released from familiar slavery and attain their canonical rights to a degree commensurate with ability.

M. Rauf

3 *Nisan* 1326 [16 April 1910]

Halil Hamid Bey,

You are asking whether or not complete equality between men and women is possible. This question of yours is truly an important scientific and social matter... The sages of Europe have hitherto taken long scientific and philosophical journeys around this issue and have consequently arrived at various intellectual positions.

In my own opinion, above all else, it is *La nature* or 'nature,' that presents an obstacle to the establishment of an absolute equality between men and women. From every aspect, 'nature' is inclined to destroy equality. That having been said, with their intelligence, people have been able to slightly modify this destructive inclination extant in nature.

It is strength, the constitution of women's bodily organs—their 'physiology'—that engenders the considerable margin between the sexes. And this governs everything.

From the perspective of the harmony and the order of social bodies, too, the social duties of woman and man need to be different.

The natural and social duty of 'woman' can be summarised as bringing up the children she will gift humankind, in a manner favourable to the material and immaterial interest of 'humanity.' In this respect, the place of 'woman' in society is quite important. One should appreciate and honour women in a manner that is in accordance with the significance of this place they occupy in social life. One should work towards compensating women for the 'inequality' produced by nature—which is therefore necessarily considered natural—by bestowing upon them respect, comfort, and consideration. For men, this is a civil and human duty. To scorn women and their social and patriotic duties is nothing more than a sign of barbarity and negligence.

Nor can I restrain myself from uttering that, in reprisal for this inequality extant in social life, I am in favour of advocating complete equality supported by intimacy and compassion between husband and wife in their life of matrimony. A virtuous wife whimpering beneath the oppressive claw of a severe and arrogant husband is earnestly deserving of mercy. As for a husband like this, he is surely worthy of abomination.

Raif Necdet

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