

# Annali di Ca' Foscari

Serie orientale

Vol. 55  
Giugno 2019

e-ISSN 2385-3042  
ISSN 1125-3789



**Edizioni**  
Ca'Foscari



e-ISSN 2385-3042  
ISSN 1125-3789

# **Annali di Ca' Foscari**

## Serie orientale

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**Edizioni Ca' Foscari** - Digital Publishing  
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia  
Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venezia  
URL <http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/riviste/annali-di-ca-foscari-serie-orientale/>

# Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale

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**Editore** Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing | Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venezia, Italia | [ecf@unive.it](mailto:ecf@unive.it)

**Stampa** Logo srl, via Marco Polo 8, 35010 Borgorico (PD)

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# Le savant et son époque à travers sa correspondance

## Seeger A. Bonebakker (1923-2005) et quelques notes sur Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī (696-764/1297-1363)

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**Abstract** This article proposes a survey of two great scholars' in Arabic literature correspondences: a European of the 20th century, Seeger Adrianus Bonebakker, who is of special interest for us because he bequeathed all of his great library, personal notes and correspondence to Università Ca' Foscari, and a subject of study of the former, Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, great *littérateur* and scholar of the first century of the Mamluk period. Letters sent and received are preserved in both cases and are primary sources on their network, but also on their personal life, personality and methodology.

**Keywords** Correspondence. Scholars' network. Literature analysis. Orientalism. Mamluk period. Intellectual History.

**Sommaire** 1 Introduction. – 2 Son réseau. – 3 Stern. – 4 Schacht, Levi della Vida, Rosenthal : arabisants exilés aux États-Unis. – 5 Heinrichs. – 6 Ambros. – 7 Kristeller, Kirsner & Berrada : au-delà du monde des arabisants. – 8 Pagnini : Bonebakker comme aîné bienveillant;. – 9 La correspondance, source d'informations sur l'auteur des lettres. – 10 La correspondance de deux savants : un regard comparatif. – 11 Conclusion.



#### Peer review

Submitted	2019-03-07
Accepted	2019-04-06
Published	2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Franssen, Elise (2019). "Le savant et son époque à travers sa correspondance. Seeger A. Bonebakker (1923-2005) et quelques notes sur Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī (696-764/1297-1363)". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 7-52.

## 1 Introduction

Au commencement de mon mandat Marie Skłodowska Curie consacré au secrétaire de chancellerie Ḥalil b. Aybak al-Şafadī et plus particulièrement à sa méthode de travail,<sup>1</sup> je découvre que le bureau qui m'est assigné à l'Università Ca' Foscari de Venise abrite également une petite partie de la collection d'un grand orientaliste du XXe siècle, Seeger<sup>2</sup> Adrianus Bonebakker (Wish, 1923-Zeist, 2005). L'érudit hollandais, spécialiste en poésie et rhétorique arabes (cf. sa bibliographie complète en annexe 2) a généreusement fait don de toute sa bibliothèque (d'une valeur estimée à 70,000 € en 2006) à l'Università Ca' Foscari de Venise, en plus d'une substantielle somme d'argent (226,890 €) destinée à en garantir le catalogage ainsi qu'à promouvoir le travail de jeunes chercheurs en littérature arabe pendant leur thèse ou juste après.<sup>3</sup> Le fond Bonebakker compte près de 8,000 livres, deux cents microfilms, au moins quatre-vingts microfilms imprimés, reliés et annotés de la main de Bonebakker (ces copies n'étant pas toutes issues des microfilms de sa collection), à peu près 1,200 tirés-à-part (et presque autant de photocopies)<sup>4</sup> d'articles,<sup>5</sup> la plupart d'entre eux étant dédiacés, quatre gros dossiers de correspondance, 26 fichiers bibliographiques, contenant des références aux sources primaires et secondaires, classées par ordre alphabétique (du nom de l'auteur et du titre d'ouvrage), thématique (avec un index des thèmes) ou chronologique (par année de décès de l'auteur ou date de rédaction de l'ouvrage), ainsi que 37 grosses boîtes de fiches de travail et notes personnelles, dont l'étude serait certainement très instructive ; son intégration aux collections de ce qui est maintenant la BALI (Biblioteca di Area Linguistica, Università Ca'

**1** Projet RASCIO : *Reader, Author, Scholar in a Context of Information Overflow. How to Manage and Master Knowledge When There is Too Much to Know ?*, Grant agreement 749180.

**2** Ou « Seger », comme ce prénom est habituellement orthographié aux Pays-Bas et comme il apparaît sur la page de titre de Bonebakker 1956, ou sous la plume de Schacht jusqu'au 27 septembre 1967, date après laquelle il écrit « Seeger ». La correspondance de Bonebakker et Schacht est conservée dans le dossier 3.

**3** Par exemple, une thèse de doctorat financée par le fond Bonebakker est actuellement en cours : Luca Rizzo, *Towards a Redefinition of Tawriya-Epigrams in the Mamluk Age* (titre provisoire) ; en 2015-2016, le projet post-doc de Simone Sibilio, intitulé *La geopoetica araba. Spazi saturi, territori instabili nella poesia araba contemporanea*, a également été co-financé par la donation. Au sujet de la donation Bonebakker, cf. Gherseti 2007. Les détails des circonstances de la donation ainsi que le courrier envoyé par la veuve de Bonebakker, Adelita Dieneke van Enter, pour notifier le Département de celle-ci, sont consignés dans le procès verbal du Conseil d'Administration de l'Università Ca' Foscari du 30 novembre 2006. Je remercie chaleureusement Mme M. Adriana Stama de m'avoir transmis ces informations.

**4** Dix-sept dossiers.

**5** Vingt gros dossiers, contenant chacune plus de 60 tirés-à-part, souvent dédiacés.



Figure 1 Ex-libris de Bonebakker

Foscari Venezia) fit doubler d'un coup le nombre de titres détenus alors par la bibliothèque en son siège de Ca' Cappello.<sup>6</sup>

Ce chercheur hollandais ayant voué une partie de sa production scientifique à al-Şafadī,<sup>7</sup> lui consacrer un article en ouverture de mon mandat, consacré précisément à l'auteur du *Wāfi*, n'est pas farfelu : al-Şafadī est donc un ami commun. Par ailleurs, en scrupuleux philologue qu'il était, Bonebakker s'est souvent intéressé aux sources utilisées par les auteurs qu'il étudiait et à la façon dont ceux-ci les utilisaient,<sup>8</sup> à leur méthode de travail, en somme. Enfin, et même si ce n'est pas le sujet de cet article, l'étude de ses fiches bibliographiques, de ses carnets de travail et de ses ouvrages annotés nous éclaireraient sur sa méthode de travail à lui. La méthodologie des érudits dans un contexte de circulation rapide de l'information et de surabondance de données (Bonebakker a vécu l'arrivée des e-mails et d'internet), ainsi que le rôle du réseau scientifique et des relations épistolaires entre savants, sont précisément deux des thèmes de mon projet autour de la *Taḍkira*

<sup>6</sup> Ca' Cappello est le palais gothique du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, donnant sur le Grand Canal, qui héberge actuellement une partie du Département des Études sur l'Asie et l'Afrique méditerranéennes (DSAAM), à savoir : les bureaux des professeurs et chercheurs travaillant dans les domaines arabe, hébreux, persan et turc, la bibliothèque qui les concerne, ainsi que plusieurs salles de cours. Le palais a appartenu au découvreur de Nimrud, l'archéologue anglais Sir Henry Austen Layard, cf. Damerini 1962 ; Zorzi, Fabris 2017, 78-80 ; Cussini 2018, 43 et *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. surtout Bonebakker 1966.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Bonebakker 1956, 1964, 1966, 1972a, 1977b, 1984c, 1986, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a.

d'al-Şafadī.<sup>9</sup> Cette petite étude sur la correspondance de Bonebakker sera le miroir de poche d'une partie de celle en cours sur al-Şafadī.

Un premier coup d'œil superficiel à la collection de l'érudit suffit à se rendre compte que Bonebakker était un homme organisé, qui ne jetait (presque) rien. Dans le cadre de cet article, nous nous attacherons plus spécifiquement à sa correspondance ;<sup>10</sup> celle-ci révèle plusieurs facettes de sa personnalité et de sa vie et, comme déjà mentionné, reflète son réseau. Tout au long de sa carrière – qui occupe toute la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle, puisqu'il est engagé à l'Université de Leiden dès 1949, soit avant même d'avoir soutenu sa thèse de doctorat (en 1956), et qu'il reste actif jusqu'à ce que sa santé et sa vue déclinantes ne le lui permettent plus, en 2004, l'année précédant son décès<sup>11</sup> – il a échangé des courriers (puis quelques e-mails, dont nous n'avons pas toujours gardé la trace), des références, des tirés-à-part et reproductions d'articles ou de manuscrits, des livres, des informations et des conseils avec les plus grands noms de la recherche en études arabes<sup>12</sup> de l'époque. Au vu des nombreuses lettres reçues et brouillons de réponses conservés et soigneusement classés, on mesure la valeur que Bonebakker accordait à sa correspondance, riche et variée. Il en va de même pour al-Şafadī, qui accordait lui aussi une grande importance aux échanges épistolaires en général – à la correspondance des figures littéraires importantes du passé, comme en atteste son *Al-mujārāh wa-l-mujāzāh fī mujārayāt al-šu'arā'*<sup>13</sup> – et aux siens en particulier, au point de leur consacrer un ouvrage entier, intitulé *Alḥān al-sawāji' bayna al-bādī' wa-l-murāji'* (2005).

**9** Aussi appelée *al-taḥkira al-şalāhiyya* ou *al-şafadiyya*, il s'agit d'un carnet de lecture, une sorte de *memorandum* où al-Şafadī gardait trace de ce qui lui semblait digne d'être retenu parmi ce qu'il lisait et ce qu'il écrivait. Cf. *EP*, X, 53.

**10** Renseignements pris auprès du service juridique de l'Université, pour s'assurer qu'aucune des règles en vigueur en matière de protection de la vie privée n'est violée, il faudrait obtenir l'autorisation expresse de publier ces notes au sujet de la correspondance Bonebakker auprès de ses descendants. À ma connaissance, Bonebakker n'a pas de descendants. Par ailleurs, il est permis de supposer que, si Bonebakker avait voulu éviter que sa correspondance soit connue, il ne l'aurait pas incluse dans la donation.

**11** La plupart des données biographiques sont tirées de la correspondance et des archives personnelles de Bonebakker, mais d'excellents aperçus de la vie de Bonebakker sont van Gelder 2006, Ghersetti 2007, Davidson et al. s.d.

**12** Mais aussi en histoire de la Renaissance européenne (Kristeller), en études germaniques contemporaines (cf. Frühwald et Kirsner fils) et même en gastro-entérologie (Kirsner père), cf. ci-dessous, § 7.

**13** Ou *Iḥtibār al-Iḥtibār*, dont l'holographe est conservé à la Chester Beatty Library, ms 5183, cf. Arberry 1964, vii, 59. Il a récemment fait l'objet de deux éditions, que je n'ai pas encore pu consulter, cf. al-Şafadī 2018 (éd. Banāt & 'Abd al-Hādī) et al-Şafadī 2018 (éd. al-Jarrāḥ). Holographe signifie « entièrement de la main de son auteur », alors que le terme « autographe » peut désigner un texte dont seule une petite partie serait de la main de son auteur ; cf. Bauden, Franssen 2019, Gacek 2019.



Ceci dit, comme on le verra plus en détail à la fin de cet article, Bonebakker et al-Şafadī ne concevaient pas la correspondance de la même manière et n'en attendaient pas la même chose : pour Bonebakker, il s'agissait surtout de demander l'avis ou la collaboration de ses collègues, de répondre à ces mêmes sollicitations de leur part, et d'offrir et recevoir des tirés-à-parts, alors que dans le cas d'al-Şafadī, l'enjeu était, outre de se faire connaître, de se faire accepter dans tel ou tel domaine du savoir (en recevant des *ijāza*-s, par exemple) et de diffuser ses travaux et ses textes, en vers ou en prose.

Le goût de Bonebakker pour l'échange de lettres explique peut-être qu'il se soit intéressé à la correspondance d'al-Şafadī – qui n'a été publiée que l'année de son décès : dans ses microfilms,<sup>14</sup> on trouve un extrait (à peine 6 feuillets) du *Kitāb nuşrat al-tā'ir 'alā al-maṭal al-sā'ir* d'al-Şafadī avec la mention, sur la boîte du microfilm : *Brievens-Interessant* (Lettres-intéressant) de la main de Bonebakker. Malheureusement, il n'y pas de mention de bibliothèque, juste les chiffres « 868 », à côté du titre de l'œuvre et du nom de l'auteur, qui doivent être une cote, puisque c'est la cote qui figure sur les autres boîtes de microfilms. À la lecture de la liste intitulée *Filing Cabinet at Home, Second Drawer from Bottom* que l'on trouve dans le même tiroir, réalisée pour faciliter le déménagement de la bibliothèque de Bonebakker de Los Angeles à Zeist et contenant la liste des microfilms se trouvant dans le meuble en question, on comprend que Bonebakker ne savait plus de quelle bibliothèque provenait ce microfilm, mais que celui-ci était originaire d'Istanbul. La consultation de GAL (GII, 41 ; SII, 29), Karabulut (Karabulut, A.R., Karabulut A.T. 2001, 1088) et de l'édition du texte (al-Şafadī 1971, 29-35) ne permet pas de formuler une hypothèse plausible. D'après les ouvrages consultés, les manuscrits stambouliotes du texte sont au nombre de quatre : Brockelmann, dans le deuxième volume de suppléments, cite Köprülü 1405, Topkapı 2439 et Feyzullah 1767-68 ; dans l'ouvrage des Karabulut, on trouve en outre mention du manuscrit 4349 de la Nuruosmaniye, qu'ils sont les seuls à citer. On pourrait penser qu'il s'agit du ms de Feyzullah, d'après Brockelmann en 2 volumes cotés 1767 et 1768 et que Bonebakker aurait fait une erreur (grossière) en copiant la cote. Cependant, une vérification effectuée sur place montre qu'il ne s'agit pas de ce manuscrit-là,<sup>15</sup> ni d'aucun des manuscrits stambouliotes connus du texte. Le manuscrit semble dater du début de l'époque ottomane et le microfilm est fabriqué en Belgique, ce qui ne nous aide pas vraiment. Le mystère reste entier.

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**14** Aucune liste complète des microfilms légués par Bonebakker n'existant à ce jour, je ne peux que renvoyer à la collection elle-même.

**15** Je remercie chaleureusement Frédéric Bauden d'avoir effectué cette vérification lors d'un séjour à Istanbul en mars 2018.



Figure 2 Dossiers contenant la correspondance de Bonebakker

À la lecture de ce microfilm, on trouve effectivement l'extrait d'une lettre d'al-Şafadī « à un ami » (*ilā ba'd al-aşhāb*), au sujet des tourments que donne la fièvre, à peine quelques lignes, en *saj'*, contenant un vers d'al-Mutanabbī (al-Şafadī 1971, 334). Ce passage du texte avait certainement été conseillé à Bonebakker par un collègue, pour une raison qui nous échappe malheureusement aujourd'hui ; aucune trace de ce texte ne figure dans sa correspondance ni dans sa bibliographie.<sup>16</sup>

## 2 Son réseau

Se(e)ger Adrianus Bonebakker est né à Wish le 21 septembre 1923. Il a fait ses études à l'Université de Leiden et y a soutenu sa thèse de doctorat en 1956. Après 4 ans à l'Université de Leiden, il est parti aux États-Unis où il fit tout le reste de sa carrière : d'abord à Columbia, de 1960 à 1969, puis à UCLA, de 1969 jusqu'à sa retraite en 1991. En 1994, il est de retour aux Pays-Bas, avec son épouse Adelita (Lita) Bonebakker-van Enter, non loin de Leiden : à Zeist. C'est là qu'il passera la fin de ses jours. Il est décédé le 19 novembre 2005.

L'ensemble des correspondants de Bonebakker dont une trace est conservée dans le fond compte pas moins de 43 personnes, rattachées à 28 institutions dans 8 pays (v. la liste en annexe 1). Avant de détailler certaines de ces relations épistolaires, nous

<sup>16</sup> Le *Kitāb nuşrat al-ţā'ir 'alā al-maṭal al-sā'ir* d'al-Şafadī est cité dans Bonebakker 1960, 193 : Bonebakker y identifie le manuscrit Nuruosmaniye 4349 comme étant une copie de cet ouvrage et non, comme le pensent Brockelmann et Rescher, un fragment du *Maṭal as-sā'ir* d'Ibn al-Aḫīr. On trouve encore mention de l'ouvrage dans Bonebakker 1996, 89, 90 et note 29, et dans Bonebakker 1996b, 150, mais aucune allusion à ce passage-là.

allons passer en revue les quatre grands groupes qui s'en dégagent.<sup>17</sup>

Un premier groupe pourrait être qualifié d'amitiés « germaniques ». On évoquera les relations de Bonebakker avec Joseph Schacht (1902-1969) et Wolfhart Heinrichs (1941-2014) un peu plus loin, mais on peut tout de suite aborder celle entretenue avec Gregor Schoeler (1944-), qui commence en 1978, à l'initiative de Bonebakker et grâce à Wolfhart Heinrichs qui semble avoir été le trait d'union entre les deux savants, plus proche de chacun des deux que les deux ne l'étaient entre eux : c'est Heinrichs qui donna l'adresse de Schoeler à Bonebakker en janvier 1978. Et Heinrichs ajoute une note manuscrite amicale, en anglais, à un courrier formel en allemand, co-signé avec Schoeler, proposant à Bonebakker de participer au *Festschrift* en l'honneur d'Ewald Wagner (1927-) (Behn 2004, 3 : 604) à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire (Heinrichs, Schoeler 1994). La réponse de Bonebakker n'est pas conservée dans le dossier, mais un article de lui figure bel et bien dans le deuxième volume de l'ouvrage collectif en question (Bonebakker 1994) et le détail des circonstances de la rédaction de l'article est consigné dans différentes lettres à Heinrichs (cf. ci-dessous, § 5). D'après les dossiers conservés, Schoeler et Bonebakker s'échangèrent une quarantaine de lettres, de 1978 à 2001, notamment autour de la relecture d'un article d'Alfred Bloch (1915-1983) (Behn 2004, 1 : 175), publié à titre posthume par Schoeler, dans la revue de la société suisse d'études asiatiques, intitulé « Stilfiguren in der altarabischen Dichtung » (Bloch 1991). Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003, qu'on évoquera plus en détail ci-dessous, § 4) est lui aussi associé à ce réseau germanique et échange épisodiquement des nouvelles de Schoeler avec Bonebakker et vice-versa.<sup>18</sup>

Un autre membre du groupe germanique, qui devint lui aussi, comme Schoeler, professeur en Suisse, est (Johann) Christoph Bürgel (1931-) (Behn 2004, 1 : 241). Les lettres conservées s'échelonnent entre 1972 et 1987. L'une d'entre elles est révélatrice des scrupules de Bonebakker : il avait invité Bürgel à UCLA pour faire une conférence et un incident s'est produit : un membre du public peu informé et agressif est intervenu de manière désobligeante.<sup>19</sup> Dans sa lettre du 10 août 1977, Bonebakker se confond en excuses (alors qu'il n'y est pour rien), promet de diffuser le récit de cette malheureuse expérience pour éventuellement fermer ces conférences au public

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**17** Pour d'évidentes raisons de protection de la vie privée et sauf avis contraire des personnes concernées, nous n'entrerons pas dans les détails des relations de Bonebakker avec des chercheurs toujours en vie aujourd'hui.

**18** Par exemple, dans sa lettre du 28 septembre 1996 à Bonebakker, Rosenthal demande des nouvelles de ses vacances en Suisse, dont Schoeler l'a informé ; dossier 3.

**19** La conférence a eu lieu au printemps ou à l'été 1977, à UCLA. La question désobligeante concernait l'érotisme en Islam et était l'œuvre d'une certaine Mrs. Bodenstein, comme on l'apprend dans la lettre de Bürgel datée du 2 juillet 1977, dossier 2.

et assure Bürgel qu'il s'agit d'un événement isolé : « Please, do not take what happened on this occasion as representative of academic meetings at UCLA or elsewhere in the country. In general, the atmosphere at such gatherings is extremely cordial » (lettre du 10 août 1977, dossier 2).

Le groupe germanique inclut également Heinz Halm (1942-) (Behn 2004, 2 : 14), pour lequel une lettre de Tübingen datée du 25 février 1995 et un tiré-à-part sont conservés (Halm 1989), ou Manfred Kropp (1947-) (Behn 2004, 2 : 314), avec qui il échangea quelques lettres assez formelles en 1976-77 (trois lettres et trois réponses sont conservées). Même s'ils sont d'origine néerlandaise, Hans Daiber (1942-) (Behn 2004, 1 : 360) et John Nawas<sup>20</sup> peuvent être inclus dans ce groupe. Les échanges entre Bonebakker et Nawas datent de 1993. Nawas lui proposait de publier un article dans la revue *Sharqiyyât : tijdschrift van de Nederlandse Vereniging voor de Studie van het Midden-Oosten en de Islam*, qu'il dirigeait alors. Il semble que Bonebakker n'ait pas répondu positivement à cette proposition (voire pas répondu du tout : aucune trace de réponse de sa part n'est conservée). Quant à Daiber, il apparaît dans les papiers de Bonebakker en 1995, sous la plume de Rosenthal d'abord,<sup>21</sup> puis par une lettre du 6 décembre 1995, sur papier à entête du Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität Orientalisches Seminar (Frankfurt-am-Main), où il mentionne un article de Bonebakker ;<sup>22</sup> de nouveau, aucune réponse de la part de Bonebakker à ce sujet n'est conservée, mais, dans les deux cas, on ne peut évidemment pas exclure qu'il ait répondu par téléphone ou de vive voix.

Le deuxième groupe de correspondants est italien. L'amour de Bonebakker et de son épouse pour l'Italie explique en partie l'importance de ses correspondants italiens. En effet, l'Italie fut la destination de vacances des Bonebakker pendant plus d'un demi siècle (van Gelder 2006, 20) et leur goût pour le pays dépassait le simple attrait touristique : Bonebakker est personnellement attristé par le séisme du 26 septembre 1997 en Ombrie et dans les Marches il écrit le 7 octobre :

We are following the sad news from Italy almost hour by hour. We were planning a short vacation in Rome in November, but now feel almost ashamed to go and enjoy ourselves in a country that is suffering.<sup>23</sup>

**20** Je n'ai pas trouvé sa date de naissance, mais une brève biographie de lui est disponible sur la page des directeurs de la School of Abbasid Studies : <https://www.abbasidstudies.org/about/directors/> (2019-06-21).

**21** Lettre du 10 septembre 1995, dossier 3.

**22** Certainement Bonebakker 1992, mais la référence à l'article est incomplète et l'écriture de Daiber n'est pas facile à déchiffrer.

**23** Lettre du 7 octobre 1997 à Antonella Ghersetti, dossier 1.

C'est également par amour pour l'Italie, et particulièrement pour Venise, qu'il décide de léguer sa collection personnelle à Ca' Foscari (van Gelder 2006, 21). Ses correspondants italiens sont de toutes les générations : des 'anciens', comme Giorgio Levi della Vida (1886-1967) ou Francesco Gabrieli (1904-1996), auxquels nous reviendrons ; des contemporains : comme Renato Traini (1923-2014) (cf. Behn 2004, 3 : 530-1 ; Baffioni 2015), qui lui communique son « ammirazione » pour « The vicissitudes of two lines of poetry » et leurs « appendices » (cf. Bonebakker 1996, 1996b) sur une carte postale représentant l'allégorie de la science de Giovanni Serodine, ou Rosella Dorigo (1945-), avec qui il correspond au sujet d'un projet de publication dans les *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* en 1991-92<sup>24</sup> et à qui il confie son projet de rédiger une « chrestomathy [...] for those students who have a good knowledge in grammar, but little experience in reading mediaeval texts », qui deviendra le fameux *Reader of Classical Arabic Literature*,<sup>25</sup> et de plus jeunes encore, comme Antonella Ghersetti (1962-), avec qui il échangea de nombreux courriers, fax et conversations téléphoniques, qui s'occupa de la gestion de son héritage avec Lita Bonebakker et qui s'occupe encore aujourd'hui du fond Bonebakker à Venise ; et d'autres encore, qu'il a parfois beaucoup aidés, tout au long de sa vie, comme en témoignent les travaux annotés d'Anna Pagnini (1964-2004), sur lesquels nous reviendrons, ou de Bruna Soravia (1960-), avec laquelle il échangea pas moins de 16 lettres entre 1988 et 1991, autour du sujet de thèse de la jeune chercheuse, qui projetait par ailleurs un séjour à UCLA à ses côtés.

C'est également ce même esprit d'entraide et de bienveillance de la part de l'ainé, du plus expérimenté, qui ressort de sa correspondance avec le groupe américain. Les brouillons de pas moins de 10 lettres de recommandation, de la main de Bonebakker et en faveur d'une même personne, sont conservés, parfois à côté des lettres de demandes ; la personne en question a dû être un peu légère puisque dans un cas, joint à l'un de ces brouillons, on trouve une réponse désolée de la part d'un doyen d'université remerciant « dear Seeger » pour sa lettre de recommandation mais indiquant que l'intéressé n'avait jamais postulé et que la date limite était désormais passée.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> La proposition de Rosella Dorigo date du 26 avril 1991 et fait suite au congrès de l'UEAI d'Utrecht (13-19 septembre 1990 Utrecht/Driebergen) ; la réponse de Bonebakker est datée du 17 août 1992 (et contient des excuses pour le retard avec lequel elle arrive) ; il y explique qu'il peut envoyer quelque chose qu'il avait présenté au congrès annuel de l'AOS mais qu'il lui faut une réponse rapide car il va redéménager en Europe peu après. L'échange est classé dans le dossier 1. L'article qui sera publié est Bonebakker 1992.

<sup>25</sup> Bonebakker, Fischbein 1996. Le *Reader* a été testé sur les étudiants de la Ca Foscari en 1994, avant l'établissement définitif du texte et à la demande de Bonebakker.

<sup>26</sup> Lettre de Fredi Chiappelli datée du 3 mars 1982, dossier 2.

D'une manière générale, le contenu de la correspondance de Bonebakker concerne au premier chef les échanges de tirés-à-part, les projets de participation à des colloques, les échanges de lettres de soutien ou de recommandation, les informations à propos de l'avancement du travail d'étudiants et de doctorants et, de plus en plus, le temps passant, l'échange de nouvelles personnelles. Nous allons à présent passer en revue les correspondants de Bonebakker particulièrement bien représentés : leur proximité, le volume de leurs échanges épistolaires ou la nature de leurs relations font ressortir ces personnalités, qui ne relèvent pas toutes du monde des arabisants.

### 3 Stern

Samuel Miklos Stern (1920-1969) est le premier correspondant du premier dossier : la petite enveloppe de papier kraft contenant leurs échanges figure en première position et la date de ces échanges est également la plus précoce, puisque, quand une date apparaît, elle se situe dans les années '50, plusieurs lettres étant datées de 1957. À l'époque, Bonebakker est jeune enseignant à l'Université de Leiden et Stern est *fellow* du All Souls College d'Oxford. Ils sont strictement contemporains - Stern est à peine 3 ans plus âgé que Bonebakker -, mais l'impression qui se dégage de la lecture de leur correspondance est que Stern jouait le rôle de conseiller de Bonebakker. La nature même de ce qui nous est parvenu de leurs échanges en atteste : à plusieurs reprises, on trouve uniquement des extraits de textes arabes recopiés et traduits par Bonebakker, avec des questions posées à Stern. Les traductions sont corrigées de la main de Stern, directement sur le document de Bonebakker, et les réponses figurent souvent sous les questions. Seuls trois documents ne présentent que la main de Stern, des lettres brèves, sur papier à entête du All Souls College, mais dont l'en-tête est biffé et remplacé par l'adresse personnelle de Stern, 39, Portland Road, Oxford. Ces lettres sont datées du 31 octobre 1957, du 2 novembre 1957 et du 8 décembre [1957]. Le ton est familier et direct et on y lit des informations personnelles : les circonstances du décès de la belle-sœur de Stern, par exemple, ou le bref récit d'un week-end à la campagne. La rapidité des échanges indique également la proximité des deux chercheurs. Dans le même dossier figurent pas moins de quatre livrets commémoratifs, *in memoriam* et annonce du décès de Stern, disparu précocement, ce qui montre une fois de plus l'attachement qui les liait. Par contre, Bonebakker n'avait pas encore pris l'habitude de conserver les brouillons des lettres qu'il envoyait, ce qui fait que cette documentation est parcellaire.

Les textes annotés et corrigés sont principalement des extraits de la *Risāla* d'al-Quṣayrī (m. 475/1072).<sup>27</sup> On trouve aussi des extraits des *ʿUyūn al-aḥbār* et du *Šiʿr* d'Ibn Qutayba (m. 276/889).<sup>28</sup> Ces échanges sont dans la continuité de ceux que les deux hommes entretiennent durant la rédaction de la thèse de doctorat de Bonebakker, comme en attestent ces quelques lignes tirées de la préface de celle-ci, où Stern est la première personne à être remerciée :

In particular, I wish to thank Dr. S.M. Stern, who directed my attention to the existence of parallels between Qudāma's *Naqd al-Šiʿr* and the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Galen; and with whom, during the early stages of my work, I discussed several difficult passages. (Bonebakker 1956, vii)

On pourrait imaginer que le choix d'Oxford comme lieu de séjour pour l'année sabbatique de Bonebakker en 1967-8, en vue de travailler sur la *Ḥilyat al-Muḥādara* d'al-Hātimī,<sup>29</sup> ait été dicté par les sentiments qui liaient les deux amis, mais rien ne nous permet de l'affirmer. En outre, si l'on en croit l'adresse qui figure sur les courriers qu'il reçoit cette année-là de Paul Oskar Kristeller (1905-1999), il ne logeait pas à Oxford-même, mais à « Wytham near Oxford », chez le Prof. Kent Hieatt (m. 2009).<sup>30</sup>

#### 4 Schacht, Levi della Vida, Rosenthal : arabisants exilés aux États-Unis

Joseph Schacht (1902-1969) (cf. Lewis 1970 ; Behn 2004, 3 : 314) était allemand de naissance (il naquit à Ratibor, en Silésie, qui faisait alors partie de l'Allemagne et aujourd'hui, de la Pologne) et de formation (Breslau, Leipzig, Freiburg im Breisgau) et si les Nazis n'avaient pas pris le pouvoir, il serait certainement resté en Allemagne, en tant que professeur de langues orientales, à Königsberg ou ailleurs (cf. Lewis 1970, 378). Les changements politiques en Allemagne l'ont poussé à voyager (Égypte, Royaume-Uni) et il continua son périple après la guerre. Entre 1954 et 1957, il était professeur d'arabe à l'Université de Leiden. À l'époque, Bonebakker y terminait sa thèse de doctorat. Les deux hommes se connaissaient depuis 1952, comme Bonebakker l'indique lui-même dans une lettre adressée à Franz

<sup>27</sup> *EP*, V, 526-7.

<sup>28</sup> Utilisés dans Bonebakker 1960-61. Sur Ibn Qutayba, cf. *EP*, III, 844-7.

<sup>29</sup> Comme on le lit dans un courrier envoyé à Franz Rosenthal le 20 octobre 1969, dossier 3.

<sup>30</sup> Spécialiste de la littérature anglaise, cf. In Memoriam : Hieatt 2009.

Rosenthal et datée du 20 octobre 1969.<sup>31</sup> Schacht, qui remplaçait Kramers, décédé, fut son directeur de thèse et quand Schacht partit pour Columbia, c'est Bonebakker qui le remplaça, avant de le rejoindre outre-Atlantique. Seize lettres de Schacht sont conservées dans les dossiers de Ca' Cappello. Elles datent surtout de la période tout juste consécutive au départ de Schacht et ont trait aux avancées des cours et des étudiants. Le ton est plutôt formel. Une lettre datée du 27 septembre 1967 concerne les problèmes liés à la publication posthume d'un livre de Levi della Vida avec un certain H.-K. « officially responsible for it » ;<sup>32</sup> le ton a changé, il est devenu plus amical (la lettre commence par « dear Seeger » et est signée « Joe »), la relation de maître à élève semble avoir fait place à une relation de collègues. On y apprend que Schacht connaissait Levi della Vida depuis 1923. Bonebakker a conservé l'annonce du décès de Schacht rédigée par le comité éditorial de l'*Encyclopédie de l'Islam* et l'a classée dans une pochette contenant également des livrets commémoratifs de Samuel Miklos Stern et de Gustav E. von Grünebaum (1909-1972) (cf. Behn 2004, 1 : 676 ; Rosenthal 1973).

Giorgio Levi della Vida (1886-1967)<sup>33</sup> fait lui aussi partie du groupe des Européens exilés aux États-Unis en raison des lois raciales promulguées au milieu du XXe siècle : il enseigne à l'Université de Pennsylvanie de 1939 à 1943. Sémitiste renommé, il est également connu pour ses travaux sur les manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane (cf. Levi della Vida 1935, 1939), où il travailla de 1932 à 1939 suite à son éviction du corps professoral de l'Université de Rome en raison de son refus de jurer fidélité au fascisme. Seules deux lettres de Levi della Vida sont conservées dans les papiers de Bonebakker, mais elles sont toutes les deux extrêmement chaleureuses et laissent penser que la relation entre les deux hommes était plus que cordiale. La première date du 19 août 1956. Il s'agit de la réponse de Levi della Vida à l'envoi par Bonebakker de son édition du *Naqd al-Ši'r* de Qudāma (1956). À la lecture de ce courrier très élogieux et très encourageant, on comprend que Bonebakker avait sollicité l'aide de Levi della Vida durant la rédaction de sa thèse et que celui-ci n'avait pas répondu à ses questions en raison de la « dépression nerveuse » dans laquelle plusieurs drames familiaux l'avaient plongé les deux dernières années. Levi della Vida fait allusion, entre autres, au décès de son épouse, survenu en 1955. On sait par ailleurs que, à partir de 1952, il diminua drastiquement toute activité « de représentation », telles que les participations aux colloques, congrès

**31** Soit à peine plus de deux mois après le décès de Schacht ; dossier 3.

**32** S'agit-il de Tibor Halasi-Kun (1914-1991) ? À son sujet, cf. Bayerle 1993 ; Behn 2004, 2 : 9.

**33** Behn 2004, 2 : 414 ; Soravia 2005 ; correspondance conservée dans le dossier 2.



et réunions d'orientalistes (cf. Soravia 2005, 809). Mais en août 1956, il semble remis de ses difficultés puisqu'il rédige un véritable compte-rendu critique de l'édition de Bonebakker qu'il lui adresse personnellement. Il relève quelques erreurs et rares (« exceedingly few ») fautes de frappe ou d'impression, donne plusieurs orientations bibliographiques et propositions de corrections et son appréciation générale :

Be that as it may, both your edition and your introduction represent an invaluable addition to our knowledge of the literary theories of the Arabs, and by them, you have reached an outstanding rank among scholars. May your future work be as brilliant as your «primitiae».<sup>34</sup>

La deuxième lettre de l'illustre orientaliste italien est du même acabit. Écrite dans les mêmes circonstances – il s'agit d'une lettre de remerciement et d'appréciation, datée du 20 mars 1967 et manuscrite, cette fois, qui fait suite à l'envoi par Bonebakker d'une autre publication : celle qui concerne le *Faḡḡ al-Ḥitām* d'al-Ṣafadī (1966-), elle est également extrêmement élogieuse et démontre encore une fois que Levi della Vida a lu sérieusement, avec bienveillance et attention critique, l'ouvrage de son collègue. Le ton est à la fois chaleureux et proche (il espère revoir Bonebakker et son épouse à Rome et félicite celle-ci pour l'obtention de sa licence en médecine), amusant (s'il a tant tardé à lui répondre, c'est parce qu'il voulait d'abord lire son livre avant de l'en remercier : « too many people are thanking for works which they never read nor will read ! ») et sérieux (quand il cite les ajouts et corrections à apporter à l'ouvrage). Il fait également allusion au Prix Giorgio Levi della Vida (« you certainly would find it ridiculous that such a distinguished award should be given my name ! ») et à une certaine Miss Gippen en fin de thèse, qu'il ne m'a pas été possible d'identifier.

Est-il nécessaire de présenter Franz Rosenthal<sup>35</sup> ? Né à Berlin, il fit une thèse sur les inscriptions palmyréennes et leur lien avec l'araméen. L'avènement des Nazis entraîna la révocation des professeurs d'université de confession juive, dont deux de ses mentors, Paul Kraus (1904-1944) (cf. Behn 2004, 2 : 307) et Richard Walzer (1900-1975) (cf. Behn 2004, 3 : 612). Ce dernier fuit en Italie, où Rosenthal le suivit brièvement, avant de retourner, tout aussi brièvement, en Allemagne. Rosenthal quitta définitivement son pays en 1938 et émigra en Suède, puis aux États-Unis. Il y continua sa carrière académique, d'abord au Hebrew Union College, puis à l'Université de Pennsylvanie

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**34** Levi della Vida, courrier du 19 août 1956, dossier 3.

**35** Reisman 2003 ; Behn 2004, 3 : 252-3 ; correspondance conservée dans le dossier 2.

et enfin à Yale. Sa bibliographie impressionnante (cf. Rosenthal 1990, ix-xxvii) reflète la grande variété de ses sujets d'études, de la philosophie aux sciences exactes, en passant par la littérature arabe et les études bibliques, l'histoire « sociologique » (selon son expression) et l'historiographie, le tout soutenu par une grande maîtrise de la philologie et une profonde connaissance des manuscrits. Les premières lettres conservées qu'il a échangées avec Bonebakker datent de septembre-octobre 1969, quand Rosenthal était déjà à Yale (il y entre en 1956). Mais il est manifeste que les deux hommes se connaissaient déjà puisque Rosenthal mentionne le carton de changement d'adresse que Bonebakker lui a envoyé au moment de son déménagement à Los Angeles. En outre, le ton est cordial mais toujours empreint de solennité, particulièrement dans les formules de politesse. Ce premier échange de courriers conservé concerne notamment le choc de la mort de Schacht, qu'ils connaissaient bien et depuis longtemps et qu'ils avaient tous deux récemment vu sans déceler un quelconque signe annonciateur de son décès. Treize lettres de Rosenthal sont conservées, couvrant les années 1969 à 1997, mais les brouillons de Bonebakker ne sont manifestement pas tous conservés : seuls huit d'entre eux se trouvent dans le dossier et Rosenthal fait allusion à d'autres lettres de Bonebakker. La relation entre les deux hommes change au cours du temps ; à partir de 1979, ils s'appellent par leurs prénoms. Bonebakker invite Rosenthal à venir loger chez lui quand il déménage de son appartement à la maison que sa femme et lui achètent à Los Angeles à l'été 1979. Les deux collègues discutent de travail, ou d'étudiants en commun, notamment Everett Rowson. Celui-ci collabora grandement à *l'Onomasticon Arabicum* (cf. Rowson, Bonebakker 1980, 1985), sous la direction de Bonebakker alors qu'il était en thèse avec Rosenthal, ce qui valut ce commentaire de son directeur de thèse, le 2 avril 1980 :

I was glad to hear that the Yatîmah is finished now. Everett wrote me that [he will]<sup>36</sup> come back to you to complete the work on al-Bâkharzî. [...] But please remind<sup>37</sup> him of the necessity to complete his dissertation!<sup>38</sup>

Par ailleurs, ils s'écrivent mutuellement des rapports de travaux pour des demandes de financement ou de prix. Bonebakker sollicite Rosenthal pour la National Endowment for History et pour la

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**36** Ajout manuscrit suscrit.

**37** Rature : « remknd » avec un « i » suscrit sur le « k » erroné.

**38** Les fautes de frappe sont très rares dans les lettres de Rosenthal ; le fait qu'il en fasse deux dans ce court extrait serait-il révélateur d'un certain agacement face à un étudiant très doué qui 'perd' du temps en travaillant pour les autres et non pour lui ?

fondation Guggenheim. Les demandes à la NEH seront couronnées de succès, contrairement à celle à la fondation Guggenheim, ce qui embête beaucoup Bonebakker : il se doutait qu'il ne serait pas éligible, mais s'était laissé convaincre par son collègue Stanislav Segert (1921-2005) (cf. Behn 2004, 3 : 355). Il se donna du mal pour rendre un dossier, sollicita d'autres personnes pour être recommandé (notamment Ambros, cf. ci-dessous, § 6) et finalement ne reçut pas le financement.

De son côté, Bonebakker a écrit une magnifique lettre au sujet du travail de Rosenthal à la demande de la fondation MacArthur et peut-être sur le conseil de P.O. Kristeller, qui avait reçu ce financement en 1983.<sup>39</sup> En voici un extrait :

It is almost embarrassing to be asked to write a recommendation for a senior scholar who is recognized as one of the greatest in his field. Professor Rosenthal is famous not only as a Semitist, but also as a scholar of Islam. I am best qualified to express an opinion on his work in this second capacity: he has written books that have already become classics, such as his Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship and Knowledge Triumphant, which one reads and re-reads. Much of his work is based on unknown or little known manuscripts. This of course enhances the value of his studies which are not limited to an interpretation of text that are already familiar. Prof Rosenthal should also be considered one of the pioneers in the exploration of manuscript collections, especially in Turkey. The time and effort that went into this type of work can hardly be overestimated and few of us can hope to achieve in their lifetime even a fraction of what he has done. It should also be noted that Professor Rosenthal's studies cover an unusually wide range of subjects: history of philosophy, historiography, traditions of Muslim scholarship, and the history of Arabic literature, to mention only a few. [Emphase de l'Auteur]

Malgré ces éloges, Rosenthal ne figure pas dans la liste des personnalités ayant profité de ce financement. Enfin, les échanges de tirés-à-part sont très fréquents et Rosenthal est toujours très élogieux, bien qu'en peu de mots, à l'égard du travail de Bonebakker. Ainsi, le 27 juin 1971, il écrit :

**39** La fondation John D. et Catherine T. MacArthur, à Chicago, a pour but « d'identifier des personnalités exceptionnelles en termes de mérite et de créativité et de les financer pendant 5 années pour qu'elles puissent accomplir le travail original de leur choix, quel qu'il soit ». Lettre de Samuel M. Grupper du 22 novembre 1983 à Bonebakker pour lui demander s'il considère que Rosenthal mérite ce financement et s'il connaît d'autres candidats possibles. La fondation est toujours active aujourd'hui, cf. <https://www.mac-found.org> (2019-06-24).

Just a note of thanks for the off-print of « Poets and critics » [Bonebakker 1970a], which certainly is chock full of interesting material and in my opinion does much to clarify confusions and misunderstandings. (Dossier 3)

Le 8 octobre 1988, à propos de « Early Arabic Literature and the Term *Adab* » (1984a), il indique :

It builds another path through the (for me) quite impenetrable jungle of Arabic literary theory, and, of course, stands on firm ground, in contrast to a good deal of fashionable writing in literary subjects that is going on these days. (Dossier 3)

Les dernières lettres de Rosenthal sont empreintes d'ennui. Il a peu de nouvelle à donner car il n'est plus « in the loop » à Yale et il semble qu'il ne se passe pas grand chose dans sa vie. Le 28 septembre 1996, il indique tout de même qu'il a reçu des échos similaires à l'expérience de fin de carrière de Bonebakker à UCLA, « gentiment » poussé vers la sortie par l'administration :

It seems that practically every professor at every campus of the University of California has accepted the 'golden handshake', apparently meant to improve the finances of the University rather than theirs. I am inclined, though, to believe that this is a passing phase and things will improve - in our field, where good people are scarce, this might not prove easy. (Dossier 3)

En conclusion, ce qui ressort de la correspondance entre Bonebakker et Rosenthal c'est une grande estime et progressivement de l'affection, principalement de la part de Rosenthal qui semble s'ennuyer pendant ses années de retraite et qui propose régulièrement à Bonebakker (et à son épouse) de lui rendre visite. Il semble que, pour une raison ou une autre, cela ne se soit pas souvent concrétisé.

## 5 Heinrichs

Au début de sa relation épistolaire avec Wolfhart Heinrichs (1941-2014),<sup>40</sup> Bonebakker semble légèrement en retrait, bien qu'extrêmement poli et généreux en tirés-à-part comme à son habitude. L'apparition inattendue de ce jeune chercheur venant remettre en cause ses idées et une partie de ce qu'il a publié à propos de *l'isti'āra*, à une période où lui-même se

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<sup>40</sup> Behn 2004, 2 : 55 ; NELC Website ; Cooperson 2014. Leur correspondance est conservée dans le dossier 3.

trouve trop occupé par les tâches administratives et d'enseignement (comme il l'écrit à plusieurs reprises dans ses courriers à Heinrichs datés du 11 août 1975, du 8 février 1978<sup>41</sup> et du 21 janvier 1981) doit l'avoir ennuyé. Cependant, les années passant, les deux hommes apprennent à se connaître et à s'apprécier. Le tournant se situe en janvier 1982, quand Bonebakker fournit à Heinrichs une longue liste de références au sujet de *maṭāl* et d'*isti'āra*, ainsi qu'une liste des microfilms en sa possession contenant des commentaires d'al-Mutanabbī, lui proposant de lui faire parvenir une copie des microfilms qui l'intéresseraient, avec cette note : « as long as libraries are not cooperative I think one should not have too many scruples about sharing documents ».<sup>42</sup>

Les relations sont devenues franchement amicales quand les deux hommes et leurs épouses se sont rencontrés. Cela s'est probablement passé en mars 1982, au colloque de l'AOS : Heinrichs indique qu'il a le projet d'y aller avec son épouse, Alma Heinrichs-Giese,<sup>43</sup> dans son courrier du 21 janvier 1982 et le document suivant dans la correspondance est une carte de vœux de la main d'Alma, datée du 16 décembre 1982, dans laquelle elle salue également Lita. Les deux hommes ne s'écrivent plus jusqu'à la fin de 1985 et c'est Heinrichs qui reprend contact avec un courrier du 31 octobre, où il regrette le fait qu'ils se soient perdus de vue, indiquant qu'il est un « very lazy letter writer ». Par ailleurs, il indique son projet de proposer un panel de poésie arabe classique à l'AOS de New Haven où il invite Bonebakker. Celui-ci lui répond le 24 novembre l'informant qu'il lui est compliqué de se libérer de ses cours et, plus confidentiellement, qu'il a été souvent malade les deux années précédentes et que s'il participe à l'AOS, ce sera une décision de dernière minute. Bonebakker ajoute : « I enclose an article on the term *adab*.<sup>44</sup> I do not think that it is much of a success and perhaps I should not have written it. Maybe it can still be useful in some ways » [emphasis de l'Auteur]. Heinrichs lui répond dans une carte de vœux, signée également par sa femme, le 18 décembre 1985 :

As usual you are much too modest in your evaluation of the article: it is a very substantial and well-documented contribution to

<sup>41</sup> Le brouillon de Bonebakker porte la date du 8 janvier 1978, mais c'est impossible étant donné qu'il s'agit de la réponse au courrier de Heinrichs du 20 janvier 1978. Ce n'est vraisemblablement pas Heinrichs qui se trompe de date car il y remercie Bonebakker pour sa carte de vœux.

<sup>42</sup> Bonebakker, dans sa lettre du 5 janvier 1982 à Wolfhart Heinrichs, dossier 3.

<sup>43</sup> Peu d'informations sont disponibles au sujet de cette brillante traductrice de l'arabe à l'allemand, mais sa bibliographie jusqu'en 2008 est donnée dans Gruendler & Cooperson 2008, xxxv-xxxvi, ainsi que quelques informations concernant sa rencontre, son mariage et sa vie avec son mari, dans les notes biographiques concernant celui-ci, Gruendler, Cooperson 2008, xiii-xix, spéc. xv.

<sup>44</sup> Bonebakker 1984a.

the whole adab complex. It goes well beyond its predecessors, such as Nallino and Pellat. I need to read it again and contemplate the wealth of material you have assembled. Also I have little to quarrel with the conclusions you draw. (Dossier 3)

Bonebakker est malade ; il explique dans une lettre du 12 septembre 1989 qu'il a été opéré en décembre 1988 et qu'il n'était toujours pas parfaitement rétabli au début de l'été. C'est pour cette raison qu'il a dû refuser plusieurs invitations, dont le symposium du JAL (*Journal of Arabic Literature*). Mais cela ne décourage pas Heinrichs qui l'invite chaleureusement, dans une lettre datée du 9 octobre 1989, co-signée avec Gregor Schoeler (à laquelle on a déjà fait allusion, cf. ci-dessus, § 2), à participer au *Festschrift* qu'ils sont en train de préparer pour Ewald Wagner, puis, dans une lettre du 29 juillet 1991 (réalisée sur un ordinateur, car la technologie avance), à participer à un panel intitulé « Poetry and Truth in Medieval Arabic Thought », coorganisé avec Irfan Shahîd (1926-2016) (cf. Ziolkowski 2017) pour l'AOS à Boston. Dans sa lettre du 22 janvier 1991, Heinrichs demande à Bonebakker de lui envoyer une liste de ses publications car il voudrait être certain de ne pas être passé à côté d'une contribution primordiale. Bonebakker lui envoie une ; pour expliquer l'apparence étrange du document, il expose les circonstances de sa rédaction dans son courrier du 10 février 1991 :

In 1984 I was refused a « Step Increase » because I had few students and few PhD's (not true!), was « at best a satisfactory teacher », and « had published nothing original since 1977 at the latest ». In 1988 my Chairman pleaded for me and asked me to write a CV which (if I remember correctly) reflected - in a way which the administration would understand - work in progress (=in the press) in 1984 and the same work, now published, in 1988. I never quite understood the system, but appreciated the Chairman's efforts which, by the way, were (and still are) to no avail. (Dossier 3)

Heinrichs se montre extrêmement choqué de ce traitement :

It's unbelievable and outright scandalous. Having written so many valuable studies in our common field of interest, you certainly deserved better than this callous disregard of your scholarship on the part of powerful ignoramuses in the administration.<sup>45</sup>

Un autre courrier de Bonebakker datant du 6 avril annonce notamment qu'il est en train de préparer « something special for my students », certainement une allusion à son *Reader* (cf. Bonebakker, Fi-

<sup>45</sup> Lettre de Wolfhart Heinrichs du 1er mai 1991, dossier 3.

shbein 1996) déjà en préparation 5 ans avant sa publication. Il se confie sur la difficulté que cela représente pour lui d'appréhender la fin de sa carrière :

I find it increasingly difficult to adjust to the idea that in five weeks I will have given up teaching for the rest of my life. In an attempt to console myself I try to keep in mind that I am now serving a corrupt institution.

À la lecture de quelques lignes issues de l'hommage funèbre rendu à Heinrichs, on comprend que les deux hommes se soient rapidement bien entendu et soient restés proches, même s'ils ne s'écrivaient pas souvent : « He never promoted himself [...] he just quietly and steadily produced, each item of scholarly output a gem contributing to a glittering tapestry of refreshingly oblique perspectives on things otherwise taken for granted or previously not considered » (Coopererson 2014, 4-5). Ces mots d'un étudiant à propos de Heinrichs auraient très bien pu concerner Bonebakker, d'autant plus qu'Alma le désignait, dans leur carte de vœux du 18 décembre 1985, comme « one of the jewels in this world ».

## 6 Ambros

Arne Ambros (1942-2007) (cf. Behn 2004, 1 : 39 ; Procházka 2008) et Bonebakker se sont rencontrés lors du wcinquième congrès de l'UEAI (Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants), à Bruxelles en 1970.<sup>46</sup> C'est là aussi que le projet d'inviter Ambros comme Visiting Professor à UCLA est né ; ce projet s'est concrétisé entre 1972 et 1974 : Ambros collabora alors avec Bonebakker et il eut Fedwa Douglas (1946-)<sup>47</sup> comme assistante. Ambros et Bonebakker deviennent rapidement amis. Ils sont très proches et le sont restés très longtemps : l'enveloppe où se trouvent leurs échanges<sup>48</sup> est très volumineuse : 81 longues lettres, très personnelles, mais contenant aussi des considérations professionnelles, qu'il s'agisse de questions de recherche ou de nouvelles de collègues. Ambros commence le plus souvent ses lettres par « Lieber Freund Seeger », expression répétée en début de différents paragraphes, et ce, dès juillet 1974.<sup>49</sup> Ces

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<sup>46</sup> Qui s'est tenu du 31 août au 6 septembre 1970, à Bruxelles.

<sup>47</sup> Aujourd'hui connue comme Fedwa Malti-Douglas, cf. Behn 2004, 3, 506.

<sup>48</sup> Qui se trouve dans le dossier 2.

<sup>49</sup> Plus précisément, c'est la lettre du 21 juillet 1974 qui, la première, commence par l'expression amicale, mais dès l'année précédente, Ambros s'adresse à Bonebakker par un « Lieber Seeger », cf. la lettre du 7 juillet 1973, dossier 2.

81 lettres sont conservées dans le dossier, aux côtés de 34 courriers de Bonebakker. Leur correspondance commence juste après l'UEAI, le 1er octobre 1970, et les derniers courriers datent de la fin de 1997, mais on sait qu'ils se téléphonaient et il est probable qu'ils se sont vus et appelés après le retour en Europe du couple Bonebakker. Bonebakker lui écrit en néerlandais, à la demande explicite d'Ambros dans un courrier du 1er octobre 1970 et suite au colloque de l'UEAI, à Bruxelles, où Ambros avait entendu cette langue pour la première fois. Bien qu'Ambros indique dans le même courrier qu'il espère bientôt pouvoir lui aussi écrire en néerlandais, ses lettres sont presque toutes en allemand.<sup>50</sup> Lita et Edith, les épouses Bonebakker et Ambros, sont également très proches, comme en attestent les quelques lignes manuscrites ajoutées par Edith Ambros en fin du courrier du 22 avril 1976 de son mari, où elle demande quand elle reverra Lita (elle est coutumière de ces ajouts, qui sont souvent très drôles, comme quand elle explique en détail mais en quelques lignes à peine à la fois les circonstances d'une visite chez le dentiste et le retour d'Ambros après avoir vu le film *L'Exorciste*, sur une lettre datée du 12 octobre 1974). Le rythme de leur correspondance est soutenu : les délais de réponses connus sont de 3 jours à un mois, avec une moyenne de deux semaines. Bonebakker et Ambros sont véritablement amis : Bonebakker évoque même son état de dépression dans une lettre de janvier 1979. Enfin, Ambros rédigea au moins une lettre de soutien pour Bonebakker : le *Report on candidate for fellowship* de la John Simon Guggenheim Foundation est conservé et est très élogieux : Bonebakker y est présenté comme « one of the very few outstanding experts in the field of the early development of Arabic criticism », un domaine négligé, alors que, toujours selon Ambros :

I trust not to be found guilty of exaggeration when considering research in this field second in importance only to the study of the Koran and the earliest religious writings, if one aims at an understanding of the formation of Islamic culture.<sup>51</sup>

On a vu (cf. ci-dessus, § 4) que, malgré cette appréciation soulignant l'importance du chercheur et de son champ de recherche, cette demande n'a pas été couronnée de succès.

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**50** Sauf les lettres du 18 février et du 4 juillet 1988, dossier 2, qui sont en anglais.

**51** « Report on candidate for fellowship », daté du 29 novembre 1979, dossier 2.



## 7 Kristeller, Kirsner & Berrada : au-delà du monde des arabisants

Bonebakker entretenait également de nombreux contacts en dehors du monde des arabisants. Par exemple, on l'a déjà mentionné, lors de son premier congé sabbatique, en 1967-8, il a logé chez le Prof. A. Kent Hieatt (m. 2009), spécialiste d'Edmund Spenser et de littérature comparée anglaise à Wytham près d'Oxford.<sup>52</sup> C'est là que Paul Oskar Kristeller lui écrit cette année-là.

Paul Oskar Kristeller (1905-1999)<sup>53</sup> était un historien de la Renaissance de renommée internationale. Comme Schacht et Rosenthal, étant juif et allemand (né à Berlin, il obtint un doctorat de l'université de Heidelberg en 1929), Kristeller fut contraint de fuir son pays, dès 1934. Après un bref passage en Italie, puis à Yale, il fut engagé à Columbia, où il fit toute sa carrière. C'est là que Bonebakker l'a rencontré. Les deux hommes avaient plusieurs points communs : Européens exilés aux États-Unis, ils partageaient en outre un grand amour et une connaissance approfondie de la musique (Kristeller était pianiste et Bonebakker, violoncelliste) et de l'Italie.<sup>54</sup> Il semble que Kristeller ait pris Bonebakker sous son aile et lui ait prodigué de précieux conseils au sujet des procédures en vigueur dans les universités américaines en général et à Columbia en particulier. Ainsi, les premières lettres (en terme de dates) qui sont conservées dans le dossier à son nom concernent une demande de promotion qui fut refusée à Bonebakker de la part de Columbia et les « avances » de UCLA. Le ton de Kristeller est à la fois bienveillant et apaisant. Il change rapidement de sujet et exprime ses pensées sans s'encombrer de détours ni de pincettes. Dans le traitement de la question de la demande d'augmentation, Kristeller est une personne ressource extrêmement précieuse pour Bonebakker : il lui donne son avis sur les personnes impliquées dans ce dossier et lui dévoile une partie de l'envers des cartes, expliquant qui est en faveur et qui ne l'est pas et quelle stratégie adopter pour servir au mieux ses intérêts ; Kristeller a manifestement relu au moins une lettre de Bonebakker avant qu'il

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**52** Peu d'informations sont disponibles au sujet de A. Kent Hieatt : In memoriam : Hieatt 2009.

**53** Kristeller, King 1994 ; Monfasani 1999, 2001 ; Pace 1999 ; Perspectives on History 1999. Leur correspondance est conservée dans le dossier 3.

**54** Quand Kristeller a fui l'Allemagne nazie, il est d'abord allé en Italie, invité par son collègue Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944). Ce dernier aurait négocié une indemnisation de départ en faveur de Kristeller, auprès de Mussolini, quand les politiques raciales du Duce ont à nouveau poussé Kristeller à l'exil. Kristeller, King 1994, 919-24, partic. 924 ; Monfasani 1999, 208-9. Sur la personnalité complexe de Giovanni Gentile, fasciste et proche de Mussolini mais protégeant ses collègues de confession juive, cf. Sasso 1999, partic. 208.

ne l'envoie à l'administration et lu et commenté les courriers envoyés par les responsables des promotions (cf. sa lettre du 7 février 1968 : « Dean's letter is as polite as it can be ».) Les deux hommes se sont également appelés à ce sujet. Ils devaient être proches pour que Kristeller consacre autant de temps et d'énergie à cette question. Bien des années plus tard, quand Bonebakker est devenu professeur à UCLA, Kristeller continue à lui manifester un soutien sans faille puisqu'il rédige, à deux reprises, des lettres d'évaluation de projets dans le cadre de demandes de financement de la NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities), en 1982 et en 1983.

Treize lettres de Kristeller à Bonebakker, envoyées entre le 2 janvier 1968 et le 23 octobre 1995, ainsi que six brouillons de réponses sont conservés. Les deux collègues étaient assidus dans leur correspondance et il est manifeste que plusieurs courriers ne nous sont pas parvenus. Par exemple, la première lettre, chronologiquement parlant, celle de Kristeller datée du 2 janvier 1968, est un courrier de réponse à une lettre de Bonebakker du 26 décembre dont nous n'avons pas trace. Quand il est possible de savoir combien de temps s'est écoulé entre une lettre et sa réponse (c'est souvent le cas, car Kristeller commence presque tous ses courriers en remerciant pour le courrier précédant et en donnant la date de sa rédaction), ce délai est de 2 à 26 jours, mais dans les échanges suivis, les délais normaux sont de 2 à 9 jours. Les épouses se sont rencontrées également puisqu'à partir de 1976, les deux hommes terminent leur courrier en remettant le bonjour à l'épouse de leur correspondant, de leur part et de celle de leur femme. Edith Kristeller et Lita Bonebakker échangent par ailleurs une correspondance privée, comme Kristeller l'indique dans sa lettre du 13 avril 1986, où il ne termine pas avec la formule habituelle, mais avec cette phrase : « Edith will write separately to Lita ». On peut supposer que ces relations plus personnelles entre les deux épouses sont consécutives à la visite des Kristeller en Californie, début avril 1986.

Les échanges de tirés-à-part semblent débiter en 1976, avec l'envoi par Bonebakker de son étude sur la rhétorique arabe (1975). Kristeller apprécie beaucoup le geste et lui envoie en retour son *Renaissance Concepts of Man*<sup>55</sup> ainsi que le texte d'autres conférences données peu de temps auparavant. C'est le début d'échanges réguliers de publications et de considérations sur leurs travaux respectifs, qu'il s'agissent de données anecdotiques (comme le récit des réactions et délais de divers éditeurs pour la publication d'un article de Bonebakker) ou de questions de fond (comme dans le brouillon du 27 mars 1976, où Bonebakker explique qu'il tente de déterminer l'influence de la rhétorique grecque sur la rhétorique arabe, ou dans

<sup>55</sup> Publié ensuite dans Kristeller 1972.

celui du 5 mai 1982, où il indique qu'il travaille sur le plagiat au début du Moyen-Âge). Il est intéressant de noter que Lita, l'épouse de Bonebakker, lisait aussi les publications envoyées par Kristeller, comme on le découvre dans le brouillon de Bonebakker daté du 17 février 1980 : « Thank you so much for sending me your Renaissance Thought and its Sources [...]. Lita and I [...] are greatly enjoying it » [emphasis de l'Auteur].

L'une des dernières lettres de Kristeller, datée du 22 décembre 1992, est extrêmement touchante. Son épouse est décédée depuis quelques mois et le ton est triste et amer, notamment sur des questions de politique américaine. Il perd un peu la mémoire et se répète, d'une lettre à l'autre. La toute dernière lettre de lui qui soit conservée dans les papiers de Bonebakker date du 23 octobre 1995, il avait donc plus de 90 ans. Son écriture est devenue un peu tremblante, mais son jugement reste clair. Bonebakker en avait alors 72 et se plaignait, de son côté, de problèmes auditifs. C'est la dernière trace de ces presque de 30 années de relation épistolaire.

Kristeller n'est pas le seul non-arabisant qui soit représenté dans les dossiers de Bonebakker. Une autre enveloppe très volumineuse concerne les Kirsner et Berrada.<sup>56</sup> Prof. Joseph Barnett Kirsner (1909-2012) (cf. Franklin 2009 ; Hanauer, Rubin 2012) est un médecin renommé, gastro-entérologue de l'hôpital de Chicago qui fut également le médecin personnel du roi Hasan II du Maroc. Bonebakker est entré en contact avec lui par l'intermédiaire de son fils, Robert Kirsner, qu'il a connu à Columbia, alors qu'il était étudiant au département de linguistique, option néerlandais, et que Bonebakker y était professeur. En 1972, quand Robert Kirsner a déménagé à Los Angeles pour commencer sa carrière à UCLA, avec sa femme Elaine, les relations entre les deux hommes, et même les deux couples, se sont encore rapprochées.<sup>57</sup> C'est tout naturellement, au détour d'une conversation sur leurs travaux respectifs, que Bonebakker a dû évoquer les manuscrits marocains qu'il voulait consulter et que Robert Kirsner a parlé de l'activité de son père auprès du roi du Maroc, puis a demandé à son père s'il pourrait intervenir pour obtenir les microfilms manquants à Bonebakker. Et c'est ainsi que Bonebakker a écrit au père de Robert, Joseph B. Kirsner, le 22 juin 1976, pour le remercier de sa proposition et lui communiquer la liste des manuscrits dont il désirait une copie. Il ajoute : « I enclose, by way of introduction, copies of a small monograph and an article which I wrote on manuscripts in Moroccan

<sup>56</sup> Contenu dans le dossier 3.

<sup>57</sup> Je remercie sincèrement Prof. Robert Kirsner de sa disponibilité et des nombreuses informations personnelles qu'il m'a transmises par e-mail début avril 2018 et qu'il m'a permis d'utiliser et de citer.

libraries ». On ne peut douter qu'il fasse allusion à son *Materials for the History of Arabic Rhetoric from the "Ḥilyat al-Muḥāḍara" of Ḥātīmī (Mss 2934 and 590 of the Qarawiyyīn Mosque in Fez)* (1975) alors récemment paru et à son article sur les manuscrits de la *Rihla* d'Ibn Jubayr (1972). Ces travaux ont dû faire impression car, dans sa lettre de réponse datée du 2 juillet 1976, Joseph Kirsner présente Bonebakker qu'il a donné la liste de manuscrits et les publications de Bonebakker à l'ambassadeur du Maroc, Abdelhadi Boutaleb, il fournit les coordonnées de celui-ci à Washington, conseillant à Bonebakker d'attendre un peu avant de le contacter. Il promet d'en parler également au Consul général, Abdelslam Jaidi, et termine comme suit : « I hope all these efforts will be productive and that you will have the opportunity for which you are so exceptionally well qualified ». En post-scriptum, Joseph Kirsner ajoute qu'il joint à son courrier « something that may be of interest to you ». Il doit s'agir de la copie d'une lettre de George Washington à l'empereur Mohamed III du Maroc, un cadeau de l'Office du tourisme du Maroc à Chicago, qui figure dans le dossier.

Le courrier suivant est daté du 3 octobre 1978, soit après le voyage au Maroc, et est rédigé par Bonebakker à son retour à Los Angeles. Il est plein de gratitude pour toute une série de personnes et du récit des bons souvenirs que conservent son épouse et lui-même de leur séjour chez Berrada à Casablanca et chez son frère et sa sœur à Fès. Mais surtout, il fait le point sur ce que ce séjour lui a apporté scientifiquement parlant :

J'ai pu établir,<sup>58</sup> pour ne mentionner que le plus important,

- qu'il y a effectivement à Fès un troisième manuscrit de la *Ḥilya* d'al-Ḥātīmī
- que les manuscrits de la bibliothèque de Sa Majesté et à Fès offrent le texte complet du commentaire d'al-Ifīlī sur le *Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*
- qu'on conserve, à la bibliothèque de Sa Majesté, un supplément au *Dīwān* d'Ibn Ḥamdīs, un manuscrit complet du *Maṭmaḥ* d'Ibn Khāqān, un manuscrit d'un texte inconnu et très intéressant sur la rhétorique arabe, ainsi que des manuscrits supplémentaires du *Dhakīra* d'Ibn Bassām. [Emphase de l'Auteur]

Les microfilms qu'on a préparé[s] pour moi à la Bibliothèque Générale m'ont fourni les matériaux nécessaires pour réaliser la par-

**58** Tous les accents nécessaires en français sont omis dans le courrier de Bonebakker et les voyelles longues et parties de caractères de translittération n'appartenant pas à l'alphabet latin ont été ajoutés à la main ; sa machine à écrire américaine ne lui permettait pas de les noter.

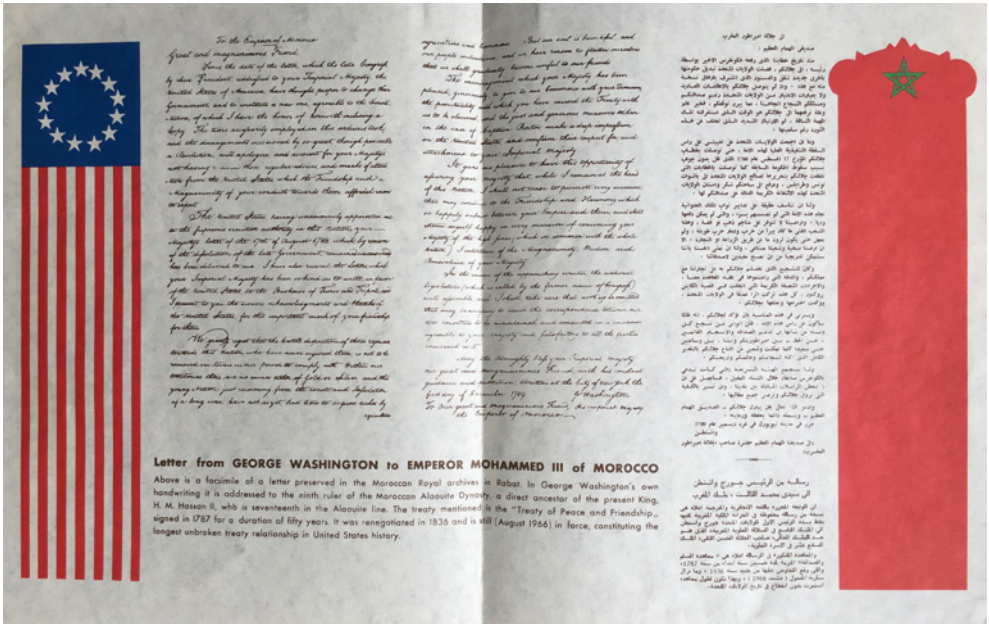



Figure 3 Copie d'une lettre de Georges Washington à Mohammed III du Maroc, envoyée à Bonebakker par Joseph Kirsner



# morocco, your oldest friend

As a very new country called the United States of America struggled to its feet, a very old country named Morocco offered friendship, magnanimity and support. A "Treaty of Friendship and Peace" signed in 1787 and described in the following letter, was renewed in 1836 and is in effect today, making it the oldest unbroken treaty in U.S. history.

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Transcript of letter of thanks from George Washington to the Emperor of Morocco.

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Figure 4 Fiche accompagnant la copie de la lettre de Georges Washington à Mohammed III

tie la plus intéressante d'un projet d'onomastique arabe, qui sera subventionné, j'espère, par le National Endowment for the Humanities a Washington. (Dossier 3)

Il indique en outre qu'il accusera bonne réception des livres et micro-films (le *Maṭmāḥ* d'Ibn Ḥāqān et le *Dīwān* d'Ibn Ḥamdīs, issus de la « bibliothèque privée de sa Majesté ») dès qu'il les aura reçus, ce qu'il fait par un courrier du 31 décembre 1978, auquel il joint un tiré-à-part, son article sur la recension de Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī du *K. Naqd al-Šī'r* de Qudāma b. Ja'far (Bonebakker 1977). Par ailleurs, il demande que Berrada lui confirme qu'il a bien reçu les disques et T-shirts envoyés pour les enfants ; Berrada lui répond le 10 janvier que les disques sont arrivés et que les T-shirts ne devraient plus tarder. En conclusion, on ne peut que souligner que la générosité et l'amabilité naturelles et désintéressées de Bonebakker envers Kirsner fils ont été largement récompensées.

## 8 Pagnini : Bonebakker comme aîné bienveillant

Bonebakker était très disponible pour les plus jeunes chercheurs et semblait prompt à leur répondre. Certains de ses correspondants, comme Michael Frischkopf, John Hayes ou Michael Fischbein, sont toujours actifs dans le domaine ; pour des raisons évidentes de respect de la vie privée, on ne traitera pas de ces lettres. J'aimerais simplement mentionner que Seema Attalla, qui était manifestement liée à son ancien professeur par une affection partagée, est devenue une poétesse reconnue.<sup>59</sup>

Par ailleurs, les relations épistolaires de Bonebakker avec Anna Pagnini peuvent être abordées ; elles sont, je pense, représentatives des relations de Bonebakker avec les chercheurs plus jeunes. Anna Pagnini, diplômée en Langue et littérature arabe à l'Université Ca' Foscari de Venise, a réalisé sa thèse de doctorat en linguistique sémitique à Florence et a travaillé comme chercheuse à l'Istituto Orientale di Napoli dès 1995, avant de devenir professeure dans la faculté des Langues et Littératures étrangères de Gênes. Elle est décédée tragiquement le 15 avril 2004, à 40 ans à peine, laissant deux jeunes enfants...

La première lettre d'Anna Pagnini date du 18 juin 1999. Elle écrit à Bonebakker car Antonella Ghersetti lui a appris que Bonebakker avait remarqué son livre sur les proverbes et la poésie arabe classique (Pagnini 1998 ; compte-rendu : Ghersetti 1998) dans le catalogue de

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<sup>59</sup> Atalla 1993 ; [Author's Biography] 2003. Leurs échanges sont consignés dans le dossier 2.



Harrassowitz. Elle en est heureuse et lui envoie les *errata corrige*, craignant que ceux-ci ne lui soient pas parvenus. Elle ajoute que si elle avait su qu'il lisait l'italien, elle lui aurait envoyé un exemplaire de son livre pour compte-rendu. La réponse à ce courrier n'est pas conservée, mais il devait contenir du matériel littéraire puisque Pagnini, dans sa lettre du 9 juillet 1999, remercie Bonebakker pour les « proverbial verses » ou « poetic proverbs » qu'il lui a envoyés, qui la confortent dans son opinion de l'importance d'examiner les proverbes, y compris pour comprendre la poésie. Elle ajoute qu'elle serait contente de le rencontrer à Rome cet été, mais qu'elle n'y sera qu'en juillet car elle partira pour Damas en août et septembre, et elle se propose de l'assister pour les réservations etc. Le courrier suivant date du 7 décembre de la même année. Pagnini le remercie de son courrier (dont nous n'avons pas de trace), lui redit le bonheur qu'elle a eu de les rencontrer en personne, sa femme et lui, et se demande bien ce qu'elle pourrait leur faire découvrir la prochaine fois, tant ils sont fins connaisseurs de la ville et de ses églises. Elle l'informe par ailleurs qu'elle est en partance pour la Ligurie, où elle attendra la naissance de son deuxième enfant, prévue pour la fin de l'année (« besides the birth of the Divine Child ») et où elle lira l'article qu'il a eu la bonté de lui envoyer (et dont le titre nous est inconnu). Elle lui envoie, en guise de « divertissement », plusieurs passages difficiles de l'ouvrage sur lequel elle travaille alors, le *Kitāb Daf' al-Hamm*, par Elie, archevêque de Nisibe,<sup>60</sup> de même que la communication qu'elle a donnée à ce sujet au *Congrès de Halle*.<sup>61</sup> La réponse de Bonebakker est cette fois conservée, ou plutôt 3 versions légèrement différentes, réalisées sur un ordinateur, datées du 1er mars et du 1er avril 2000 (il s'agit certainement d'une erreur puisque, comme on va le voir, la réponse de Pagnini est datée du 6 mars 2000), où il propose des explications lexicographiques, où il attire son attention sur plusieurs particularités de l'auteur (chrétien et « tardif », il n'emploie certainement pas les mots dans la même acception que les auteurs musulmans classiques sur base desquels les dictionnaires ont été rédigés...), où il identifie un passage comme étant une citation poétique, où il signale plusieurs références utiles et où il lui propose une traduction pour chacun de ces passages difficiles, ainsi que des pistes de recherche. La réponse de Pagnini, datée du 6 mars 2000, donc, est pleine de gratitude, notamment car ce courrier lui permet de se remettre au travail après la naissance de son fils Niccolò. Pour le fond, l'identification des vers de poésie et les considérations de Bonebakker lui inspirent de

**60** GAL SI 815 14c, 820 63b. Un ouvrage posthume a été publié, à partir des notes laissées par Pagnini, sur le sujet : Elia di Nisibi et. al. 2007.

**61** Il s'agit du dix-neuvième congrès de l'UEAI, qui s'est tenu à Halle du 30 août au 3 septembre 1998.

nouvelles interprétations et traductions plus pertinentes des passages en question, interprétations et traductions qu'elle soumet à son avis. C'est la dernière lettre du dossier, qui contient encore deux coupures de presse italienne : deux articles qui déplorent la disparition des proverbes italiens à cause de la publicité.

Bonebakker n'a pas économisé son temps ni son énergie, à 77 ans, un âge où d'aucuns sont séniles, pour réfléchir aux problèmes posés par Pagnini et pour lui proposer des solutions documentées, argumentées, réfléchies et inspirantes. Ses dossiers montrent qu'il a travaillé presque jusqu'à la fin de sa vie : on trouve des post-it portant des notes rédigées d'une main tremblante, notamment sur les fax échangés avec Ghersetti, dans les années 2000.

## 9 La correspondance, source d'informations sur l'auteur des lettres

Les lettres envoyées à Stern, Ambros, Heinrichs et Rosenthal sont les plus riches en termes d'informations sur les travaux en cours de Bonebakker. Elles contiennent également des données plus personnelles qui éclairent la production scientifique et la vie du chercheur et lui donnent une autre tonalité.

Si l'on s'attache d'abord aux caractéristiques personnelles de Bonebakker, la première chose à dire est qu'il était très sensible. Edith Ambros le souligne d'ailleurs à la fin de la lettre du 29 janvier 1979, réponse à un courrier où Bonebakker se plaint de certains de ses collègues et des critiques négatives qu'ils formulent à son égard ; elle écrit :

I know this is very hard for someone of your exceedingly fine sensibilities, but you do have a very fine sense of humour, too, which ought to help you out of any 'materialistic disappointments' - I may be wrong, but I think of all the paraphernalia of a career and, in fact, the career itself, as 'materialistic'. That can certainly not be a gauge of one's scholarly 'worth'. (Dossier 2)

Peut-être ce trait de caractère avait-il été accentué par son internement dans un camp japonais des Indes néerlandaises (aujourd'hui l'Indonésie) durant la seconde guerre mondiale ? En tout cas, il est un fait que cette période difficile de sa vie lui avait laissé des séquelles psychologiques profondes<sup>62</sup> : d'après Robert Kirsner, il a été suivi par

<sup>62</sup> Robert S. Kirsner mentionne ce fait dans un e-mail qu'il m'a envoyé le 6 avril 2018. Antonella Ghersetti y avait déjà fait allusion (Bonebakker le lui avait dit) et ce fait est également repris dans van Gelder 2006, 19. Sur l'occupation japonaise des Indes



un psychiatre pendant très longtemps, peut-être le Dr. Robert O. Pannau, de UCLA, qui figure dans sa correspondance.<sup>63</sup> Quelle qu'en soit la cause – trait de caractère inné et/ou séquelle d'un traumatisme de jeunesse –, la grande sensibilité de Bonebakker se manifeste de plusieurs façons dans sa correspondance. On pense d'abord à l'épisode de la conférence de Bürgel à UCLA, auquel on a déjà fait allusion (cf. ci-dessus, § 2), mais sa réaction face au tremblement de terre du 26 septembre 1997 survenu en Ombrie et dans les Marches est éloquent aussi, à cet égard (cf. ci-dessus, § 2). Son attitude face à l'injustice qui frappe les femmes et les jeunes dans leur avancement de carrière est également révélatrice. Il soutient franchement Kathleen Burrill (1924-2005) (cf. Behn 2004, 1: 245 ; *New York Times* 2005) dans son combat pour la reconnaissance de sa « *de facto* tenure » à Columbia, alors qu'il vient de déménager en Californie : d'après les courriers de Burrill (ceux de Bonebakker ne figurent pas dans le dossier), on comprend qu'il est intervenu auprès de plusieurs des personnes décisionnaires et qu'il suit attentivement le dossier.

Un autre trait de personnalité frappant est la façon négative dont il présente toujours les travaux qu'il envoie à ses collègues<sup>64</sup> ; on l'a vu avec Rosenthal (cf. ci-dessus, § 4), mais aussi auprès de chercheurs plus jeunes et moins avancés dans leur carrière scientifique, comme Wolfhart Heinrichs, par exemple (cf. ci-dessus, § 5). Pourtant, ses travaux étaient appréciés et respectés et il fallait parfois en venir aux mains pour pouvoir entrer dans la salle où il donnait une conférence !<sup>65</sup> Enfin, il montre une grande peur de déranger chaque fois qu'il doit solliciter quelque chose de quelqu'un, comme dans sa lettre du 6 juillet 1978 à Berrada par rapport à l'organisation de son voyage au Maroc, où il écrit :

Je ne veux pas vous déranger d'aucune façon [*sic*]. Puisque je connais déjà un peu votre pays, une simple lettre d'introduction et une

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néerlandaises, voir Post et al. 2010, 36-7, 163-73 et *passim*. Le roman de Jeroen Brouwers (Brouwers 1991) donne une idée de l'horreur de la vie dans les camps d'internement de femmes avec enfants et des séquelles que celle-ci peut laisser. L'internement des civils européens de Java et Sumatra débuta à la fin de 1942. Bonebakker était déjà âgé de 19 ans, ce qui signifie qu'il a été détenu dans un camp d'hommes : hommes et femmes étaient séparés, les enfants âgés de moins de 10 ans restaient avec leur mère et les femmes âgées, les hommes de 18 à 60 ans étaient rassemblés dans des camps de travail.

**63** Une lettre de lui est conservée, datée du 15 juillet 1993. Le médecin donne des nouvelles de UCLA, qui sont mauvaises ; mais il conclut qu'il garde la conviction que tout s'arrangera car il a foi en « l'homo Sapiens » !

**64** Pour se préparer à un jugement qui pourrait être négatif ? Ou pour être rassuré sur leur qualité ?...

**65** Cf. la carte d'Alma Heinrichs-Giese du 25 février 1988, bizarrement classée dans le dossier Ambros : « It was really lovely to see you again in Baltimore, and I certainly enjoyed your paper – although I almost had to use my fists to enter in the lecture room! ».

autorisation a faire microfilmer les quelques manuscrits qui me manquent encore suffiraient à réaliser mes projets de recherches, mais je serais infiniment heureux si je pourrais [sic] vous rencontrer en personne.

De même, toute l'histoire autour de la fondation Guggenheim (cf. § 4) et la façon dont il accepte les propositions d'envoi de tirés-à-part (comme dans cette lettre à Kristeller du 21 mars 1976, où il accepte en spécifiant et en soulignant : « if it is really no trouble » [emphasis de l'Auteur]) participent du même trait de caractère.

Son épouse semble avoir été d'un soutien sans faille. D'ailleurs, presque tous ses correspondants l'ont connue et lui transmettent leurs amitiés : Rosenthal, les Heinrichs, Kirsner (qui parle lui aussi beaucoup de son épouse) et Berrada, les Ambros, Frischkopf, Nawas, Pagnini... De la même façon, quand il les connaissait, Bonebakker ne manquait jamais de saluer les épouses de ses correspondants. L'une d'entre elles, Alma Giese, a d'ailleurs développé une relation épistolaire personnelle avec lui : ainsi, dans sa carte du 25 mars 1995, elle lui annonce fièrement la publication de son premier article dans l'*Encyclopédie de l'Islam* (« Shukr » [emphasis de l'Auteur]) (1997 ; cf. dossier 3) ; d'autres épouses de ses correspondants écrivent directement à Lita, comme Edith Kristeller (cf. ci-dessus, § 7). En outre, Lita était docteur en médecine, ce qui devait contribuer à rassurer Bonebakker, d'une santé fragile depuis l'enfance. Dans les années '80, il a souvent été malade et a finalement subi une intervention chirurgicale en décembre 1988 (comme il le dit à Heinrichs, cf. § 5), dont il a eu beaucoup de mal à se remettre : il n'était pas encore en forme parfaite à l'été 1989 et de nouveau malade : une grosse infection à l'oreille pour laquelle une nouvelle opération est préconisée.<sup>66</sup>

Ses livres, sa bibliothèque, sont une véritable source de préoccupation. Quand il déménage à Los Angeles, il raconte à Burrill la difficulté de se procurer des bibliothèques et étagères, ce dont elle s'amuse.<sup>67</sup> Quand, vingt-cinq ans plus tard, toujours à Los Angeles, il achète une maison, il se réjouit d'avoir plus de place pour ses livres, dans une lettre à Rosenthal du 23 septembre 1979 (dossier 3). Enfin, au moment de son retour en Europe en 1994, un des critères de choix principaux pour la maison que Lita et lui occuperont est encore l'espace occupé par sa bibliothèque. En prévision de l'emménagement à Zeist, il a réalisé un catalogue de sa collection, particulièrement des microfilms (comme en atteste la liste déjà évoquée ci-dessus § 1), et, d'après son épouse, qui en a informé Ghersetti au moment

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<sup>66</sup> Comme il l'écrit à Heinrichs le 10 février 1991, cf. dossier 3.

<sup>67</sup> Dans sa lettre du 16 octobre 1969, conservée dans le dossier 3.

des discussions pour l'intégration du fonds Bonebaker à la Ca' Foscari, il avait photographié ses bibliothèques pour garder trace de l'ordonnancement de ses livres et pour pouvoir le reproduire, car celui-ci était bien pensé.

Gentil, serviable et généreux, Bonebakker aimait enseigner : on l'a vu, il vit très difficilement sa fin de carrière (comme il l'explique notamment à Heinrichs, cf. ci-dessus § 5) et c'est peut-être aussi pour perdurer encore un peu qu'il rédige son *Reader* (Bonebakker, Fishbein 1996). Il a d'excellentes relations avec ses étudiants, pour lesquels il ne refuse jamais de rédiger une lettre de recommandation (il se plaint d'ailleurs de crouler sous le nombre de demandes en février 1991, dans une lettre à Heinrichs) (cf. dossier 3). Il reste en contact avec plusieurs d'entre eux, qui lui donnent régulièrement des nouvelles – plusieurs faire-part de naissance sont conservés dans les dossiers. Car Bonebakker ne jetait pas grand chose : on trouve parfois plusieurs versions du brouillon d'une même lettre, des procès-verbaux de conseils de faculté des années '70, des lettres envoyées à des hôtels, à Alitalia, ou reçues du Touring Club, des enveloppes dont les timbres ont été coupés (était-il lui-même philatliste ?) ; mais il ne gardait pas tout non plus : dans sa correspondance avec Rosenthal, le dernier brouillon de lui date de 1990 et la dernière réponse de Rosenthal, de juin 1997 (où Rosenthal remercie Bonebakker de sa lettre de mai). Il devait donc accumuler beaucoup de choses, son systématisme remarquable dans ses différents fichiers bibliographiques, par auteurs, par thèmes et chronologique, était donc absolument nécessaire.

Il ressort par ailleurs que Bonebakker n'aimait pas l'administration et toutes les tâches exigées de lui en dehors de la recherche et de l'enseignement. Van Gelder l'a souligné dans son obituaire (2006, 6) et, dans une lettre à Kristeller du 5 mai 1982, Bonebakker écrit qu'il travaille quand il « manage to squeeze in a few hours to work » (cf. dossier 3)... Mais son dégoût s'applique surtout à UCLA, qu'il décrit comme une « corrupt institution », dans une lettre à Heinrichs du 6 avril 1991 (cf. aussi § 5):

Misappropriation of funds in a period of [financial]<sup>68</sup> crisis is one thing; one also finds it elsewhere. A more serious, but also rather funny, example is the following [...]: Colleague A a senior professor Step VII, wants a further step increase. He asks B, a younger colleague, to write a letter of recommendation for him. When the letter is not immediately forthcoming, he writes it himself [without telling B] typing the name of B under it. His department brings the matter to the attention of Privilege and Tenure which

68 Ajouté au crayon dans l'interligne.

finds that A did not do anything inappropriate (I do not remember the exact wording), maybe because A did not forge B's signature. The department nevertheless rejects the step increase with large majority, but the administration readily approves it, A being a friend. (Dossier 3)

C'est également l'opinion de Kirsner fils, qui m'écrit, le 6 avril [2018]: « Seeger was too much of a gentleman, perhaps too careful a scholar, and too kind a person to thrive in behind the scenes academic politics at UCLA ».

## 10 La correspondance de deux savants : un regard comparatif

Il est donc possible d'en apprendre beaucoup au sujet d'une personne que l'on n'a pas connue à la lecture de sa correspondance. Bonebakker mène sa carrière à un moment crucial à bien des égards. Les études arabes sont alors en pleine expansion aux États-Unis, stimulées par l'arrivée de chercheurs éminents fuyant l'Europe nazie et fasciste : von Grünebaum, Levi della Vida, Schacht, Rosenthal... Autant de grands noms de la discipline qui ont fait tout ou partie de leur carrière sur le continent américain. La correspondance de Bonebakker reflète un réseau international de chercheurs en littérature arabe pré-moderne.

L'étude des échanges entre Bonebakker et ses correspondants montre l'importance des colloques et congrès épisodiques qui se tiennent à intervalles réguliers pour se construire un réseau : c'est aux différents congrès de l'UEAI que Bonebakker rencontre plusieurs collègues et entame une relation avec eux ; le cas d'Ambros est particulièrement éloquent : ils se rencontrent à Bruxelles en 1970 et deux ans après, Ambros est Professeur invité à UCLA et une longue amitié se noue entre les deux hommes. C'est aussi à l'UEAI que Bonebakker conçoit le projet de léguer sa collection à l'Università Ca' Foscari de Venise, lors de discussions avec Antonella Ghersetti. L'AOS fut important aussi pour le réseau de Bonebakker puisqu'il y fit la connaissance des Heinrichs-Giese, qui devinrent également des amis chers. Le MESA a certainement joué le même rôle, mais nous n'avons pas d'exemple précis.

L'on constate également l'importance des fondations privées dans la vie des professeurs actifs aux États-Unis : la fondation MacArthur ou la fondation Guggenheim apparaissent assez souvent dans les papiers et il s'agit de leur consacrer du temps et de l'énergie, de rédiger des dossiers et lettres de soutien... C'est certainement notamment un signe des politiques économiques dures des universités : « golden handshakes » pour pousser les vieux professeurs qui coûtent cher vers la sortie, rapports désobligeants et incorrects pour refuser des

augmentations et avancements, obligation de justifier et de prouver que l'on travaille et que l'on rapporte (de l'argent, de la renommée, des étudiants, des subsides...) à son institution, précarité des contrats des plus jeunes chercheurs... : ces pratiques aujourd'hui répandues en Europe, étaient déjà légion aux États-Unis, ou en tout cas, à UCLA, qui semble être précurseur en la matière, à l'époque de Bonebakker.

Cela peut sembler anecdotique, mais ce demi-siècle de carrière a vu un important changement de support de l'écrit : les premières lettres des dossiers, celles échangées avec Stern, sont toutes manuscrites, sur du papier ligné, à la plume. Ensuite, le règne de la machine à écrire arrive assez rapidement et est extrêmement durable puisque le traitement de texte informatisé n'est visible dans la correspondance de Bonebakker qu'à partir des années '90, mais on le sait sensible à la question de l'informatisation des données et aux facilités de recherche que celle-ci permet dès la fin des années '70 et le début des années '80 grâce à son projet de liste informatisée de l'*Onomasticon Arabicum*.<sup>69</sup> Ce nouveau support suppose également une nouvelle méthode de travail et on devine que les nombreuses fiches bibliographiques de Bonebakker ont dû se sentir bien seules quand il les a informatisées – des notes manuscrites retrouvées çà et là indiquent qu'il a tenté l'aventure, mais ces mêmes notes trahissent son inconfort vis-à-vis de la nouvelle méthode.

Al-Şafadī se trouve au centre de mon projet de recherche et puisque sa correspondance est en grande partie publiée (al-Şafadī 2005), voyons ce que l'on peut en tirer pour obtenir une connaissance plus intime du personnage. Il ne s'agit pas ici de procéder à une analyse détaillée, mais de formuler quelques notes sur le sujet.

La première chose à souligner est que la correspondance d'al-Şafadī nous est parvenue principalement sous la forme qu'il a bien voulu lui donner puisqu'il se chargea de la publier lui-même dans son *Alḥān al-sawāji' bayna al-bādī' al-murāji'*<sup>70</sup> ; les informations qu'on en tirera concerneront donc surtout la façon dont al-Şafadī désirait se présenter et présenter son réseau, certainement en partie considéré comme faire-valoir pour lui-même. Les deux volumes holographes de l'ouvrage, qui semblent malheureusement avoir échappé à l'éditeur, ne sont pas directement datés, mais portent un *samā'* de 758/1357.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Rowson, Bonebakker 1980, 1985. Sur ce projet international, cf. aussi <https://onomasticon.irht.cnrs.fr> (2019-06-25).

<sup>70</sup> al-Şafadī 2005. « Principalement » car il y a des allusions à des lettres d'al-Şafadī sous la plume d'autres auteurs (mais à ma connaissance, cela reste anecdotique) et car certaines lettres qu'il a rédigées ou reçues se trouvent consignées dans sa *Taḍkira*, sans être reprises dans l'*Alḥān*. Sur la *taḍkira*, cf. ci-dessus, note 9.

<sup>71</sup> Il s'agit des mss WE II 150 et WE II 151, de la Staatsbibliothek Berlin. Le certificat d'audition se trouve sur le ms WE II 150, f. 1b (foliotation de la bibliothèque) ; sur ces mss, cf. Alhwardt 1887-99, 7 : 572 (nr. 8631).

Quoi qu'il en soit, al-Şafadī donne des informations biographiques en introduction de presque chacun des échanges de lettres consignés, notamment la date de rédaction (l'année, mais parfois aussi le mois et le jour), le lieu d'où il écrit et d'où son correspondant lui écrit, les circonstances de la rédaction – par exemple, il consigne la lettre qu'Ibn Qāḍī Şuhba (un ancêtre de l'historien du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle) lui écrit pour le féliciter suite à la naissance de son fils aîné, dont il donne l'*ism*, la *kunya* et le *laqab*, respectivement : Muḥammad Abū Bakr Tāj al-Dīn, ainsi que sa date de naissance : le 19 Şafar 753 (6 avril 1352)<sup>72</sup> ; ou dans la notice au sujet de Şāfi' ibn 'Alī (m. 730/1330),<sup>73</sup> al-Şafadī indique qu'il a initié lui-même leurs échanges en lui demandant une *ijāza* en 727 (1326-7), alors qu'il se trouvait au Caire ; ou encore des détails plus étonnants, comme dans la notice au sujet du Şayḥ Muğaltāy b. Qilij b. 'Abd Allāh al-Bakjarī, où al-Şafadī précise qu'il note sa réponse « fī waraq<sup>in</sup> aḥmar<sup>a</sup> », certainement car alors, en 739 (1338-9), comme il l'indique lui-même, il se trouvait à Damas et que ce papier rouge est typique de la chancellerie damascène.<sup>74</sup> Plusieurs *ijāza*-s sont intégralement consignées, notamment celle d'Ibn Nubāta (m. 768-9/1366-7) pour al-Şafadī.<sup>75</sup>

Outre ces données biographiques, l'ouvrage permet également de tirer d'intéressantes informations sur son réseau. Sur les 107 correspondants, on trouve seulement deux *ism*-s turcs : Altunbuğā al-Jāwulī<sup>76</sup> (m. 744/1344) et Muğaltāy b. Qilij b. 'Abd Allāh al-Bakjarī<sup>77</sup> (m. 762/1362) que l'on vient de mentionner, mais, sans surprise, une écrasante majorité de membres de la chancellerie et d'auteurs littéraires.<sup>78</sup>

Par ailleurs, comme cela a déjà été souligné par Arberry pour les volumes conservés à la Chester Beatty, on trouve également des extraits de la correspondance d'al-Şafadī dans sa *Taqkīra*,<sup>79</sup> le carnet de lecture qui est plus particulièrement l'objet du projet de recherche RASCIO. Ainsi, il consigne dans son volume 44, le seul holographe

<sup>72</sup> al-Şafadī 2005, nr. 85, 2 : 148. Sur les Ibn Qāḍī Şuhba, cf. *EP*<sup>2</sup>, III, 814.

<sup>73</sup> al-Şafadī 2005, nr. 44, 1 : 353. Sur Şāfi' b. 'Alī, cf. al-Şafadī 1982, xvi : 77-85 (no. 97) ; *EP*, IX, 180-1.

<sup>74</sup> La note se trouve dans al-Şafadī 2005, 322. Sur le papier rouge de Kerak et Damas, cf. al-Qalqaşandī 1913-22, vi : 193.

<sup>75</sup> al-Şafadī 2005, 2 : 186-90. Sur Ibn Nubāta, cf. *EP*<sup>2</sup>, III, 900-1.

<sup>76</sup> al-Şafadī 2005, nr. 19, 1 : 194-7. Sur Altunbuğā al-Jāwulī, cf. al-Şafadī 1998, i, 610 ; al-Şafadī 1982, ix : 366.

<sup>77</sup> al-Şafadī 2005, nr. 99, 2 : 321. Sur Muğaltāy b. Qilij b. 'Abd Allāh al-Bakjarī, cf. al-Şafadī 1998, v : 433.

<sup>78</sup> Un étude globale du profil des correspondants d'al-Şafadī serait extrêmement instructive, mais dépasserait les limites de cet article.

<sup>79</sup> Arberry 1961, 108, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117.

avéré jusqu'à présent,<sup>80</sup> des vers (*ṭawīl*) d'un certain ṣayḥ Ibrāhīm al-Ġazzī al-Qādirī et sa réponse à ceux-ci, datée du 6 Rabī' al-awwal 756/21 mars 1355, qui comprend notamment ce qui ressemble à un carré magique.<sup>81</sup>

Inversement, la *Taḍkira al-ṣalāhiyya*, comme elle est parfois appelée, est citée dans sa correspondance. Par exemple, Muḥyī al-dīn al-Šahrazūrī, connu comme Ibn Qāḍī al-Mawṣil (m. 778/1377) (al-Šafadī 1953, 3 : 275), a emprunté plusieurs volumes de la *taḍkira* et a rédigé des vers vantant l'ouvrage. Par exemple, au sujet du volume 19, il écrit (mètre *ramal*) :

إِنَّ دِي تَذْكِرَةٌ مُفْتَحَرَةٌ	مَا رَأَيْنَا مِثْلَهَا مِنْ تَذْكِرَةٍ
جَمَعَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ لَفْظٍ تَبْرَهُ	وَخَوَّثَ مِنْ كُلِّ مَعْنَى دُرَرَهُ
حَرَسَ آلَهُ الَّذِي آفَقَهَا	فَلَقَدْ أَبْدَعَ فِيهَا حَرَرَهُ <sup>1</sup>
Nous n'en avons pas vu de pareille	Certes cette <i>Taḍkira</i> glorieuse
Elle a réuni de toute signification, les perles	Elle a rassemblé de toute parole, l'or pur
Car vraiment il a été novateur en ce qu'il a bien écrit	Que Dieu veille sur celui qui l'a composée
<b>1</b> al-Šafadī 2005, 2 : 132 ; MS Berlin WE II 151, f. 82.	

Comme on le constate, et d'une manière générale, le personnage est extrêmement élogieux envers al-Šafadī et celui-ci cite *in extenso* tout ce qu'il lui écrit. La notice au sujet de Taqī al-dīn al-Subkī (m. 756/1355) (al-Šafadī 1988, XXI : 253 ; 1998, 3 : 417) contient elle aussi une allusion à la *Taḍkira* : pour ce qui est de la lettre dont il est question, seuls les vers sont consignés dans l'ouvrage, la partie en prose de la réponse se trouvant dans le volume 29 de la *Taḍkira*, elle n'est pas répétée (al-Šafadī 2005, 2 : 5-18, ce passage 9-10). Cela démontre que la *Taḍkira* circulait du vivant d'al-Šafadī.

Enfin, il est amusant de noter que certaines requêtes d'al-Šafadī s'apparentent à ce que l'on a vu dans la correspondance de Bonebakker. Ainsi, lors de son séjour à la chancellerie d'al-Raḥba, il se sent isolé et correspond donc beaucoup, notamment avec Ibn Nubāta, qui est alors toujours son ami, et il lui demande de lui envoyer des livres, pour le distraire de son ennui et le garder

**80** Le volume de Gotha est peut-être lui aussi un holographe, mais je n'ai pas encore pu le constater moi-même.

**81** Princeton University Library, ms Garrett 3570Y, ff. 89b-92. Ce volume de la *Taḍkira* est en ce moment en cours d'édition. À terme, une édition digitale sera disponible en ligne. Sur les carrés magiques, cf. Ährens 1917, 1922 ; Bergsträsser 1922 ; et le plus récent Gunther, Pielow 2018 (que je n'ai pas encore pu consulter).

informé de ce qu'il se passe au centre de l'activité.<sup>82</sup> Les demandes de tirés-à-part de Bonebakker et de ses correspondants participent du même esprit.

## 11 Conclusion

Étudier la correspondance des chercheurs et des grands hommes (comme Dévényi 2015) permet de mieux les comprendre, de mieux comprendre leur réseau et même, parfois, leur méthode de travail, puisqu'ils mentionnent leurs sujets de recherche et s'échangent des tirés-à-part ou vers de poésie. Les informations sont intéressantes, même dans le cas d'al-Şafadī, où il s'agit d'appliquer un deuxième niveau de lecture puisqu'il publie lui-même ses lettres. On constate qu'il s'y présente sous son meilleur jour. Mais les allusions à son carnet de lecture, la *taḡkira*, outil de travail personnel, sorte de pense-bête, indiquent que les différents volumes du carnet circulaient déjà de son vivant et qu'ils n'étaient donc pas seulement conçus comme le premier jalon de sa méthode de travail, mais aussi, déjà, comme une sorte de *readers' digest* ou de recueil de lieux communs, comme ceux qui fleurirent en Europe au XVIIIe siècle.<sup>83</sup>

Bonebakker et al-Şafadī entretiennent tous deux un réseau de correspondants important et diversifié, passent une partie non négligeable de leur temps à écrire des courriers, à échanger des informations, des ouvrages, des travaux, des idées, des vers de poésie. Ils accordent tous deux une grande importance à leur correspondance, mais pas de la même manière : au contraire de Bonebakker, qui la voit comme un outil, un moyen et non une fin, al-Şafadī considère que sa correspondance est un accomplissement, un véritable travail littéraire digne d'être publié. Nous y reviendrons dans la suite du projet de recherche.

Bonebakker a vécu les débuts d'un changement de paradigme important en terme de méthode de travail, tout comme al-Şafadī avait vécu à une période de surabondance d'informations supposant un changement dans la façon d'appréhender le savoir, rendant nécessaire la tenue de cahiers de notes car il est désormais impossible de mémoriser tous les détails de ce que l'on apprend. Al-Şafadī note tout, conserve tout, notamment la copie des lettres qu'il rédige, tout comme Bonebakker. Sa *taḡkira* joue le rôle d'une sorte de journal ou d'agenda et lui permet de si bien se souvenir des dates, lieux et détails relatifs à des événements parfois passés depuis longtemps.

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**82** al-Şafadī 2005, 2 : 180-268, notamment 192-4 ; la correspondance couvrant le séjour à al-Raḡba : 192-225.

**83** À ce sujet, cf. Blair 1996 ; Havens 2001 ; Décultot 2003.



Nous n'avons pas ce type de carnet pour Bonebakker. Qu'auront les chercheurs de demain au sujet des chercheurs d'aujourd'hui ? Des disques durs ? Des sauvegardes ?... Avec l'écrasement des fichiers et la sauvegarde de la seule dernière version d'un document, il leur faudra trouver des informations autrement...

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## Annexe 1 : liste des correspondants de Bonebakker

- Adler ?/Adelung ?, C., Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen.
- Ambros, Arne A. (1942-2007), Universität Wien, UCLA visiting professor entre 1972 et 1974 (Behn 2004, 1 : 39 ; Procházka 2008).
- Anastos, Milton V. (1909-1997), Prof. UCLA (Vryonis 1999).
- Attalla,<sup>84</sup> Seema, étudiante palestinienne de UCLA devenue poète et traductrice (Attalla 1993 ; [Author's Biography] 2003) (correspondance informelle).
- Berrada, Abdelhamid, Casablanca (contact donné par Prof. B. Kirsner), directeur général de l'entreprise de fabrication de meubles Primarios ; organise le voyage des Bonebakker au Maroc en 1978.
- Bürgel, Johann Christoph (1931-), Universität Bern (Steffen Gerber 2003 ; Behn 2004, 1 : 241).
- Burril, Kathleen (née Griffin, 1924-2005), Columbia University, NYC (Behn 2004, 1 : 245 ; NYTimes 2005).
- Cagni, Luigi, *Annali dell'Istituto orientale di Napoli*.
- Claus, Helmut (1932-), spécialiste de l'histoire de l'imprimerie au XVIIe s., Forschungsbibliothek Gotha (Melanchthonpreisträger 2018, 2017).
- Crosby, Taylor & Elise, anciens étudiants de UCLA, partis se former en Arabie saoudite et au Yémen.
- Daiber, Hans (1942-), Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, puis Goethe Universität Frankfurt-am-Main (Behn 2004, 1 : 360).
- Dorigo, Rosella (1945-), Università Ca' Foscari.
- Fishbein, Michael (1942-), PhD à UCLA avec Bonebakker comme Committee Chair en 1988, se sont peut-être déjà connus à Columbia (BA en 1963).
- Frischkopf, Michael, doctorant à UCLA (PhD 1999), Prof. à la University of Alberta.
- Frühwald, Wolfgang (1935-), Universität München (DFG 2013).
- Gabrieli, Francesco (1904-1996), Università La Sapienza di Roma (Borruso 1974 ; Traini 1999 ; Behn 2004, 1 : 575).
- Ghersetti, Antonella (1962-), Università Ca' Foscari, Venise.
- Haikal, Samir, Muscat, Oman.
- Halm, Heinz (1942-), Universität Tübingen (Behn 2004, 2 : 14).
- Hayes, John, étudiant de Bonebakker à UCLA, Prof. à Berkeley (Center for Middle East Studies) ; ont collaboré à l'*Onomasticon arabicum* (Bonebakker, Hayes 1986).
- Heinrichs, Wolfhart (1941-2014), Harvard University (Behn 2004, 2, 55 ; Gruendler & Cooperson 2008, xiii-xix ; NELC Website ; Cooperson 2014).
- Heinrichs, Alma (née Giese), chercheuse free-lance<sup>85</sup> (bibliographie dans Gruendler & Cooperson 2008, xxxv-xxxvi).

**84** Orthographié « Atallah » dans les notes de Bonebakker.

**85** Notamment auteur de Giese 1981, le livre tiré de sa thèse de doctorat, dont W. Heinrichs annonce la publication à Bonebakker dans un courrier daté du 21 janvier 1982 (dossier 3).

- Ibrāhīm, 'Alī Najīb.
- Kirsner, Joseph B. (1909-2012), Prof. au Chicago University Hospital, un des médecins personnels du roi Hasan II du Maroc, ce qui lui fit faire de nombreux voyages au Maroc ; de nombreux membres de la famille royale marocaine furent admis à l'hôpital de Chicago pour recevoir ses soins.<sup>86</sup>
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar (1905-1999), Columbia University (NY) (Monfasani 1999 ; Monfasani 2001 ; Pace 1999 ; Perspectives on History 1999).
- Kropp, Manfred (1947-), Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (Behn 2004, 2 : 314).
- Levi della Vida, Giorgio (1886-1967), University of Pennsylvania, puis Rome (Behn 2004, 2 : 414 ; Soravia 2005, 807-11).
- Levtzion, Nehemia (1935-2003), Hebrew University of Jerusalem (africaniste, pour avis sur Arazi) (Behn 2004, 2 : 417 ; McDougall 2008, surtout 230-49).
- Al-Mana, Suaad Abdul Aziz, (=ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Māni') PhD à Michigan University en 1986 (sous la dir. de Prof. Bellamy).
- Marmon, Shaun, doctorante puis Prof. à Princeton University (depuis 1992).
- Nawas, John, NL (Noordhorn), aujourd'hui à Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Director of the School of Abbasid Studies.
- Pagnini, Anna (?-2004), Istituto orientale di Napoli, puis Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere di Genova.
- Pasnau, Robert O., UCLA School of medicine (psychiatre).
- M. Qatam (Koweit puis Salt Lake City).
- Rosenthal, Franz (1914-2003), Yale University (Reisman 2003 ; YaleNews 2003 ; Behn 2004, 3 : 252-3).
- Schacht, Joseph (1902-1969), directeur de thèse à l'Université Leiden, puis Prof. à Columbia University à partir de septembre 1957 (Lewis 1970 ; Behn 2004, 3 : 314).
- Schoeler, Gregor (1944-), Universität Basel (Bâle) (Behn 2004, 2 : 334).
- Soravia, Bruna (Graziosi) (1960-), Università LUISS di Roma (site web de l'université).
- Stern, Samuel Miklos (1920-1969), All Souls College, Oxford (Behn 2004, 3 : 450-1).
- Ruyter, Hans.
- Traini, Renato (1923-2014), Istituto orientale di Napoli, puis Università La Sapienza di Roma (Behn 2004, 3 : 530-1 ; Baffioni 2015).
- van Gelder, Geert (1947-), PhD à l'Université Leiden en 1982, University of Groningen (puis University of Oxford).
- von Grünebaum, Gustav Edmund (1909-72), UCLA (Behn 2004, 1 : 676 ; Rosenthal 1973).

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**86** Je remercie les Drs. Hanauer et Rubin, auteurs de Hanauer, Rubin 2012, pour ces informations transmises par e-mail (avril 2018).

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# Il terzo stadio dell'imparare Piacere e bellezza del testo in Tammām Ḥassān

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**Abstract** In 1983 the eminent Egyptian linguist Tammām Ḥassān (1918-2011) wrote *al-Tamhīd fī iktisāb al-luḡa al-'arabiyya li-ḡayr al-nāṭiqīn bi-hā* (Introduction to the Acquisition of Arabic Language by Non Arabic Speakers), an essential work in the field of Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language, where he theorised his three-level approach for the acquisition of Arabic language by non Arabs consisting of the first level of knowledge, the second of comprehension and the third, the 'enjoyment level' (*marḥalat al-istimtā'*). The aim of the study is to shed light on the third level of language acquisition, which allows learners to detect the beauty of a text and results particularly interesting since it considers certain aspects that characterise Arabic language specificity and legacy such as literary taste (*taḍawwuq adabī*), stylistic embellishments, figures of speech, etc.

**Keywords** Didactics of Arabic to non-Arabic-speaking. Tammām Ḥassān. Arabic language. Learning. Taḍawwuq adabī. Arabic linguistics.

**Summary** 1 Introduzione. – 2 Cornice teorica di riferimento: la didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni. – 3 Il contributo di Tammām Ḥassān alla didattica dell'arabo. – 4 L'opera di Tammām Ḥassān nel contesto della ricerca. – 5 Il terzo stadio dell'imparare. – 6 Conclusioni.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2019-01-25
Accepted	2019-03-28
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Facchin, Andrea (2019). "Il terzo stadio dell'imparare. Piacere e bellezza del testo in Tammām Ḥassām". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 53-72.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/002

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## 1 Introduzione

Il periodo che sta a cavallo tra gli anni Settanta e Ottanta fu un momento assai significativo per la didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni – anche nota a livello internazionale come *Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language* –, area nella quale si colloca il presente contributo. A partire dal 1978, anno in cui si tenne a Riad il primo simposio internazionale dedicato alla suddetta area, e per tutto il decennio successivo si assistette infatti a un notevole sviluppo di questa disciplina sia sul piano pratico sia su quello della ricerca, favorito dalla crescente attenzione internazionale per le vicende mediorientali e il conseguente incremento dell'interesse attorno allo studio della lingua araba, uscita ormai dai confini della regione e diventata a tutti gli effetti lingua insegnata a livello globale nei più disparati contesti e nelle diverse varietà colloquiali.

Tale tuffo nel passato è motivato dal fatto che fu in questa atmosfera che venne alla luce l'opera di Tammām Ḥassān, noto studioso egiziano definito 'pioniere della linguistica' araba moderna, scomparso nel 2011. Nel 1983 egli pubblicò *al-Tamhīd fī iktisāb al-luġa al-'arabiyya li-ġayr al-nāṭiqīn bi-hā* (Introduzione all'acquisizione della lingua araba da non-arabofoni) all'interno della collana di studi linguistici dell'Università Umm al-Qurā di Mecca, opera fondamentale nel campo della linguistica applicata alla lingua araba nella quale lo studioso egiziano presentò l'approccio a tre livelli nel processo di acquisizione della lingua araba: lo stadio di conoscenza, lo stadio di comprensione e per ultimo quello di piacere (*marḥalat al-istimtā'*). È con questo scritto inoltre che lo studioso iniziò a concentrarsi sulla didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni, dopo essere divenuto celebre grazie alla sua opera magna pubblicata nel 1973 'La lingua araba: significato e struttura' (*al-Luġa al-'arabiyya ma'nā-hā wa-mabnā-hā*).

Obiettivo della presente ricerca è l'esplorazione del terzo stadio, ovvero quello di 'piacere' o 'godimento', il quale si caratterizza per la trattazione di temi peculiari come la comprensione della bellezza in un testo e il gusto letterario (*taḍawwuq adabī*), il quale – secondo Ḥusayn Sulaymān Qūra – è attitudine (*iqtidār*), frutto del costante dialogo tra letteratura (*adab*), retorica (*balāġa*) e critica letteraria (*naqd*), quest'ultimi elementi inseparabili come le diverse parti che formano un albero (Qūra [1969] 1972, 239). Secondo i maggiori studiosi della disciplina tali temi rappresenterebbero i tratti distintivi dell'insegnamento dell'arabo a non arabofoni, il quale comprenderebbe determinate abilità, attitudini o discipline specifiche della lingua araba e la sua tradizione. Per questo motivo si indagherà nel presente contributo come lo stadio di piacere influisca sulla didattica della lingua araba a non arabofoni e su che piano ciò avvenga nella visione di Tammām

Ḥassān,<sup>1</sup> prendendo parzialmente in considerazione al contempo – e mai in maniera esaustiva per chiari limiti di spazio – il suo pensiero e le sue influenze in relazione alle teorie sull'acquisizione delle lingue seconde o straniere. Si collegheranno le teorie del linguista egiziano alla produzione degli anni Ottanta nel campo della didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni e ad alcuni celebri esempi successivi che considerano il *taḍawwuq adabī* obiettivo finale dell'apprendimento dell'arabo standard e dei relativi testi letterari, uno fra tutti il 'limite linguistico' (*saqf luḡawī*) di al-Sa'īd Muḥammad Badawī (1992).

Oltre a ciò un altro obiettivo dell'articolo è fare luce su un autore ancora insufficientemente celebrato dagli studiosi non arabi,<sup>2</sup> ancor più se messo in relazione alla sua opera *al-Tamhīd fī iktisāb al-luḡa al-'arabiyya li-ḡayr al-nāṭiqīn bi-hā* (d'ora in poi abbreviata *al-Tamhīd fī iktisāb al-'arabiyya*) dedicata alla didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni e analizzata nel presente contributo. Pur essendo ormai datato, il lavoro di Ḥassān resta oggi un'opera essenziale della suddetta disciplina, oltre che fonte utilissima per gli studiosi che intendono condurre riflessioni teoriche circa l'ideologia arabo-islamica in relazione all'apprendimento dell'arabo. A distanza di 35 anni l'opera di Tammām Ḥassān è ancora attuale poiché prende in esame importanti questioni e valorizza le specificità della lingua araba e della sua tradizione.

Infine, prima di passare alla trattazione, è doveroso precisare che la varietà linguistica considerata in questo contributo è l'arabo standard moderno (*al-luḡa al-'arabiyya al-fuṣḥā al-ḥadīṭa*), non tanto per una particolare linea di pensiero, quanto piuttosto perché essa è la variante generalmente considerata dagli studiosi arabi nel campo della didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni,<sup>3</sup> incluso Tammām Ḥassān, il quale si esprime più volte nettamente a favore dell'insegnamento dell'arabo standard – o semplicemente 'arabo' come si troverà di seguito – essendo contrario quindi a quello delle varietà colloquiali. In tal senso l'obiettivo del contributo è anche quello di chiarire brevemente la linea di pensiero di Ḥassān, la quale forgia la sua rappresentazione della lingua araba e dalla quale scaturisce, di conseguenza, la sua teoria glottodidattica.

1 In tal senso questo contributo rappresenta un approfondimento di Facchin 2017.

2 Se si escludono gli studi coranici sono ancora pochi gli studiosi che lo citano. Si veda ad esempio Elamrani-Jamal 1983, al-Batal 1990 e Suleiman 1999, 2012.

3 Si veda anche l'articolo di Giolfo, Sinatora 2018 a riguardo.

## 2 **Cornice teorica di riferimento: la didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni**

La didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni è una disciplina afferente al campo della linguistica applicata, conosciuta oggi a livello internazionale con l'espressione inglese *Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language* (o semplicemente con il suo acronimo TAFL) e dagli esperti con la sua versione araba *ta'lim al-luġa al-'arabiyya li-ġayr al-nāṭiqīn bi-hā* (insegnamento dell'arabo ai non arabofoni), o una delle sue innumerevoli varianti 'a stranieri' (*li-l-aġānib*), 'a non arabi' (*li-ġayr al-'arab*), 'a parlanti altre lingue' (*li-l-nāṭiqīn bi-luġāt uḥrā*), ecc. (Ta'īma 1986, 52).

Seppure l'insegnamento dell'arabo ai non arabofoni come pratica didattica affondi le sue radici nella storia, essendo presente negli atenei d'Europa già dalla fine del XVI secolo e ben prima in altri contesti, vedasi ad esempio la *Escuela de traductores* di Toledo o alcune zone degli attuali Iran, Afghanistan, India o Nigeria, la nascita della didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni come disciplina scientifica è piuttosto recente, poiché per lungo tempo gli studiosi arabi si soffermarono a dibattere 'quale' varietà di arabo insegnare, trascurando la discussione sul 'come' insegnare. La didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni come area di ricerca si sviluppa dunque tra gli Stati Uniti, l'Europa e il mondo arabo sul finire degli anni Cinquanta, quando il nuovo ordine mondiale, scaturito dalla fine della Seconda guerra e dal graduale processo di decolonizzazione, garantisce una rinnovata centralità alle nazioni arabe da poco indipendenti. Essa è così il frutto dello scambio e del dialogo tra le neonate nazioni arabe e il resto del mondo attorno alla fine degli anni Cinquanta.

Inizialmente formatasi come ramo della linguistica applicata, la didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni si sviluppa nei decenni successivi per diventare dapprima 'area di ricerca indipendente' (Bākallā in Mubārak 1978, 70), poi disciplina a tutti gli effetti ed è oggi insegnata nelle università a livello internazionale. In particolare il suo sviluppo a cavallo degli anni Settanta e Ottanta è assai significativo per questo articolo, poiché è in questo periodo che si colloca l'opera di Tammām Ḥassān presa in considerazione. È infatti nel 1978, anno cruciale per la suddetta disciplina, che si tenne il primo simposio sulla didattica dell'arabo ai non arabofoni (*al-nadwa al-'ālamīyya al-ūlā li-ta'lim al-'arabiyya li-ġayr al-nāṭiqīn bi-hā*) a Riad, presso l'Università Re Sa'ūd, all'epoca chiamata 'Università di Riad' (Ġāmi'at al-Riyāḍ). L'incontro rappresentò un'eccezionale occasione per gli studiosi di tutto il mondo al fine di entrare in contatto con altri colleghi e dibattere delle più aggiornate teorie – oltre che delle buone prassi – nel campo della didattica delle lingue moderne e nello specifico quella dell'arabo rivolta ai non arabofoni. Il simposio diede inoltre il via a una serie di iniziative e a un'intensa attività di ricerca nel triennio successivo, tanto da essere considerato un periodo di graduale crescita e sviluppo del-

la disciplina come area di studio scientifica grazie alla pubblicazione di saggi e articoli, la formazione di comitati per la redazione di libri di testo di lingua araba, la nascita di nuovi istituti, l'organizzazione di numerosi simposi tra il Cairo, Khartoum e l'Arabia Saudita, ecc. È in questa atmosfera che si colloca l'opera di Tammām Ḥassān analizzata più approfonditamente nelle sezioni seguenti.

### 3 Il contributo di Tammām Ḥassān alla didattica dell'arabo

'Pioniere della linguistica' araba moderna (*rā'id luḡawī*) è l'appellativo che Tammām Ḥassān si guadagnò dopo una lunga carriera, a tratti errabonda, dedicata alla linguistica araba, dapprima concentrandosi sulla fonetica (Ḥassān 1952), poi sulla metodologia di ricerca linguistica (1955) e infine sulla didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni. Sebbene quest'ultima rappresenti un'area di ricerca marginale nel complesso della produzione scientifica del linguista egiziano, è doveroso far luce sull'apporto che egli ha dato al campo della didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni, nonché - brevemente - sul suo pensiero. In tal senso il presente paragrafo non può essere esaustivo per ovvi limiti di spazio e per questo motivo si rimanda a lavori come quello curato da 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Ārif che, nel 2002, raccolse una serie di articoli redatti dagli allievi di Ḥassān in un'opera biografica dedicata al linguista intitolata *Tammām Ḥassān rā'idan luḡawīyyan* (Tammām Ḥassān pioniere della linguistica).

Ḥassān nacque nel 1918 nel villaggio di El-Karnak, nell'Alto Egitto, dove dimostrò già all'età di undici anni di avere notevoli doti intellettuali riuscendo a memorizzare il Corano per intero (al-'Ārif 2002, 13); poi si spostò al Cairo per studiare presso al-Azhar, diplomandosi nel 1939. Dopo aver completato gli studi alla Dār al-'Ulūm, si trasferì a Londra dove si laureò e ottenne il dottorato in fonetica nel 1952 con una tesi dedicata alla varietà colloquiale di Aden, nell'attuale Yemen. In Inghilterra conobbe il linguista John Rupert Firth (1890-1960), del quale fu allievo e che influenzò la sua prima produzione come per esempio 'Metodologia della ricerca linguistica' (*Manāhiġ al-baḥt fī al-luġa*), scritto pubblicato al Cairo nel 1955. Degno di nota è l'articolo 'Grammatica e logica' (*al-Naḥw wa-l-manṭiq*) pubblicato su *Maġallat al-Azhar* (Ḥassān 1960), suo contributo al dibattito sulla riforma della lingua e la sua semplificazione, che tenne impegnati gli studiosi di tutto il mondo arabo per lungo tempo e che coinvolse varie riviste scientifiche come il 'Giornale dell'Accademia della lingua araba' (*Maġallat maġma' al-luġa al-'arabiyya*), 'Il Giornale' (*al-Maġalla*), il 'Giornale dell'Accademia damascena' (*Maġallat maġma' Dimašq*), ecc.

Tuttavia è nel 1973 che Ḥassān pubblicò la sua opera magna 'La lingua araba: significato e struttura' (*al-Luġa al-'arabiyya ma'nā-hā wa-mabnā-hā*), la quale lasciò il segno nel campo della linguistica araba

moderna negli anni a venire per le tematiche affrontate dal suo autore. Ḥassān fu infatti il primo a scardinare la tradizionale suddivisione tripartita del discorso (*aqsām al-kalām*), articolata in nome, verbo e particella e generalmente ascritta a Sībawayhi (m. 180/796), individuando invece sette *partes orationis* (Ḥassān 1973).

Durante gli anni Ottanta, dopo una serie di incarichi tra l'Egitto, la Nigeria, il Marocco e il Sudan (al-ʿĀrif 2002), iniziò una nuova fase per il linguista egiziano, il quale si spostò a Mecca, dove insegnò l'arabo per 16 anni presso l'Istituto per l'insegnamento dell'arabo a non arabofoni dell'Università Umm al-Qurà (*Maʿhad al-luġa al-ʿarabiyya li-ġayr al-nāṭiqīn bi-hā*), all'epoca 'Università Re ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz'. È in questo periodo che lo studioso iniziò a interessarsi alle teorie sull'acquisizione delle lingue seconde o straniere, pubblicando l'opera analizzata in questo articolo e partecipando a una serie di importanti iniziative nel campo della didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni come la guida della commissione dell'Università Umm al-Qurà per la redazione del testo 'Corso base di lingua araba per non arabofoni' (*al-Kitāb al-asāsī li-taʿlīm al-luġa al-ʿarabiyya li-l-nāṭiqīn bi-luġāt uḥrā*) summenzionato, poi completato da Ruṣdī Aḥmad Ṭaʿīma e Maḥmūd Kāmil al-Nāqa nel 1983.

Nelle sue opere Ḥassān dimostrò di prendere varie posizioni sulle teorie di acquisizione linguistica, frutto anche delle sue numerose letture. Esse lo inquadrano nello strutturalismo, ma risentono anche delle teorie di Noam Chomsky (al-ʿĀrif 2002, 7). In generale Ḥassān (1983, 91) sosteneva che una lingua andasse imparata nel suo ambiente naturale (*bīʿa siyāqīyya*),<sup>4</sup> affermazione che riporta alla mente le teorie contenute nell'opera di Stephen D. Krashen e Tracy D. Terrell *The Natural Approach* uscita in contemporanea con quella di Ḥassān nel 1983. Al contempo Ḥassān dimostrò anche consapevolezza pratica, poiché affermò che lo studente di lingua straniera non può apprendere come il bambino acquisisce la sua lingua madre. Egli non è infatti una pagina bianca, in quanto impara una lingua seconda (o straniera) innestando sulle sue abitudini linguistiche di parlante nativo nuove abitudini relative alla lingua obiettivo (Ḥassān 1983, 148).

In ultima analisi, ma per questo non meno importante, Tammām Ḥassān fu strenuo sostenitore dell'insegnamento dell'arabo nella sua varietà 'più eloquente' (*al-luġa al-ʿarabiyya al-fuṣḥā*) a discapito delle varietà colloquiali, le quali egli riteneva potessero confondere gli apprendenti non arabofoni disorientandoli nella diversità delle pronunce (1983, 66). Secondo Ḥassān inoltre l'arabo standard sarebbe l'uni-

<sup>4</sup> Più propriamente Ḥassān utilizza l'aggettivo *siyāqī* ovvero 'relativo al contesto', il quale può tuttavia essere letto come 'naturale', quindi 'ambiente naturale' nel senso krasheniano, da una lettura della riflessione che il linguista egiziano impenna su tale concetto (Ḥassān 1983, 91).



ca varietà degna di essere insegnata, anche per ragioni collegate alla domanda di istruzione degli studenti in arrivo nel mondo arabo (1983, 66), posizioni sulle quali molti studiosi arabi del campo si trovarono d'accordo (si veda ad esempio al-Uṣaylī 2002, 177; Madkūr, Harīdī 2006, 79) e che pochissimi misero in discussione confutandole parzialmente (al-Nāqa 1985b; Ṭa'īma 1986). Al fine di corroborare la sua tesi il linguista cita l'esempio delle cattive pratiche didattiche dei docenti di arabo a non arabofoni rivelando che questi utilizzano spesso l'arabo colloquiale al posto dello standard in classe e che inoltre sviano lo studente dalla pronuncia corretta. Questa prassi genererebbe confusione nell'apprendente e soprattutto andrebbe a inficiare sui primi due stadi dell'apprendimento pregiudicando la conoscenza esatta della forma e la comprensione dei significati (Ḥassān 1983, 67). Più precisamente la giustificazione che Ḥassān fornisce in ragione dell'esclusione delle varietà colloquiali dall'insegnamento sottende una questione ben più complessa legata all'ideologia della lingua ovvero il rifiuto delle varietà parlate in quanto indegne di essere studiate o addirittura 'inesistenti' come già spiegato in celebri studi sulla diglossia.<sup>5</sup>

Questa linea di pensiero forgia la rappresentazione di Ḥassān della lingua araba, a servizio del Corano e dell'identità linguistica comune (Ḥassān 1983, 71), non solo distinta dalla varietà 'più eloquente' ma anche 'moderna'. In questo senso lo studioso afferma che la pronuncia deve rispecchiare l'uso attuale oltre che rispettare il principio di accuratezza. La teoria glottodidattica che ne deriva si può riassumere nei seguenti punti basilari: in primo luogo l'uso del registro eloquente a discapito di quello colloquiale (*al-isti'māl al-faṣīḥ dūna al-'āmmī*), poi l'accuratezza della pronuncia (*nuṭq salīm*), l'impiego di metodi didattici moderni e il raggiungimento del gusto letterario, fine ultimo dell'apprendimento, del quale si parlerà più approfonditamente nei paragrafi successivi.

#### 4 L'opera di Tammām Ḥassān nel contesto della ricerca

Come si è visto in precedenza, la didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni, sviluppatasi come ramo della linguistica applicata sul finire degli anni Cinquanta, ebbe un nuovo impulso nel quadriennio che va dal 1978 al 1981, ovvero a cavallo tra gli ultimi anni del XIV e i primi del XV secolo dell'egira, quando gli studiosi arabi si interrogarono sul ruolo che la loro lingua potesse avere sulla scena internazionale globalizzata alla volta del nuovo secolo. Uno fra tutti Turkī Rābiḥ si chiese nell'articolo «Hal tuṣbiḥ al-luḡa al-'arabiyya fī al-qarn al-ḥāmis 'aṣar al-ḥiḡrī luḡa 'ālamīyya min ḡadīd?» se l'arabo sarebbe diventato una lingua

<sup>5</sup> Si veda, ad esempio, Ferguson (1959, 1990) e Bassiouney (2009).

mondiale nel nuovo secolo', un articolo e un quesito che ben sintetizzano l'atmosfera di quegli anni in cui l'arabo iniziò a essere insegnato nei più disparati contesti (al-Nāqa 1985b), nelle diverse varietà colloquiali (Badawī 1992, 55) e che pronostica il mutamento descritto da Nielsen (2009, 147) anni dopo e cioè che l'arabo passò dall'essere

a scholarly language studied for religious and, at times, commercial reasons in the 16th and 17th centuries to serving as one of the main foreign and second languages in the 21st century.

Più precisamente, nel breve lasso temporale sopra considerato si assistette a un notevole sviluppo della didattica dell'arabo, che passò da ramo della linguistica applicata ad area di ricerca indipendente e disciplina a tutti gli effetti (Mubārak 1978, 70). Ciò fu possibile grazie alla crescente attenzione degli studiosi arabi, i quali si concentrarono su nuovi focus di ricerca come la realizzazione di sillabi nozionali-funzionali (Ṭa'īma 1982), l'insegnamento dell'arabo come lingua d'origine (al-Munazzama 1988) o quello della letteratura (al-Maliḡī 1989), oltre che temi già dibattuti come la semplificazione linguistica (*taysīr*) e la redazione dei libri di testo. Del resto, è doveroso far notare che è proprio in questo periodo e quello immediatamente successivo che nacquero i primi 'corsi base' (*kitāb asāsī*) di lingua araba e ciò dal notevole impulso dato da alcune istituzioni come per esempio l'*Arab League Educational Cultural and Scientific Organization* (ALECSO), la quale promosse una serie di seminari sul tema nei primi anni Ottanta.

Non solo, lo sviluppo della disciplina come area di ricerca e pratica didattica si deve inoltre alla nascita di nuovi centri per l'insegnamento dell'arabo ai non arabofoni, la formazione di unità di ricerca dedicate e l'istituzione di collane di studi sulla linguistica applicata all'insegnamento dell'arabo, una tra le quali la collana dell'Istituto per l'insegnamento dell'arabo a non arabofoni dell'Università Umm al-Qurā di Mecca sopraccitato, la quale pubblicò numerosi contributi di coloro che sarebbero diventati celebri studiosi nel campo della suddetta disciplina: Ruṣdī Aḥmad Ṭa'īma (1940-2013), il suo collega Maḥmūd Kāmīl al-Nāqa e il linguista egiziano Tammām Ḥassān per l'appunto.

Tra le realizzazioni della collana è doveroso citare *al-Tamhīd fī iktisāb al-'arabiyya* di Ḥassān, edita nel 1983, la quale si inserisce nel campo della linguistica generale e quella applicata all'insegnamento dell'arabo, più propriamente denominata 'didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni'. L'opera è un trattato di linguistica araba nella quale l'autore discute numerosi aspetti legati alla disciplina, menzionando famosi grammatici e intellettuali del passato come Sibawayhi, Ibn Ġinnī, al-Ġāḥiẓ, al-Suyūṭī, ecc., ma allo stesso tempo intellettuali dell'era moderna come Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) e le relative teorie.

L'opera di Ḥassān divenne famosa per l'approccio a tre livelli - più propriamente 'stadi' (*marāḥil*) - nel processo di acquisizione della lingua

araba ivi discusso. Il primo dei tre è lo 'stadio di conoscenza' (*marḥalat al-ta'arruf*), il quale comprende secondo il linguista egiziano elementi e abilità basilari della lingua come ad esempio il saper distinguere i diversi suoni e le parole, attribuendo loro un ruolo. Ad esempio, uno studente che raggiunge e completa il primo stadio dovrebbe saper distinguere le funzioni del participio attivo *fā'il* e di quello passivo *maf'ūl*.

Lo stadio che segue è quello di 'comprensione' (*marḥalat al-istī'āb*), che Ḥassān associa alla comprensione delle funzioni dei periodi (*anmāt al-ḡumal*) e, se completato, permette all'apprendente di capire i significati (*ma'ānī*) di un testo. In questo stadio il linguista include anche la comprensione culturale (*istī'āb al-ṭaqāfa*). In tal senso Ḥassān afferma che il concetto di cultura associato alla società araba integra due versanti che identifica di per sé come due culture interconnesse, complementari e opposte allo stesso tempo, quella araba e quella islamica (Ḥassān 1983, 85). Egli sostiene che esse sono molto diverse fra loro: mentre la cultura araba persegue la conoscenza e l'educazione dello spirito nazionalista (*rūḥ qawmiyya*), quella islamica ha come obiettivo il fornire esempi (*quḍwa*), insegnamenti (*maw'īza*) e istruire sulle questioni religiose (*irṣād ilā awāmir al-dīn*). Pertanto il docente di arabo a non arabofoni ha il dovere di introdurre entrambe le componenti della cultura arabo-islamica tra i propri studenti. Nel far ciò, secondo il linguista egiziano, il docente dovrà seguire il principio di semplicità, scegliendo temi appropriati e servendosi di strumenti audiovisivi (Ḥassān 1983, 92), affermazione che lo inserisce nelle tendenze strutturaliste che caratterizzavano la didattica dell'arabo di quell'epoca (si veda ad esempio al-Qāsimī 1979; al-Swīsī 1979).

Il terzo e ultimo livello descritto da Ḥassān – del quale si tratterà più approfonditamente nel prossimo paragrafo – è denominato 'stadio di piacere' o 'godimento' (*marḥalat al-istimtā'*). Esso è il più alto dei tre e il massimo al quale possa aspirare l'apprendente; si raggiunge quando lo studente padroneggia il gusto letterario (*taḍawwuq adabī*) e arriva così a comprendere la bellezza in un testo di letteratura. In tal senso è accessibile per ultimo poiché l'approccio a tre livelli di Ḥassān si inserisce in una gerarchia rigida, la quale fa sì che lo studente non passi allo stadio successivo fintanto che non ha completato quello precedente. L'acquisizione della lingua araba può dunque avvenire solo in un ordine preciso: dalla conoscenza alla comprensione per poi finire con il piacere.

L'arabo, in questo senso, non è visto da Ḥassān come lingua veicolare, funzionale ad esempio agli scambi commerciali, i rapporti diplomatici, ecc. – come avveniva in altri contesti educativi durante gli anni Ottanta (si veda Ṣāliḥ 1980; Badawī 1992, 55) – ma come lingua letteraria e patrimonio culturale. L'obiettivo ultimo dell'approccio a tre livelli proposto da Ḥassān è la padronanza della lingua della letteratura, quindi il raggiungimento del gusto letterario e la conoscenza dell'arabo come lingua di cultura e tradizione. Tale obiettivo poco si discosta da quel-

lo dei corsi di arabo per scopi religiosi (*al-'arabiyya li-ağrād dīniyya*), i quali hanno caratterizzato la didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni sin dai suoi primi giorni, soprattutto in Arabia Saudita, dove molti istituti ieri come oggi insegnano la lingua attraverso lo studio del Corano, gli *aḥādīṭ*, il diritto islamico, ecc. (al-Fawzān 2014). Questa scelta, oltre ad essere supportata da ricerche scientifiche (al-Nāqa 1985a) e da analisi di mercato sulla domanda di formazione, deriva prevalentemente dal fatto che l'arabo è legato da sempre alla religione e quindi alla sacertà del Corano, legame ribadito più volte dai glottodidatti arabi (al-Qāsimī 1979; Bahğat 1980; Şinī, al-Qāsimī 1980, ecc.),<sup>6</sup> i quali hanno sottolineato il legame necessario tra la natura eterna della lingua e quella della religione<sup>7</sup> o, riportando le parole di famosi eruditi come Abū Maşūr al-Ta'ālibī (m. 429/1039), hanno descritto il nesso che unisce lingua e religione: 'chi ama Allah, ama il suo Profeta, dunque gli arabi e la loro lingua, attraverso la quale il Corano è stato rivelato'.<sup>8</sup> In tal senso l'approccio proposto da Ḥassān e l'insegnamento dell'arabo per scopi religiosi condividono lo stesso obiettivo, poiché mirano alla padronanza di una lingua principalmente per propositi culturali o al fine di praticare la vita religiosa, escludendo pertanto i principi di funzionalità e comunicazione che invece caratterizzano gran parte della glottodidattica contemporanea, compresa quella dell'arabo, come si vedrà in seguito.

Nei decenni successivi alcuni linguisti e pedagogisti arabi hanno citato Ḥassān e la sua celebre teoria dell'approccio a tre livelli. Uno fra tutti il noto studioso egiziano al-Sa'īd Muḥammad Badawī (1924-2014), il quale sviluppò dalle riflessioni di Ḥassān il concetto di 'limite linguistico', esaminato più avanti in questo articolo. Oltre a lui vi è anche il saudita 'Abd al-'Aziz al-'Uşaylī, il quale per redigere il suo trattato di linguistica applicata pubblicato nel 2002 si ispirò a una serie di letture disparate edite da famosi studiosi come 'Alī al-Qāsimī, Ruşdī Aḥmad Ta'īma, Maḥmūd Kāmil al-Nāqa, Muḥammad Ḥasan Bākallā, 'Alī Aḥmad Madkūr, Maḥmūd Ismā'īl Şinī e nondimeno il linguista egiziano Tammām Ḥassān.

Nonostante la discreta fortuna della quale ha goduto *al-Tamhīd fī iktisāb al-'arabiyya* di Ḥassān, appena apprezzabile rispetto a quella riservata alla sua opera magna del 1973, tale pubblicazione si rivela particolarmente interessante poiché pone l'accento su alcune specificità della lingua araba come la letteratura o il gusto letterario, le quali la caratterizzano e rendono il suo apprendimento diverso se confrontato con quello di altre lingue.

<sup>6</sup> Si propone qui una selezione stringata dei glottodidatti che hanno trattato del suddetto legame nei primi anni Ottanta, periodo in cui si collocano le teorie di Ḥassān esposte in questo articolo. Per i decenni successivi si veda Facchin (2019).

<sup>7</sup> *Ḥulūd al-'arabiyya murtabiṭ bi-ḥulūd al-islām*.

<sup>8</sup> Bahğat 1980, 189. Qui e altrove, salvo indicazione contraria, la traduzione è dell'Autore.

## 5 Il terzo stadio dell'imparare

Il terzo stadio è dunque l'ultimo e il più alto (o avanzato) descritto da Ḥassān, il quale lo denomina 'stadio di piacere' (*marḥalat al-istimtā'*). Esso non può essere raggiunto senza che lo studente abbia prima conosciuto i fondamenti del testo (*mabānī al-naṣṣ al-luġawī*), ne abbia compreso i relativi significati e sia così passato per i primi due stadi descritti nel paragrafo precedente. Se con essi il linguista egiziano ha trattato conoscenza, comprensione e una serie di questioni linguistiche a esse correlate, nel terzo ed ultimo capitolo della sua opera Ḥassān si occupa della forma linguistica (*ṣakl luġawī*) e dell'influenza che questa esercita sul gusto (*dawq*), chiedendosi come si genera il piacere (*iḥsās al-istimtā'*). Quest'ultimo è - secondo Ḥassān - gusto letterario (*taḍawwuq adabī*) citato peraltro da molti studiosi arabi<sup>9</sup> e permetterebbe di comprendere dove risiede la bellezza in un testo. Tale disposizione, descritta da Ḥusayn Sulaymān Qūra ([1969] 1972, 239) come attitudine (*iqtidār*), è secondo Ḥassān strettamente connessa alla riflessione sullo stile e parte del lavoro di analisi critica di un testo.

Nel terzo stadio dell'apprendimento, analogamente agli altri, la varietà linguistica considerata è rigorosamente l'arabo 'più eloquente', nonché lingua della letteratura (*luġat al-adab*), la quale fa uso di espressioni come l'encomio (*madḥ*), il biasimo (*damm*), l'implorazione (*taraġġī*), l'incitazione (*iġrā'*), l'ammonimento (*taḥḍīr*) o l'esortazione (*taḥḍīd*) e si caratterizza al contempo per lo stile prolisso (*iṭnāb*), la concisione (*iġāz*), gli ornamenti stilistici (*muḥassināt*), la presenza di espedienti retorici come il linguaggio figurato (*maġāz*), la metonimia (*kināya*), ecc. La lingua della letteratura descritta da Ḥassān (1983, 112) si distingue inoltre da altri tipi di registri o linguaggi settoriali (*lagwa*) come ad esempio la lingua dei mercati<sup>10</sup> o quella della scienza, la quale è oggettiva, concreta e semplice.

Se quelle sopraccitate sono le peculiarità della lingua della letteratura, allo scrittore non resta che 'agire' sul testo, più propriamente - come afferma Ḥassān - 'sfruttare' (*tashīr*) la forma linguistica a suo vantaggio per ottenere la compartecipazione emotiva del lettore.

Se ciò che persegue lo scrittore nelle sue opere è la compartecipazione emotiva del lettore o di chi ascolta, i quali sarebbero indotti a guardare attraverso gli occhi dell'autore, ad ascoltare come lui, a sentire quello che egli sente, a desiderare che si realizzi ciò che ha chiesto o che gli impedimenti siano rimossi, se è questo ciò che l'autore persegue, allora il più celebre dei mezzi a sua

<sup>9</sup> Si veda Ibrāhīm [1961] 1968; Qūra [1969] 1972; al-Maliġī 1989; Ruṣḍī Ḥaṭīr, Raṣlān 1990; Šiḥāta [1992] 1996; Abū Maġlī, al-Fāz 1998; al-Munazzama 1983, 87.

<sup>10</sup> *al-Luġa allatī yasta'milu-hā man yamšūna fī al-aswāq.*

disposizione è l'agire sulla forma linguistica, migliorandola, al fine di ottenere ciò che si prefigge. (Ḥassān 1983, 111)

I mezzi che generano compartecipazione emotiva a disposizione del letterato sono dunque discussi da Ḥassān, il quale si interroga sulla loro natura, chiedendosi se le persone di fronte ad essi siano uguali come quando sono scaldati dal tepore del sole,<sup>11</sup> quindi influiscano di per sé sul gusto, oppure se questi siano specifici a seconda delle diverse culture (*taqāfiyya maḥalliyya*) e di conseguenza possano essere codificati solamente dai 'nativi' di una data cultura (*nāšī'*) e ancora se chi legge il testo letterario possa beneficiarne per via innata o acquisita (*fiṭrī aw muktasab*). Del resto, afferma Ḥassān (1983, 149), non tutti i nativi possono arrivare a godersi il testo letterario e nemmeno tutti i non-nativi sono in grado di comprendere la cultura obiettivo studiata, a meno che non soggiornino nel paese dove è presente tale cultura.

Nella discussione sulla natura dei mezzi Ḥassān opera una distinzione significativa: egli spiega, in primis, che è una questione di 'marcatezza' e per questo motivo discerne tra utilizzo marcato (*'udūlī*) e non marcato (*uṣūlī*) della lingua. Per chiarire il concetto, il linguista fa un esempio classico relativo all'ambito morfofonemico, per cui *qawala* sarebbe la forma soggiacente marcata del verbo *qāla*, il quale rappresenta la norma, la forma non marcata per l'appunto. Ḥassān spiega inoltre che l'utilizzo non marcato della lingua garantisce la correttezza (*siḥḥa*), non la bellezza, la quale scaturirebbe dall'utilizzo marcato. Quest'ultimo si realizzerebbe attraverso una serie di usi linguistici precisi come la traduzione (*naql*) del nome primitivo (*ġāmid*) con il suo derivato (*muṣṭaqq*) e viceversa,<sup>12</sup> l'impiego della lingua<sup>13</sup> per generare nuovi significati (*tashīr al-lafẓ li-tawliḍ al-ma'nā*), l'anacoluto (*iltifāt*), il *taglīb*,<sup>14</sup> le cooccorrenze<sup>15</sup> (*taḍām*) e i loro rispettivi utilizzi

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11 *Fa-yakūnu al-nās ḥayāla-hā kamā yatasāwawna fī al-istidfā' bi-ḥarārāt al-šams.*

12 Si veda a tal riguardo la seguente frase *Zayd raḡul* 'Zayd è un uomo' e la traduzione del nome primitivo in essa contenuto con il suo corrispettivo nome derivato *Zayd mutṭaṣif bi-l-ruḡūla* 'Zayd è contraddistinto dalla mascolinità' (Ḥassān 1983, 114).

13 Più propriamente Ḥassān scrive 'espressione' (*lafẓ*), sebbene il tipo di neoformazioni alle quali egli si riferisce comprendano usi linguistici di vario tipo come l'eufonia (*ġars*) o figure retoriche quali la metonimia (*kināya*), il *double entendre* (*tawriya*), la sineddoche (*maġāz mursal*), ecc.

14 Nello specifico Ḥassān fornisce i seguenti esempi di *taglīb* 'prevalenza', i quali lo accercherebbero a un tipo di sineddoche nel quale il termine plurale viene sostituito con il suo corrispettivo singolare. Ciononostante in questo caso si assiste a una vera e propria neoformazione: *al-abawān* per 'il padre e la madre' dove il genere maschile 'prevale' sulla scelta lessicale alla base della neoformazione stessa, *al-farqadān* per 'le stelle β e γ dell'Orsa minore', *al-Ḥasanān* per 'Ḥasan e Ḥusayn', entrambi figli del quarto Califfo ben guidato 'Alī.

15 Anche chiamate 'collocazioni' o 'combinazioni lessicali'. In arabo, oltre alla proposta dello studioso, sono anche dette *mutalāzimāt*, *mutaṣāhibāt lafẓiyya* o *mutawaridāt* (Husni, Newman 2015, 1).

marcati come l'ellissi (*ḥaḍf*) sia essa grammaticale (*naḥwī*) o retorica (*balāḡī; bayānī*), l'incremento (*ziyāda*),<sup>16</sup> la disgiunzione (*faṣl*), l'incisione (*i'tirāḍ*) e l'inclusione (*taḍmīn*).<sup>17</sup>

Attraverso gli utilizzi marcati della lingua sopradescritti il lettore può compiacersi della bellezza di un testo letterario, ma - secondo Ḥassān (1983, 146) - esistono numerosi altri modi in cui chi contempla un testo sarebbe influenzato dalla sua bellezza. In tal senso il linguista egiziano afferma che un testo può suscitare attitudini nascoste (*naza'āt kāmīna*) nell'animo del lettore, il quale si fa coinvolgere dal contenuto, non dalla forma, la quale - a sua volta - può essere non di meno fonte di piacere grazie a mezzi quali il ritmo (*īqā'*), la rima (*qāfiya*), i vari metri (*buhūr*) del verso poetico, ecc. Il contenuto del testo può colpire suscitando sentimenti che il lettore prima non sapeva di custodire, finendo per condividere il pensiero dell'autore. Non solo, il lettore può provare ammirazione per l'inventiva e la chiarezza del testo, può ritrovarsi nelle trepidazioni, gli stati d'animo, le relazioni sociali caratteristiche della natura umana descritte dall'autore, imbattendosi in segreti e accorgendosi della bellezza del loro svelamento e conoscenza (Ḥassān 1983, 147). Il testo può caratterizzarsi inoltre per tratti distintivi intrinseci all'autore stesso come l'arditezza (*ṣaḡā'a*), la profondità delle riflessioni (*'umq al-fikra*), per contro la loro semplicità (*basāṭa*) o schiettezza (*ṣarāḥa*), tutte qualità delle quali il lettore può compiacersi.

Secondo Ḥassān il raggiungimento dello 'stadio di piacere' garantirebbe dunque di godere della bellezza di un testo o per contro di individuarne le brutture attraverso i mezzi sopraccitati. Ciononostante il linguista egiziano afferma che il piacere è uno stato d'animo e in quanto tale non può essere 'appreso' (1983, 149), a meno che non lo si consideri uno stato mentale consapevole (*ḥāla 'aqliyya wā'iya*) secondo il quale si discernono i punti di bellezza da quelli di bruttezza per determinate ragioni. Pertanto il raggiungimento del piacere come stato d'animo sarebbe legato a una predisposizione innata (*isti'dād fiṭrī*) propria di alcuni, non di tutti, che pur arrivando allo stadio di comprensione non sarebbero in grado di godersi il testo letterario pur essendo questo scritto nella propria lingua madre e riguardando aspetti impliciti della cultura di provenienza. Nonostante ciò lo studente non arabofono - il quale resta il focus principe dell'opera del linguista egiziano - può essere istruito sui tratti di bellezza (*mawāṭin al-ḡamāl*) di un testo, quindi raggiungere lo stadio di piacere, inteso come stato mentale, aggirando l'ansia sua nemica per antonomasia e scendendo tra il bello e il brutto in un'opera letteraria. Secondo Ḥassān infat-

<sup>16</sup> «Augmentation» secondo Troupeau (1993, 915).

<sup>17</sup> Si vedano Bausani (1986, 356) e Abdul-Raof (2006).

ti 'ciò che si può acquisire si può anche imparare',<sup>18</sup> un'affermazione che andando a obiettare il ragionamento sulla natura del piacere stesso sopraccitato giustificherebbe la bipartizione proposta dal linguista.

Il raggiungimento dell'ultimo livello nell'apprendimento di una lingua è stato un tema dibattuto nel campo della didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni anche da al-Sa'īd Muḥammad Badawī, il quale ispirandosi al suo collega apripista Tammām Ḥassān parlò di 'limite linguistico' (*saqf luġawī*) o 'educativo' (*ta'īmī*), inteso come il livello finale di competenza relativo alle quattro abilità linguistiche classiche al quale lo studente può aspirare (Badawī 1992). Nonostante esso sia un livello finale come lo stadio di piacere e siano inclusi in esso la comprensione delle opere di letteratura e il saper distinguere le caratteristiche stilistiche (*furūq uslūbiyya*) del testo (53), l'obiettivo ultimo del 'limite linguistico' si discosta da quello dell'approccio a tre livelli sopraccitato, poiché non considera il gusto letterario e pone l'accento sulle quattro abilità linguistiche in generale. La riflessione di Badawī potrebbe sembrare oggi scontata, tuttavia essa mirava a scardinare una tendenza educativa generale diffusa nei primi anni Novanta tra i docenti di lingua araba a non arabofoni, i quali non completavano il livello avanzato di lingua araba poiché erano convinti che i loro studenti non fossero in grado di raggiungerlo, un'*impasse* didattica che Badawī definì 'tacito accordo' (*ittifāq šāmit*) o 'visione generale' (*ra'ī 'āmm*) e che portò lo studioso ad appellarsi a favore di un'inversione di tendenza. Ciò spiega perché Badawī decise di tradurre i descrittori del livello 'di riguardo' (*mutamayyiz*)<sup>19</sup> dell'*American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages* (ACTFL 1989) in arabo e di presentarli all'incontro dei direttori dei centri per l'insegnamento dell'arabo ai non arabofoni (*iġtimā' mudīrī al-ma'āhid al-'arabiyya al-mutaḥaššīša fi i'dād mu'allimi al-luġa al-'arabiyya wa-tadrīsi-hā li-ġayr al-nātiqīn bi-hā*) radunatisi a Tunisi nel settembre del 1991, così che esperti e docenti arabofoni potessero conoscerli, leggendoli direttamente nella propria lingua e non dovessero fare ricorso all'inglese, condizione comune a molte delle opere di autori stranieri raramente tradotte in arabo e per questo spesso ignorate.

Ciononostante l'operazione scientifica di Badawī non rappresenta solamente una semplice traduzione con l'obiettivo di confutare il tacito accordo sopraccitato, ma è rilevante anche per un secondo motivo. Essa infatti introduce una novità nel dibattito teorico sulla didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni al quale gli studiosi arabi presero parte nei primi anni Novanta: la questione dei livelli di competenza per la misurazione delle abilità linguistiche con scopo la comunicazione (Younes 2015, 24). Questo dibattito, nonostante già attingesse dalle teo-

**18** *Kull šay' in šalaḥa li-l-iktisāb fa-qad šalaḥa bi-l-tālī li-l-ta'īm.*

**19** Il nome originale è 'distinguished' (ACTFL 1989).



rie di Ferdinand de Saussure, Leonard Bloomfield, Robert Lado, Noam Chomsky e altri noti studiosi non arabi, appariva legato a un ambiente di ricerca ancora poco rinnovato. A Tunisi Badawī innestò su tale dibattito una nuova prospettiva glottodidattica dei livelli ponendo l'accento sulle abilità linguistiche e sulla comunicazione. Ciò si spiega col fatto che Badawī era in contatto con i più aggiornati approcci glottodidattici provenienti dagli Stati Uniti essendo direttore del *Master of Arts in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language* presso l'American University in Cairo dal 1979.

Per contro Tammām Ḥassān, assieme agli altri studiosi già citati,<sup>20</sup> incarna la concezione glottodidattica tipicamente arabo-islamica che si discosta di netto dalla filosofia alla base delle scale di livello dell'ACTFL e del *Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le lingue* (CE 2002). Questi standard internazionali si distinguono per funzionalità, efficienza, praticità e mirano a un uso della lingua volto alla comunicazione, tutti elementi distintivi degli approcci glottodidattici contemporanei. In tal senso l'approccio a tre livelli di Ḥassān stride con gli obiettivi delle scale di livello sopraccitate poiché esclude i principi che le caratterizzano. La teoria glottodidattica del linguista egiziano rifiuta infatti lo studio delle varietà colloquiali, mezzo di comunicazione principale della quotidianità araba, poiché le considera varietà basse e si eleva alla lingua 'più eloquente', individuando il suo 'limite linguistico' nella padronanza della lingua della letteratura, quindi nel raggiungimento del gusto letterario - attitudine largamente apprezzabile perché più alta di tutte - e nella conoscenza dell'arabo come lingua di cultura e tradizione.

## 6 Conclusioni

I livelli di apprendimento linguistico, compreso l'ultimo (o avanzato) in relazione all'arabo, sono un tema dibattuto soprattutto nell'ultimo decennio (si veda Alish 2010; Soliman 2018), tanto che ormai da anni vi sono prassi consolidate circa il loro impiego in vari contesti educativi nel settore delle lingue. Ciononostante poco ancora si è detto circa i contenuti e gli obiettivi del livello più alto di competenza di lingua araba. Nel contesto di una migliore conoscenza di una fase storica cruciale per la didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni - disciplina ancora insufficientemente studiata soprattutto in relazione alla sua evoluzione cronologica - il presente studio problematizza la questione dei livelli e descrive la prospettiva glottodidattica dell'ideologia arabo-islamica analizzando nello specifico la questione degli sta-

<sup>20</sup> Ibrāhīm [1961] 1968; Qūra [1969] 1972; al-Malīgī 1989; Ruṣdī Ḥāṭir, Raslān 1990; Šihāta [1992] 1996; Abū Maġlī, al-Fāz 1998.

di (o livelli) di apprendimento. Tale prospettiva si caratterizza per un approccio asincrono rispetto alle traiettorie della teoria glottodidattica odierna ma al contempo volto alla conoscenza dei testi letterari e della lingua per il gusto e la bellezza della lingua stessa.

Il saggio ha dunque trattato delle connessioni della suddetta disciplina con alcune peculiarità che caratterizzano la lingua araba e del dibattito che gli studiosi arabi hanno intavolato su quest'ultime. Nello specifico si è cercato di approfondire (nella maniera più soddisfacente possibile considerati i limiti di spazio) il pensiero e le influenze di uno degli studiosi più eminenti nel campo della linguistica araba moderna, Tammām Ḥassān, il quale pur avendo dedicato la sua carriera alla linguistica è stato al contempo un importante protagonista della discussione sulla didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni.

Tra le criticità delle teorie di Ḥassān si trova senza dubbio il fatto che *al-Tamhīd fī iktisāb al-'arabiyya* sia espressione di un approccio strutturalista ormai datato. Inoltre il linguista egiziano esclude dalla sua analisi le varietà dell'arabo parlato, scelta che oggi va contro le tendenze metodologiche sempre più diffuse nel campo della didattica dell'arabo a non arabofoni e cioè l'insegnamento dell'arabo standard affiancato a una - o più - varietà colloquiali, espressione dell'approccio integrato (*ṭarīqa takāmuliyya*).<sup>21</sup> In aggiunta, nella sua opera il linguista considera una varietà di lingua, l'arabo standard, mai veicolare oppure orientata alla comunicazione, bensì funzionale al raggiungimento del puro gusto letterario per scopi culturali o di piacere, scelta che ancora una volta strida con l'orientamento della glottodidattica contemporanea e le necessità di formazione pratica odierne degli apprendenti. Questi fattori relegano l'approccio di Ḥassān in nicchie educative, poiché esso risulta applicabile - sul piano pratico - solo a determinate tipologie di corso. In tal senso le teorie del linguista egiziano possono ritenersi valide solamente per i curricula di arabo standard che mirano alla conoscenza della letteratura araba, ivi incluso il raggiungimento del gusto letterario e in senso lato alla conoscenza della cultura e delle tradizioni arabo-islamiche attraverso le opere di letteratura.

Ciononostante l'opera di Ḥassān resta un contributo più che attuale e fonte utilissima per gli studiosi di oggi che intendono condurre riflessioni teoriche circa l'ideologia arabo-islamica in relazione all'apprendimento dell'arabo. La centralità dedicata a quelle che vengono percepite da Ḥassān come specificità della lingua araba (gli ornamenti stilistici e le altre figure retoriche citate, i vari utilizzi marcati della lingua come la traduzione del nome primitivo con il suo derivato e viceversa, l'impiego della lingua per generare nuovi significati, il *taglib*, le cooccorrenze, ecc.) ha evidenziato infatti la loro grande importanza sia nel dibattito intavolato dagli studiosi arabi di ieri, sia nelle di-

<sup>21</sup> Si veda a tal riguardo Younes 2015 e al-Batal 2018.

scussioni sul tema che possono seguire oggi. In tal senso il 'piacere' e il 'godimento' che scaturisce dalla lettura di un testo di letteratura può essere, secondo il linguista egiziano, uno stato mentale consapevole raggiungibile anche dagli studenti non arabofoni attraverso l'apprendimento e l'abbattimento dell'ansia, nemica per antonomasia del piacere.

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# The Peregrinations of *panjgāh*

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**Abstract** One of the more durable elements in the modal repertoires of the art-music traditions of the Middle East and Central Asia, *panjgāh* has a recorded history going back to the beginning of the fourteenth century, and all major theoretical texts of the following centuries refer to it. Discussed here is the documentation of its emergence, diffusion and morphological development, leading to a presentation and comparison of contemporary forms from Turkey to Xinjiang, manifestly diverse but in several cases still demonstrably related.

**Keywords** Mode. Maqām/makam/mughām. Historical musicology. History of music in the Middle East. History of music in Central Asia.

**Summary** 1 Origins, Diffusion, and Early Definitions. – 2 Indices of Use. – 3 Later Historical Developments. – 3.1 The Ottoman Evidence. – 3.2 Arab Accounts. – 3.3 Iraq. – 3.4 Iran. – 3.5 Azerbaijan and Central Asia. – 4 Commonalities. – 5 Perspectives. – 6 Contexts Past and Present.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2019-01-24
Accepted	2019-02-20
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Wright, Owen (2019). "The Peregrinations of *panjgāh*". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 73-120.

**DOI** 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/003

## 1 Origins, Diffusion, and Early Definitions

The following survey of the evolution of *panjgāh*<sup>1</sup> may be regarded as a supplement to previous scholarship on other members of what may be designated as the set of ‘number’ modes, those with names beginning with a (Persian) numeral. The original set, most of which were to become prevalent in much of the central Islamic world, is first attested at the beginning of the fourteenth century in the *durrat al-tāj* of Qoṭb al-Dīn Šīrāzi (d. 1311) (henceforth Šīrāzi). It consisted of four such modes, *dōgāh* (‘position 2’), *segāh* (3), *čahārgāh* (4) and *panjgāh* (5), of which two have previously been discussed: *segāh* (Elsner 2006, 2016; Powers 1989; Wright 1992) and *čahārgāh* (Wright 1990). All four derive from a single parent mode, *rāst*, each according prominence to a successively higher note and segment within the *rāst* pitch set, with in most a corresponding stepwise shift upwards of the finalis, but rather than remaining a closely-knit family each subsequently followed a quite different trajectory: *segāh* was to retain a stable core element and at the same time prosper as a prominent feature of the modal landscape, while *čahārgāh* would have a more irregular development, even with an attempt being made in republican Turkey to co-opt the name for ideological purposes as a label for, in effect, the Western C major scale, and in so doing to side-line the small but modally quite different surviving repertoire. With *panjgāh* we are confronted with yet another profile, that of a mode which would both mutate and preserve earlier structural features as it ventured forth to enjoy wider geographical diffusion, jostling against other modes in the process.

That the textual record begins with Šīrāzi does not mean that *panjgāh* originated in or was restricted to western Persia at the turn of the fourteenth century (Wright 1978, 172-5, 286-7). We cannot establish a trajectory or early history of diffusion, and certainly not one beginning in 1300, for *panjgāh* may already have been quite widely known by then: during the first half of the fourteenth

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The Author should like to express his gratitude to Mehmet Uğur Ekinci and Jacob Olley, who kindly read through a draft and offered constructive comments on the Ottoman material, and likewise to Polina Dessiatnitchenko, Scheherazade Hassan and Saeid Kordmafi, who generously responded to queries for further information concerning the Azeri, Iraqi, and Iranian traditions respectively.

**1** This transliteration will be used throughout, rather than jumping to *pençgah*, *banjkāh*, etc., depending on the language of the tradition in question. For the most part, other terms will also be given in a similarly arbitrary way as if from Persian. Only in cases of confusion or when clearly restricted to a specific tradition will the transliteration react accordingly. Plural forms will generally not be given, thus ‘several *šo’ba*’ rather than ‘several *šo’ab*’.



century it is attested as far away as Cairo.<sup>2</sup> In the fifteenth we find it cited in both Timurid and Anatolian sources, and during the sixteenth in Safavid texts, evidence that by this time the name was or had been current at various cultural centres along an arc stretching from Cairo to Herat. Less clear is its relative prominence within the mode stock and its degree of uniformity over this area and time span. Such uncertainty also attends its later history, indeed becomes more acute, as we find it recorded even further afield: it will eventually appear, whether centrally or peripherally, on the modal maps of Egypt, the Levant, Iraq, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kashmir, and Central Asia right as far as Uighur Xinjiang: the arc thus now extends from Cairo to Ürümchi.

Sources down to the sixteenth century show a tolerable degree of consistency with regard to its basic structure or structures. The octave scale abstract of its parent mode *rāst* provided by Širāzi's predecessor al-Urmawī (d. 1294) may be represented as /1 2 3- 4 5 6- 7<sub>b</sub> 1'/; it contained parallel conjunct tetrachords, each probably with a neutral third (symbolised here by 3- and 6-).<sup>3</sup> To this definition Širāzi adds that the pivotal 4 was prominent, and it is from this point that the derivation of the 'number' modes begins, the perception that they were indeed derivations being clearly signalled by giving them the category label *šō'ba* ('branch'). It is thus to the upper pentachord of *rāst* that they are primarily related, in origin at least, and if /4 5 6- 7<sub>b</sub> 1'/ is accordingly re-notated as /1 2 3- 4 5/, *dōgāh* will have 2 as prominent (and finalis), *segāh* 3-, *čahārgāh* 4 and *panjgāh* 5, thus explaining the inclusion of these numbers in the name. It is, then, with this whole segment that *panjgāh* is identified, and although in his discussion of *dōgāh* Širāzi does recognise that in practice melodies might exceed what he assumes to have been its originally narrow confines by reaching 6 in descent, no such comment is made with reference to *panjgāh*, so that it may well be that it was largely restricted to the /1 2 3- 4 5/ pentachord, with 1 as finalis. It would thus be distinguished from its parent *rāst* by concentrating on or even being confined to the upper part, and in one common line of development *rāst* will in effect relinquish that area to it, becoming itself increasingly concentrated

<sup>2</sup> By Ibn Kurr (1282-1357), who also recognises it as a note name. It does not, though, occur among the mode names cited by his contemporary, al-'Umarī (1301-49), although the other three 'number' modes do. See Wright 2014, 119, 141, 186.

<sup>3</sup> Albeit one given the effective value of a Just Intonation major third in al-Urmawī's theoretical analysis (more precisely, whole tone (204 cents) + two limmas (180 cents), i.e. 384 as against the 386 of the Just Intonation interval). In what follows, – and + will be used to indicate intermediate pitches without suggesting precise values: generally, 2- may be assumed to be approximately halfway between 1 and 2, and 2+ halfway between 2 and 3. The upper octave is identified by a prime, the lower by underlining.

on a core area around and below its own 1 (= 5 in the relation to the re-notated upper pentachord).<sup>4</sup>

Another feature mentioned by Širāzi, primarily in relation to *dōgāh* but also to *segāh*, is the possible inclusion of 4# (corresponding to the optional 7 that could be added in *rāst*).<sup>5</sup> Although he makes no mention of 4# in relation to *čahārgāh* and *panjgāh*, it is reasonable to assume that insofar as it was an ancillary feature of *rāst* it would also sometimes be present, and that such was the case with *čahārgāh* is confirmed by the way it is recorded in the early fourteenth century by Ibn Kurr (Wright 2014, 140-1). However, he fails to mention 4# in relation to *panjgāh*,<sup>6</sup> and as it is also absent from the fleeting reference to *panjgāh* made later in the fourteenth century by Mubārakšāh<sup>7</sup> it not until we reach the beginning of the fifteenth century, with the treatises of Marāji (d. 1435), that its optional inclusion is attested (Marāji 1987, 140). Indeed, two forms of *panjgāh* are now recognised, one without 4#, still /1 2 3- 4 5/, but the other with: /1 2 3- 4 4# 5/. The name of the former, *panjgāh-e ašli*, indicates that it was considered the primary, original form, while even if the name of the latter, *panjgāh-e zāyed*, points to 4# being regarded as an additional extra, it clearly has the status of an autonomous variant. The bifurcation is recognised by nearly all later fifteenth-century Systematist theorists based in Herat, and also by al-Lādiqī (d. 1494), who may represent the Ottoman practice of the period (al-Lādiqī 1939, 401). Among those belonging to the Herati tradition the exception is Banā'i, who has only the form without 4# (Banā'i 1368š/1990, 93), while outside the Systematist orbit we find that Seydi, too, who reflects Anatolian norms of the very end of the fifteenth century, recognises only this form. He refers to an *eşfahān* → *rāst* trajectory, but confirmation that *eşfahān* here is to be equated with a note (5) rather than the mode, so that this definition should be identified with 5 4 3- 2 1, is given by the listing of *panjgāh* among the modes that are played with the *rāst* tuning with-

<sup>4</sup> As shown, for example, in Neubauer 1999-2000, 363.

<sup>5</sup> The implication that 7 could be added in *rāst* is clear from Širāzi's comments on possible confusions of modal identity with regard to *dōgāh* and *segāh* (Wright 1978, 174-5), although it never forms part of the standard definitions of *rāst*: neither al-Urmawī nor Širāzi include it, and Mubārakšāh in effect excludes it by saying that *eşfahān* has same notes as *rāst* plus one more, yz, i.e. 7 (*Šarḥ mawlānā mubārakšāh bar adwār*, fol. 119v, D'Erlanger 1938, 3: 404).

<sup>6</sup> It is presented as a descending abstract (/5 4 3- 2 1/) the register of which is not specified: that given by Wright 2014, 141, is arbitrary, and in relation to the position given to *ra's al-hank* = *rāst* it would more realistically be represented a fourth higher.

<sup>7</sup> It is referred to (*Šarḥ mawlānā mubārakšāh bar adwār*, fol. 153r, D'Erlanger 1938, 3: 563) in identifying a passage that does not contain the extra note.

out adjustment (*giriftsüz*).<sup>8</sup> In contrast, it is the version with 4# that is preferred in a Judaeo-Persian text of approximately the same period, probably from one of the western provinces of Persia,<sup>9</sup> which describes an outline melodic shape in the form of a wide descending-ascending curve that exceeds the pentachord limit but returns to its lowest note as finalis:

5 4# 4 3- 2 1 7- 6 5 6 7- 1

Sixteenth-century texts, on the other hand, whether Persian or Arabic, again relinquish the version with 4#, which appears to have become marginal or regionally restricted. They present, again, a falling-rising contour, with or without an initial 5 6 move, but one otherwise confined to the basic pentachord and now with finalis 5:

(5 6) 5 4 3- 2 1 2 3- 4 5<sup>10</sup>

Although it is hazardous to attempt to draw conclusions from accounts such as these, it would be possible to read the emergence of *panjgāh-e zāyed* almost as a defensive assertion of autonomy, its inclusion of 4# as a standard feature signalling a greater degree of independence from *rāst*, or at least a resistance to reabsorption. The corollary, though, is that *panjgāh-e asli*, lacking the distinctive 4#, should find it more difficult to maintain a separate existence, yet it is this version that will predominate. As it seems fairly clear that what was unusual about the Judaeo-Persian version was not so much the inclusion of 4# as its extended range, greater than that of most modes, which were increasingly conceived in terms of, or certainly characterised by, a distinctive and fairly compact nucleus, it is likely that differences of register could assume increasing significance as markers of identity and grant protective agency to the high-low contrast between *panjgāh* and *rāst*, thereby rendering the inclusion of 4# less necessary, indeed redundant, as a means of ensuring independence.

<sup>8</sup> [Seydī] 2004, 50-1, 144-5, and see the glossary entry, 261-2. For al-Lāḏiqī, on the other hand, the reference to *esfahān* (*al-Risāla al-faḥiyya*, fol. 57v) in relation to *panjgāh-e zāyed* concerns the tetrachord 2 3- 4 4# 5.

<sup>9</sup> Although inaccurate, the designation Judaeo-Persian is useful short-hand, being based upon the striking presence of a few mode names in Hebrew script. The text is otherwise Persian, in Arabic script. The conclusion about provenance is that reached by Eckhart Neubauer in his study and presentation of this text (2010-11).

<sup>10</sup> The version with 6 is given in *al-Šajara ḡāt al-akmām*, that without in the *Taqsim al-naḡamāt*, Wright 2019, 57, 374.

## 2 Indices of Use

But by whatever means this was preserved, *panjgāh* appears to have suffered varying fortunes. To judge by the songs listed by al-‘Umarī as current in early fourteenth-century Cairo it was hardly known there,<sup>11</sup> but it has a prominent place in the much larger corpus recorded in the song-text collections of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, mainly Ottoman (although they fail to reflect the terminological distinction between the *aşli* and *zāyed* forms). Indeed, at this stage it is only a little less frequent than *hoseyni* and *rāst*, the most common modes of all, and just edges *dōgāh* into fourth place (Wright 2019, 172). This high-water mark is followed, though, by decline. Already by the seventeenth century the pattern has changed quite dramatically: together with ‘*erāq*, *segāh* comes to the fore, and *panjgāh* recedes in significance to the extent that of the two Safavid collections, by Aqa Mo’men and Gorji,<sup>12</sup> the former provides a mere three instances out of a total of 52 pieces with mode indications, while in the latter it is cited as occurring in five pieces out of 33 but, significantly, only once as the principal mode.

On the Ottoman side a similar pattern may be observed in Ali Ufuki’s mid seventeenth-century *saz ü söz* collection, which does not even accord *panjgāh* the courtesy of a separate section: it is reduced to lurking furtively among the pieces in *rāst*, where three pieces are labelled *rāst panjgāh* and just one *panjgāh* alone. However, in Cantemir’s exclusively instrumental corpus of some fifty years later it has greater visibility: he notates eleven pieces in *panjgāh*<sup>13</sup> (five of which had also been recorded by Ali Ufuki but, tellingly, assigned to *rāst*). Set against its earlier prominence its presence is, though, still modest: it represents just 3% of the total number of Cantemir’s notations (less than half the proportion of *rāst*, at 7.7% itself also relatively reduced). Nevertheless, it is certainly accorded a greater degree of recognition in comparison to its near invisibility in the Ali Ufuki collection, and further indications of renewed well-being are provided by its showing in the vocal repertoire recorded in the song-text collection of Hafız Post (d. 1694), where it has its own section, containing approximately the same number of entries as *rāst*.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It fails to appear among the twenty-six modes he cites in relation to a corpus of sixty-five songs (Wright 2014, 186).

<sup>12</sup> Āqā Mo’men, *Resāla*, and Amir Khān Gorji, *Resāla*, both in Pourjavady 2005.

<sup>13</sup> In his index the existence of a further two pieces is noted (Kantemiroğlu 2001, I, cilt, 205). For further details on his notations and mode lists see Neubauer 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Topkapı MS Revan 1724 (a precise evaluation is obscured by the inclusion of a number of additional entries in later hands).

If we turn to Arabic song-text collections, we again find *panjgāh* in retreat. [Fig. 1] shows the incidence of the more common modes in three such collections, spanning the late seventeenth to late eighteenth centuries.<sup>15</sup>

	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	sum	%
total	597	409	740	1746	
<i>segāh</i>	73	61	93	227	13
<i>‘erāq</i>	112	43	56	211	12
<i>ḥosaynī</i>	56	60	79	195	11.2
<i>ḥejāz</i>	54	31	45	130	7.4
<i>navā</i>	69	27	32	128	7.3
<i>panjgāh</i>	66	29	11	106	6
<i>čahārgāh</i>	45	36	19	100	5.7
. . . . .					
<i>rāst</i>	22	3	53	78	4.5

- (i) the Syrian *majmū‘a* of Ibn al-Ḥāl (d. 1705);  
(ii) another seventeenth-century collection from Syria or Egypt;  
(iii) the late eighteenth-century Syrian *safīna* of al-Kubaysī.

Figure 1 Incidence of the most common modes in three Arab song-text collections

There is, to be sure, a certain lack of consistency here: *segāh* and *‘erāq*, for example, switch positions between (i) and (iii); *navā* and *čahārgāh* are markedly lower in (iii), while *rāst* scores more highly, so that an interpretation of trends is by no means assured. Difficult to dismiss, nevertheless, is the seemingly precipitous decline in the fortunes of *panjgāh*, and the ominous shrinkage indicated by al-Kubaysī is confirmed in the nineteenth century: it simply fades away from the later Arabic song-text collections. In the *safīnat al-mulk* of Šihāb al-Dīn al-Ḥijāzī (1795-1857) it is cited in the introduction (not necessarily a reliable guide to contemporary practice) but fails to occur in the collection itself. Similarly, at the beginning of the next century it is not even mentioned by al-Ḥulaī (1881-1931):<sup>16</sup> it hardly appears to survive outside the exhibition cabinets of the large-scale modulatory compositions and the covers of later theoretical textbooks.

There is no record of it ever having made further headway westwards. Along the arc of *mağribī* traditions from Libya to Morocco we find among the number modes various distributions of *segāh* and

<sup>15</sup> This table is assembled from the figures given by Neubauer 1999-2000, tables inserted after 344.

<sup>16</sup> al-Ḥulaī 1322h/1904-5.

*čahārgāh* but, like *dōgāh*, *panjgāh* is absent: not even the Ottoman presence in Tunis was effective in introducing it. As a result, the one major Arab tradition in which *panjgāh* is alive and well (to the extent that the tradition itself is still alive and well) is the Iraqi *maqām*.<sup>17</sup> It would also appear to retain a fairly firm foothold in the neo-Ottoman Turkish tradition. Such would certainly be suggested by its inclusion among the thirty representative modes chosen for exemplification by Rauf Yekta Bey in the Lavignac encyclopaedia (Yekta Bey 1922, 3007). Nevertheless, a quick check on other sources would suggest that it is, rather, little more than a toehold: the Neyzen website includes 14 pieces as against almost 300 for *rāst*, while Üngör's vast song-text collection contains even more for *rāst*, over 400, but even fewer, a mere 10, for *panjgāh* (Üngör n.d.). Not surprisingly, the two selections overlap, and prominent among them are attributions (to Marāgi, Itrī and Cantemir) emphasizing perceptions of antiquity.

Now moribund in most of the Arab east, *panjgāh* thus also appears to be becoming if not an endangered species then at least a marginal entity in Turkey. For a healthier contemporary representation we need to turn to Iraq, and then further east, where a common thread is its usually close relationship to *rāst*. Thus in Azerbaijan it is one of the more important *šo'ba* of the *muqām rāst*, and in Iran the same connection is flagged in the name *rāst panjgāh* given to one of the seven *dastgāh*, a prominence of nomenclature, however, reflected neither by frequency of performance nor, seemingly, by the position of *panjgāh* itself within it, deceptively tucked away among the other *guša*. A further outcrop occurs in Kashmir, where it is again considered a *šo'ba* of *rāst* and is, indeed, also known as *rāst-e farsī* (Pacholczyk 1996). The same terminological connection recurs in the Tajik/Uzbek *šašmaqām* repertoire, where *panjgāh* appears within *maqām-e rāst*, and also in the related Khorezmian *altı-yarım* ('six and a half') corpus, where it again appears, according to the nineteenth-century tablature notations, as part of *maqām-e rāst* (but with finalis 5 as against the 1 of *rāst*), although according to later authorities the connection has been severed, with *panjgāh* either becoming an independent instrumental *maqām*, or, more drastically, being inexplicably dropped entirely from a recent edition that may represent an attempt to recast parts of the repertoire.<sup>18</sup> This particular omission notwithstanding, the general impression, in contrast to the near total eclipse of *panjgāh* in the Arab world, is one of a continuing centrality that carries on eastward into Uighur Xinjiang where, equally liberated from any dependence on *rāst*, it is now projected

<sup>17</sup> No particular importance attaches to its position as part of the *nawā faṣl*, as modal affinity is not a significant organising principle (see Hassan 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Jung 1989, 244-6, where these various versions and sources are reviewed.

as the core mode of a substantial independent cycle of vocal and instrumental pieces within the recently reconstituted, or newly constructed, on *ikki maqam*.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, one may note a faint presence, if hardly more than lexical, in South Asia. Although *maqām/rāga* equivalences or correspondences are occasionally paraded in Persian texts from South Asia, their import is unclear and it may be doubted whether they are to be taken seriously as indications of cultural impingement at the level of modal structure, whether coming from Persia/Khorasan or Central Asia.<sup>20</sup> In the case of *panjgāh* we find a reference in a seventeenth-century text that invokes, perhaps inevitably, the authority of Amir Ḥosrau (1253-1325) for the rather confused naming of a modal compound: in *toḍī*, he is said to have combined *panjgāh* and *moḥayyer*, naming the result *moḥayyer*. The claim is hardly to be taken seriously, whether as a historical statement or a reflection of seventeenth-century realities, and it is in any case difficult to surmise what structure(s) this constellation of names might relate to,<sup>21</sup> which brings us sharply up against the central problem of ascertaining commonalities. How, if at all, are these far-flung modal entities and formal frameworks labelled *panjgāh* related to each other?

### 3 Later Historical Developments

Assuming that we can exclude linkage based upon arbitrary extra-musical associations, the answer must be sought through tracking, as far as the sources allow, processes of diffusion and change at the level of structure. Here, then, we pick up the thread left dangling during the sixteenth century, with a modal entity based upon a major pentachord containing a neutral third, and a seemingly less common variant form including 4#. This is a rather confused period, marked by serious ruptures in transmission and consequent loss of repertoire resulting from political upheaval and/or withdrawal of patronage, during which the Ottoman and Iranian traditions diverge, only to converge again during the latter part of the seventeenth century, to judge by a degree of

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<sup>19</sup> For a perceptive account of the erratic canonization process involved see Harris 2008.

<sup>20</sup> In particular, the notion of equivalence as a token of synthesis is suspect, as pointed out in Brown 2006. For a bibliographical survey of treatises see Mohammadi 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Faqīrullāh 1996, 58-9. A relationship of sorts between *panjgāh* and *moḥayyer*, from a Persian perspective, would hardly be problematic, given that they are both main-note (1 2 3- 4 5 6 7-) modes, the former spanning 1 - 5, the latter 2 - 2'. But what kind of connection there might have been between either or both of these and *toḍī* is difficult to envisage, even if it were thought that the reference was to something cognate with the contemporary (and largely diatonic major) Kashmiri form (Pacholczyk 1996, 205-6).

transferability of repertoire (see Wright forthcoming).

### 3.1 The Ottoman Evidence

It is at this point, fortunately, that we encounter significant Ottoman corpora of notation that afford the possibility of examining the modal articulation of compositions in *panjgāh*: the mixed vocal and instrumental mid-century collections of Ali Ufuki followed, at the turn of the eighteenth century, by Cantemir's revelatory instrumental notations and, in addition, his verbal description, which again recognises two forms of *panjgāh*. They are now perceived as old and new respectively, and to the chronologically linear development thus suggested may be added the effacement of the earlier high/low contrast with *rāst*: the pitch range of *panjgāh* now falls within that of *rāst*, and they share the same finalis.

The 'old' form can readily be seen to derive from the earlier version without 4#. It is described as a compound of *navā* and *rāst*, pointing thereby to the initial prominence of 5 and to finalis 1, an encapsulation that is, however, summarily dismissed on the grounds that it does not differentiate *panjgāh* from *rāst* (and a possible confusion between the two could well explain the differences between Ali Ufuki's and Cantemir's labelling of a number of compositions). This brusque rejection may well be justified with regard to the one piece that Ali Ufuki actually assigns to *panjgāh*, especially as it does not even give initial prominence to 5 [ex. 1]: the setting of the first hemistich is centred upon 1 and is firmly in *rāst*.<sup>22</sup>

In the second, the melody rises to 5, perfectly normal in *rāst*, but only in the *meyān* is there a brief passage with prominent 5 that might suggest an association with *navā*. In contrast, for the other piece from which 4# is absent (labelled *rāst panjgāh*), the encapsulation of *panjgāh* as a progression from *navā* to *rāst* seems wholly appropriate.<sup>23</sup>

The 'new' version, in which 4# reappears, is not, though, a recent innovation, as it is foreshadowed in a set of laconic earlier modal def-

**Example 1** The first hemistich of a composition in *panjgāh* notated by Ali Ufuki. B stands for B-

<sup>22</sup> Ali Ufuki, facsimile 1976, 222; transcription, 2003, 702. It is, indeed, to *rāst* that the piece is assigned by Hafız Post (for this information and for other helpful comments regarding the Ottoman tradition the Author is indebted to Mehmet Uğur Kincini).

<sup>23</sup> Ali Ufuki, facsimile 1976, 235; transcription, 2003, 740.



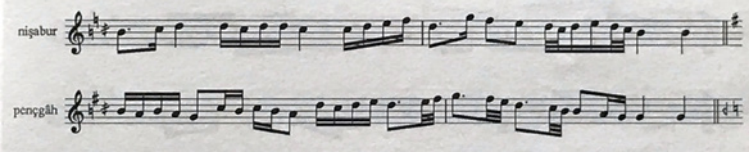
initions given in the *edvâr-ı kadîm* section among which the brief encapsulation of *panjgāh* (Kantemiroğlu 2001, 148-9) refers to a combination of 3 and 4# and a *hejâz* (i.e. 4#) → *râst* trajectory, and regards the *navâ* → *râst* trajectory as outmoded (*'atîk*). In Cantemir's own fuller account it is regarded as a combination of elements of *nešâbur* and *râst*, thereby referring to the consecutive use of two pitch sets, 1 2 3 4# 5 for the former and 1 2 3- 4 5 for the latter. It is said to begin from 1 and to show *râst* before switching, via 2 and 3, to *nešâbur*, and so continuing with 4#, 5 and 6 (Kantemiroğlu 2001, 88-9). Further ascent may be via 7<sub>b</sub> or 7-, and for the upper register, if needed, the *râst* pitch set is used. Descent is again via *nešâbur*, ending with 2 and finalis 1, and mention is made of the possibility of exploring the lower register, down to 5, again employing the *râst* pitch set. Cantemir's account thus further extends the more generous dimensions given by the Judaeo-Persian text; more particularly, it reflects the larger-scale Ottoman perceptions of modal structure according to which the flanking registers, and especially the upper, normally explored in the second section (*hane*), may be considered integral rather than separate modulatory sections: potentially, therefore, *panjgāh* now has a two octave range, from 5 to 5'; in practice, however, as his notations reveal, the normal range was 7 to 2', sometimes 3-, and ascent was via 7- or 7, rather than 7<sub>b</sub> or 7-.

The other two of Ali Ufuki's pieces, both designated *râst panjgāh*,<sup>24</sup> do not quite conform to this new model, and possibly represent an earlier stage of development. They fail to show *nešâbur* in the initial stages but have a brief medial to late passage in which 4# replaces 4 in the context of 5, with a following descent to 1 (and with no indication of a raising of 3- to 3). It is only in Cantemir's notations that the raising of 3- to 3 in the environment of 4# is signalled, and that the order of events begins to change. Intriguingly, he adds that all pieces in the older version can be performed in the newer, and two pieces are actually notated in both. Yet rather than simply recording the possible alternative use of two versions, respectively derived from the earlier *aşli* and *zāyed* forms, Cantemir is documenting a modal shift, clearly expressed by the old vs. new formulation, first towards a juxtaposition of segments based upon two distinct pitch sets, that with 4# (and without 4) becoming assimilated to *nešâbur*, and then, finally, arriving at the effacement of the original *râst* pitch-set elements. The manifestation of *panjgāh* in C296,<sup>25</sup> an example of the *küllî külliyyat* form that strings together brief illustrations of a large number of *maqāms*, perfectly encapsulates this final stage of development: as shown in [ex. 2], it actually follows *nešâbur* and is distinguished from it by the initial contrast of

<sup>24</sup> Ali Ufuki, facsimile 1976, 222, 233; transcription 2002, 703, 734.

<sup>25</sup> Here and below, such references are to the number of the piece in Cantemir 1992.

the 3 2 1 descent built into the rising 3 4# 5 movement; by the use of 7- (as against 7<sub>b</sub>); and by the final 3 2 1 descent (the finalis of *nešābur* being 3). The characteristic 3- and 4 of *rāst* are nowhere to be found.



**Example 2** The sections in *nešābur* and *panjgāh* from a *küllü külliyyat* notated by Cantemir

The temptation to derive from his notated corpus a hypothetical periodization is well-nigh irresistible. The earliest would consist of some or all of the five compositions (C3, C120, C126, C128, C244) in which there is no sign of the *nešābur*-like element, two of which must date from no later than the mid seventeenth century, as they had already been notated by Ali Ufuki (and assigned to *rāst*). Setting aside modulatory sections, they are also quite conservative in range: only one descends, briefly, below 7, and then only in the *mülâzime*, and only two ascend as far as 3-. As elsewhere, there is also a degree of registral differentiation between sections: in C244, for example, the range of the first *hane* + *mülâzime* is 7 - 6, that of the second *hane* 1 - 2'. In a further two pieces (C242, C243), the latter of which, according to Ali Ufuki, is again in *rāst* (or, in the Paris manuscript, *rāst panjgāh*), we see the possible germ of a modal shift in that 4# replaces 4 for all or almost all of the second *hane*, but as it only occurs in the flexure 5 4# 5 (the range being 4# - 3-) there is still no trace of *nešābur* proper.<sup>26</sup> We then have the stage represented by the two pieces given in alternative notations (C295, C301), one of which had been designated as *rāst* by Ali Ufuki: these were presumably pieces in transition. Finally, we have another of Ali Ufuki's *rāst* pieces (C27),<sup>27</sup> one that has completed the process, being notated by Cantemir throughout in terms of the *nešābur* pitch set, and a composition by Cantemir himself (C321) that extends the range in the second *hane* to 4', and uses both routes of ascent, 6 7 ... 3- in the first part, 3 ... 7- ... 4' in the second. Representing the latest stage of development along with C296, these two pieces, the beginnings of which are shown in [ex. 3],

**26** In Cantemir's version of C243 the ritornello has finalis 5, but this is a later development in which its final section has lost the cadential passage ending on 1 that Ali Ufuki records.

**27** Again, as Mehmet Uğur Ekinci points out, there is a discrepancy between the London and Paris manuscripts: in the latter it is said to be in *panjgāh*.

could be described modally as constituting a variant form of *nešābur* with finalis 1 instead of 3, and including in the second case, as a residual survival from the earlier form that only occurs in the initial section, 4 in place of 4# in descent.

**Example 3** The beginnings of two pieces in *panjgāh* as notated by Cantemir

A similar progression may be noted in C243, where the later *aksak se-mai* version<sup>28</sup> not only fleshes out the potential implications of 4# in the second *hane*, so that much of it is now clearly in *nešābur*, but also transforms the middle of the first *hane* into a modulation into *nešābur*.<sup>29</sup>

Later accounts are, however, mixed, and resistant to any notion of finality implied by the trajectory that can be read out of the corpus notated by Cantemir. The one further piece recorded by Kevseri (2015, nr. 371), probably in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, has the air of a seventeenth-century leftover that Ali Ufuki missed, but it at least suggests that the conservative *navā* → *rāst* type was not yet defunct. The mid eighteenth-century outline offered by Arutin (Popescu-Judet, 2002, 82), on the other hand, 5 4# 3 4# 5 6 7- 5 4# 3 2 1, follows the logic of the transformation recorded by Cantemir, making no mention of the *rāst* pitch set. This is, though, mentioned later in the century by Hızır Ağa, and is still recognised at the end of the century by Abdülbâkî (1765-1821), who even restores the concept of two forms of *panjgāh*, one without 4# and one with, together with their *aşl* and *zāyed* designations.<sup>30</sup> The former is now encapsulated as ‘oşşāq →

<sup>28</sup> For the relationship between the two cycles see Ekinçi 2018.

<sup>29</sup> *Darülelhan külliyyatı* nr. 171. The relationship between the two is discussed in Feldman 1996, 486-90.

<sup>30</sup> *Tedkik ü tahkik*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi MS Türkçe Yazmalar 5572, fol. 18, Abdülbâkî 2006, 44.

*râst*, suggesting initial 2, which is later confirmed as a feature distinguishing it from *râst* along with a lack of elaboration (*müzeyyin*) apart from the inclusion of 6,<sup>31</sup> so that it would seem to resemble the earlier *navâ* → *râst* type closely. Abdülbâkî recognises that this version is not universally accepted but asserts that the old and valuable works he knows are in accord with it. His parallel and, he claims, unanimously agreed formulation for the *zâyed* version is *eşfahân* → *râst*, where we must now take *eşfahân* to refer to the mode, as he points to the need to partially show its characteristics (*eşfahân ruşeni nim görünmeli*), indicating therefore a trajectory that approaches the earlier *neşâbur* → *râst* by including 4#.<sup>32</sup> He adds, though, a further complication, commenting that of late some people have thought that it is differently constituted and cannot be distinguished from *salmak*. This view he dismisses summarily in his account of *salmak*, stating that the difference between it and *panjgâh-i zâyed* is quite obvious from its structural articulation (*ecza-i terkipten bedihidir*):<sup>33</sup> it seems to reside in a different beginning (from 2 rather than, presumably, 5), and in adherence to the *neşâbur* pitch set being more characteristic of *salmak* than of *panjgâh-i zâyed*.<sup>34</sup>

An example demonstrating the survival of the older form without 4# as late as the early nineteenth century is provided by the *kar-ı natık* beginning in *râst* by Hammamizade İsmail Dede Efendi (1778-1846), where it mimics the preceding exemplification of *rehâvi*, but ends in a 1 - 5 ascent in contrast to the 1 - 5 descent of *rehâvi*. However, by the late nineteenth century this form is moribund, and the morphology of *panjgâh*, as illustrated in [fig. 2], has moved decisively towards the *neşâbur* → *râst* paradigm.

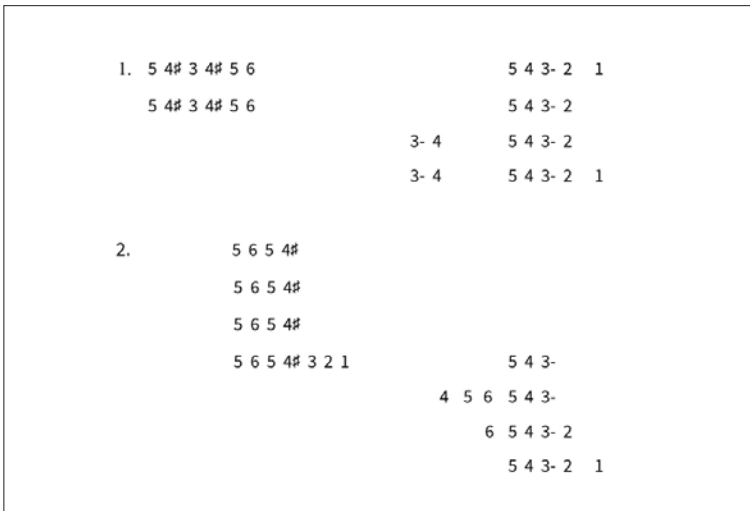
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**31** It may be noted that 6 is initial in C242 and C243, in both cases beginning a descent to 1.

**32** Hinting therefore at a 5 4# 5 4 3- 2 nuclear shape.

**33** *Tedkik ü tahkik*, MS Türkçe Yazmalar 5572, fol. 19b, Abdülbâkî 2006, 45.

**34** This form of *salmak* seems to be an eighteenth-century development. In the one composition in *salmak* notated by Cantemir (C124) the initial exposition in the first *hane* and *mülâzime* is very close to *râst*.



**Figure 2** Analytical abstracts of the first sections of two pieces attributed to fifteenth-century composers

This provides an abstract of the opening sections of two representative ‘ancient’ examples, both attributed to fifteenth-century composers, the first to Gulām Ṣādī<sup>35</sup> and the second to Marāġi, even though its rhythmic cycle, *aksak semai*, suggests that the piece (at least in its current form) may be considerably later.<sup>36</sup> It should be stressed that the abstractions presented in this and later figures are not the precipitate of a particular process of analytical reduction consistently and rigorously applied, even though they rely on common criteria of relative duration and position in relation to the percussion underlay (where present). They should be regarded as somewhat impressionistic and fuzzy edged, especially as the sources from which they are derived are themselves rather heterogeneous and not usually as strictly comparable as those outlined in [fig. 2] are. In this we have, in one composition, alternation of the two pitch sets, and in the other separate blocks, and in both cases the *nešābur* kernel precedes. Elsewhere the pattern may be rather less tidy, even if in broad conformity: we find, for example, as shown in [fig. 3], that the initial *nešābur* area of another of the ‘Marāġi’ pieces<sup>37</sup> is extended (or diluted) by

**35** *Darülelhan külliyyatı* nrr. 163-4.

**36** *Darülelhan külliyyatı* nr. 168. Neither this ten time-unit cycle nor the alternative but related (Ekinci 2018) six time-unit *semai* is included by Marāġi in his catalogue of rhythmic cycles in the *Jāmi’ al-alḥān*, although the latter could be equated with his *torki ḥafif*.

**37** *Darülelhan külliyyatı* nr. 165.

the inclusion of both an exploration of the higher register and a modulation, enclosed here within square brackets.

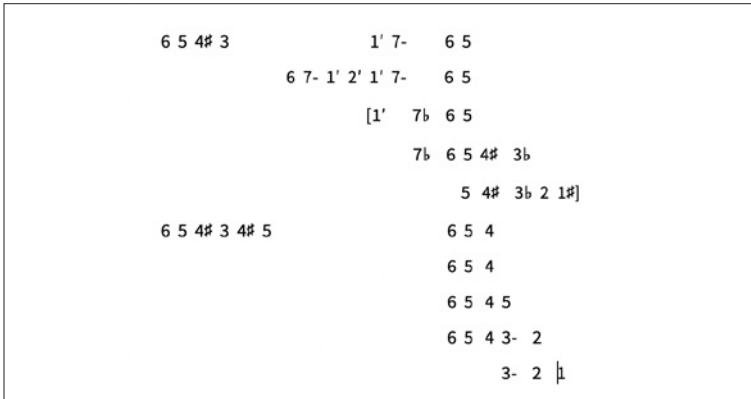


Figure 3 Analytical abstract of the beginning of a composition attributed to Marāḡi

The Mevlevi *ayin* in *panjgāh* provides an interesting combination of different layers (Heper 1974, 5-16). As might be expected, the modal layout of the opening *peşrev*, by Dede Salih Efendi (d. 1888), accords perfectly with the nineteenth-century state of play exhibited in the above models: the first and second sections (*hane*) are *neşābur*-related, differentiated only, like Cantemir’s brief C296 sample, by the occasional medial cadence in 3 2 1, while the ritornello (*teslim*) proceeds *rāst* → *neşābur* → *rāst*. However, with the first *selam*, labelled as ‘ancient’ (*kadim*), we move back towards the earlier *navā* → *rāst* model: the melody is centred on the 2 – 6 area for much of its length, with 5 prominent and 4# nowhere in sight, but with the *rāst* cadential area somewhat reduced and placed medially rather than finally. In the second and third *selam* the emphasis is more on the 1 – 5 area, with 5 still prominent and 4# still absent: it is only in the instrumental *terennüm* section of the latter that a *rāst/neşābur* alternation is introduced, its *neşābur* characteristics consonant with an eighteenth-century (or later) elaboration of earlier material.<sup>38</sup> The remaining material modulates elsewhere, and the fourth *selam*, despite a medial reminiscence of *neşābur* in the inclusion of the characteristic 5 4# 3 4# 5 figure, is firmly in *segāh*, as are the following *son*

<sup>38</sup> Now notated in *aksak semai*, it corresponds, as pointed out by Mehmet Uğur Ekinici, in part to material known to both Ali Ufuki and Cantemir in the form of a (*yürük*) *semai* (C243).

*peşrev* (by Yusuf Paşa (1821-84)) and *son yürük semai*. With regard to the material that is clearly in *panjgâh* it is certainly reasonable to conclude that the vocal sections of the *ayin* are more conservative in character than much of the surrounding instrumental material, and that the label *kadim* for the first *selam* may, for once, be justified.

Twentieth-century accounts propose a variety of models. What is in effect a *seyir* provided by Rauf Yekta Bey in his quasi-waltz presentation of a single version<sup>39</sup> (Yekta 1922, 3007, 79) may be reduced (but only slightly) as in [fig. 4], which shows just a minimal and now centrally placed excursus into *neşâbur* territory:

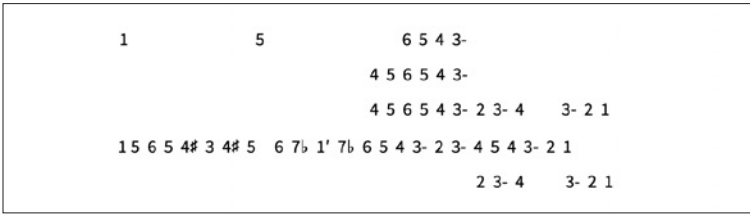


Figure 4 Abstract of Rauf Yekta Bey's model outline

Later theorists, though, follow Abdülbâkî in restoring the distinction between *panjgâh-i aşl* and *panjgâh-i zâyed*, with for each a detailed tetra/pentachordal breakdown. The former is exemplified by Özkan (1984, 418-24) with a *beste* attributed to Itrî (1640-1712), again, then, one of perceived antiquity, in which the exposition consists essentially of a development of the /5 6 7- 1' 2'/ pentachord (with 4# present only as a cadential embellishment of 5) followed by development of the /1 2 3- 4 5/ pentachord, while the *miyan* reverts to the upper pentachord, introducing hints of *evic*, with the *neşâbur* pitch set only appearing, equally fleetingly, in the final cadence (6 5 4# 3 5 4# 5). Tellingly, mention of 4# is reserved for his analysis of *panjgâh-i zâyed*, which recognises the pentachord /1 2 3 4# 5/, termed, indeed, *pençgah beşlisi*. Here, the example cited conforms broadly to the alternating type, with the opening *neşâbur* material followed by (the *râst*-related) *segâh*. The same pattern appears in the composition, also attributed to Itrî, with which Karadeniz illustrates *panjgâh* (= *panjgâh-i zâyed*), while for *panjgâh-i aşl* he quotes a decidedly conservative section from a *kâr-ı nâtık* by Ahmed Avni Konuk (1871-1938) in which 4# only appears once and 3 not at all: the contour of its opening gesture resembles that found in other *panjgâh* pieces, 5 4# 3 4# 5, but appears in the *râst* form: 5 4 3- 4 5 (Karadeniz ?1982, 485-6).

<sup>39</sup> Yekta 1922, 3007. Turkish translation by Nasuhioğlu 1986, 79.

Development of the upper register is normally restricted to a contrastive later section. In the Ali Ufuki/Cantemir corpus this generally concentrates on the 5 - 2' pentachord, relatable modally either to *rāst* (with 7-) or to *māhur* (with 7), and occasionally rising to 3-: 4' is only reached in Cantemir's own composition, C321. The later repertoire (even if ascribed to early composers) tends to prefer the 7- option and may contain passages relatable to *ḥoseyni* or *awj/eviç*. Overall there is a slight suggestion of greater freedom, almost as if it were felt that this area was not considered integral to *panjgāh* proper, and in one case the higher register is avoided in favour of a modulatory alternation between *neşābur* and *segāh*.<sup>40</sup> Combinatorial freedom of another kind, though, fails to be exploited: among the multitude of compound modes that come to the fore during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as *ḥejāz-zamzama* or *navā-busalik*, *panjgāh* barely registers as a component, and however ephemeral many of these combinations may have been, the virtual absence of *panjgāh* from them can only be considered another indication of its own increasingly peripheral position.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.2 Arab Accounts

Structural outlines similar to the Ottoman ones appear in encapsulations by nineteenth and twentieth-century Arab theorists. Maššāqa (1800-88), for example, gives a very clear *neşābur* beginning but, unlike Arutin, retains the final *rāst* tetrachord descent, thereby providing a succinct abstraction that could be compared with the reduction in [fig. 3] of a 'Marāgi' composition, and in effect almost fusing the two versions proposed by Abdūlbâkî. Bold numbers indicate prominence:<sup>42</sup>

**5** **4#** **3** 4# 5 7- 6 5 **4#** **3** **4** 3- 2 1

Unlike the autonomous Iraqi form, this is a clearly derivative *panjgāh*, a token of the diffusion of Ottoman norms into Syria and Egypt that would develop further during the *nahḍa* period as Istanbul assumed greater significance as a cultural centre of attraction. It is a model that prefigures the initial exposition of the *taqsīm* example in the D'Erlanger

<sup>40</sup> *Darülelhan külliyyatı* nr. 169: an *acemler* piece.

<sup>41</sup> An exhaustive inventory may be consulted in Popescu-Judetiz 2007. This lists (on page 109) just *panjgāh-'ajam* and *panjgāh-'erāq*.

<sup>42</sup> For which the term in the original is *muḥḥaran*. Mašāqa/Maššāqa/Mušāqa 1913, 90-1 (En. transl. 38-9). The immediately preceding outline given for *neşāburak* is **5** **4#** **3** 2 1. Abou Mrad (2007) translates indications of prominence into durations that can then be fitted into a current rhythmic cycle. The resulting transcription of *panjgāh*, at page 164, has 3 instead of 3- in the final descent.



*maqām* catalogue, presumably provided by the Syrian ‘Alī al-Darwīš (D’Erlanger 1949, 5: 225). Corresponding quite closely to the preceding analytical outline, which points to the initial prominence of (*en faisant ressortir*) 3 and 4#, this starts in the area 2 3 4# 5 and cadences 3 2 1 before developing the area above 5, at first 5 6 7- 1’ 2’, and later 5 6 7<sub>b</sub> 1’ 2’ 3- 4’ 5’. Only in the following descent and the final cadence area are 4# and 3 replaced by 4 and 3-, thereby establishing the *rāst* character of the ending. In the slightly later account by Sāmī al-Šawwā ([1946], 16) *panjgāh* is classed, tellingly, as a neglected (*muḥmal*) *maqām*, and the fact that he describes three variants, *panjgāh*, a second version (*ṭariqa*), and *panjgāh-e zāyed*, should be seen less as a sign of vitality than of terminal indecision.<sup>43</sup> The first is briefly defined, seemingly in terms of main notes: it has initial 1, ascends like ‘*oššāq*’ from 2, and has finalis 1, but he then observes that most Turkish compositions employ an altered form (*taǧyīr*), which he outlines as 4+ (*nim ḥejāz*, rather than 4#) 5 6 7<sub>b</sub> 1’ 2’, then descending to 5 4+ 3 3<sub>b</sub> and finalis 1. Finally, *panjgāh-e zāyed* is said to begin with *eṣfahān* on 2, ascend to 5 (presumably via 3 and 4+)<sup>44</sup> and then continue with *rāst* on 5, and in descent to progress from 5 via 4 3 and 2 to finalis 1.

The versions given by Miḥā’il Allāhwirdī, contemporary with those of Sāmī al-Šawwā, are slightly different (Allāhwirdī 1949, 433-4): *panjgāh* begins between 1 and 5, uses the pitch set 1 2 3- 4# 5 6 7 1’ in both ascent (with a possible further *rāst* extension to 5’) and descent (with a possible further *rāst* extension to 5); *panjgāh-e zāyed* differs only in the addition of 4, sometimes used together with 4#, sometimes with 3-, especially in cadential passages (*al-‘ibārāt al-qarāriyya*). The relative degrees of importance of 4 and 4# in earlier versions are thus reversed, with inclusion of the former now implied by the label *panjgāh-e zāyed*. In relation to the Turkish form, Allāhwirdī’s version suggests a slight readjustment of features: 1 2 3 4# 5 + 5 4 3- 2 1 → 1 2 3- 4# 5 + 5 (4#) 4 3- 2 1, with 3 no longer present, whereas in Sāmī al-Šawwā’s account it is 3- that is elided, while something rather more remote is suggested by the odd juxtaposition of 3 and 3<sub>b</sub> in the variant that he actually identifies as Turkish. It is, however, apart from preferring 4+ to 4#, virtually identical to the definition that had been given by Haşim Bey (1815-68), which can be stated as:

4# 5 6 7<sub>b</sub> 1’ 2’ 1’ 7<sub>b</sub> 6 5 4# 3- 3<sub>b</sub> (2) 1

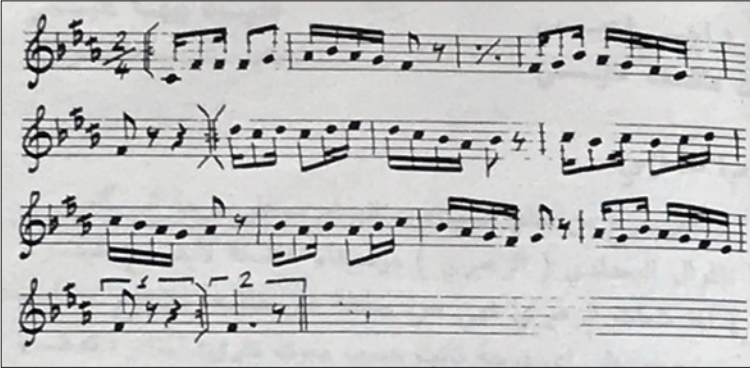
<sup>43</sup> al-Šawwā [1946], 92-3. It may be noted that there is no place for *panjgāh* in the more recent survey by al-Mahdī [1979], although among the outline presentations of Iraqi *maqām* structures with which it ends there is an odd example provided (on page 237), with a largely diatonic scale and couched in the distinctly unidiomatic 10 time-unit *samā’ī* rhythmic cycle.

<sup>44</sup> Since he describes *eṣfahān* (67) as beginning with *rāst* on 2.

The presence of 2 can only be inferred: neither author mentions it. Rather than being a misrepresentation, Sāmī al-Šawwā's 'Turkish' version is probably a late survival of a mid nineteenth-century Ottoman variant form no longer recognised in the canonic repertoire.

### 3.3 Iraq

No such confusions attend the Iraqi version. Although largely neglected by the modernizing trend associated with Šerif Muhyeddin Haydar and his pupils,<sup>45</sup> *panjgāh* remains an integral part of the *al-maqām al-‘irāqī* mode stock, being defined pithily by Ša‘ūbī Ibrāhīm Ḥalīl as a derivative of *rāst* based upon 4 (*far‘ min maqām al-rast yartakiz ‘alā darajat al-jahārgāh*), that is, *f* in his notation of the initial instrumental *muqaddima* (Ḥalīl 1982, 22-3).



Example 4 The instrumental prelude (*muqaddima*) of Iraqi *panjgāh*

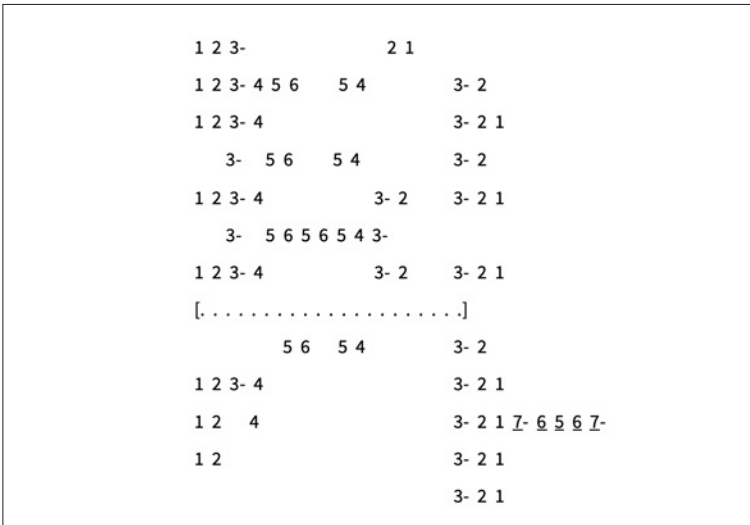
The melodic development, numbering the material from  $f = 1$ , thus consists of a repeated presentation of the *rāst* tetrachord, 1 2 3- 4, followed by sequential descending phrases with 5 initially prominent. The exposition in the following textless vocal *tahrīr* follows a broadly similar trajectory, although without a clearly articulated descending sequence and with a final ascent to 5 before the onset of the text-setting section:

<sup>45</sup> An interesting exception being the prominent place accorded to it by Munīr Bašīr on his 1973 CD (the first in the *Arabesques* series).



**Example 5** The initial vocal section (*taḥrīr*) of Iraqi *panjgāh* according to *Ša'ūbi Ibrāhīm Ḥalīl*

The melodic development then proceeds, as exemplified in one performance by *Ša'ūbi Ibrāhīm Ḥalīl* himself, in arch-like waves over the 1 - 6 area, with the lower  $\underline{5}$  - 1 tetrachord only appearing in the concluding and very similar *jāl̄sa* and *taslīm* sections that come after modulatory excursions into *ḥejāz*. Up to the *jāl̄sa* (preceding the onset of the *meyāna*), and placing the first *ḥejāz* episode in brackets, this may be abstracted as in [fig. 5]:<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 5** Abstract of the first text-setting section in a performance by *Ša'ūbi Ibrāhīm Ḥalīl*

Here, then, given that Iraqi *rāst* begins by developing the area below  $\underline{5}$  (c) and then the  $\underline{5}$  - 2 pentachord, contrast of register is a key element, and it echoes, in effect, the relationship between the two described by *Širāzi*. The *meyāna* area, where the upper register is

<sup>46</sup> On the basis of the transcription in Simms 2004, 60-1.

developed, is normally a modulatory zone rather than part of the *maqām* proper, but for *panjgāh* Ša‘ūbī Ibrāhīm Ḥalīl specifies *hejāz* as a standard coupling, one that his own performance exemplifies, exploring the *hejāz* tetrachord, /5 6<sup>b</sup> 7 1/, and reaching 2’. Other accounts are broadly similar:<sup>47</sup> that of Hāšim al-Rajab allows the inclusion of higher register material up to 4’ before returning to 4, followed by the *meyāna*, consisting of *hejāz* again, but this time from 1’ and rising, potentially, to 5’. There is no clear consensus as to which modulatory inserts (*quṭa’*) may be introduced in the *tahrīr*, although *manšūrī* and *humāyūn* are mentioned more than once.

### 3.4 Iran

Commonalities of repertoire between the Iranian and Ottoman traditions during the latter part of the seventeenth century suggest that similar conceptualizations of *panjgāh* occurred in both. Given the absence of 4# from its current Iranian manifestation we may assume that this is ultimately related both to the Iraqi form and to that represented by Ali Ufuki and encapsulated by Cantemir as a combination of *navā* and *rāst*. A faint terminological thread (or coincidence) links Ali Ufuki’s *rast panjgāh* to the eponymous modern *dastgāh*, but this is a more recent Qajar compilation emerging out of the debris of eighteenth-century post-Safavid confusion. In the published versions of various authoritative *radif* repertoires, *panjgāh* is represented, despite its presence in the *dastgāh* title, as a run of the mill *guša* occurring midway in the corpus, so that after the *darāmad* in *rāst*, which presents a rising-falling development of a major-scale pentachord, a number of other *guša* intervene before *panjgāh* is reached. As recorded in Karimi’s vocal *radif* (Mas‘udiya 1368š/1989), this group extends the range upwards to 7<sup>b</sup> and 1’, with *ruḥ-afzā* introducing 3- before returning to 3, thus preparing the way for *panjgāh*, which has 3- throughout, and is additionally differentiated from *rāst* by the greater prominence given to 5, and by its overall brevity. Equally brief, Ṭalā’i’s performance of Mirzā ‘Abdollah’s instrumental version (Ṭalā’i 1376š/1998) is spaced a little differently and gives rather greater weight to 3- and 4 alongside 5, but traverses what is identifiably the same terrain, as shown in [fig. 6]:

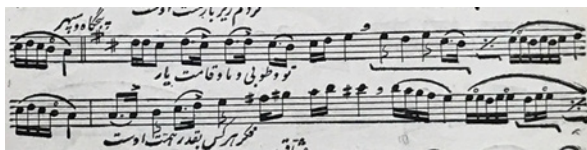
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<sup>47</sup> The Author is grateful to Scheherazade Hassan for kindly supplying the following information.

Karimi	Ṭalā'i
4 {3- 4} 5 6 5	4 {3- 4} 5
	4 3- 5
{4 5}	4 {5 4
	5 3-}
4 {6 5}	4 {5 6}
{4 5} 4 3- 2	5 7̣ 6 5 4 3- 2
5 4 5 4 3- 2	
{2 3-} {4 3-} 4 5 4 3- 2 1	{2 3-} 4 3- 2 1
{ } multiple repetitions	

Figure 6 Abstracts of *panjgāh* in a vocal and an instrumental *radif*

In both, the final descent to 1 (however crucial the inclusion of 1 as a marker of modal identity, this is the only time it appears) is dispatched in an almost offhand way, being followed immediately by a rising scalar or sequential transition to 6. This marks the beginning of the higher-register *guša* with which it is habitually paired, *sepehr*: indeed, the two are sometimes even presented as a combined item, *panjgāh o sepehr*, as in the violin *radif* of Abolḥasan Šabā,<sup>48</sup> shown in [ex. 6] (which is notated, in relation to an A - e - a - e' tuning, with 1 = a):



Example 6 The Abolḥasan Šabā *radif* version of *panjgāh o sepehr*: *panjgāh* begins at the double bar and ends on *a* at the bar in the second line. Only the beginning of *sepehr* is given

Compared to this, the Karimi and Ṭalā'i versions are made to appear almost expansive, although all three still give the misleading impression of *panjgāh* as no more than a minor cog in the machine. Rather,

48 Alternatively, *sepehr* may be added to *panjgāh* without being signalled in the heading, as in Pirniyākān 1380š/2001.

as its inclusion in the name of the *dastgāh* indicates, it is a vital element, a *guša* that can be developed with some freedom, referencing others in the process of expansion. Accordingly, the area above 5 is not excluded in performance: as hinted in the Mirzā ‘Abdollāh version, the /5 6 7<sub>b</sub> 1'/ tetrachord will be explored, serving as a flexible area of development and as a springboard for modulatory transitions back and forth, usually involving a shift between 7<sub>b</sub> and 7.<sup>49</sup>

The difference in pitch set between the 3 of *rāst* and the 3- of *panjgāh* remains, though, unaccounted for. It is reasonable to assume that *panjgāh* retains the original derivational relationship and pitch set, in parallel to the Iraqi tradition, as shown in [fig. 7]:

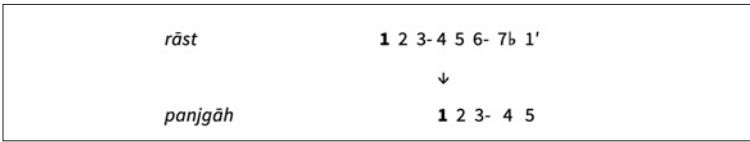


Figure 7 The original derivation from *rāst*

But the high-low register contrast has also been cancelled, so that one might hypothesise that the current form of *rāst*, evidently now separate, relates to the later shift to a disjunct structure, subsequently adjusted by the raising of 3-, for reasons that are unclear, and, parallel to its development elsewhere, with emphasis on the lower tetrachord and some downward extension, as outlined in [fig. 8]:

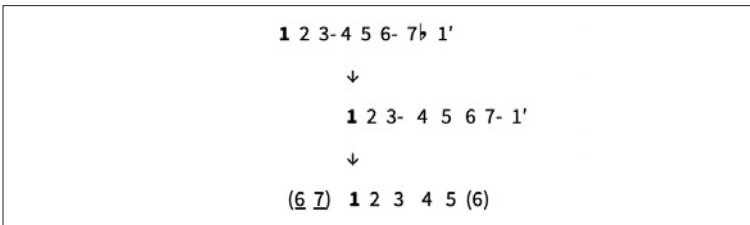


Figure 8 Hypothetical derivation of modern Iranian *rāst*

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**49** Here the Author is grateful for information supplied by Saeid Kordmafi, who also kindly copied me a recording that exemplifies such performance possibilities.

### 3.5 Azerbaijan and Central Asia

This is, needless to say, highly speculative, but whatever the genealogy, similar modal profiles and relationships might have been expected in the Azeri tradition, where *panjgāh* is one of the more important *šo'ba* of the *muqām rāst*. In the event, the distinction between the two no longer involves a pitch set contrast, for *panjgāh* too has 3 rather than 3-: it relates, rather, to range, that of *panjgāh* being more restricted, and to register, *panjgāh* being situated in, and largely confined to, the upper octave, within which there is an emphasis on the first tetrachord, with 4 prominent.<sup>50</sup>

Here, then, neutral intervals disappear, as they do also in Central Asia. However, this cannot be taken necessarily to indicate a break in transmission, as it would be perfectly understandable for melodic material to be adjusted to fit the marginally different intonational norms of another region. In Central Asia the change may in any case be quite recent, and an external imposition: memories of other intonations persist, and early recordings provide supporting evidence, so that the major motor for change is likely to have been the mid twentieth-century Soviet insistence on tempered scales as a vehicle of modernisation and standardisation. Early surviving examples of the normative long-necked *dōtār* lutes of Central Asia may have fewer frets to the octave than their Iranian and, especially, Turkish counterparts, but some of them are positioned to produce neutral intervals.<sup>51</sup> Historical sources are, though, sparse and, in this as in other respects, unhelpful: *panjgāh* is mentioned by Kawkabi, writing in Bukhara in the early sixteenth century, and by Darviš 'Ali a century later; in a possibly seventeenth-century text it is related to the upper register of *rāst*, and the close relationship between the two is underlined in the modulatory assemblages termed *šadd* found in certain Persian texts.<sup>52</sup> Of particular interest is that in one version of the *rāst šadd* the sequence begins with *rāst* followed by *panjgāh* and concludes with *nešābur*, *panjgāh*, and *rāst*. Yet here, as elsewhere, description is absent, so that no information on either structure or intonation is

<sup>50</sup> During 1988, 71, quoting Mansurov. A quite specific and limited melodic contour is suggested, outlined as 1 4 3 2 1, with 1 prominent (to be understood as 1' 4' etc). In practice the range may be somewhat wider, including at least 5' and 6' above and 7 below. Placed again an octave above the basic exposition (*māye*), it may also be included, in a rather more restricted format and in an even higher register, in the quite similar *muqām māhur hindi* (personal communication from Polina Dessiatnitchenko).

<sup>51</sup> Sumits 2011, 180-92. On the positioning of modes in relation to the current diatonic fretting of the *tanbur* see Abdurashidov 1992.

<sup>52</sup> See Sumits 2011, 115-35; also Wright 2019, 153-61. How significant a part of the modal repertoire *panjgāh* was is impossible to determine from these sources. The fact that the courtship story of Āmānnisā and Sultan 'Abdurrašid features a performance in *panjgāh* is, in all likelihood, of no consequence (Sumits 2016, 157-8).

forthcoming, even if in another text of this period and environment we are offered, interestingly, the same curt *esfahān* → *rāst* trajectory for *panjgāh* previously given by Seydi (Didi 2016).

A similar drift towards the diatonic major scale is to be observed in Afghanistan and Kashmir, although here it is likely that the major impetus came from South Asia. The fretting of the Afghan *robāb*, for example, is primarily semitonal, with just occasional recent additions designed to enable performance of Iranian scale systems (Baily 1988, 47), and while other intonations occur at the margins of Kashmiri *ṣufyāna musiqi* practice, the normative tuning, as represented on the *santur*, is diatonic.<sup>53</sup> Similar additions to accommodate different intonations may be seen in a recent trend to add further frets to the Azerbaijani *tār*, again referencing neighbouring scale systems, but motivated primarily by a post-Soviet desire to reactivate real or imagined earlier intonational norms as semiological tokens of a more authentically indigenous modal practice. Although the major scale of *panjgāh* remains largely unscathed, some musicians propose a quite unexpected adjustment, not, though, by the introduction of a new fret but rather by repositioning an existing one to allow neutral intervals to be (re)introduced, albeit in a different disposition to what might have been anticipated: instead of 3 being lowered to 3- we find 2 being raised to 2+.<sup>54</sup>

In the current *šāšmaqām* repertoire *rāst* is also articulated within a major scale, the *tašnif-e rāst* being formed of a gradually expanding series of phrases with initial 1 and, in successive sections (*ḥāna*), reaching 4, 5, 6, 1', 2', 3', 5', and 6', in most cases with a leap to the highest pitch immediately after the initial 1, followed by a gradually unfurling descent (Jung 1986, 259-61, from Uspenski). The following series of vocal items beginning with *savt-i panjgāh* and *čapandoz-i savt-i panjgāh*, which are essentially rhythmically differentiated articulations of common melodic material, inhabits the same pitch zone but is structurally different: it exhibits a preference for coupling successive arch-like contours with a following descent, first to 1 and then in the higher-register section to 5, as shown in [fig. 9] (from Jung 2010):

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**53** Pacholczyk 1996. Occasional intermediate intonations are generally restricted to the vocal part.

**54** Dessiatnitchenko 2017, 187-9; and personal communication.



a.	1 2 3	4 3 2 1	6 5 4 5	3 2	1
b.		4 5 4 3 2 1	6 5 4 5	3 2	1
c.	1 2	3 2 1	4 5 4	3 2 3 2 1	
d.		5 4	5 6 5 1' 7 6 7 6 5	+ a + b	
e.	1'	2' 1' 2' 3' 2' 1' 7	6 5	+ a + b	

Figure 9 Abstract of *savt-i-panjgāh*

However, the modal structure of *panjgāh* cannot be pinned down quite so neatly, for the *moḥammad-i-panjgāh* section fails to conform to this model, and hints at the earlier contrast of register. It begins not on 1 but on 4; the moves 3 4 5 and 5 4 3 4 5 are frequent; and in most sections the finalis is 5. Its range, however, is again quite wide, with different areas being emphasised in different sections: first the central 2 - 6, with 2 prominent, then, more briefly, 5 - 1', 1 - 5, 6 - 3' and 1' - 5' (both with finalis 1'), before a return to the central area. The general prominence of 5 in *panjgāh* is made clear in Matyakubov's analytical abstract, which also notes its slightly restricted range by comparison with the even more expansive *rāst* (Matjakubov 1989).

In Kashmir, the scale is again a diatonic major, if with 7 weak and variable in intonation, and the range is once more wide, from 1 to 4', and from the examples of notation Pacholczyk provides one would conclude that although 1, 5 and 1' are clearly prominent, the 2 - 6 pentachord is also significant (Pacholczyk 1996, 180-2). Despite its alternative designation, *rāst-e farsi*, one would thus anticipate finding potential links between the Kashmiri form and Central Asian practice (Harris 2018) rather than Persian, and there are certain analogies between the Kashmiri and Uighur traditions with regard to modal nomenclature,<sup>55</sup> but in the event similarities with the structural type represented by *moḥammad-i-panjgāh* prove elusive. If there is a parallel to be found it might rather be sought in the process of range extension that characterises the arch shape of the initial *šakl* of the Kashmiri *panjgāh*, outlined in [fig. 10] (Pacholczyk 1996, 180-1):

<sup>55</sup> During, Trebinjac 1991, 35-6, although rather than indicating current similarities it is suggested that they might be evidence of historical connections. For his part, Pacholczyk 1996, 122, balances Indic modal parallels against formal similarities to what he terms the 'Greater Islamic Near Eastern' culture.

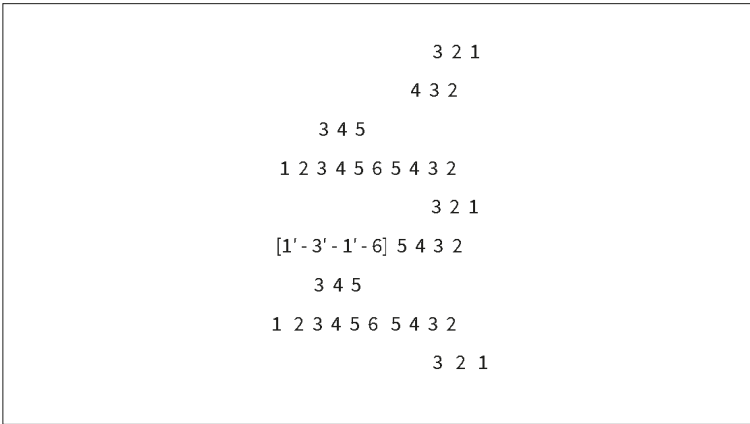


Figure 10 Abstract of the *šakl* of Kashmiri *panjgāh*

This presents analogies with both the phrase structure of *savt-i panjgāh* [fig. 9] in the *šāšmaqām* and the initial stages of the more extensive *tašnif-e rāst*, reduced rather more drastically in [fig. 11], even if the higher pitches are reached by a leap rather than a step-wise ascent:

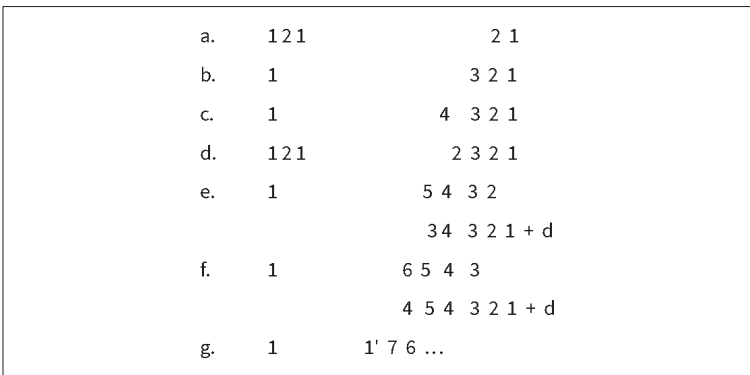


Figure 11 Abstract of the beginning of the *šāšmaqām tašnif-e rāst*

Finally, in the Uighur *on ikki maqām*, *rāst* at last disappears, leaving *panjgāh* in splendid isolation, its major scale modally inflected by a characteristic omission of 7 in descent that suggests a possible connection with its variable realisation elsewhere, and perhaps most obviously in Kashmir. Taking the lengthy initial *čoṅ naḡma* section as modally representative, we find the instrumental introduction outlin-

ing a broad arch shape, with 1 initial and finalis and rising to 6 (also dipping at one point to 5), and with 2 and 5 prominent. The vocal part expands on this fundamental shape, eventually extending the range upwards to a prominent 2', and occasionally touching 4'. Marking in bold notes identifiable as prominent, either through duration or dynamics, and with square brackets indicating the position of intervening instrumental passages, the first part, up to its arrival at the highest register, may be reduced as shown in [fig. 12].<sup>56</sup>

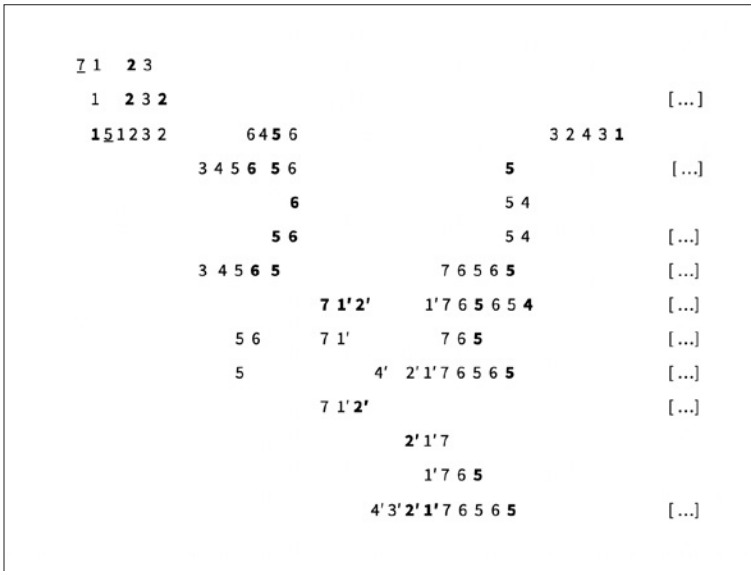


Figure 12 Abstract of the beginning of the *čoŋ naǰma* in the Uighur *panjgāh*

This shows a clear trend for phrases to explore successively higher areas, and for the following descent to end predominantly on 5. There are, then, certain parallels that can be detected, but elsewhere, in the following *tāzā* section for example, similar material is differently distributed, thus making comparison more hazardous, as is suggested by [fig. 13], which juxtaposes abstracts of the first two sections of the ‘official’ version (1) and the second section (2) of a performance by musicians from Qaraqash, near Khotan (Harris 2008, 124):

<sup>56</sup> Based on *Uigur on ikki muqami* (Uighur twelve muqam), vol. 5: *panjgāh*, to which corresponds a broadcast performance released on two cassettes, XD-001 and 002. The performers are not identified.

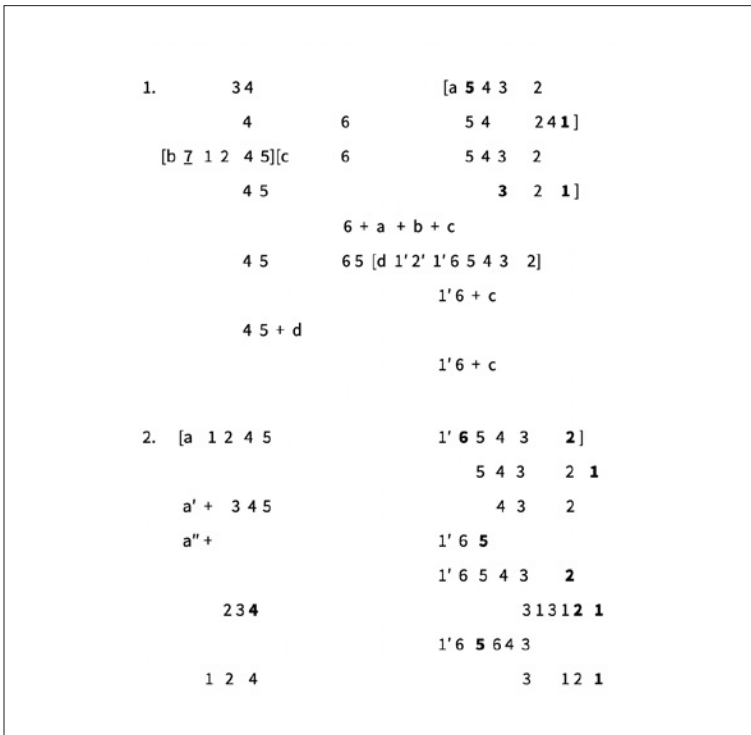


Figure 13 Abstracts of the beginnings of the *tāzā* section in two versions

## 4 Commonalities

They agree on a recurrent descent, initially from 6 to 2 or 1, and later from 1' (omitting 7) to 2 or 1 and eventually to finalis 1, with a variety of starting points for the preceding ascent, and similar features can be found in some of the preceding examples, first and most obviously in the *čon nağma* [fig. 12], where the ascent is initially from 1, but soon shifts to 3 and above, while the descent is at first to 1 and subsequently to 5. In the *šašmaqām savt-i panjgāh* we again have an expansion of the range but anchored within ritornello material dominated by a 6 to 1 descent, while in the Kashmiri *šakl* [fig. 10] we see a clear *aba* shape consisting of an undulating unfolding of the 1 to 6 area with a central excursion into the upper octave. Analogies could also be drawn between the Uighur *čon nağma* and the *šašmaqām tašnif-i rāst* in the systematic way in which both extend the range, even if the latter is more schematic and avoids stepwise ascents in favour of initial leaps. This marks it off even more clearly than the others from the

resolutely ascending-descending contours of the Iraqi version, where the majority of phrases begin and end on 1 and ascend no higher than 6. Nevertheless, it would be possible to argue here for the muted or partly disguised presence of a common generic contour feature in all four traditions, although the extent to which it might be construed as mode-specific is uncertain, rather than being just one among several instantiations of a standard set of techniques of melodic development: without the direct name connections it is by no means certain that the possibility of a genealogical link between them would have suggested itself. What is at least clear, though, is that the Kashmiri form resembles its Central Asian namesakes, and even the Iraqi one, more than the Iranian: they tend towards expansion, whereas the Iranian remains more concentrated, even when extended beyond its nuclear *radif* form, the inclusion of pitches above 5 being compensated for by a reduction in the use of 2 and, especially, 1. The modal morphology of late Ottoman *panjgāh*, with the injection of *nešābur*, represents a radically different development, yet it still retains a residual resemblance to the Persian form in its retention of an overall 5 → 1 trajectory.

Relationships between the disparate parts of the *panjgāh* flutilla are thus sometimes obvious, at others frustratingly elusive. Nevertheless, if we set aside as a contingent variable the differences in modal identity encountered in the upper register (where this occurs at all), we might, in seeking a common denominator, arrive at a general formulation of the type given in [fig. 14]:

(1 2) 3 4 5 [3 4 5 6]      4 3 2 1

(6 7 1' ..)

where 3 = 3- or 3, and if 3, then 4 = 4 or 4#

7 = 7, 7- or 7<sup>b</sup>

[ ] area of prolongation of 5

( ) optional extension

Figure 14 Reduction of common elements

Where the upper register occurs it is characterised for the most part by diatonic extension, to 1' 2' 3' in the Kashmiri, Central Asian and Uighur forms, to 1' 2' 3-' in Turkey, and with 7 variable: omitted in one tradition, weak in another, or optionally 7<sup>b</sup>, 7- or 7 in yet others. Exceptional is the Iraqi preference for the 5 6<sup>b</sup> 7 1' tetrachord, clearly perceived, though, as a modulation, however conventional (and to that extent functionally integral) it might be.

Such an encapsulation can, though, hardly serve as a convincing and conclusive demonstration of underlying unity; nor can it provide an answer to fundamental questions concerning the nature and historical development of the relationships between these various forms of *panjgāh*. The distribution of some of the various features referred to in the above survey is charted in [fig. 15], if only in a fuzzy and approximate fashion, but no very clear pattern emerges.

	eastern Arab	late Ottoman	early Ottoman	Iraq	Iran	Azeri	Kashmir	<i>šašmaqām</i>	Uighur
<i>rāst</i> register contrast	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	±	∅
1 <sup>~</sup> 1 contour	-	-	-	+	-	±	-	±	+
3 4 5 \ 1	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	±	±
2' 1' \ 5	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
stepwise expansion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	±
use of 4#	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
use of 3	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+
use of 3-octave + range	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
prominent 5	+	+	+	±	-	-	+	+	+
	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	±

Figure 15 Distribution of features. Not all oppositions are clear-cut, and marginal or partial cases are indicated by ±

It suggests a degree of propinquity between the early Ottoman, Iraqi, and Iranian forms, but with different features held in common between each pair. At a further remove come the Azeri and Kashmiri forms, despite sharing certain features with the Iranian, while of the two it is the Kashmiri that can be regarded as transitional to the more closely related Central Asian types, yet still differing from them in significant respects, similarities of scale being only weakly matched by melodic morphology.<sup>57</sup> Independent developments, in short, have frayed earlier ties, and although a reasonable case can be made for degrees of diachronic continuity as well as unpredictably evolving lines, the map is too sketchy for comfort: there are long periods during which documentation is lacking, so that processes of

<sup>57</sup> Pacholczyk 1997 argues for a degree of kinship on the basis of similarities in melodic material detected in one particular *maqām*, following on from the relationships between various manifestations of *segāh* discussed in Powers 1989.

change remain unrecorded. Nor to be dismissed, even, is the possibility that, as one of a set of terms possessing cultural prestige, the label *panjgāh* might have been attached to something perceived as vaguely similar but, incidentally and unimportantly, of unrelated origin.<sup>58</sup> Paradoxically, it is the radical transformation witnessed in the Ottoman tradition and its Arab satellites that is the easiest to trace, whereas the possible chronological links between the ways in which *panjgāh* is manifested in the remaining patchwork of traditions cannot be established with confidence. As a result, it would be possible to draw, as in [fig. 16], an outline of chronological developments leading to the seventeenth-century Ottoman manifestation of *panjgāh*, and from that to tabulate the later stages outlined above in the later Ottoman tradition and its Arab offshoots, but not to map the evolution of the other traditions in the same way.

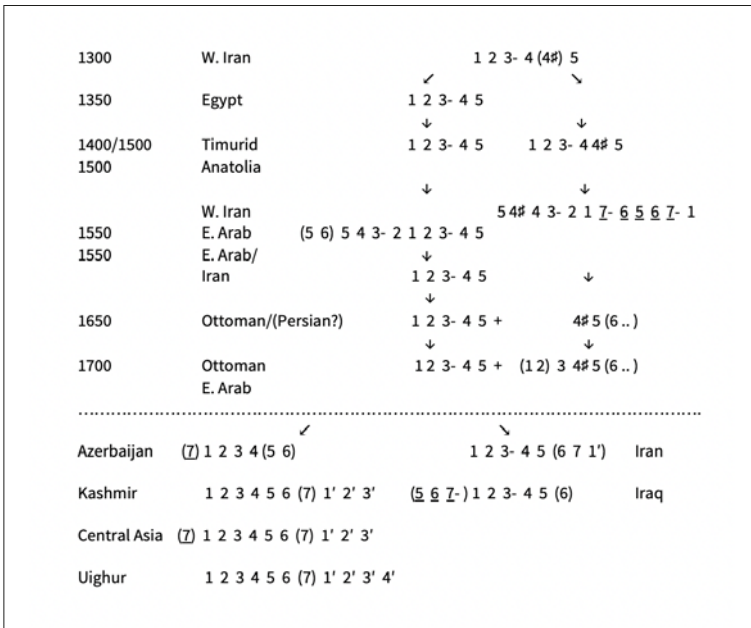


Figure 16 Derivations and parallels

<sup>58</sup> Harris 2008, 102 (citing Muhämmät Imin) makes the point more broadly about the application of an imported terminology to pre-existing phenomena.

## 5 Perspectives

There are questions of a more general nature also to be considered. One is that the structural properties of the individual systems within which *panjgāh* functions may vary considerably, and with them its rôle and manner of utilisation. Crudely put, stability and autonomy are more easily assured, other things being equal, within repertoires that are assemblages of largely pre-composed material, whereas elsewhere we may be dealing with a more flexible but also vulnerable entity. Another is that a mode considered in isolation is shorn of context: it is plucked out of the web of similarities and differences that mark it off at any given stage from various others, constituting boundaries of various strengths and levels of porosity. Sixteenth-century accounts, for example, suggest that although a significant vehicle for composition, *panjgāh* still had to jockey for position within the quite crowded area shown in [fig. 17]: above the characteristic kernel of *rāst* in the lower register a sizeable clump of modes occupy overlapping segments of the same pitch set, separated (but how effectively?) by range and identity of finalis.



Figure 17 Sixteenth-century modal nuclei sharing overlapping segments of the same pitch set

From the late seventeenth century on its position within the better-documented Ottoman tradition can be discerned more clearly and, following emic perceptions, it can be classed initially as one of the satellites of *rāst*, as shown in [fig. 18], where the spatial disposition is arbitrary:



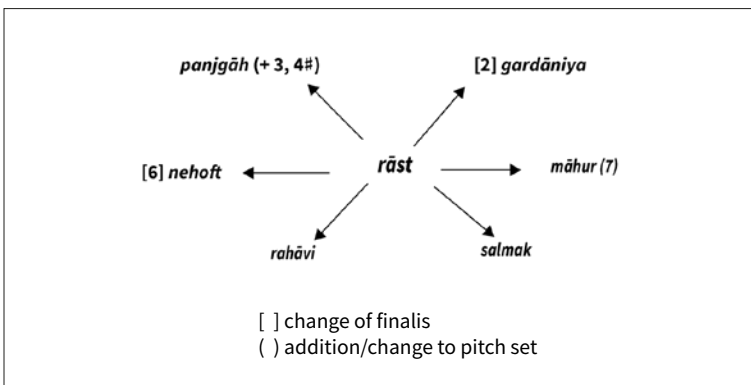


Figure 18 Seventeenth-century Ottoman constellation centred upon *rāst*

but if, as shown in [fig. 19], we change perspective, placing *panjgāh* at the centre, and change the metaphor, it suddenly becomes surrounded by potentially hostile neighbours contending for parts or all of the same habitat:

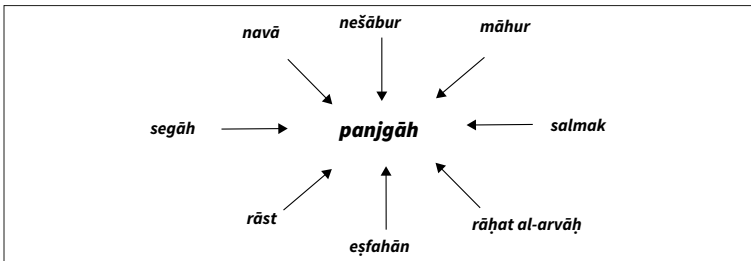


Figure 19 Seventeenth-century Ottoman constellation centred upon *panjgāh*

From potential absorption by *rāst* we thus move, through alterations to the pitch set, to a position where *nešābur* becomes the more threatening Ottoman predator, while later accounts also suggest interference from *eşfahān*: it would be reasonable to wonder, in such circumstances, how effective a protection an individual *seyir* might be. The same issue of vulnerability arises, in the Iranian context, with regard to the capacity of *radif* models to protect frailer *guša* from being smudged or even smothered by the encroachment or overlay of closely similar ones, even if the danger of erasure may be discounted in the particular case of *panjgāh*, given its centrality to its *dstgāh*, so that in the equivalent constellation the arrows are less markers of power imbalance than indications of intimacy:

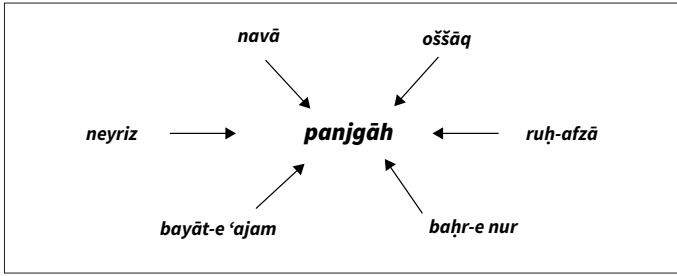


Figure 20 Modern Iranian constellation centred upon *panjgāh*

Such networks of overlaps and linkages, with their potential for interference, encroachment, and even the erosion of difference, point to the need to consider or problematize *panjgāh*, beyond its evolutionary connection to *rāst*, also in terms of interactions with others, among which the Ottoman *nešābur* is merely the most obvious.

A reasonable case can nevertheless be made for continuities over significant parts of the domain in which its presence has been recorded, however varied the influences and pressures to which it has been subject. Particularly striking is the survival in Iran and Iraq of the original modal nucleus, and in the latter also of the register contrast first reported by Širāzi. Where changes have occurred, it is in the evolution of the Ottoman tradition and its Arab satellites since the seventeenth century that their course can most clearly be traced, yet. Even here it is difficult to resist the temptation to pursue the evolution of *panjgāh* in isolation, whatever general trends might be involved, and a limitation of the above survey is that it has treated (or mistreated) *panjgāh* largely as an abstract entity, either alone or, at most, interacting with other such entities. Wider issues of human agency have been left out of account, as have modalities of transmission. For these, though, however vital they may be, there is the unfortunately cogent excuse that although reasonable hypotheses may be formulated, the necessary documentation is lacking: even the fortunes of complete repertoires and traditions cannot always be securely traced, and while the general processes of diffusion are hardly mysterious, their precise nature and results are effectively unrecorded. Similarly, if the rough shape of courtly performance contexts and their associated aesthetic principles can be sketched in, the fine grain of responses to particular modal constellations remains elusive, let alone to instances of innovation and creative adjustment made by unidentified individuals to a particular *maqām*.

## 6 Contexts Past and Present

Despite such drawbacks, we may nevertheless outline briefly various factors contributing to the development of the overall fabric of which *panjgāh* is a thread. Thus from around the time it was first recorded until at least the sixteenth century, the indications are that it remained, within the specific constraints of its modal structure, a flexible tool for creativity, functioning essentially as a constituent (whether dominant or subordinate) of individual compositions, and that there were no clearly established conventions of sequencing to determine how such compositions would be selected and ordered in a performance. To be assumed is that the repertoires recorded for this period were predominantly produced by musicians active at princely courts or having other aristocratic patrons, and that their individual creativity was both encouraged and constrained by the need to conform to aesthetic norms maintained by their peers and their connoisseur audiences, thus integrating music within a world of artistic practices and intellectual discourse marked by subtlety and allusiveness, a possible reflex of which is a proliferation of increasingly detailed modal discriminations (as hinted at in figs. 15 and 17). Such discriminations trace lines of defence, but at the same time provide a background against which the gradually reduced visibility of *panjgāh* in later song-text collections [fig. 1] might more readily be understood. A further contributory factor towards a reduction in status might be detected in an increasingly prominent strand in the theoretical literature from the sixteenth century on, the organisation of the modal repertoire, beyond the addition of further classes to the traditional *maqām*, *āvāz* and *šō'ba* nuclei, into groups increasingly ordered according to the principle of modulatory smoothness as expressed through pitch-set propinquity. As the texts involved are predominantly Persian and possibly relate to Central Asian as well as Iranian perceptions, the question arises, despite it being difficult to grasp the way(s) in which these groups might reflect compositional habits and/or performance norms, whether it is possible to detect here an incipient line of cleavage between the Ottoman and Persianate worlds with regard to large-scale organisation, with certain modes, of which *panjgāh* may have been one, being increasingly viewed in the latter as integral (and hence subordinate) elements of a modulatory sequence rather than as free-standing entities.

Given the paucity of relevant documentation, particularly for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is difficult to proceed here beyond the level of plausible conjecture, but developments in the Ottoman tradition do at least provide a term of reference. Here we find retention of the convention whereby a composition was predominantly in a single *maqām* coupled with an increasing tendency to organise performances according to standardised sequences, in the sa-

cred domain the *ayin* of the Mevlevi ceremony and, in or around the court, the *fasil*, in both of which a set of vocal items was framed by an instrumental introduction and conclusion.<sup>59</sup> Analogous sequences appear elsewhere, but the resemblances between them are less likely to be the result of the diffusion of a particular large-scale formal model, as has been argued, than the outcome of social factors, a reflection of the requirements and expectations of elite audiences assembled in similar environments.<sup>60</sup> Such audiences tended to shrink in much of the Arab world as power drained away and patronage was enfeebled, so that, as demonstrated by the increasing anonymity of the contents of Arabic song-text collections, the role of the high-profile composer/performer was undermined, leaving the Sufi orders as major corporate guardians of tradition in urban centres and hence also of its formal articulation and, within it, of modal consistency.<sup>61</sup> In Iran, in contrast, post-Safavid political upheaval led to a reduction of patronage and to disruption, manifested in widespread loss of repertoire and the wholesale abandonment of the inherited range of complex rhythmic cycles, leaving modal nuclei, certain modal-rhythmic patterns and conventions, and anonymous surviving fragments of compositions as the raw material to be gradually forged, together with fresh contributions from local traditions, into a new amalgam of authoritative models, most of which the performer is expected to vary creatively.

Diffusion of repertoires and the systems underpinning them was doubtless helped by the peripatetic careers of numerous influential musicians, but also, given the at least partial sharing of idioms between the secular and sacred domains, by the spread of Sufi orders and their ritual practices, and the equally peripatetic careers of important Sufi personalities. The parallel cannot, though, be pushed too far: however vital the role of the major orders as vehicles of diffusion and providers of environments within which large-scale formal conventions could evolve, the inclusion of local musical practices into ceremonies must surely have been more significant than the imposition of imported repertoires or norms of modal practice.<sup>62</sup>

Periods of disturbance may well be followed by an increasing degree of formal stability as patterns of court patronage are renewed,

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**59** For the relationship between the two, see Feldman 1996.

**60** A case for the diffusion of a performance-event structure purportedly evolved in Abbasid Baghdad has been urged in Pacholczyk 1992, while the gradual expansion of a particular four-movement suite form is suggested in Jung 1989, 237-8. In neither case, however, is the evidence compelling.

**61** See Guettat's remarks (1980, 178-80) for North Africa.

**62** One may cite, for example, the marked differences between the musical components of the Mevlevi ceremony in Damascus and Istanbul; and for Central Asia the differences reported in Harris 2018, 224.

but only after seismic shifts that can radically alter the frameworks governing modal function. The result is a striking difference in both nature and dimensions across the region. Untouched by such upheavals, an Ottoman *beste* or *peşrev* in *panjgāh* is a specific unique member of an open series, a composition that may take five or more minutes to perform, and although modulatory episodes are expected the home mode will predominate: along the gradient from scale to fixed melody, Ottoman *panjgāh* occupies an approximately mid-way zone that allows the repertoire to be constantly replenished by new additions, each one melodically distinct and autonomous while at the same time modally related and identified by incorporating a selection from a family of cognate melodic gestures along with adherence to a particular pitch set, and following a conventional sequence of events. In contrast, *panjgāh* in the Persian tradition is at one level conceived and transmitted as a single and relatively small-scale entity lying nearer the melody end of the spectrum,<sup>63</sup> and even if subject to myriad micro-variations in performance it may be dispatched within a much shorter time, while at another level it operates on a broader canvas as the core element of a series of often closely related entities. The Azeri case is analogous, but in the Iraqi tradition it lies somewhere between the two, in that a performance may approach the scale of an Ottoman piece while resembling the Persian model somewhat in being a variable realisation of a recognizable archetype. Iraqi *panjgāh* is, in addition, governed by specific rhythmic and also textual conventions (the absence of a rhythmic cycle and the use of classical verse and specific verbal formulae), although the performer has a certain freedom of choice with regard to the brief modulatory sections (*quṭa'*) that can be included in the intermediate high-register section (*meyāna*).

It is also, again as in the Persian tradition, subject to the formal constraint of being traditionally placed within a conventional sequence. Just as the Persian *radif* corpus is organised into twelve large-scale groupings (seven called *dastgāh*, five *āvāz*), so the Iraqi *maqām* corpus is organised into five (each called *faşl*), and similar large-scale grouping are typical of Central Asian repertoires. The processes of accretion giving rise to these are, however, difficult to date, and they do not necessarily run in parallel. The current organisation of the Persian corpus is no earlier than the nineteenth century,<sup>64</sup> and the same is probably true for the Iraqi and Azeri traditions; the prototype of the Uzbek/Tajik *šaşmaqām* possibly emerged somewhat earlier, in the eighteenth century, but the current constitu-

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**63** The distinction between the two types is usefully characterised by Jürgen Elsner in terms of *Variabilität* versus *Variation*.

**64** For documentation see Mohammadi 2017.

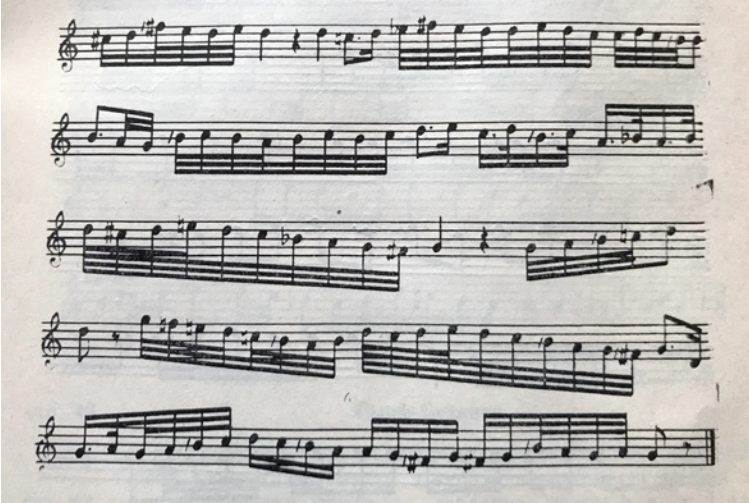
tion of the instrumental *panjgāh* repertoire in the Khwarazmian tradition was not arrived at until the turn of the twentieth century,<sup>65</sup> and the gradual codification of the Uighur *on ikki muqām* is an even more recent phenomenon, one stimulated by twentieth-century ideologies of nation formation (Harris 2008). It is therefore hardly surprising that *panjgāh* should acquire markedly different profiles across this range. In Iran, Iraq, and Azerbaijan it is an individual entity of varying degrees of complexity normally housed within a set of items, but potentially separable; in the *šāšmaqām* repertoire it relates to a sequence of related items forming part of a large-scale group; and in the *on ikki muqām* it heads one such group that is marked internally by a high degree of modal consistency.

A further variable of a general order, applicable to a tradition as a whole rather than just to an individual mode, concerns the relationship between patrons and performers. These may be one and the same, as in the ceremonies of Sufi orders, but otherwise, occasional cases of the aristocratic amateur apart, they tend to be marked by social distance, often also involving confessional identity. In Bukhara and Baghdad Jewish performers played a vital rôle, while in Istanbul Armenian and Greek musicians were prominent, and one question that then arises is whether a style variation developed within a given minority community could give fresh impetus to the majority tradition. Evidence here is scanty, and would seem to be generally negative: one might note anecdotally that the occasional additions admitted to the Iraqi *maqām* stock have been innovations stemming not from the Jewish instrumentalists but from the singers: *tiflis*, for example, was a creation of Raḥmatallāh Šiltāg (1799-1871), and *lāmi* and others were introduced more recently by Muḥammad al-Qubbānī (1901-89), while in the Ottoman environment there were outflows from the majority tradition, Ottoman ‘classical’ norms affecting the idiom of Jewish *maftirim*.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, the significant rôles played by Jewish and, especially, Greek and Armenian musicians within the commercial *piyasa* environment may well have added to (or diluted) pre-existing stylistic conventions. Of particular interest in this connection is the catalogue of the modal repertoire of the turn of the twentieth century produced by Aivazian (1869-1918), each *maqām* being illustrated by a *taksim*-like exposition in free rhythm. That for *panjgāh* is at first sight a quite orthodox traversal of the territory, beginning in *nešābur* and ending in *rāst* (Aivazian 1990, 73), but these two areas are separated by a passage, shown in [ex. 7], that introduces various modulations, veering first towards *suznak* and *hūzzam* through the introduction of the *hejāz* tetrachord on 5, af-

65 Incorporating elements previously belonging to *rāst* (Jung 1992, 276-305).

66 See Seroussi 2001 and Jackson 2013, especially 17-48.

ter which a descent including  $3\flat$  is followed by the *hejāz* tetrachord again, on 2, and a cadence on 1 suggesting *nikriz*, after which comes the final *rāst* segment.



**Example 7** The final section of the *panjgāh* model supplied by Aivazian

One might detect here an enrichment of possibilities to which may be related the emergence of new variants of *panjgāh* such as those described by Haşim Bey and, later, Sāmī al-Şawwā, an efflorescence interpretable at the same time as a structural loosening that reflects its weakened position and stands in contrast to its stability elsewhere. Indeed, contrary to the continuing importance of *panjgāh* in the Iraqi *maqām*, the Azerbaijani *mugham* and the Central Asian traditions, one might well predict for it, given its barely maintained small and static repertoire, further decline in Turkey, with the eventual prospect of reaching the state of obsolescence already arrived at in most of the Arab world, where it has become no more than one among many notional entries in catalogues that bear little or no relation to the world of performance practice.

After interment there remains, though, the possibility of exhumation. If an important element of the social fabric of music during the nineteenth century was the rôle played by minority communities, whether as maintainers of tradition or as innovators, in the twenty-first it is the restlessness of the young that commands attention. One strand among its several and varied manifestations is an almost archaeological re-engagement, after a troubled and unresolved period of westernization, with the earlier modal heritage, usually in the late

Ottoman, *nahḍa*, or Qajar forms recuperable from pioneer recordings, but sometimes also as reported, however schematically and imperfectly, in much older theoretical texts that are seen as representative of earlier periods cultural splendour. They provide the material for efforts at restoration and expansion, sometimes separately, sometimes combined, serving therefore as a springboard for fresh creativity. Thus *panjgāh* is included, for example, as an ‘unknown’ *maqām* (in Egypt, that is), one among many others surveyed in a reclamation project involving a quaintly-termed ‘verification’ process applied to Ottoman models that resulted, in the case of *panjgāh*, in the composition of a *samā’ī*: it was presumably deemed worthy of resuscitation (as briefly reported in Fathalla 1997). The success of this particular venture is unknown, but in the general context of renewed interest in heritage it would not be surprising to find *panjgāh* being given another lease of life, whether through performances of earlier repertoire,<sup>67</sup> efforts at composition in a traditional style or, indeed, echoing certain developments in previous centuries, through innovations that push it in uncharted and unpredictable directions.

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<sup>67</sup> The recordings made so far have been primarily of the Ottoman repertoire as notated by Cantemir. They include the *acemler peşrev* (C27) and a *semâi* (C244) on the CDs accompanying Kantemiroğlu, *Kitâbu ‘İlmi’l-Mûsîkî ‘alâ vehi’l-Ḥurûfât*, and a further *semâi* (C243) on Bezmârâ: *Splendours of Topkapı*, Opus 111: OPS 30-266.



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# *I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur* Dervishes Ceremonies in Constantinople Described by Western Travellers and Painters between Sixteenth and Eighteenth Century

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**Abstract** Between the sixteenth century and the eighteenth century many Europeans visited Constantinople, the new Ottoman capital, and wrote reports that took various aspects of its cultural and musical life into consideration. Among the recurring elements of such reports, we note the description of Dervishes and their ceremonies, often accompanied by engravings and more rarely by musical transcriptions. Through time, such a description became a topic (and a stereotype) both in literature and in fine arts. Without claiming to be exhaustive, my article retraces and comments descriptions of Dervish ceremonies, in a chronological order, by Western travellers and scholars between sixteenth and eighteenth century, between the so-called Age of Exploration and Modernity.

**Keywords** Dervishes. Dervish Ceremonies. Mevlevî Dervishes. Mevlevî Ceremonies. Sufi Music. History of Sufism. Ottoman Classical Music. Ottoman History. Western Travels History.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Nicolas de Nicolay, *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et pèlerinages orientales* (1568). – 3 Guillaume Postel, *De la republique des Turcs* (1560). – 4 Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il Pellegrino descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari al suo erudito amico Pietro Schipano* (posthumous). – 5 Two Western Residents in Town: Wojciech Bobowski and Demetrius Cantemir. – 6 Jean Antoine du Loir, *Les voyages du Sieur du Loir* (1654). – 7 John Covell, *Extracts from the Diaries of Dr. John Covell, 1670-1679*. – 8 Charles de Ferriol, *Recueil de Cent Estampes representant différentes Nations du Levant* (1714). – 9 Filippo Bonanni, *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'Instrumenti* (1716). – 10 On Some Jean Baptiste Vanmour Works. – 11 Charles Fonton, *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne* (1751). – 12 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763). – 13 Giambattista Toderini, *Letteratura turchesca* (1787). – 14 Final Remarks.



#### Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-14
Accepted	2019-05-14
Published	2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** De Zorzi, Giovanni (2019). "*I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur*. Dervishes Ceremonies in Constantinople Described by Western Travellers and Painters between Sixteenth and Eighteenth Century". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 121-152.

## 1 Introduction

Between the sixteenth century and the eighteenth century many Europeans visited Constantinople, the new Ottoman capital, and wrote reports that took into consideration various aspects of its cultural and musical life. Among the recurring elements of such reports, we note the description of Dervishes and their ceremonies. In particular, at a certain point of their sojourn in Constantinople, ambassadors, aristocrats, wealthy merchants, and other worthy travellers invariably would be taken, or at least directed, to the lodge of the famous *mevlevî* dervishes, better known as ‘Whirling Dervishes’, situated in Pera, the European part of town. Upon their return at home, the observers published books containing, amidst many other subjects, the description of such Dervish rituals, often illustrated by engravings and more rarely by musical transcriptions: through time, these ceremonies became a topic (and a stereotype) both in literature and in fine arts.

The whole inclusions and exclusions process of what was (and what was not) noted and reported in Constantinople by Western travellers would be capable of raising many questions, yet, it is worth saying that, at the time, almost every Sufi brotherhood of the vast Ottoman world had a centre in the capital:<sup>1</sup> according to Ottoman historian Evliyâ Çelebi (1611-1684), in his time in Constantinople there were five hundreds and seventy seven *tekkes* (large centres) and six thousands *zaviyas* (small centres) of dervishes.<sup>2</sup> For this reason meeting a dervish in the street must have been a rather common experience for Western travellers. Yet, if such a curiosity for these ‘strange’ figures, was, after all, rather normal, I am wondering why did Ottomans think that European visitors would have enjoyed such dervish ceremonies or been impressed by it? What the *mevlevî* ceremonies was likely to have represented for Ottoman hosts? Was it a ‘performance’ of which they were especially proud? And for their part, why were Europeans almost invariably fascinated? *What* did they see in such rituals, aside from mere picturesque element?

Without any pretension of exhaustiveness, in the following pages I will focus on some first traces of such a curiosity that we find both in travellers reports and in fine arts between sixteenth and eighteenth century, a fervid period between the so-called Age of Exploration and modernity. Of course, Western curiosity for the Dervish-

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**1** Called, in order of magnitude and importance, *tekke*, *zaviya*, *dargâh*. In addition to these general terms, the more specific *asitâne* was applied to the headquarters of a given Sufi order, while *mevlevihâne* was used only for the bigger *mevlevî* dervishes centres.

**2** Musicologically, it seems rather interesting that, despite the distance, a dervish coming from Bukhara could meet, for instance, a brother from Baghdad and find a common musical background made by hymns (*ilâhi*) and other more sophisticated genres.



es ceremonies continued, after our chosen time frame, throughout nineteenth century, from Romantic exoticism *reveries* about a 'far' East, to hippies staying at the Pera Palas during their travel to India; little by little the engravings, devoured by curious upper class Westerners during XVI-XVIII, gave way to photographs and videos, arriving to nowadays Istanbul, where tourists crowd the reopened Pera/Galata centre (a recurring place in our travellers descriptions) and many 'secular' theatres propose each day 'dervish ceremonies' for the tourists in town.

## 2 **Nicolas de Nicolay, *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales* (1568)**

The same term *dervish* seems to appear for the first time in Europe in a book of travels, as is Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583), *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales* published in Lyon by Guillaume Rouillé in 1568. In 1551 French king Henry II (1519-1559) ordered de Nicolay to follow Gabriel de Luetz, Baron et Seigneur d'Aramon et de Vallabregues (?-1553) in Constantinople, where he was French ambassador to Suleyman the Magnificent (Kanunî Sultan Süleyman, 1494-1566). Aramon's entourage included many famous scholars as Pierre Belon (1517-1564), Pierre Gilles (alias Petrus Gyllius, 1490-1555), André Thevet (1516-1590) and Guillaume Postel (1510-1581). Translated in many Western languages,<sup>3</sup> de Nicolay's book had an enormous success and became a source for Orientalism through the centuries thanks also to the precious copper engravings made by Louis Danet, probably after de Nicolay original drawings. In our perspective, among the peculiarities of Constantinople, the author noted 'men of religion' and classified them in four categories; according to such a classification, the chapter XVII of the third book is devoted to the third category, *De la tierce secte des religieux turcs, appelez deruis*. As stated above, the meetings with such *religieux turcs, appelez deruis* must have been rather frequent in Constantinople, yet, de Nicolay chapter is mostly devoted to a harsh and Eurocentric description of the severe ascetic practices of the most unorthodox (and picturesque) dervishes named *qalandâr* (Ottoman-Turkish *kalender*), still existing nowadays in Indo-Pakistan area and in Xinjiang [figs. 1-2].

<sup>3</sup> Among them, Nicolas de Nicolay (1580). *Le Navigazioni et viaggi fatti nella Turchia*. Novamente tradotto di francese in italiano da Francesco Flori da Lilla, aritmetico. Venezia: Francesco Ziletti.



**Figure 1** *Derviso religioso Turco che si fa tagli p la vita.*  
Engraving by Louis Danet,  
from Nicolas de Nicolay, 1580

Given the academic public of this review, I hope it is not redundant to briefly remember here that, according to current knowledge, the term *deruis* come from Persian *darvish*, equivalent to Arab *faqīr* and *mishqīn* ('poor'), probably indicating who is 'poor' in front of the only One who, according to the Ninety-Nine divine names/divine attributes (*al-asmā al-husnā*), is *al-ghānī* ('Rich', 'Self-sufficient'). According to another possible etymology, the term derives from Persian *dar* (door, threshold) so that *darvish* would literally mean 'the one standing at the door'. Yet, such a 'door' may have different meanings: the dervishes may have moved from door to door (Persian, *dar ba dar*) during the begging; in a second sense they moved from one spiritual threshold to another asking for divine revelations, in a third sense they stood on the door between this and other worlds (see Papas 2001, 3: 129-35). Be that as it may, during the Middle Age the term began to be used for those who adopted a style of life in which detachment and renunciation were both material and spiritual.



**Figure 2** *Calendario Religioso Turco che porta anella oltra l'altre parti del corpo al membro virile per farsi inhabile al coito.* Engraving by Louis Danet, from Nicolas de Nicolay, 1580

### 3 Guillaume Postel, *De la republique des Turcs* (1560)

From the same French environment in Constantinople, Guillaume Postel (1510-1581) was a highly gifted French linguist, astronomer, cabbalist, and diplomat who possessed a particular interest in spirituality. His travels were made during a period of alliance between the French King François I, who reigned from 1515 to 1547, and his new ally Sulayman ‘the Magnificent’ (Kanunî Sultan Süleyman), who ruled the Ottoman Empire between 1520 and 1566, and continued under the reign of Henri II. In his *De la republique des Turcs*, published in 1560, Postel describes the travels that he made in the 1530s and provides a description of a dervish ceremony:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This and the following passages cited in the article preserve the original orthography and punctuation, despite obvious differences from modern forms of French, Italian, or English.

Commancent en branlant la teste, et tout le corps, l'un vers l'autre, disans 'alla, alla, alla, alla, alla' tant des fois et long de temps repentant qu'ils cheent à bas comme estourdis, et disent que alors leur esprit va avec Dieu porter lassala, ou l'oraison. En la Surie et Natolie ou Turquie en y a qui se mettent à fort tourner disant 'alla, alla' etc. que jamais pirouette n'est fist imitation, en fin que tous estourdis demeurent comme mors, et en extase, et alors dient que leur esprit va avec Dieu. (Postel 1560, 52)

They begin by bowing the head, and all the body, one toward the other, saying 'alla, alla, alla, alla, alla' so many times and repeating it for so long that they fall as if they were stunned, and they say that their spirit takes the prayer<sup>5</sup> to God. In Syria and Anatolia or Turkey there are some who begin to whirl so powerfully while repeating 'alla, alla' etc. that a pirouette could never imitate them; so that finally they are all stunned and remain as if dead, in ecstasy, and they say that their spirit goes with God.

If the first observation made by Postel seems to depict a *dhikr jāhrī* (vocal invocation) of the *qiyyam* (standing) type, the second phrase, with his precise verb *tourner* (to whirl), suggests a Mevlevī *semâ*. However, in the absence of any remarks about musical instruments, the whirling of the dervishes while repeating the name of God seems similar to the *raqs-i samō* diffused in Central Asia and among the *Naqshbandī jāhrī* (or *Naqshbandī āfāqī*) in what is now Xinjiang (De Zorzi 2013, 173-210).

#### **4 Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il Pellegrino descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari al suo erudito amico Pietro Schipano* (posthumous)**

The third report is that of the Roman antiquarian, composer, musicologist and Orientalist Pietro della Valle (1586-1652). Between 1614 and 1626, his journeys took him to the Holy Land, through the Middle East and North Africa, and as far as India. In his second letter from Constantinople, he describes a visit to the centre of the Mevlevī dervishes in Pera, the European quarter of the city.

Un venerdì, che secondo il costume de' Turchi si va più del solito alle meschite, e vi si predica, andai qui ne' borghi di Pera, dove noi abitiamo, in un luogo di dervisci, che ci è, dove aveva inteso che si soleva fare in tal giorno una buona musica... andai al luogo di costoro, che hanno qui fra le vigne di Pera, e trovai che già vi si predicava... finita la predica, si raunarono i dervisci in mezzo della meschita in giro; e quivi al suono di quattro o cinque flauti, fatti di canne, che con distinzione di

<sup>5</sup> In the French original, *lassala* probably represents *lasalāt*. In Arabic, *salāt* is the stipulated ritual prayer, meant to be performed five times in a day, rather than spontaneous prayer.

tutte le voci, basso, tenore, contralto e soprano facevano una bellissima armonia, cominciarono a ballare: talora sonando senza ballare e talora sonando e ballando insieme a vicenda: e ballando, ora tutti insieme, ora alcuni di loro, ed ora alcun solo. Il moto de' piedi, ne' lor balli, è appunto il medesimo che quello degli Spagnoli nelle loro ciaccone; che i Mori, nella Spagna, dovettero insegnarlo, ma questi, ballando, si girano sempre attorno sopra un piede; e chi gira più presto, e dura più a girare, è più valent'uomo. Nel principio cominciano con moto lento e soave, adagio adagio: ma poi, poco a poco riscaldati, lo vanno ogni ora più affrettando; finché al fine, cresciuto quasi in eccesso il fervore, si danno tanta fretta e si aggirano con tanta velocità, che appena gli arriva la vista di chi gli riguarda. Nel girare invocano spesso Dio; replicando forte, volta a volta, la parola *Hù*, che si interpreta *Esso*, ovvero *E'*, e s'intende per Dio, che solo ha vero essere... Però la musica che fanno è galante, e degna in ver d'essere sentita: e quei flauti che chiamano *nai*, ovvero più correttamente *nei*, che in persiano significa propriamente canna, come di canna son fatti, non si può credere quanto dolce suono rendano. (Della Valle 1843, 47-8)

One Friday, the day on which by custom Turks go more than usual to the mosques, and listen to sermons, I went in the area of Pera, where we live, to a place of dervishes that is there, where I heard that good music would be played... I went to the place that they have there among the vineyards of Pera, and I found that they were already listening to the sermon... When the sermon had finished, the dervishes gathered in the middle of the mosque; and here, to the sound of four or five flutes made of reed, with a sweet harmony produced by all the voices, bass, tenor, alto and soprano, they began to dance: at times they played without dancing and at times they were playing and dancing at the same time: and at times they all danced together, at times some of them danced, and at times only one. The movement of the feet, in their dances, is the same as that in the dance of the Spanish, in their *chaccones*; the Moors, in Spain, must have taught them, yet, when they dance, they whirl always on one foot; the one who whirls faster and longer is considered to be the most able. At the beginning they start with a slow and sweet pace, adagio, adagio: but after a while, they accelerate the movement little by little, constantly increasing the pace; at the end, attaining an almost excessive fervour, they whirl with such a speed that is difficult to follow them with the eyes. When they are whirling, they often invoke God; repeating loudly the word *Hu*, which means 'He', God, the only Being... But the music they play is really gallant, and worthy of being heard: and the flutes that they call *nai*, or more correctly *nei*, a term that in Persian means 'reed', because they are made of reed, it is impossible to believe what a sweet sound they make.

The remarks of Pietro della Valle about harmony are quite puzzling and may simply reflect his Western musical education, because Ottoman music is monophonic and heterophonic. While there are indeed many sizes of *ney*, even if they were played together, they would play in unison by transposing the melody. Instead, his observation that the musicians alternated sections of music with sections of music and dancing accurately reflects the structure of a *mevlevî* ceremony (*âyın*) in which purely musical sections, such as *na'at-i Mevlânâ*, *peşrev*, and *baş taksîm*, are included along with sections in which the *semâzens* are in motion. His remarks about the speed of the *semâzens*, gradually accelerating and attaining a great velocity, may recall comments by the musicolo-

gist Jean During (1988, 172) about the gradual shift of the Mevlevî *sêmâ* from an ecstatic ceremony, disordered and full of energy, as it appears in the observations of Pietro della Valle and in commentaries produced by the Mevlevî themselves, to the more formal and composed performances of modern Mevlevî ceremonies. Finally, his remarks on the *ney* accurately reflect the etymology and the sweet sound of the flute and confirm the status among the Mevlevî of an instrument dear to Mevlâna when he composed the eighteen distiches that open his *Mesnevî*.

## 5 Two Western Residents in Town: Wojciech Bobowski and Demetrius Cantemir

Our next encounters are with two European *residents* of the city, rather than the occasional travellers who provide the majority of our accounts. Dervishes are present in their pages but in a subtler way, beyond their simple and picturesque description: the first of these European residents is a multitalented man called Wojciech Bobowski, *alias* Albertus Bobovius Leopopolitanus *alias* 'Alî Ufukî, *alias* 'Alî Beg el-santurî (Bobowa, 1610?-Constantinople, 1675?): born near Leopoldis, a city known through times as Lemberg in German, Lwów in Polish, and Łviv in Ukrainian, he was captured by Tatar marauders, sold at the slave market in Constantinople and set to work at the court as *ıçoğlan* (pageboy),<sup>6</sup> playing, among other duties, the hammered zither known as *santûr*. Moreover, thanks to his studies, to his colleagues' amazement Bobowski *transcribed* the musical compositions that he had been learning by ear according to the *meşk* method, so that he could refresh his memory.

In our particular perspective, it seems worthy of note that it is generally believed that he converted to Islam, taking the name 'Alî Ufukî', and entering a Sufi brotherhood, the *Celvetîye*.<sup>7</sup> If this is true, dervishes were not a mere picturesque element in his life. Apart

<sup>6</sup> More precisely as a 'music pageboy'; in the title of the Italian version of the *Serrai Enderum* (Ottoman *Seray Enderûn*) we read, in fact: "Serrai Enderum Del Serraglio del nuovo delli Gran Signori Ottomani descritto da Alberto Bobouio Leopolitano Polacco, il quale [...] hà iui con officio di paggio di musica parecchij anni abitato". Cf. Cornelio Magni, *Quanto di più curioso e vago ha potuto raccorre Cornelio Magni nel primo biennio da esso consumato in viaggi e dimore per la Turchia. Resta distribuito in questa Prima parte in varie lettere scritte in Italia, le quali principalmente includono l'esame della metropoli di Costantinopoli, de' luoghi soggiacenti e dell'esercito Ottomano, sì in marcia, come in campo. Dedicata all'inclita città di Parma sua patria. Aggiuntai la relazione del Serraglio del Gran Signore, e delle parti più recondite di esso, distesa da Alberto Bobouio Leopolitano trattenutosi con nome di Bey in qualità di paggio* (Parma, Rosati 1679, 502).

<sup>7</sup> The *Celvetîye* was a branch of the *Halvetîye* founded by Şeyh Uftâde (d. 1580) that was very active at the Ottoman court during the seventeenth century. According to the descriptions that have survived, *Celvetî* dervishes seem to have performed a distinctive *zîkr* with musical instruments. Cf. Feldman 1996, 63, 68.

from his inner life, the dervishes repertoires that he transcribed in his private carnet and that arrived to our days are of great importance: in fact, at the end of his life, after a career as a man of letters and translator (Dragoman, *tercuman*), he entrusted two copies of his private notebook containing his musical transcriptions to some travellers. These two copies, not identical, are preserved at the British Library in London (GB Lbl Sloane 3114) and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (F BnF Turc 292). Both are precious sources of information about the music of the time because the author transcribed *all* the music that he heard at court and elsewhere - as a sort of *avant la lettre* ethnomusicologist - of secular as well as spiritual genres, including folk songs (*türkü*), urban popular songs (*şarkı*), the songs of the dancing boys (*köçekçe*), calls to prayer (*ezan*) and, in our perspective, dervishes hymns (*ilâhi* and *tevşih*).

Mevlevî culture seems to have influenced in a subtler way the treatise composed by the second European resident, the Moldavian prince Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), entitled *Kitâbu 'İlmi'l-Mûsiki 'alâ Vechi'l-Hurûfât* (The Book of the Science of Music according to Alphabetic Notation). Written in Constantinople between 1700 and 1703, when Cantemir was held hostage in the capital to ensure that his father remained loyal to the sultan, the treatise comprises a theoretical section written in Ottoman that is followed by a second section of 351 entirely instrumental compositions, mostly *peşrev* and *semâî*, which are anonymous or attributed to various composers. They are all written in a notational system often said to have been invented by Cantemir and therefore known as *Kantemiroğlu Notası*. However, according to recent scholarship, his system was a revision of an earlier and similar system of musical notation invented by the Mevlevî dervish Osman Dede (1652-1729), a composer and musician revered as the *kutb-u nâyi* (Pole of the *Ney*) of his epoch.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, as above for Bobowski, also for Cantemir the relations with dervishes were far from a mere picturesque description.

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<sup>8</sup> *Kutb* (pole) referred to the axis around which the heavens turned. The term was applied to a figure of unrivalled sanctity and also to the foremost exponent of an art or science. For Cantemir's treatise, see Wright 1992 and 2000. On the relationship between the musical notation system invented by Osman Dede and Cantemir, see Feldman 1996, 33, 52, 92.



154 *Relation du Voyage*

Hymne. *I ki hezar a feryn, ay ay, I ki hezar a feryn bou nidge Sultan olur dgiu- num Kosli olan Kechiler, dgianium, hufreu u hba- km olur.*

Des les caracteres ont esté fournis par Monsieur Ballard, seul Imprimeur du Roy pour la Musique.

**I** Ki hezar aferin bon nidge sultan olur,  
Kosli olan kechiler, hufreu-u hba kan olur,  
Ayaghinang tozini surme theken guceuzine,  
Nejne guur guuzi kim valihu beiran olur,  
Che-beinang catrefin her kim ut-ber dgiurefta,  
Gunli guher dolaben sinefi umman olur,  
Sanga direm, dedey salma deni dunsade,  
Nefsi deuin zapt iden dinde juleyman olour,

**Figure 3** Musical transcription of the Hymn *I ki hezar aferin* from Jean Antoine du Loir, *Les voyages du Sieur du Loir* (Paris: Gervais Clovzier, 1654, 154). Under the score it can be read: "Dons les caracteres on esté fournis par monsieur Ballard, seul imprimeur du Roy pour la musique". (Whose [typographical] characters was furnished by Mr. Ballard, one and only King's music printer)

## 6 Jean Antoine du Loir, *Les voyages du Sieur du Loir* (1654)

After these residents, we return to the description of a Mevlevî ceremony written by another traveller, this time French aristocrat Jean Antoine du Loir (XVII), published in 1654 and accompanied by a valuable and innovative – albeit very short – musical transcription from a setting of the verses beginning with *I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur*, that inspired the title of this article [fig. 3]. The transcription is accompanied by a precious and accurate translation from Ottoman into French, that can be intended here as a sign of a deeper curiosity for the ‘Other’ and, at the same time, one of the first examples of Orientalism.

Deux fois la sepmaine un des leurs fait une predication dans leur couvent, & les femmes qui par tout ailleurs n’ont point d’entrée aux lieux où sont les hommes y assistent par un privilege particulier, estant bien raisonnable qu’elles soient admises aux devotions de ces Religieux amans. Celuy qui preche prend pour texte quelque versets de l’Alcoran & je vous assure que les plus devots Chrestiens pourroient profiter de la Morale de son Sermon.

Cependant tous les dervichs sont renfermez dans une balustrade pour n’estre pas emportunez de la foule des assistants, & pour n’estre pas troublez dans l’exercice de leur ordre, que ie vais vous descrire.



*La predication estant finie, les Chantres qui sont dans une galerie, comme sont icy les orgues dans les Eglises, accordant leur voix avec des flutes, qui pour estre merueilleusement harmonieuses sont deffendües a tout autre sorte d'usage, commencent un Hymne à la cadence d'un tambour de biscaye. Voicy les parolles de cét Hymne, que j'ay nottéés, afin que ceux qui sçauent la Musique en puissent juger.<sup>9</sup>*

I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur,  
 Kouli olan kichiler husie-u hhakan olur,  
 Ayaghinung tozini sureme theken gucceuzine,  
 Nesne gurur gueuzi xim valihu heïran olur,  
 Che beiinnung catresin her kim ither dgiuresin,  
 Gungli guhert doluben sinesi ûmman olur,  
 Sanga direm, dedey salma deui dunsade,  
 Nefsi deuin zapriden dinde suleyman olur,  
 Sen malungne tapmaghil, xiokchu saray yapmaghil,  
 Ol dourouchub yaptughung sung oudgi viran olur,  
 Beslemeghil icnugni nimet-u bircan ile,  
 Bir gun olur ol tenung damoude biriaïn olur,  
 Her xichi kimal bolour senma ki deuler boulur,  
 Deuleti boulan kichi allah: boulan olur,  
 Her ki bougun veledé inanuben yuz sure,  
 Yokhsoul ise bai olur, bai ise soultan olur.

Voicy l'explication de cette Hymne, dont asseurement vous trouverez le sens meilleur que le chant.

Ha combine de loüanges merite, & combien est grand ce Seigneur,  
 dont toutes les esclaves sont autant des Rois.  
 Quiconque frottera ses yeux de la poudre de ses pieds,  
 verra quelque chose qui luy donnera tant d'admiration qu'il tombera en extase.  
 Celuy qui boira une goutte de son breuvage,  
 aura le sein comme un Ocean remply de pierreries & de liqueurs precieuses.  
 le te le dis, ó pere! Ne lasche point dans ce monde la bride à tes passions,  
 quiconque le reprimera sera un vrai Salomon dans la foÿ.  
 Ne t'amuse point à adore les richesses, n-y a bastir des kiosks, & des palais.  
 La fin de ce que tu aurais basty n'est que ruyne,  
 Ne nourris point ton corps avec tant des delicatesses & des friandises.  
 Il arriveroit un iour que ce corps resteroit dans les enfers.  
 Ne t'ïmagine point que celuy qui trouve des richesses trouve du bon-heur.  
 Celuy qui trouve le bon-heur n'est autre que celuy qui trouve Dieu.  
 Tout ceux qui se prosternent avec respect & humilité, croiront aujourd'huy en Velé,  
 Seront riches, s'ils estoient pauvres, & s'ils estoient riches deviendront des Rois.

*I ne vous ay point escrit cette traduction interlineaire, parce que la phrase du François ne se rencontre pas avec celle du Turc, & i'ai cru que ce seroit traduire ces Vers assez exactement que de mettre ligne pour vers comme ie vous l'enuoyer. Vous remarquerez*

<sup>9</sup> The following words appear in a small typeface under the musical score: *Dons les carachteres on esté fournis par monsieur Ballard, seul imprimeur du Roy pour la musique* (Whose characters were provided by M. Ballard, sole musical printer of the King).

seulement que le ay, ay qui est une particule d'exclamation, ni le mot agianum qui signifie mon ame, ne sont point partie des deux premiers Vers, mais que souvent il les mettent à la cesure & à la fin des couplets, & qu'ils ont plusieurs semblables mots qu'ils appliquent de mesme en chantant, mais a propos et selon le sujet.

Durant le premier Verset de cét Hymne tous les Dervichs sont dans une posture fort devote, assis sur les talons, les bas croisez & la teste baissée. Le Superieur qui est dans la queblé, orné d'une estolle de poil de chameau, frappe des mains aussitôt que le second commence, & tous les dervichs s'estant incontinant levez, les plus proche de luy passant devant le saluë, avec une profonde inclination de teste, & se met à tourner, pirouëtant petit à petit d'un mouvement si viste qu'à peine peut on s'apercevoir; Celuy qui suit en fait autant, & aussi tous les autres qui sont trente ou quarante. Cette danse circulaire ayant duré quelquefois plus d'un demy-quant d'heure, dans son plus rapide mouvement cesse tout d'un coup au mesme signal qu'elle a commancé, & les dervichs, comme s'ils n'avoient bougé de la place où ils se trouvent, se remettent assis sur en leur premier posture iusques à ce que leur Superieur les fasse encore recommencer. Ainsi cette danse continuë quelquefois une heure et plus, a quatre ou cinq reprises dont les derniers durent toujours plus longtemps, parce que les dervichs sont plus en haleine & plus en bransle pour tourner, estans vestus fort à propos pour ce suiet d'une espece de lupon volant, taillé en rond comme les chemisettes des femmes en France. (du Loir 1654, 153-7)

Twice a week one of them makes a sermon in their convent, and the women who cannot enter elsewhere in places where there are men are granted a special privilege, so it is reasonable that they be admitted to the devotions of these religious lovers. The one who preaches takes as a text some verses from the Qur'an and I assure you that many devout Christians could benefit from the moral of these sermons.

Meanwhile all the dervishes are gathered within a balustrade in order not to be disturbed by the crowd of the audience, and to avoid being troubled in the exercise of their order, which I am going to describe to you.

When the sermon is over, the singers, who are in a gallery like those which exist where the organs in churches are [kept] here, begin to tune their voices with some flutes, which are beautifully harmonious and are prohibited for any other use, beginning a hymn to the beat of a frame drum.<sup>10</sup> Here are the words of this hymn, which I have written, so that anyone who knows music can judge.<sup>11</sup>

Here you have the translation of this hymn, whose sense you will assuredly find better than the song.

Ah, how many praises he deserves and how great is this Lord,  
 all of whose slaves are so many kings!  
 Whoever will rub on his eyes the dust of His feet  
 will see something so admirable that he will fall in ecstasy.  
 Whoever will drink a drop of His wine,  
 his breast will be like an ocean full of precious gems and liqueurs.

**10** According to Soullier 1870, a *tambour de biscayne* is a sort of 'tambour de basque avec grelots et castagnettes', which means that it was a frame drum with cymbals. Du Loir very probably depicted an Ottoman *def* or *daire*.

**11** The transcription from the Ottoman, beginning with the line *I ki hezar aferin bon nidge Sultan olur*, is provided above.

I tell you: O father! Do not let your passions run unbridled in this world,  
 whoever will tame them will be a real Solomon of the faith.  
 Do not indulge yourself by worshipping wealth; do not build kiosks and palaces:  
 The end of what you have built is nothing but ruins.  
 Do not feed your body with so many delicacies and sweetmeats:  
 The day will arrive when your body will remain in hell.  
 Do not imagine that one who finds wealth finds happiness.  
 He who finds happiness is none other than he who finds God.  
 All those who prostrate themselves with respect and humility,  
 who believe today in the Friend,  
 Will become rich if they are poor, and if they are rich will become kings!

I did not provide an interlinear translation, because the phrases in French do not correspond with those in Turkish, and I also thought that it would be tedious for you if I translated these verses so exactly that the lines were placed together. You will notice that I have omitted from the first verses the exclamations *ay, ay*, just as I have omitted the recurring term *agianum*, which means ‘my soul’,<sup>12</sup> but often these are in the caesura and in the end of the couplets, and there are many similar words that may be used in the same way while singing, but according to the subject.

During the first verse of this hymn all the dervishes are in a very devout posture, sitting on their heels, their arms across the breast and their heads bowed. The Superior who is in the *qibla*, dressed in a robe of camel hair, claps his hands as soon as the second begins, and all the dervishes rise up at once, the nearest passing in front salutes him, with a deep bow, and begins to whirl, spinning little by little to attain a movement so rapid that it is difficult to see. The one who follows does the same, and so do all the others, who are thirty or forty. This circular dance, having sometimes continued for more than half of a quarter of an hour, suddenly stops at its maximum speed with the same signal that began it, and the dervishes, as if they had not moved from the place where they were, return again to the same posture, as if nothing had happened, remaining sitting in their initial posture until their Superior makes them begin once again. So this dance continues sometimes for an hour or more, four or five repetitions of which the final ones continue for longer, because the dervishes are more transported and aroused for whirling, being dressed very suitably for this task in a sort of a flying petticoat cut round like the chemisettes worn by women in France.

Many remarks could be made about this long passage written by du Loir, from the presence of women at the ceremony to the accurate and pioneering translation of the Mevlevî hymn *Hey Ki Ezar Afer-*

<sup>12</sup> *Agianum*, which the author translates as ‘mon ame’, is clearly an attempt to represent the Turkish *canım*.

in, that inspired part of this article title, at a time when the study of Turkish was only beginning in Europe. The hymn, which is often reduced to its first four verses, recurs many times in the corpus of Mevlevî ceremonies, from the third *selâm* (salutation) of the ceremony (*âyın*) in *makâm pençgâh*, which is considered to be the earliest Mevlevî *âyın*, onward.<sup>13</sup> While interested readers can listen to the hymn in many versions, I suggest the warm and intimate performance by the late Nezh Uz (1938-2012).<sup>14</sup>

About the musical transcription, it seems worthy of note that, according to Turkish musicologist Feza Tansuğ, the du Loir transcription should have been the source of inspiration for the famous chorus of Dervishes entitled: 'Du hast in deines Ärmes falten' from Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827) *The Ruins of Athens*, performed in February 1812 and concluded by the 'Turkish March', still quite famous today.

Finally, the posture of the dervishes while they are sitting and the deep bow that they make to the *shaykh* before they begin turning are the same that we see today, although once again the speed with which they are said to turn seems very different from the severe and highly composed performances of the modern era.

## 7 John Covel, *Extracts from the Diaries of Dr. John Covel, 1670-1679*

The next description is that of John Covel (1638-1722), an English cleric and scientist who became Master of Christ's College at Cambridge and Vice-Chancellor of the University. While serving in Constantinople as Chaplain to the Levant Company,<sup>15</sup> Covel travelled widely in Asia Minor in search of ancient Greek texts. His diaries were published between 1670 and 1679 and contain a rather different account of dervishes, music, and musical instruments because they include so many details about finance and administration.

I was at the Dervises in Galata, which Dervise Mustapha the Näizam bashè,<sup>16</sup> or head of the players of the pipe which they call Nâi.<sup>17</sup> He hath been there 14 years, his pay is 45 aspers; to the rest he payes 5, 6, 7, 8, or more, as they are deserving.

<sup>13</sup> Texts of the hymns that are sung in the ceremonies (*âyın-i şeriflerin güftelerin*) are conveniently presented in Heper 1979, 533-60.

<sup>14</sup> *Music of the Whirling Dervishes*. New York: Atlantic Recording Corporation, 1987, CD 82493, track 6.

<sup>15</sup> The Levant Company was an English chartered company formed in 1581 and reformed in 1592 to oversee trade with the Ottoman Empire. See Wood 1935 and, more recently, Mather 2009.

<sup>16</sup> 'Head *ney* player', i.e. *neyzenbaşı*.

<sup>17</sup> Nâi = a flute made out of a reed (note by John Covel).

They have 100 kilos of wheat per annum vacoof,<sup>18</sup> 3000 aspers per man; from the G. Sr<sup>19</sup> 10 sheep at little Beiram,<sup>20</sup> 100 at Ramazan. They have usuall prayers in the houses, and he that is devout may pray all night long, fast etc. There are 4 Tekyes or monasteryes, of them here one, two Kasoumpasha, 3 Bisicktash, 4 Yenicaon;<sup>21</sup> on Stambal side there are eighteen sorts of them. These founded first by Molàh Hunkyòr, Harset meulanàh, for he goeth by both the names. Heretofore they preach't, danc't, and piped every Tuesday and Friday. 3 lye here buried. 1. Arzéh Mahmet Effendi, a great benefactor to them; 2. Ismél Effendi, another benefactor, who was once their sheik (or head, though it signifies prince) and benefactor. 3. Ismaél Effendi, another benefactor, who built them 10 chambers and left 1,000 dollars. They let their neighbours be there buried for their money. Formerly, the *Baltagee*<sup>22</sup> of Galata seraglio were buried; now they have a corner apart. There Govisë Achmet is their Sheik now, who receives all the money and himself 1 ½ d. per day. Their musick is a Tamboor, and a long week small lute with wire strings, to which they sound their Nai or pipe, whereof they have two sorts, a base and a treble; for the middle ones partake of that to which they are nearest. The little pipes have 7 holes on the upper side all in a row, and an eighth at the bottom, a little of one side, and just in the middle (measuring from that lowest eighth hole upwards) on the back in a 9<sup>th</sup> hole. Some of these are a foot and ½ long; some lesse, some more. The long pipe hath six holes, on one side three, and three at equal distance, and on the back side, just half way there is a 7<sup>th</sup> hole. There is neither a fipple<sup>23</sup> above, nor noze<sup>24</sup> in the mouth, but the head is a horn sloped up and brought to a very fine edge, which leaning sideways to the mouth, gives the sound, as boyes (with us) used to whistle in acorn cups, this *πλαγιαυλος*;<sup>25</sup> whence our flageolet. Shepherds use small pipes of wood with such mouths, and some I have seen of the wings and thigh bones of Crowes, Bistards, Pelicanes etc.,<sup>26</sup> from whence of old were cal'd *tibia*. These dervish pipes are very dear, not one of twenty proving good and true. The smallest and deepest he ask 3 dollars for, and some of the largest he valued at 20 dollars. One (which had belong'd to the Convent these 300 years) he valued at 50 dollars.; yet more for its sweetness, than antiquity. They play mournfull tones, but seldom any point of musick. They are all made of Indian canes, just as we make our fishing rods in England of; the workmanship and luck in proving good give them their price.<sup>27</sup>

18 *Vakouf* = money from the mosque property (note by John Covel).

19 I.e. *Gran Signore*.

20 I.e. *Ramazan Bayrami*, at the end of Ramazan.

21 I.e. the *Mevlevihânes* of Kasımpaşa, Beşiktaş, and Yenikapı; Beşiktaş later moved to Bahariye on the Golden Horn.

22 I.e. *baltacı*, lit. a maker or seller of axes, a halberdier in the palace.

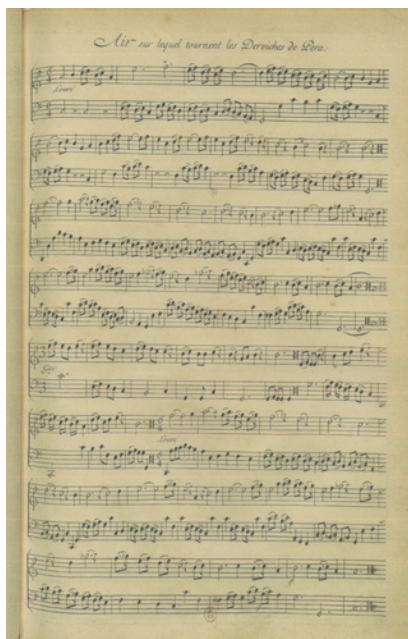
23 Fipple = a stopper. "In recorders, which go with a gentle breath; the concave of the pipe, were it not for the *fipple*, that straiteneth the air much more than the simple concave, would yeld no sound" (Bacon, *Nat. Hist.*, 116) (note by John Covel).

24 Noze = nozzle (note by John Covel).

25 *πλαγιαυλος* = Mod. Gr. a transverse flute (note by John Covel).

26 Still in use in the Greek islands (note by John Covel).

27 Dallam, Covel, Bent 1893a; 1893b, 168-70.



**Figure 4** Air sur lequel tournent les Derviches de Pera, noté par le Sieur Chabert qui était avec M<sup>e</sup> de Ferriol et qui en a composé la Basse. From Charles de Ferriol (1652-1722), *Recueil de Cent Estampes représentant différentes Nations du Levant*, Paris, par les soins de M. Le Hay, 1714, 17

As we remarked above, Covell provides a pragmatic or even mundane account of the Mevlevî that might in places seem rather dull. Nevertheless, it includes very valuable information. After all, Covell is the first visitor who mentions the *four* Mevlevîhânes in Constantinople at the time, rather than the most famous Mevlevîhâne at Pera to which ambassadors, diplomats, and travellers were evidently taken as part of the usual tour of the city. He is also very accurate and indeed modern in his approach to musical instruments.

## 8 Charles de Ferriol, *Recueil de Cent Estampes représentant différentes Nations du Levant* (1714)

We shall examine now another description of Mevlevî ritual, which is accompanied by a precious musical transcription made by the Sieur Chabert. They appear in the famous *Recueil de cent estampes représentant les diverses nations du Levant*, published in 1714 and reprinted with additional plates in 1715 [figs. 4-5].

When Charles de Ferriol (1652-1722) was sent by Louis XIV as ambassador to the Ottoman court, he invited a young Flemish nineteen-year-old artist named Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737) to accompany him. The collection of engravings in the *Recueil de cent estampes*



**Figure 5** *Les Derviches dans leur temple de Pera, achevant de tourner.* Engraving by Gérard Jean Baptiste Scotin son (1678-?). From Charles de Ferriol (1652-1722), *Recueil de Cent Estampes representant différentes Nations du Levant*, Paris, par les soins de M. Le Hay, 1714

*représentant les diverses nations du Levant* were made by Vanmour and served as models for a large number of later painters and engravers and, moreover, was the source for the most important engravings that depict Ottoman instruments, i.e. the *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'Instrumenti* of Filippo Bonanni (1639-1725) published in 1716, immediately after the *Recueil*, which provides the first modern essay in musical organology, well described by Cristina Ghirardini (2013, 53). In our perspective, Ferriol in his *Recueil de cent estampes* wrote a few paragraphs entitled 'Derviches qui tournent' in order to describe an engraving depicting Mevlevî dervishes and to introduce the rare musical transcription made by Chabert.

Cette Planche represente le Temple des Derviches de Pera, qui est fait en Dôme; il est clair, & bien parqueté: il y a une Tribune où l'on met la Musique. On a joint icy l'Air noté que les Musiciens jouent pour faire tourner les Derviches: ils tournent les bras ouverts, & paroissent extasiez: les jeunes tournent d'une vitesse incroyable. Le Superieur & les vieux tournent plus lentement; & quand ils sont las, ils se mettent à genoux le visage contre terre. C'est la Musique qui les anime; ils prétendent qu'elle a quelque chose de divin: plusieurs ont assuré M. de Ferriol que, sans la Musique, ils ne pourroient pas faire trois tours sans tomber, au lieu qu'ils tournent près d'une heure.

La danse est précédée par la lecture de quelques passages de l'Alcoran que le Superieur, ou un des ses principaux Derviches explique aux Assistans.



Le double cercle, qui est suspendu en l'air, ne sert qu'à mettre des Lampes dans les tems du Ramazan; & les Inscriptions qu'on voit au-dessus des colonnes, & autour du Dôme, sont des Sentences, ou des passages de l'Alcoran à la louange de Dieu.

*Il y a encore un Couvent des mêmes Dervichs sur le canal de la Mer noire.*<sup>28</sup>

This table shows the temple of the Pera Dervishes, which is a dome; it is clear and well parquetted: there is a gallery where the music is performed. We have added here the musical notation of the air which the musicians play in order to make the dervishes turn: they turn with open arms and seem in ecstasy: the young turn at an incredible speed. The Superior and the elders turn more slowly, and when they are tired they place themselves on their knees with their faces to the ground. It is music that animates them; they claim that it is in some way divine: many have assured M. de Ferriol that, without the music, they would not be able to perform three turns without falling, while they turn for nearly an hour.

The dance is preceded by the reading of some passages from the Qur'an, which the Superior, or one of his principal dervishes explains to the audience.

The double ring, which is suspended in the air, is only for lamps which are erected during the period of Ramazan, and the inscriptions under the columns, and around the dome, are sentences or passages from the Qur'an in praise of God.

There is another convent of these same dervishes on the Black Sea channel.<sup>29</sup>

Although concise, the description provided by Ferriol is accurate when compared to the travellers who preceded him. The passage "C'est la Musique qui les anime..." raises an important and difficult question. For centuries, Westerners believed that the dervishes whirled in response to the music. Dervishes themselves, however, offered a different explanation: ecstasy lies in human soul from the primordial covenant between man and God known in Turkish as *bezm-i elest*.<sup>30</sup> The act of listening (*samā'*) revives this immanent but often disconnected inner state. What counts is the intention of the listener (*niyya*) toward the act of listening. With this in mind, it should be emphasised that there is no Sufi music per se, but, rather, music *listened to* by the Sufis. The views attributed to the dervishes by Ferriol are therefore intriguing and need to be explored in greater detail and at greater length.

<sup>28</sup> Charles de Ferriol 1714. The expanded edition published in the following year included a second title page: *Explication des cent estampes qui representent diferentes nations du Levant avec de nouvelles estampes de ceremonies turques qui ont aussi leurs explications* (Paris: Jacques Collombat, 1715). The passage cited above appears on page 26. The music score appears on page 27. In some editions, the caption above the score contains not only "Air sur lequel tournent les Derviches de Pera" but also "Noté par le Sieur Chabert qui était avec Mr. de Ferriol, et qui en a composé la Basse" (Air to which the dervishes of Pera turn, written down by the Sieur Chabert who was with Mr. de Ferriol and who composed the bass).

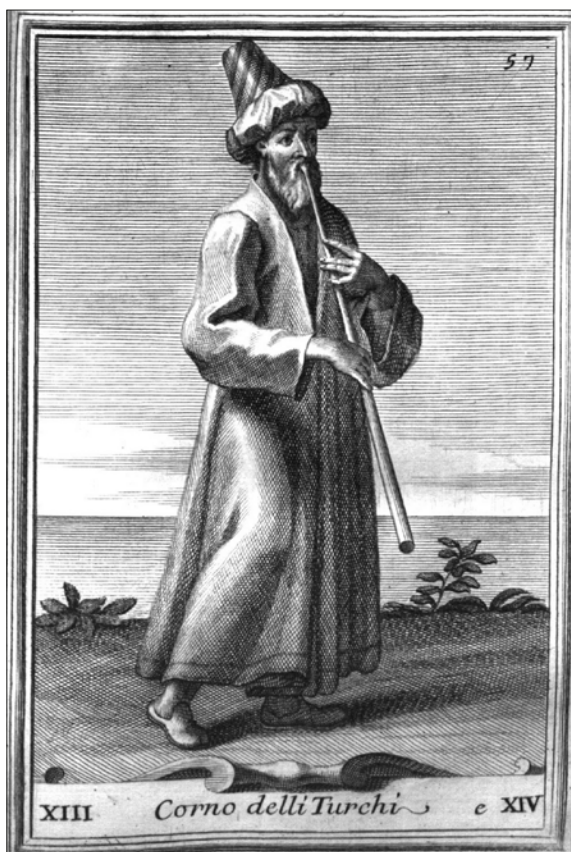
<sup>29</sup> I.e. the Bosphorus.

<sup>30</sup> Lit. 'Assembly of *Alast*'. The first word is the Persian *basm* (assembly, meeting, banquet) and the second is Arabic, adopted from the question that God asked mankind on the Day of Creation: *alastu bi-rabbikum* (Am I not your Lord?). See Qur'an VII: 172.



## 9 Filippo Bonanni, *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'Instrumenti* (1716)

Filippo Bonanni (1639-1725) copied five instruments from the above-mentioned *Recueil de Cent Estampes* for his *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'Instrumenti* (1716): among these a rim blown flute *ney*, a central instrument for *mevlevî* dervishes culture, that he apparently interpreted as a cornet, and then a kettle drum, a long-necked lute, a zither and castanets. According to Cristina Ghirardini (2013, 53), Bonanni probably used a copy of the *Recueil*, which lacked the captions that gives useful information on each plate: this is maybe the reason why he does not mention the whirling dervishes of the *mevlevîhâne* of Pera, which, as we saw, were one of the most renowned attractions of Istanbul for Western travellers, and where the music of *ney* were heard as in the reports we quoted above.



**Figure 6** Filippo Bonanni, *Corno delli Turchi*. From *Gabinetto Armonico*, Roma: Giorgio Placho, 1723, table XIII/XIV

## 10 On Some Jean Baptiste Vanmour Works

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam preserves three paintings made by Jean Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737), probably after the de Ferriol's *Recueil* mentioned above. Two of them correspond to engravings of the same subject that we find in the *Recueil*: the ritual of the whirling dervishes at the temple of Pera [fig. 7], and a single dancing dervish [figs. 9-10]. A third painting depicts a group of dervishes during a convivial meeting in a private house [fig. 8].

His return to the topic should suggest that the picturesque theme had become, somehow, a stereotype. The very relaxed atmosphere of 'Dervishes at dinner' seems worthy of note: here three *mevlevî* dervishes, easily recognizable from their high conical hat (*sikke*), are playing *ney* flutes. The rendering is not accurate, but the flutes seems different in sizes: one may suppose a *şah* *ney* for the upstanding dervish while two *mansûr*, or a *mansûr* and a *kız*, for the sitting ones. Be that as it may, while they are playing other brethren are laughing, smoking and chatting, in a inner state rather far from the concentration required during a *samâ'* (listening, audition, spiritual concert). The flask in the foreground, one may think, should know the reason for such a gaiety as well as for the flushed cheeks of the laughing dervish.

## 11 Charles Fonton, *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne* (1751)

I mention only in passing a long and detailed essay written in 1751 at Constantinople by a French dragoman named Charles Fonton (1725-1793), illustrated by his friend Jean-Baptiste Adanson (1732-1803) and entitled *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne*. The essay, unpublished and unknown until recent times,<sup>31</sup> does not discuss the question of dervishes aside from an illustration in which two Mevlevî dervishes with their conical hats (*sikke*) are depicted playing the *ney*.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Fonton, *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne*, Bibliothèque nationale Ms. 9137. The essay was translated and edited in German by Eckard Neubauer as "Der *Essai sur la musique orientale* von Charles Fonton mit Zeichnungen von Adanson". *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften*. 2, 1985, 277-327 and 3, 1986, 277-324. The work was translated into English by Robert Martin and published as "Essay Comparing Turkish Music with European Music". *Turkish Music Quarterly*, autumn 1988, 1-9; winter 1989, 1-11. A Turkish translation and commentary was published by Cem Behar as *18 yüzyılda Türk müziği: Charles Fonton*. Istanbul: Pan, 1987.



**Figure 7** Jean Baptiste Vanmour, whirling dervishes at the Galata Mevlevihâne in Pera. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



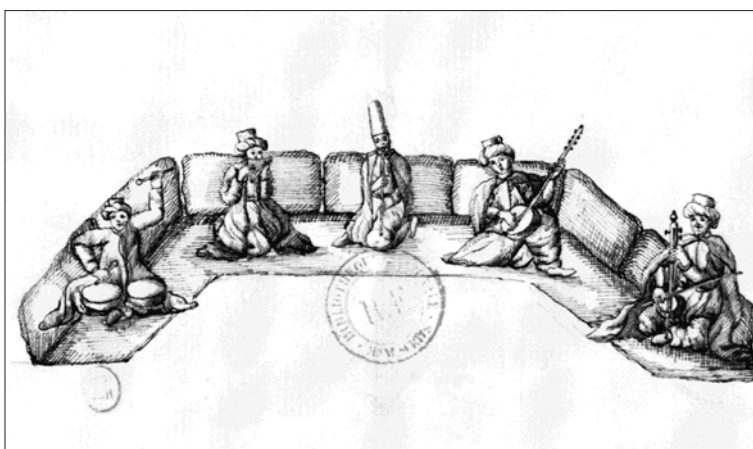
**Figure 8** Jean Baptiste Vanmour, dervishes at dinner. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



**Figure 9** Jean Baptist Vanmour, *Dervich ou Moine Turc qui tourne par devotion*. From Ferriol, *Recueil de Cent Estampes*, pl. 25



**Figure 10** Jean Baptiste Vanmour (workshop), *Dervish*. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



**Figure 11** Musical Ensemble in Charles Fonton (1725-1793), *Essai sur la musique orientale comparée à la musique européenne*. Engraving by Jean-Baptiste Adanson (1732-1803). A mevlevî dervish with his conical hat (*sikke*) playing *ney* (flute) is clearly visible

## 12 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763)

After this long procession of male travellers and artists, the next report comes from a woman, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), wife of the British ambassador Edward Wortley Montagu, who followed his husband in the capital when, in 1716, he was appointed British ambassador to the Sublime Porte. There, ‘on the field’, as modern anthropologists would say, she wrote many letters that recorded her impression of Ottoman society and culture. The letters were published posthumous in 1763 and among her acute observations, I will focus on her visit to a dervish centre, already a ‘must’ among West-erners, and the description of the Whirling Dervishes ceremony:

I had the curiosity to visit one of them and observe the devotions of the dervishes, which are as whimsical as any in Rome. These fellows have permission to marry, but are conned to an odd habit, which is only a piece of coarse white cloth wrapped about them, with their legs and arms naked. Their order has few other rules, except that of performing their fantastic rites every Tuesday and Friday, which is in this manner. They meet together in a large hall, where they all stand, with their eyes fixed on the ground and their arms across, while the imam or preacher reads part of the Alcoran from a pulpit placed in the midst; and when he has done, eight or ten of them make a melancholy consort with their pipes, which are no unmusical instruments. Then he reads again and makes a short exposition on what he has



read, after which they sing and play till their superior (the only one of them dressed in green) rises and begins a sort of solemn dance. They all stand about him in regular figure, and while some play the others tie their robe, which is very wide, fast round their waists and begin to turn round with an amazing swiftness and yet with great regard to the music, moving slower or faster as the tune is played. This lasts above an hour without any of them showing the least appearance of giddiness, which is not to be wondered at when it is considered they are all used to it from infancy, most of them being devoted to this way of life from their birth, and sons of dervishes. There turned amongst them some little dervishes of six or seven years old who seem no more disordered by that exercise than the others. At the end of the ceremony they shout out; 'there is no other god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet', after which they kiss the superior's hand and retire. The whole is performed with the most solemn gravity. Nothing can be more austere than the form of these people. They never raise their eyes and seem devoted to contemplation, and as ridiculous as this is in description there is something touching in the air of submission and mortification they assume. (Montagu 1994, 130-1)

### 13 Giambattista Toderini, *Letteratura turchesca* (1787)

Our final encounter is with a scholar who is considered to be the last European traveller in the eighteenth century who made a significant contribution to the study of Ottoman music, bringing to an end an epoch that had been marked by a curiosity for Turkeries. Giambattista Toderini (Venice, 1728-1799) was a Jesuit abbot who arrived at Constantinople in October 1781, after a busy career as a scholar and teacher, in the entourage of the Venetian ambassador (*bailo*) Agostino Garzoni and his wife Pisana Querini Stampalia who had asked him to serve as a theologian and preceptor for their son. As he wrote in the introduction to his *Letteratura*, he remained in the city from October 1781 to May 1786 and lived in the house of the ambassador. During the first months of his sojourn, he began to devote any available time to research that followed his earlier interests. Little by little, however, the idea occurred to him that he should write a history of printing in Constantinople that would include a survey of all the books that had been published there. As the idea grew, he began to study Turkish literature in its entirety, pursuing his investigation through the main archives and libraries of the imperial capital and eventually producing the three volumes of his *Letteratura Turchesca* (Turkish Literature). They were published at Venice by Giacomo Storti in 1787, only a year after Toderini returned from Constantinople. The wide circulation and enthusiastic reception of his work by a European readership consisting of scholars and intellectuals seems to be proven by the many reviews that it received immediately after

its publication and by the two translations, into French and German,<sup>32</sup> that were published within three years of its appearance. In the midst of the eighteenth-century curiosity for *Turcherie*, which had been nourished by the accounts of travellers, *Letteratura Turchesca* provided a solid point of reference that was increasingly admired as a reliable source of information about Ottoman culture.

Through the centuries, *Letteratura Turchesca* has also served as a source for the study of Ottoman music. The reason for its importance to musicologists is the lengthy Chapter XVI, consisting of thirty pages and two engravings, which appears at the end of the first volume. Entitled 'Musica', it contains observations on the subject that are often the fruit of Toderini's conversations with Mevlevî dervishes. He deals with many topics and themes, from the history of Ottoman music, in which he follows Cantemir,<sup>33</sup> to its theoretical basis in the context of Arab-Persian musicology, an alphabetical Greek and Arab-Persian notation, and a description of musical instruments and the division of the octave into twenty-four unequal microtones, ending in a series of epistolary exchanges with his Jesuit colleagues Abbott Pizzati (1732-1803) and Abbott Juan Andrés (1740-1817). Moreover, the chapter concludes with two illustrations that have become very famous: the first depicting a long-necked lute known as a *tanbûr*, including its fretting and its inherent musical system of 24 unequal microtones, and the second of a composition entitled *Concerto Turco Nominato Izia Semaisi*.

From a dense chapter written in eighteenth-century Italian, I have extracted only the passages that concern the Mevlevî:

La maggior parte de' ragguardevoli Turchi, e signori piglian piacere della Musica, la quale, come usavan li Greci, entra nel sistema della loro educazione. Su false relazioni scrisse il Niebuhr,<sup>34</sup> che i Turchi di condizione signorile credebbono disonorarsi apprendendo la Musica. Nella sua Repubblica determinava Platone,

**32** Toderini, Giambattista (1789). *De la literature des Turcs*. Transl. by the Abbott de Cournaud. Paris: Poincot, 1789); *Litteratur der Türken. Aus dem Italianischen des Hern Abbé Toderini, Mit Zusätzen und Anmerkungen von Philipp Wilhelm Gottlieb Hausleutner*. Königsberg: Friederich Nicolovius, 1790. A Spanish translation by the Chilean Jesuit Warcisse Vas remains unpublished.

**33** See Demetrius Cantemir, *Histoire de l'Empire Othoman, où se voyent les causes de son aggrandissement et de sa decadence* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1743). The treatise *Kitâbu 'İlmi'l-Mûsiki 'alâ Vechi'l-Hurûfât*, which has been mentioned above, was not in wide circulation during the life of Toderini.

**34** Toderini provides the following note: "Niebuhr, *Voy. En Arabie*, T.I. p. 142". He is referring to Karsten (or Carsten) Niebuhr (1733-1815) and to his *Reisebeschreibung von Arabien und anderen umliegenden Ländern*, which was first published in 1772. French and Dutch translations of Niebuhr's narratives were published during his lifetime. Toderini seems to have used the French translation that was published in the Netherlands: C. Niebuhr, *Voyage en Arabie & en d'autres pays circonvoisins*. Amsterdam: S.J. Baalde/Utrecht: J van Schoonven, 1776.

che s'applicassero i giovani tre anni a questa scienza. I Turchi coltivano lungamente, e i più cogli stromenti a corde e col Neì. Tengono schiavi, e schiave, che suonino a lor diletto. Disdegnano però i Signori d'alto stato di farsi udire nelle pubbliche adunanze, fuorchè suonando il Neì tra gli amici, perché viene reputato stromento di studio. Così imparai da Ibraimo Efendi, mentre nelle praterie di Bojux-derè, ove concorrono molti d'ogni nazione a diporto, sonò un Ulemà mio amico in compagnia del più valente Dervis Mevlèvi, venuti quel giorno perché sentissi il suono dolcissimo dello stromento... (Toderini 1787, 228)

Most of the notable Turks and the nobility take pleasure in music, which, as it was among the Greeks, has entered their system of education. Based on an unreliable source Niebuhr wrote, that Turks of high social standing are convinced that their honour is diminished if they learn music. In his *Republic*, Plato recommended that the young apply three years to the study of this science. The Turks study and practice music for a long time, in particular [focus] on stringed instruments and on the *Neì*. They keep male slaves, and female slaves, who can play for their amusement. Yet, the nobles of high rank do not want to be heard in public, unless they play the *Neì* among friends, because it is considered to be an instrument of study.<sup>35</sup> This I learned from Ibraimo Efendi in the meadows of Bojux-derè,<sup>36</sup> when a man of religious learning who was a friend of mine played for me in the company of the most talented Mevlèvi dervishes, who came that day in order to make me listen to the sweetest sound of that instrument.

[...]

I Dervis Mevlèvi, così nominati dal Fondatore, avendo introdotto qual religioso culto la danza nel loro Oratorio (che in nessuna maniera vuol chiamarsi Moschea) coltivano molto la musica, e sono de' migliori sonatori. Usano stromenti da fiato, e timpani, come vidi trovandomi presente alle turbinose lor danze, ove celeramente s'aggirano quasi un palèo. Suonano finalmente il Neì, non usando, come noi, dell'estremità delle dita, fuorchè del mignolo, ma delle seconde giunture. Stromento egli è questo di malagevole imboccatura, essendo tutto aperto nell'alto, di singolare dolcezza, e somigliante alla voce umana. (1787, 241-2)

The Mevlèvi<sup>37</sup> dervishes, who are named in this way after their founder, having introduced the dance as a religious devotion in their oratorio<sup>38</sup> (which they would

**35** It is not clear if the Italian *stromento di studio* is intended to refer to the usual study and practice of a given instrument or if it alludes to a form of inner practice, typical of those who devoted themselves to the *ney*, especially among the Mevlèvi.

**36** Although the area is still known as Büyükdere, the meadow can no longer be seen.

**37** Either Toderini or his publisher has written 'Mevlèvi' instead of 'Mevlevi'. The latter form is obviously correct and appears elsewhere in the chapter.

**38** As with the terms *sonata* and *cantata*, which have been discussed above, modern readers may be tempted to understand *oratorio* in terms of European music during the classical period. However, the term was used here in its Latin sense, referring to a place in which people pray (*oratorius*, from the verb *orare*), normally distinct from the church. With this in mind, the comment by Toderini is rather subtle. It assumes a clear distinction between a mosque and a Mevlèvi hâne, especially a *semâhâne*, the space in which the Mevlèvi performed the *semâ*, the liturgy accompanied by music.



in no way call a mosque) practice music assiduously, and are among the best musicians. They play wind instruments, and kettledrums, as I saw when I was at their whirling dances, where they turn quickly in the manner of a spinning top. They play the *Nei* well, not using, as we do, the top joint of the finger, apart from the little finger, but using the second joint. It is a difficult instrument to play, being all open on the top, but of a singular sweetness and similar to the human voice.

Toderini makes the following comment about attempts at musical transcription in Ferriol, made by Chabert, that preceded him.

L'aria, sulla quale ballano li Dervis, vedesi riportata con note europee nell'opera illustre dell'Ambasciatore Ferriol.<sup>39</sup> Sonata da valente Maestro sulle corde del violino non la riconobbero per dessa i Turchi uditori e bellamente ne risero. A dir vero, alcuni tuoni sono inesprimibili affatto coll'usate note europee. Conviene formare nuove figure, e darne loro giusto valore: faccenda alquanto spinosa, che domanda lunga meditazione, e non volgare perizia nella Musica nostra e nella turchesca. (1787, 242)

The melody, to which the dervishes dance, can be seen in European notes in the illustrious work of the Ambassador de Ferriol. However, when it was read and played on the violin by a talented master, the Turkish listeners did not recognise it at all and had a good laugh. To be honest, some tones are inexpressible in European notes. It is necessary to form new figures, and give them the correct value: a thorny task that requires prolonged meditation and unusual skill, both in our music as well as in Turkish.

Or veggasi la Tavola I e II, che presenta al lettore nuovo saggio, ossia tentative sulla Musica Turca espresso con note nostre Europee, approvate da'pratici esperti in questa scienza. Anzi i non esperti, se udirono l'arie, e sonate Ottomane, in queste note ravviseranno il genio e l'indole della Musica, che non avverrà loro sonando le carte di Mr. Ferriol Ambasciatore di Francia alla Porta, nè le alter più antiche del Bailo Donado mentovate più sopra.

Queste cognizioni apriranno per avventura nuovo campo ai Maestri per arricchire e vie più adronare la Musica Italiana. Queste potranno spandere nuova luce sulla scientifica Teoria, e illuminare l'oscura storia della Musica antica negli autori Greci e Latini. (1787, 241-2)

Now let us see Illustrations I and II, which present to the reader a new attempt, a tentative approach to expressing Turkish music in our European notes, approved by the real experts in this music. Even non-experts, when listening to these Ottoman arias and sonatas, will be able to perceive in these notes the genius

**39** Recueil de cent estampes de Mr Ferriol, 26. à Paris, 1714 (Toderini's footnote). Here the author refers to the above quoted "Air sur la quelle tourment les Dervichs": an analysis of this very particular musical transcription would give material for a whole other article.

and the spirit of this music, which will not happen if they play the musical scores arranged by Mr. Ferriol, French Ambassador at the Porte, or the earlier ones by *bailo* Donado mentioned above.

This knowledge may perhaps open a new field for the maestros to enrich and embellish Italian music. In this way they can shed new light upon scientific theory, and enlighten the obscure history of the ancient music of Greek and Latin authors.

Toderini is very acute in identifying Plato as a common source for the Ottoman conception of music as an ennobling practice while at the same time citing Islamic assumptions that music as an abstract science or as a source of amusement is licit, even if making a living by performing it would not be thought suitable for a member of the Ottoman elite. As he says, 'the grandees do not want to be heard in public'. The descriptions of the Mevlevî are standard, aside from the conversation that he seems to have conducted with them in the meadows of Büyükdere. Again, he seems to have made a very acute distinction between a *semâhâne* and a mosque. He demonstrates that he knows the musical transcriptions that preceded him and he criticises them on the basis of a new formulation in which the musical scale is divided into twenty-four unequal microtones, a remarkable innovation if we remember that the Cairo Congress of Arab Music, at which the octave was divided into twenty-four equal quartertones, would not be held until 1932. The last part of his chapter is primarily concerned with theory, transcription, and interval ratios as well as the two famous illustrations. The first of these illustrations, which represents a *tanbûr* with its fretting and its inherent microtonal musical system, is discussed in detail by Toderini throughout the chapter.



**Figura 12** Table II from Giambattista Toderini, *Letteratura Turchesca* (Venezia: Storti Editore, 1787) with the *Concerto turco nominato Izia Saz Semaisi*

The second illustration is of greater interest. It presents a composition to which Toderini gives the name *Concerto Turco Nominato Izia Semaisi*.<sup>40</sup> With some variation, this is a composition that is now very well known: the *Hicâz Saz Semâ'îsi* that concludes at least three Mevlevî *âyınler*. In chronological order, it concludes the *âyın* in *makâm beyâtî* composed by Derviş Küçük Mustafa Dede (d. 1683), the *âyın* in *makâm hicâz* composed by Musahip 'Vardakosta' Ahmed Ağa (1724-94) and the *âyın* in *makâm hicâz* composed by Abdürrahim Kunhi Dede (1769-1831). Toderini or his assistants could have listened to the *hicâz son yürük semâ'î* from at least one of these *âyın* and decided to transcribe it because they admired its beauty or because its presence in Ottoman music was so noticeable.<sup>41</sup>

## 14 Final Remarks

The curiosity for the 'different', for the 'other', for 'what we don't have' is maybe a key for all the descriptions and reports we listed above and this naïve curiosity should be also intended as one of the first signs of what became later a mass phenomenon as is modern tourism.

The publication of travel diaries had, of course, political implications that went beyond cultural curiosity: observing and describing the culture of the 'other' also meant to study the culture of the 'enemy', as were often considered the Ottomans, at least from the masses; at the same time, showing interest for such a culture was also an opening diplomatic move.

If European observers reactions to such 'picturesque' figures as the dervishes, were, after all, rather normal, I am wondering, as in the beginning, why did Ottomans, granting permissions to visit a dervish centre, think that European visitors would have enjoyed such ceremonies? What the *mevlevî* ceremonies was likely to have represented for Ottoman hosts? Was it a 'performance' of which they were especially proud? From a cultural and political point of view, *mevlevîye* brotherhood was certainly regarded by the Ottomans as a learned Sunni brotherhood, with many poets, musicians and calligraphers among its ranks, and with many adepts among the high-class milieu. Far from its aura, the political and symbolical role of the brotherhood for the Ottomans was evident in the enthronement ceremony itself of a new sultan, in which the so called 'sword of Os-

<sup>40</sup> The *Concerto* has been recorded several times, for example by Concerto Köln with the Ensemble Sarband in *Dream of the Orient*, Deutsche Grammophon (2003), CD: 474 193-2, track 4.

<sup>41</sup> During my first visit to Konya in 1990, the composition could be heard incessantly almost everywhere in the city and it resonated in my memory long after my return to Venice.

man' (*taklid-i seyf*) was girded on to the new sultan by the prior of the brotherhood (*tarikatchı dede*), the Sharif of Konya. Such a privilege was reserved to the *mevlevîs* from the same Osman I (?-1323), mythical founder of the Ottoman dynasty, when he had established his residence in Konya in 1299, before the capital was moved to Bursa and then Constantinople. Yet, despite such an intellectual and politic 'respectability' of the brotherhood, *mevlevî* ceremonies were, and still are, deeply rooted in a particular Sufi tradition as is *samâ'* ('audition, listening, spiritual concert'), not exactly perceived as 'orthodox' in Islam and, rather, often severely criticized or radically prohibited elsewhere. This, somehow, reflects the multifaceted personality of its saint eponym, Persian language mystic poet Mevlânâ Jalâl ud-Dîn Rûmî (1207-1273), who was at the same time a renowned man of letters, a professor, an *'alîm* (scholar), a *faqîh* (doctor of the law) esteemed by the Seljuk rulers and an ecstatic, capable of whirling for days, according to the hagiography *al-manâqib al-'arifin* written by Aflaki (d. 1360), as it was for Mevlânâ's friend and tutor, the wandering dervish Shams al Dîn Tabrizî (1185-1248) held in great esteem by unorthodox dervishes *qalandâr*, that we met above in de Nicolay.

Europeans, in their reports, did not seem to perceive the complexity of Mevlânâ that, instead, had to be clear to Ottomans. Rather, they describe a ceremony in which dervishes whirl as spinning top, as a *paléo*, with the archaic Italian language by Toderini, somehow falling to the ground in ecstasy, shouting, like it happened, until recent times, in nowadays Xinjiang, in Indo-Pakistan area and elsewhere in the territories of Sufism. There is no need to say that all this is rather distant from nowadays *mevlevî* rite (*âyin*) in Turkey and its somehow forced composure.

In the light of Ottomans knowledge of Mevlânâ work, of his concept of *samâ'*, of the multiple levels of the rite, of the beauty of the verses sung, of the complex compositions in Art music (*maqâm*) style, and of the intense whirling in itself, yes, a *mevlevî* ceremony must have been considered a 'performance' of which Ottomans were proud.

From another point of view, dervishes themselves should have been well aware of their position, and were not ashamed to be the subjects for engravers and painters, as is in our reports, as well as for early photographers, between 19th and 20th century, maybe foreboding the severe closure of all the Sufi orders and centres that would be arrived in 1925.

Few among Europeans observers, as Lady Montagu or Toderini, perceived that there must have been something 'more' in the rite, beyond its global atmosphere. Yet *what* did Europeans see in such rituals, aside from mere picturesque element? Maybe it is worthy to remember the simplistic current interpretation diffused through the world nowadays (not only among Europeans), which read in the *mevlevî* ceremonies the reflex of the 'cosmic dance': the Creation, the

stars, the planets, the angels, human beings, all moves and rotates in the drunkenness (*mast*) of Love. The evident platonic resonances in this must have resonated, even unconsciously, in the observers. Such a theory is partial, simplistic and does not take into consideration the emic interpretation, given by dervishes themselves, about the rite, but for the moment it seems better to stop here this already too long journey, thanking the kind reader for sharing with me a long stretch of road.

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- Serraglio del Gran Signore, e delle parti più recondite di esso, distesa da Alberto Bobouio Leopolitano trattenutosi con nome di Bey in qualità di paggio.* Parma: Rosati.
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# Algeria and the Washington Consensus: Debtor-Creditor Relation Re-Examined

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**Abstract** Algeria's experience with liberal economic reforms occurred while the country faced its worst crisis due to the civil conflict between the army and Islamist insurgents. The study of Algeria's debt relief process, from loan negotiation to the implementation of adjustment packages, is key to understand how the aid received enabled the Algerian authorities to survive the crisis and renew their patronage networks. Focusing on Algerian relation with International Financial Institutions, this paper provides a political analysis of this process. As a result, the creditors' favour for stabilisation and their political priorities emerge as factors that increased the leverages of the Algerian authorities.

**Keywords** Algeria. World Bank. International Monetary Fund. Washington Consensus. Debt Relief.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Reassessing the Trail of the Washington Consensus in Algeria. – 3 From Boumedienne's Industrialization to Chadli's Adjustments. – 4 The Hamrouche Government and the IFIs: A Short-Lived Honeymoon. – 5 Wartime Financial Assistance: Reforming to Preserve. – 6 Conclusions.



## Peer review

Submitted	2019-03-01
Accepted	2019-04-12
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Leopardi, Francesco Saverio (2019). "Algeria and the Washington Consensus: Debtor-Creditor Relation Re-Examined". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 153-172.

## **1 Introduction**

Algeria started to receive economic assistance from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in 1989, when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) initiated their first adjustment projects in the North African country. Coming in the middle of a societal meltdown and a dramatic civil conflict, IFIs assistance to Algeria contributed to the survival of the Algerian regime and to the reaffirmation of its control over the country. The academic studies of Algerian neo-liberal reforms have focused on the economic assessment of the adjustment programmes implemented throughout roughly a decade. However, to understand how these programmes were formulated and what factors influenced policy makers, both Algerian and international, attention should be shifted to the relations between Algeria and its creditors. This paper argues that the Algerian authorities exploited its creditors' political and economic exposure in the country, to preserve their position in a time of violent political contestation. Factors such as European economic exchanges with Algeria, in both directions and in different sectors, from energy to manufacturing, played in favour of the North African country when negotiations over debt relief were held. Similarly, the new global, notably Western, concern over the rise of transnational jihadism in the mid-nineties, lent more leverage to the Algerian authorities who, while negotiating with Western-dominated IFIs, were also fighting a jihadist insurgency.

After a survey of the existing literature and an overview of how the Algerian debt crisis emerged, attention is put on the evolution of Algeria's contacts with the IFIs and on the negotiation process leading to the financial assistance programmes. This allows to highlight the political significance that the IFIs attached to the Algerian reforms, a factor that justified the outstanding financial support received by Algeria in a relatively short time span. Besides, the paper also underscores the IFIs' shortcomings in the formulation of their reform packages and in the monitoring of reforms due to their lack of acquaintance with Algerian politics and state structure. The study of Algeria-IFIs relations entails a close observation of the changing attitudes displayed by the Algerian authorities during the period under scrutiny. From the first 1988 reformist government to the post-January 1992 pragmatic cabinets, Algerian positions towards reforms varied considerably. The development of the relations and negotiations with the IFIs thus reflected the divisions within the Algerian

Research for this article was funded by the Italian Minister of University and Research (PRIN 2015TZ92TF). This article is part of the activities of the Bologna research unit in the framework of the project *The Making of the Washington Consensus. Negotiating International Assets, Debts and Power (1979-91)*.



State, emphasising the emergences of several power groups. While identifying these forces, the paper stresses the ability of the ruling bureaucratic and military elites to cope with the country's economic and political crisis and survive it with renewed strength. Their awareness of the IFIs' macroeconomic priorities allowed the Algerian elites to secure external financings while watering down the impact of structural reforms such as trade liberalization and privatization. Thanks to their dominant position within State institutions and IFIs' political limits, the Algerian bureaucratic and military elites re-balanced the creditor-debtor relation in their own favour.

This paper, presenting the preliminary result of an ongoing research project, is based on declassified WB and IMF official documents produced during the negotiation and implementation of their sponsored reform programmes, namely between 1988 and 1998. Some documents, such as WB final assessment of single programme, are available online, through the WB archive web site. Other, more specific material, such as minutes of negotiations and progression reports were retrieved from the WB archives in Washington, D.C. The IMF documents quoted herein are all available online at the IMF archives website, while other still classified material is going through disclosure procedures. The use of Algerian official sources is among the goals of the research project, but due to the lack of formal procedures to access public archives, state official documents could not be used for the present paper. Nonetheless, texts authored by former Algerian officials provided some context on the authorities' perspective on the reforming process.

## **2 Reassessing the Trail of the Washington Consensus in Algeria**

Similarly to several of its North African neighbours, Algeria's experience with the implementation of Washington Consensus measures is strictly related to its debt crisis whose first symptoms emerged in the mid-eighties after the unprecedented drop in oil prices. Difficulties in repaying its foreign debt pushed the country's authorities to seek a closer relation with IFIs, not only to obtain financial assistance, but also to reassure both public and private creditors. However, as seen below, academic attention on this subject and historical phase is characterised by an emphasis on the study of reforms themselves rather than on the relations between Algeria and the IFIs. Therefore, it appears that more weight should be granted to the evaluation of how this relation shaped the reform process and where the parties involved stood concerning the formulation of neo-liberal policies.

The parallel experiments in economic liberalization happening all over North Africa and beyond since the late eighties prompted early

assessments of neo-liberal reform packages implemented by regional governments. Throughout the nineties to the early 2000s, economists and political scientists evaluated the performance of governments in the realm of reforms particularly through collective works. These studies not only provide comprehensive accounts of state reforming efforts, but also touch on the socio-political dimension of neo-liberal reforms.<sup>1</sup> Besides regional, and even global perspectives, some authors also focused on single country case studies, among which Tunisia for instance, has been one of the most studied (Zartman 1991; Murphy 1999).

Given the gigantic sizes of the public sector in several countries, attention has been focused on the withdrawal of the state from industrial production through liquidation of state enterprises, a dynamic that did not exempt Algeria (Harik, Sullivan 1992; Celasun 2001). The ostensible link between economic and political liberalizations stimulated analyses trying to prove the existence of an actual relation between the implementation of neo-liberal agendas and the transition to more democratic polities (Layachi 1998; Nonneman 1996). In this framework, Clement M. Henry argued that the liberal reform of the financial sector and the empowerment of private commercial banks could have been a vehicle for democratization. The integration into global financial markets and reduced state control over credit allocation represented some promising conditions for the appearance of pluralist politics (1996). Nonetheless, in the case of Algeria, later works looking at the performance of Middle East and North African economies in an age of further globalisation observed the substantial immobilism in terms of economic and political transformation (Lowi 2009; Henry, Springborg 2010).

The uncertain progression of IMF and WB-sponsored programmes in Algeria, occurring in the midst of a parallel crisis of state institutions and society, pushed scholars to scrutinise the specific Algerian experience with reforms. Attention on the private sector remained high, since its relation with the state continued to be seen as a major tangle reuniting the threads of multiple structural problems, such as the persistence of monopolies in different economic sectors (Dillman 2000). The high stakes of economic reform predictably stimulated a heated academic debate in Algeria itself. Despite different starting points, the final judgment on Algeria's reform process throughout its different phases is often negative. Indeed, the persistence of deep-seated distortions like the oil-based rentier economy and its related neo-patrimonial conducts, are highlighted as fundamental causes of the poor implementation of reforms. The ensuing economic decline is thus pointed out as the main reason behind the collapse of Algerian institutions (Boudersa 1993; Dahmani 1999).

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**1** Haggard, Kaufman 1992; Vandewalle 1996; Bensabat Kleinberg, Clark 2000.

The assessment of Algeria's economic performance during its age of reforms also came from those 'technicians' who held official positions at different times during the adjustments period. Throughout the nineties and the early 2000s, Algerian former Ministers, Heads of Government and Central Bank Governors gave their own account of Algeria's reforms during the previous decades. Despite the academic training of most of these former officials, these essays could be rather seen as personal memories in which the authors defend their record in office. Therefore, such accounts provide valuable insights into the divisions within the Algerian State, the changing positions towards IFIs as well as the functioning and positioning of the different institutions towards reforms. Indeed, from proponents of continued state-led development (Bennoune, El-Kenz 1990; Hadj-Nacer 2011), to early reformers (Brahimi 1991; Goumeziane 1994; Hidouci 1995) and officials with IMF or WB backgrounds (Benachenhou M. 1993), all provided their testimony on the reforms and their diagnosis for Algeria's economic and political dysfunctions.

The assessment of economic performance amid structural adjustment is a fundamental area of research, nonetheless more attention should be paid to the political dimension of this process. Moreover, since one of the core ideas behind neo-liberal reform is opening a country to economic globalisation, the study of international relations in the framework of structural adjustment acquires a greater importance. Harrigan and Said approached the issue by highlighting the political rationales behind IMF and WB support to several Middle Eastern countries (2009). Unfortunately, Algeria was not chosen as one of their case studies that makes a survey of this country's experience even more urgent. The present paper aims at starting to fill such gap through an overview of Algeria's relations with the IMF and the WB between 1989 and 1999, namely the period of IFIs' assistance to the North African country. This approach thus allows to shed light on the political priorities, beyond stated economic principles, that prompted IFIs support for Algeria, especially as it came before a full-fledged debt crisis. A further goal is to assess the balance of forces between debtor country and creditor institutions, looking at what strategy Algeria adopted in order to obtain the most from IFIs' assistance programmes. Finally, the analysis of this relation appears fundamental to understand how the Algerian military elites managed to survive throughout the civil conflict and how they reorganised their power leverages, also thanks to international economic support. Additional importance is lent to this aspect, in light of the political instability that characterised most of North Africa in the recent years and that apparently spared Algeria until spring 2019, when wide popular protests led to the unexpected deposition of President Bouteflika, opening a new phase of uncertainty in the political future of the country.

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### 3 From Boumedienne's Industrialization to Chadli's Adjustments

The Algerian State has been dominating the economy since independence in 1962, but only after Houari Boumedienne's coup and access to power (1965-78) did it pursue a full-fledged strategy of import substituting industrialization (ISI), specifically named 'industrialising industries'. Relying on the revenues of the hydrocarbon sector, the State prioritized the development of heavy industries which were deemed capable of promoting growth in other economic sectors, from agriculture, to infrastructure and light industries (Tlemçani 1986, 111-13). Nonetheless, due to several factors, such as the lack of clear regulatory frameworks and internal competition within the ruling clan, the industrialising effort suffered from poor planning. Moreover, new state industries operated in monopolistic and highly protected environments while being run at high costs and low productivity rates. They quickly became means for state managers to funnel patronage thanks to the massive investments they received and exert pressure on the central government. At the same time, agriculture was neglected both because of its ancillary role in ISI doctrine, and due to the authorities' will to deactivate the political potential of the rural population that the urban state bureaucracy continuously regarded with concern (Tlemçani 1986, 124-33, 160-2).

By the mid-seventies, the Algerian economy was already showing substantial structural problems. The lack of adequate agricultural policies and funding compromised the linkage mechanism upon which the Algerian ISI strategy was based. If, in theory, agriculture was to be the main market for the products of new industries such as fertilizers and tractors, in fact this sector could not generate the needed income and demands for industrial products (Richards, Waterbury 2008, 19). Furthermore, instead of emancipating the country in terms of food provision, state agricultural policies made Algeria even more dependent on food imports. In sum, agricultural insufficient output, especially in light of a rapidly growing population and the inability of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) to compete internationally, exacerbated Algeria's dependence on world markets for capital accumulation. Indeed, hydrocarbon sale, emigrants' remittances and loans were the sole sources of foreign exchange, thus dangerously exposing Algerian finances to uncontrolled external dynamics (Lowi 2009, 91-2; Tlemçani 1986, 114-15). The 1973 and 1979 oil shocks allowed the authorities to keep the flow of public spending up, ensuring the survival of a loss-making industrial apparatus while sustaining a wide system of subsidies and allowances. Nonetheless, by the end of the seventies it was clear that the Algerian economy suffered from those shortcomings, such as lack of diversification and overdependence on global markets, that would later ensure a debt crisis.

When President Boumedienne suddenly died in December 1978, the Algerian authorities, or at least a significant part of the ruling establishment, were persuaded of the need to reform the national economy. For instance, despite regular servicing, the authorities became increasingly worried about the country's growing external debt. In the early eighties, SOEs started to look for credit from sources other than the government in order to support their wide financial needs. This, alongside the already mentioned dependence on food import and a fall in export revenues, entailed a debt servicing of 3.9 \$ billion in 1982, with a projected ratio exceeding the 30% of the GDP (Willis 1996, 200; Murphy 1996, 184; IMF 1982, 11-12).

The new President, Chadli Benjedid, showed almost immediately his willingness to put economic and political reforms high on his agenda as he spoke of the need "to evaluate regularly what has been achieved" and "introduce improvements" where necessary (Murphy 1996, 181). Indeed, Chadli launched in 1980 a five-year social and economic plan accompanied by the slogan 'for a better life'. The main goal of the programme was to improve the efficiency of the economy by favouring consumptions after decades of restrictions, downsizing giant SOEs through division into smaller, autonomous firms, restructuring the agricultural sector and encouraging private initiative (Lowi 2009, 105).

While mounting debt and balance of payment were the main concerns of Algeria's external sector, the most pressing domestic problem was the coming to age of an educated and numerous work force. Large swaths of young people flocked to the main urban centres where most of the industries were based to later realise that the economy could not absorb such outstanding employment demand. Moreover, the state was also unable to meet the housing demand thus aggravating the crisis of an unemployed youth living in poor conditions (Richards, Waterbury 2008, 252). In this respect, the first reforms, notably the dinar devaluation started as early as 1980, further worsened the conditions of the general population that experienced a significant drop in purchase power. Consequently, on the one hand, support for the reform effort appeared eroded because the authorities stopped respecting the traditional social pact according to which the State was to provide a wide set of social services and ensure the improvement of living conditions. On the other, some of the reform measures affected also the cadres in the state sector thus creating the premises for resistance to liberalization among managerial staff within public enterprises (Benachenhou A. 1992, 179, 182-3).

Chadli's reforms were not only meant to redress Algerian economy, thus responding to social urgencies, but they also aimed at distinguishing the new course from the old one. The new economic orientations coupled with a political reshuffle whose purpose was to consolidate Chadli's position and limit the influence of Boumediennist

rivals. For instance, the restructuring of SOEs while targeting productivity also aimed at curtailing the influence of top regime members who enjoyed wide power and wealth deriving from the control of industrial complexes (Dahmani 1999, 70-2). The most glaring examples were the removals of Belaid Abdesselam and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, respectively Minister of Industry and Energy and of Foreign Affairs under Boumedienne, both accused of corruption in 1982 along other top bureaucrats (Richards, Waterbury 2008, 282).

Despite the wide range of reforms, the plan did not achieve much of its goals. For instance, the new smaller SOEs did not improve their productivity and continued to feature significant budget deficits. The liberalization of imports did not produce positive results either. The relaxation of government restrictions on products increased the disbursement of hard currency needed to pay imported items, thus fuelling state deficit. The reorganization of import licences led to the 'democratization' of corruption and clienteles as smaller monopolies within the different sectors of external trade replaced the old, larger ones but continued to function on the same corruptive patterns (Dahmani 1999, 74-6). Notwithstanding such shortcomings, the authorities managed to cope with the situation as far as the revenues from hydrocarbons could cover the deficit. However, the mid-eighties conjuncture of negative external conditions definitely compromised Algeria's ability to avoid debt accumulation while strained its servicing effort. Oil prices collapsed in the mid-eighties, and the Algerian crude reached the record low of 14 US \$ per barrel in early 1986 (World Bank 1989c, 4). In addition, following the Plaza agreements that same year, the value of US dollar declined, a particularly negative development for Algeria. Indeed, most of the Algerian foreign debt was denominated in US dollar and at the same time, being the currency of oil trade, Algeria saw its external revenues reduced by 23% compared to 1985. Finally, interest rates on loans peaked, further debilitating Algeria's financial position and contributing to a 2 billion US \$ external debt increase. As a consequence, the country was thrown into its worst economic crisis and its debt payment ability appeared in severe jeopardy (McDougall 2017, 280; Benachenhou A. 1992, 181). This forced the government to severely cut imports, which not only hurt consumption but also undermined the overall industrial production that depended heavily on external supplies. In this context, despite payments to creditors were ensured, thus preventing a full-blown debt crisis, growth slowed, reaching negative terms in 1987 and 1988 (IMF 1989a, 6).

However, the economic crisis also represented an opportunity for the authorities to further economic liberal reforms, particularly as a group of like-minded technocrats gathered to promote economic adjustment. High cadres such as Ghazi Hidouci or Smail Goumezi-ane started to work first informally and later within a government-

tal framework in favour of broad economic liberalization measures. Such group reached its largest influence when one of its members, Mouloud Hamrouche was appointed Prime Minister in 1989 and other reformist technocrats, like Hidouci held key ministries (Tlemçani 1999, 24-6; McDougall 2017, 282-3). While the oil-countershock prompted the formation of the reformist group, the shock of the 1988 riots propelled the reformists into government. On 5 October a general strike was called but riots erupted in suburban Algiers and the violent response of the army led to hundreds of casualties. The 1988 riots resulted from the build-up of popular grievances due to widespread regime corruption and the deterioration of living conditions. Indeed, the country not only faced deep unemployment and housing crises, but was also hit by severe droughts and a locust invasion in the preceding years that pushed large sectors of the population on the brink of famine (Vandewalle 1992, 710; Swearingen 1990, 21). As factions within the regime started to be more vocal in their criticisms of Chadli's policies, the Algerian President met social and political challenges by deepening and widening his reformist agenda. While political reforms peaked with the approval in early 1989 of a new constitution, abandoning the one-party system, economic adjustment culminated with the appointment of reformist technocrats at the head of government and the Central Bank in September (McDougall 2017, 284-5).

#### **4 The Hamrouche Government and the IFIs: A Short-Lived Honeymoon**

The IMF and the WB agreed to release four loans each to Algeria between 1989 and 1999, resulting respectively in almost SDR 2 billion and 1.1 billion US \$ of financial assistance. Such loans would later lead to debt rescheduling by the Paris and London clubs, namely public and private creditors agreed to extend the repayment terms of the Algerian sovereign debt. This financial assistance not only avoided an Algerian default but also supported the regime in the middle of a civil war (Harrigan, Al-Said 2009, 197-8). Such lifeline provided by foreign creditors remained constant throughout the 'black decade' despite ruling elites in Algeria alternated over the years, proposing varying economic agendas.

IMF and WB assistance to Algeria started on positive grounds as both the first Stand-by Arrangement (SBA) and the Economic Reform Support Loan (ERSL) were granted to Hamrouche's reformist government. The IMF welcomed the Algerian request as it did not come on the verge of a debt crisis, but it sought international support and legitimization for a deep reform programme launched in complete autonomy (IMF 1989b, 8). The WB believed that Algeria could avoid



“shock therapy”, hence the loans were “an acknowledgment of the liberalization measures already taken” and “an incentive for pursuing the reforms” (World Bank 1994, 5). Moreover, the WB realised the political significance of Algeria’s shift to market economy as contacts for assistance came before the fall of the Berlin wall (World Bank 1994, 5). These aspects also emerged in WB meetings with US officials from the Treasury and the Federal Reserve as well as with US representatives within the WB during the preparation of the first ERS-L to Algeria. The WB Country Economist stressed several times to US officials that in light of the measures already implemented by Algerian authorities, concerns over vague conditionalities and unclear sequencing could be put aside (World Bank 1989b). In August 1989, US support for the WB operation in Algeria was already secured as the staff of the US Executive Director at the WB confirmed that Washington would make “appropriate laudatory noise” to accompany the operation (World Bank 1989a).

Between 1989 and 1991, the Harmouche government pursued far-reaching reforms, ranging from price liberalization and the creation of holding companies supposed to run SOEs, to the promulgation of a new “currency and credit law” meant to empower the central bank vis-à-vis the government and create a suitable environment for private investments (IMF 1991, 5-16). Predictably, the government faced opposition from wide sections of the Algerian economic, social and political apparatuses. All those cadres and functionaries who used to benefit, both in political and economic terms, from state monopolies and redistributive policies tried to jeopardize the action of the Hamrouche government. According to Hidouci, the reformists had to deflect attacks from a hostile parliament, smear campaigns in the press and win over the resistances of Algeria’s main trade unions (Hidouci 1995, 215-18, 284-5).

Ultimately, the Hamrouche government fell under the burden of the tense political situation. Political liberalization led to the creation of a myriad of parties among which the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) capitalized on popular discontent due to the unresolved problems of inflation, unemployment and deteriorating living standards. This became clear when the FIS won the 1990 local elections, securing more than half of total votes and taking over a majority of the renewed municipal councils (Rouzeik 1992, 38-9). In June 1991, taking advantage of a prolonged FIS-led strike, the regime military leaders imposed on Chadli the declaration of the state of emergency and a government reshuffle that Hamrouche refused, leading to the end of his reforming experience (McDougall 2017, 286-9). The WB apparently had little understanding of Algerian political turbulences: a few days before Hamrouche’s resignations, the report for the second WB adjustment loan saw no risks in Algeria’s political liberalization as “all the major parties [were] committed to the broad goals of econom-



ic liberalization" (World Bank 1991b, 5). Significantly, even after the fall of the Hamrouche government, the WB team following the second loan to Algeria, apparently believed in continued "support from a wide political spectrum" (World Bank 1991a, 4) within the country. In their preparatory documents for presentation to the Executive Board, the team members seemed to think that such statement would be enough to appease possible concerns coming from the Directors (World Bank 1991a).

The new government led by Sid Ahmed Ghazali continued the reform process although with major inconsistencies, particularly concerning privatizations which were virtually stopped (Dahmani 1999, 165-70). The first contrasts with the IFIs also emerged, as the Algerian authorities appeared reluctant in the implementation of two key measures that the IMF recommended, namely total exchange rate liberalization and debt rescheduling. Algerian enterprises did not welcome the 1991 exchange rate adjustment that was lived as a "traumatic event", hence the pressure on the authorities to avoid further liberalization (IMF 1993a, 16). Besides, the government refused to reschedule its debt that, while not particularly heavy, was mainly composed of short-term loans. Debt rescheduling represented a highly polarizing issue in Algerian politics since the beginning of the first IFIs-sponsored programmes. The acceptance of debt rescheduling and consequently of full-fledged adjustment programmes amounted to ceding national sovereignty to foreign institutions. Therefore, opposition to debt rescheduling was not only due to the refusal of more far-reaching economic reforms, but also to the attack it represented to the Algerian regime 'nationalist' legitimacy. Such reluctance was matter of concern for the IFIs and other creditors both in political and economic terms. The rejection of rescheduling led to the adoption of more control measures to limit expenditures, such as import compression, thus harming, according to the IMF, the 'spirit' of a reform process aimed at reducing state involvement. Moreover, these measures could also jeopardise the overall economy, casting more doubts on Algeria's future ability to service its debt (IMF 1993b, 21, 25-6, 37).

Algeria remained steadfast in its refusal, seeking bilateral debt reprofiling instead, confident that creditors' exposure to Algeria would serve its interests. The authorities believed that such strategy would allow the country to resist negative circumstances, particularly low oil prices, until a new improvement in the external economic environment. Their concern was avoiding a formal IFIs-sponsored rescheduling, a move that could hurt nationalist sensibility in Algeria and that had been recently evoked to attack the previous reformist government. Indeed, some successful debt renegotiation inspired confidence in the Algerian authorities. In spring 1991 France had already agreed to reprofile Algeria's debt despite its stated favour for rescheduling. In fact, reprofiling was the last act of French assistance to Algeria

in the late eighties and early nineties: worried about the conditions of its southern Small-Medium Enterprises (SME) that made most of their revenues from supply trade with Algeria, Paris consistently ensured credit for Algerian purchases from French enterprises. In this framework, the refinancing operation was worth 5.9 US \$ billion and entailed public-private collaboration between the Ministry of Economy and the *Crédit Lyonnais* banking group, which was significantly involved in the financing of French SME selling their products across the Mediterranean (Ardouin 1995, 20). Moreover, in the same year, the Algerian authorities also managed to obtain a refinancing of their trade credits amounting to 2.7 US \$ billion from the Italian government as well as a similar agreement with the US worth 1.5 US \$ billion (World Bank 1992). Nonetheless, these measures did not enable Algeria to wait until a new surge of oil prices that remained low throughout the early nineties, eventually pushing the authorities to make those concessions that they had staunchly rejected.

## **5 Wartime Financial Assistance: Reforming to Preserve**

Ghazali's half-hearted reform process ended abruptly in January 1992, in the wake of the FIS shocking victory in the first round of the legislative elections in December 1991. Fearing an Islamist takeover, the military stepped in, pushing Chadli to resign, cancelling the elections' second round and forming a Haut Comité d'Etat (HCE) to preside over the transition period. The military intervention prompted a radical response from the multi-faceted Islamist movement and fuelled its insurgent fringes: the country quickly descended into a civil war that would last for the rest of the nineties. In the context of such unprecedented existential threat, one of the keys to regime survival was indeed its ability to ensure foreign financial aid in which the IFIs adjustment programmes played a fundamental role (McDougall 2017, 299-302, 320).

Initially, the *janviéristes*<sup>2</sup> tried a return to traditional planned economy bringing back Belaid Abdesselam as prime minister. Despite his past as architect of Algeria's ISI strategy, the WB hoped that Abdesselam's centralising attitude would speed up the implementation of the agreed reforms. Six months after his appointment, the WB officials had come to realise that their hopes were clearly misplaced. A WB mission to Algeria in December 1992 found that 'uncertainty' and a 'wait-and-see attitude' dominated the action of the Abdesselam government. Moreover, his attempt to revive state intervention, combined with his autocratic governance, undermined the efforts

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**2** The generals who led the coup in January 1992.

of those functionaries who tried to abide by the reform programme while antagonised important segments of the institutions. The WB mission report also affirmed that, as a result, Algeria was left in a:

no-man's land between central planning and market economy arguably exposing the country to the worst of both and the best of neither. (World Bank 1993, 2-3)

In this context, the Algerian economy continued to deteriorate, and debt servicing became particularly burdensome, reaching the 70% of the GDP in 1993. Therefore, the military leaders realised that debt rescheduling guaranteed by a traditional IMF-sponsored adjustment programme was necessary to secure badly needed external financing. Throughout 1994, a new government quickly found an agreement for an SBA to be followed by an Extended Facility Fund (EFF) in 1995, accompanied by Paris and London Clubs rescheduling. The WB for its part released another ERSL in 1994 and a Structural Adjustment Loan (SAL) in 1996 while more credits were secured from the European Union, Japan and other public sources (World Bank 1998, 1-2). Despite having opposed reforming technocrats before the 1991-92 crisis, the ruling clique behind, first HCE Chairman Ali Kafi and, since 1995, President Liamine Zeroual, placed functionaries with similar profiles in charge of negotiating with the IMF and the WB. Figures such as Mourad Benachenhou and Ahmed Benbitour, who had held executive positions within the WB and the IMF respectively, occupied several economic ministries between 1993 and 1996 and oversaw the negotiation and implementation of IFIs-backed projects. Nonetheless, the military leaders held in check these technocrats, sometimes limiting their action, as former HCE member Redha Malek and later Boumedienne-era bureaucrat Mokdad Sifi became Prime Ministers (Dillman 1997, 164-5; McDougall 2017, 320-1).

This double approach was clear in how the authorities addressed the objectives of the IMF and WB programmes. Macroeconomic stabilization was the top priority since foreign financing not only supported the overall economy but also provided resources for the war effort and for clienteles' networks (Werenfels 2007, 140-1). The EFF programme was meant to achieve such stability and, indeed, Algeria not only met the main programmed targets, but exceeded them in a couple of years. By the end of 1996, balance of payments deficits was lower than expected, foreign currency reserves increased, inflation decelerated, and growth recovered. External developments such as surges in oil prices and in agricultural output due to favourable weather conditions contributed to the success. Nonetheless, the government would have met the EFF goals in any case due to a prolonged public service wage freeze, improved tax administration and liquidation of some public enterprises among other measures (IMF 1996, 6-12, 20-2).

The determination to achieve macroeconomic stability was not matched by a similar take on privatizations and other structural measures that represented the core of the second phase of IMF and WB programmes. Algerian reluctance to privatise was long-standing as even the Hamrouche government did not envision privatization when drafting a reform programme for the 1991 EFSAL (Hidouci 1991, 2). Such reluctance emerged also when discussions on the first WB-sponsored SAL were underway and as a WB pre-appraisal mission denounced, Algeria did not adhere to the agreed steps needed to prepare the adjustment loan. Despite their promises, the Algeria authorities did not include a privatization programme in their draft programme and they planned to retain the banking sector altogether in public hands (World Bank 1995, 2). Ultimately, the Algerian government did make some steps to meet WB requirements such as passing a new privatization law, opening public enterprises to private equities and launching a pilot privatization programme (World Bank 1996a, 14-15). Nonetheless, these structural adjustment measures hardly made consensus within the Algerian institutions, consequently, resistances and ambiguities continued throughout the whole duration of post-rescheduling IFI's assistance programmes.

Technocrats and other groups favourable to privatizations could not always win over the opposition of those clans and figures within the Algeria state that benefitted from control of SOEs. For instance, oligopolies working within the framework of SOEs in the import sectors opposed real privatization and market competition as this would curtail their ability to administer the rent derived from their bureaucratic control of such SOEs (Werenfels 2002, 13-14). Similarly, at the *wilaya* level, governors tended to oppose the liquidation of loss-making SOEs, even blocking the operations in a first phase, as they were afraid of the "social implications" that these could have in the area they governed (World Bank 1996b, 1-2). The liquidation could indeed create some problems for the governors, from increasing unemployment to curtailing their patronage channels. Even in those areas where reforms were actually implemented, the groups that dominated the economy through public institutions managed to preserve their control and economic benefits. In the import sector, high-ranking military officers continued to enjoy monopolistic control thanks to their penetration of public enterprises, of the informal areas of the economy and of state bureaucracy. Consequently, privatizations and liberalizations were formally carried out but did not result in a real redistribution of economic power and revenues (Werenfels 2007, 49-50).

As progresses were made on the macroeconomic front while structural adjustment went through continuous slippages, the WB final assessment of its SAL contrasted the IMF evaluation of its own programme and described Algeria performance as disappointing. The

WB pointed out that privatization of SOEs never started despite the existence of a broad legal framework: the problem laid in the sequencing of adjustment measures which prioritized macroeconomic stabilization, thus steps like trade and exchange rate liberalization, without a parallel effort to privatise unproductive SOEs. Algeria authorities adopted a gradual approach stopping at liquidation and rehabilitation measures thus contributing to de-industrialisation. In this context, unemployment remained on high levels, erecting further obstacle to a privatization process that would entail massive layoffs (World Bank 1998, 10-11).

By the late nineties, the conflict wound down and the Algerian polity started to recompose as legislative elections were held in 1997 and a new presidential ballot took place in 1999, selecting Abdelaziz Bouteflika as new Head of State. Such development was the result of the regime military campaign and the insurgents' shortcomings but also of external events. During the 'black decade' Algerian-US relations improved significantly achieving the status of a strategic alliance in the early 2000s. In this regard, both the hydrocarbon and the security sectors played a prominent role. US firms working on hydrocarbon exploration and production were increasingly involved in Algeria since the late eighties. In addition, the emergence of jihadism as new global threat compacted foreign support, notably American, for a regime that had apparently faced a jihadist insurgency with success. This led to the expansion of Algerian-US security cooperation, particularly as Washington extended the range and scope of counter-terrorism activities in the Sahel region, identifying in the Algerian regime a strategic ally for its 'War on Terror' in the post-9/11 phase. It is therefore clear, that the US were interested, throughout the nineties and after, in ensuring the stability of the Algerian regime (Lowi 2009, 142-3). Moreover, as Harrigan and Said suggested, given the voting weight of the US and its Western allies within the IFIs, these strategic interests may have had an influence on the IMF and WB positions towards Algeria during the period of economic reform (2009, 25-7, 33-5). Finally, as far as external factors are concerned, with the stabilization of oil prices and their rise in early 2000s the regime could resume "spending and patronage on a grand scale again", thus renewing its patronage networks constituting the bedrock of its stability since at least, the Boumedienne-era (McDougall 2017, 320-3).

## 6 Conclusions

Thanks to renewed hydrocarbon profits, the Algerian authorities have been able to avoid liberal adjustment in the following years. For instance, wide privatizations plans were never resumed despite some cases of technical collaboration with the WB in that field (e.g.

World Bank 2004). Algeria's experience with Washington Consensus measures gave similar results to those of other neighbouring countries, such as Egypt, although the path towards them differed consistently. The state bureaucracies remained the dominant forces within the economy and, when transition to a market system was attempted, it followed clientele's networks and created or renewed monopolistic environments (Richards, Waterbury 2008, 256).

However, the survey of Algeria's relation with the IFIs highlights some noteworthy aspects. Notwithstanding internal divisions, the Algerian military elites, managed to navigate through a financial crisis and a military conflict, resorting to IFIs assistance to achieve their goals. When the reformist initiative was out of their control, these elites managed to thwart the pursuit of a deep adjustment that would have threatened their access to rent. When later external financial backing could not be secured eschewing IFIs assistance and debt rescheduling, the authorities took advantage of IMF and WB prioritization of macroeconomic stability to obtain credits and later avoid further structural measures. Algeria successfully mixed political and economic arguments in order to secure IFIs finances and support with other private and public creditors. As it was shown, European industrial ties with Algeria secured debt refinancing, even when debt rescheduling would have been preferred by French or Italian Economy Ministries. On the political side, the significance of pushing Algeria towards market-oriented globalisation, deeply resonated with both the IFIs and national governments, particularly the US. Moreover, as Algeria spiralled down towards civil war, growing global concern for jihadism, ensured Western support to the country's military elite.

On their part, the IFIs apparently showed limited understanding of the Algerian evolving political scenario while did not fully realise the impact of their financial assistance. For instance, the WB assessments of the situation on the ground, oscillated from confidence that all political actors in Algeria would pursue the reforming effort to hoping that Boumedienne-era bureaucrats would not only embrace but even speed up the adjustment process. The events disavowed both these evaluations, highlighting a difficulty to grasp from Washington the functioning of Algerian politics. Furthermore, the IFIs stress on macroeconomic stabilization also reflected the shortcomings of pre-conceived adjustment packages. Algeria's respect of macroeconomic conditionalities guaranteed an impressive flow of funds from public and private creditors throughout less than a decade. These funds ultimately fostered the reproduction of patronage based on rent-seeking, which in turn strengthened obstacles to the actual restructuring of the Algerian economy. Moreover, IFIs' frameworks for liberalizing some sectors were skilfully exploited by Algerian elites to reorganise their clientele networks.

In conclusion Algeria's experience with the Washington Consensus ended when abundant hydrocarbon revenues were restored in the early 2000s. By then, adjustment programmes had not addressed the historical shortcomings of the Algerian economy, while they had helped the preservation of neo-patrimonial patterns preventing political change. Neo-liberal reforms thus contributed to the stabilization of the Algerian polity through a *de-facto* support to the reorganization of traditional power patterns. This in turn, summed with unresolved economic problems, set the grounds for a return of political contestation and destabilization.

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# “If Man Had Received Such a Nature...”

## Textual Form, Transmission, and Interpretation of a Passage in Eznik’s *Refutation of the Sects* (Book I, 11 [§ 45])

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**Abstract** After providing some background on Eznik’s views on the origin of evil and free will as they are argued for in his treatise *Refutation of the Sects*, the article reviews the history of the interpretation of a passage in this work (Eznik, I, 11 [§ 45]), giving a critical assessment of the suggested emendations so far, and proposing two hypothetical readings, based on a comparison of the Armenian text with its supposed Greek Vorlage, the text’s transmission history, and internal contextual analysis.

**Keywords** Eznik of Kolb. Methodius of Olympus. Textual Criticism. Armenian Literature.

**Summary** 1 Eznik’s Views on the Origin of Evil and Free Will. – 2 “If Man Had Received Such a Nature...”: Eznik I, 11 (§ 45) and the History of Its Textual-critical Interpretation. – 3 Two Hypothetical Readings.



### Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-15
Accepted	2019-03-18
Published	2019-06-27

### Open access

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**Citation** Lucca, Paolo (2019). “If Man Had Received Such a Nature...: Textual Form, Transmission, and Interpretation of a Passage in Eznik’s *Refutation of the Sects* (Book I, 11 [§ 45])”. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 173-198.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/006

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Der Teufel ist ein Optimist, wenn er glaubt, daß er  
die Menschen schlechter machen kann.  
(Kraus 1912, 131)

## 1 Eznik's Views on the Origin of Evil and Free Will

Written around 441-448 by Eznik of Kolb, the text commonly known under the title of *Refutation of the Sects* is one of the earliest original Armenian works. It has been preserved in one manuscript only, and was first published in Smyrna in 1763, possibly from another now lost manuscript.<sup>1</sup> After the *editio princeps*, other editions followed, the most important of them being the two critical editions published in the 20th century by Mariès and Mercier (1959a, together with a French translation: 1959b), and by Minasean (1992) respectively. The text, being anepigraphic in the manuscript tradition, has since 1763 been given a number of titles: *Book of Refutations*, *Refutation of the Sects*, *Speeches of Refutation*, *Speeches against the Sects*, and *On God (De Deo)*. The latter, suggested by Mariès, emphasises its character of theological treatise on the nature and oneness of God, where positive theses are followed by arguments against the chosen opponents – the Zurvanites, the Greek philosophers, and Marcion –, who, conversely, all maintain the dualistic principle of evil (the ՚ղղ for the Greek philosophers and Marcion, Ahriman for the Zurvanites) and good (God or Ohrmazd).<sup>2</sup>

Eznik addresses the question of the nature and origin of evil and its relation to human freedom of the will in §§ 33-62. In this section, relying mostly on Methodius of Olympus' *De Autexusio*,<sup>3</sup> he discards the idea that evil is uncreated or created by God: evil entered the world through the devil's jealousy/envy and disobedience,<sup>4</sup> and through man's ensuing disobedience and sin:

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1 *Girk' ənddimut'eanc' arareal i srboy Eznakay Kolbacwoy* 1762 [but 1763]; on the manuscript and printed tradition of Eznik's work, see Minassian 1984 and 1987; Minasean 1992, 1: 50-76; Orenco 1996, 24-6.

2 Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 543-4; see also Mariès 1924, 30-1; for a brief presentation of the context, content, and character of Eznik's work, see Bruns 2007; Orenco 2014, 804-8.

3 Paragraphs 4-56 and 353-4 of Eznik's text are essentially an occasionally reworked translation of Methodius' *De Autexusio*, as first noted by Galèmk'earean at the end of the 19th century (Galèmk'earean 1919). On Eznik's dependence on Methodius and his translating choices and style, see Orenco 2016; on the question of free will in Eznik and his dependence on the thought and text of Methodius, see also Zeilfelder 2017.

4 Zeilfelder rightly notes that Eznik does not deal with the existence of an 'evil' emotion (jealousy/envy) before evil came into existence, commenting that "man kann nicht behaupten, dass Eznik das Problem sonderlich elegant gelöst hätte" (Zeilfelder 2017, 277).

Ասեմք, եթե Սատանայի՝ չար գտունգանել մարդոյն՝ Աստուածոյ իմացաւ, վասն որոյն զմարդն յայն յաւժարեցոյց. [...] Եւ արդ, սկիզբն չարեաց գնախանձն ասեմք, եւ գնախանձն՝ յառաւել զմարդն պատուելոյ եւ գչարիսն՝ յանհնազանդութենէն, զի Աստուած այնպէս առաւել զմարդն պատ[ո]ւեաց, եւ նորա անաստեալ՝ զքն[կ]էց գպատ[ո]ւիրանն : Ուստի զամենայն ինչ որ լինի չար, ոչ բնութեամբ չար գիտեմք, այլ զի առանց կամացն Աստուածոյ գործին իրք ինչ լինին չար : (Eznik, I, 12 [§§ 47.48]; Minasean 1992, 1: 162.163, ll. 503-4.547-51; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 809, ll. 9-13)

We say that Satan realized it was evil for man to disobey God, and for that reason he *made* the man *want* to do it. [...] Thus we say that that jealousy is the beginning of evils, and that jealousy comes from the superabundance of honor given to man, and those evils come from his disobedience. Because God has so honored man the more, and *he disobeyed and* rejected His command. From this we *know that* everything that becomes evil *is not naturally evil*, but it *becomes* evil because *it is* accomplished outside the will of God. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 58.60)<sup>5</sup>

Following Methodius’ argument, Eznik is adamant in supporting the existence of free will: Satan and man knew the difference between good and evil, and the rightness or wrongness of an action depend on how that action is willed.<sup>6</sup>

Նա՛, եւ ընդ լինելն իսկ Սատանայի յԱստուածոյ՝ գիտաց, եթե անաստեալ ումեք Աստուածոյ չար է եւ ոչ բարի [...] : Եւ վասն այնորիկ յիրաւի տանջէ գնա Աստուած, զի գիտէ զբարին եւ ոչ առնէ եւ հնուս է չարին եւ ոչ խորշի : [...] Նա՛ եւ զմարդոյն յիրաւի ասեմք կրել պատուհաս ընդ որոց, գործիցէ, քանզի կամաւ երթալոյ յուսումն այնպիսի իրաց, յորոց, յորժամ եւ կամիցի, եւ մեկնել կարող է, քանզի ե՛ւ կամելոյն, ե՛ւ չկամելոյն ունի իշխանութիւն, զորոյն զհետ երթալոյ, ե՛ւ՛ կարելն, զոր ինչ կամիցի առնել : (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 48.49]; Minasean 1992, 1: 163, ll. 552-3.555-7.564-7; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 811, ll. 6-7.9-11.14-15; 813, ll. 1-3)

So too, when Satan came into being from God, he knew that is evil and not good for someone to disobey God. [...] And for this reason God rightly makes him suffer: *for he* knows the good and does not

<sup>5</sup> Here and hereafter, my changes to Blanchard and Young’s translation are in italics. Unless otherwise noted, all other translations are mine.

<sup>6</sup> Eznik, I, 10 (§§ 35-41); Minasean 1992, 1: 160-1, ll. 375-423.

do it, *and* he is well-versed in evil, yet does not avoid it. [...] And concerning man also, we say that he rightly endures punishment for the things that he does. Because willingly he undertakes the study of such things, which he could avoid if he so willed. Because he has the sovereignty over willing and not willing, after which comes the ability to do whatever he wills. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 60-1)

Free will is not the power to choose a pre-existent evil (which would leave the way open to cosmological dualism), but it makes man the one and only cause of his own obedience or disobedience to God:

Եւ արդ, յայտ է, թէ անձնիշխան եղև մարդն՝ առնել զբարի եւ ժտել ի չար. իբր ոչ եթէ չար ինչ առաջի կայր, յոր ժողիցի, այլ այն եւեթ առաջի կայր՝ կա՛մ անսալ Աստուածոյ, կա՛մ չանսալ, եւ զնոյն եւեթ պատճառ չարին իմանալ. (Eznik, I, 11 (§ 45); Minasean 1992, 1: 161, ll. 471-4; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVII; Vaillant 1930, 801, ll. 3-5)

And so it is clear that man *was* free to do good and to dare evil. It is not as if some evil thing existed first, which he might dare; but only this existed first – either to obey God or not to obey, and only this can be considered the cause of evil. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 56)

As a consequence, evil is the result of a free and deliberate intellectual choice. Nevertheless, both in Methodius and Eznik, this stance is tempered by the *topos* of Satan’s deception:

Որպէս յորժամ իցէ որ ուրուք թշնամի եւ թարուցեալ զթշնամութիւնն՝ գաղտ կամիցի վնասել [...] եւ նորա լուեալ՝ վաղվաղակի ի կեղծիս բարեկամութեան կեղծաւորեալ [...] զաւգտակարսն նմա վնասակարս թելադրեալ կարծեցուցանիցէ. (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 47]); Minasean 1992, 1: 162, ll. 504-5.509-11; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 805, ll. 1-2.7-10)

Because when someone is an enemy to others, he conceals the enmity and wishes to injure stealthily. [...] *And when he* [i.e. Satan] heard, dissembling at once in counterfeit friendship [...], *giving him* [i.e. the man] *advice*, caused *him* to consider harmful the things useful to him. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 58)

That Adam sinned out of ignorance and because of Satan’s deception is a view shared also by other Church fathers, such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa: evil was not originally chosen *qua* evil, but because it was mistaken for good (see Ramelli 2013, 178). Indeed, Methodius seems here to embrace ethical intellectualism: the Ser-

pent “instigated” (παρώρησε)<sup>7</sup> and “persuaded” (πέισας; ἔπεισε)<sup>8</sup> man to disobey God’s order, leading him astray<sup>9</sup> and talking him into doing something that he subsequently did thinking it was good. The *topos* of Satan’s plot to harm man and of his jealousy and envy towards him is well attested in 5th-century Armenian literature, too (Stone 2013, 26-7). Yet, in this respect, Eznik’s translation of Methodius appears occasionally to emphasise man’s disobedience as an act of free will over the devil’s instigation: Satan “made (the man) want (or ‘choose’)” (յաւժարեցոյ)<sup>10</sup> to transgress God’s commandment, “gave (him) advice” (թելադրեալ),<sup>11</sup> and “emboldened” him (or “gave [him] the arrogance”) (ժտեցոյ) to do so.<sup>12</sup>

## 2 “If Man Had Received Such a Nature...”: Eznik I, 11 (§ 45) and the History of Its Textual-critical Interpretation

Eznik stresses man’s freedom of the will over Satan’s instigation also in § 45, where he argues that man learned evil and disobedience through the teaching of someone else (i.e. the devil), yet he was not forced to do it. Accordingly, when Methodius speaks of Satan as “the one who teaches evil [...] to man”, Eznik reworks his *Vorlage*, calling the devil “an instigator but not a constrainer”, and replacing Methodius’ original quotation of Jer 13:3 with another scriptural allusion to Gen 8:21, which he glosses “whoever is inclined (towards evil), is inclined willingly and not under someone else’s constraint”. If these amplifications are justified by the above-said attitude, the textual form of this passage in the Armenian version shows some peculiar readings com-

7 Ὅθεν καὶ εἰς τοῦτο παρώρησε τὸν ἄνθρωπον (reconstructed Greek text from the Slavice version; *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 803, l. 17).

8 Καὶ οὕτω πείσας βλάβην ποιήσειται τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ (reconstructed Greek text from the Slavice version; *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 805, l. 9); ἔπεισε τὸν ἄνθρωπον υπερῆναι τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ (reconstructed Greek text from the Slavice version, Vaillant 1930, 807, l. 2).

9 Methodius speaks of the man as τέχνας ὁ ποικίλας δράκοντος ἐκπεσών, “[the one] who has fallen *because of* the variform trickeries of the Serpent”, also in the final hymn in *Symp.*, XI (see Ramelli 2013, 272 [italics added]); see also *Meth. Res.* II, 1, where the devil is said to have “deceived [man] into disobeying”. However, one should not forget that a common view was that God does not allow man to be tempted beyond his strength; as a consequence, the responsibility for sin lays with the individual, not with Satan, and definitely not with God (see, for example, Origen, *Princ.*, III, 5-7).

10 Վասն որոյ] զմարդն յայն յաւժարեցոյ (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 47]; Minasean 1992, 1: 162, l. 504). Significantly, the only Greek equivalent given in the NHB for յաւժարեցոյնքանքն is προαίρεσμαι, which is connected with the idea of ‘free choice’ (προαίρεσις) (Awetikean et al. 1836, 2: 380).

11 Եւսա վնասակարսն թելադրեալ կարծեցուցանիցէ (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 47]; Minasean 1992, 1: 162, ll. 510-1).

12 Ժտեցոյ թշնամի զմարդն անցանել զհրամանաւն Աստուածոյ (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 47]; Minasean 1992, 1: 162, l. 523).

pared to its supposed Greek original. The text has a long history of attempted emendations and interpretations, the problem being particularly the meaning of the unreal conditional clause that (for the moment) could be translated “if man had received such a nature, then a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of (a) creature and by the divine books [i.e. Scripture]”. Some scholars postulate an omission in the transmitted text and argue for emending it,<sup>13</sup> while others, notwithstanding some apparent lack of perspicuity, leave it as it is.<sup>14</sup>

The whole passage reads as follows:

Οὐδὲ < γὰρ > ἀγένητον ταύτην τις εἰπεῖν ἔχει, τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὴν ὄντος γεννητοῦ. Πάντως δὲ πόθεν τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι ζητήσεις. Ἀλλὰ κείται σαφῶς ἐν τινι θείᾳ γραφῇ, ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγόνει φημί, κατὰ δὲ τὴν τινοῦ διδασκαλίαν τοῦτο πεπονθέναι λέγω· οὐδὲ γὰρ τοιαύτην < ἦν > φύσιν εἰληφώς ὁ ἄνθρωπος· εἰ γὰρ οὕτως εἶχεν, οὐκ ἂν αὐτῷ κατὰ διδασκαλίαν τοῦτο προσεγένετο, τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς οὕτως ἐχούσης. Λέγει δὲ τις θεία φωνὴ μεμαθηκέναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὰ πονηρὰ διδάσκεσθαι δ’ αὐτὸν φημί τὸ παρακοῦειν θεοῦ· τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ μόνον ἐστὶ τὸ κακόν, ὃ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ προαίρεσιν γίνεται. Οὐ γὰρ οὖν καθ’ ἑαυτὸν τὸ πονηρὸν ἄνθρωπος διδάσκεται. Ὁ διδάσκων τὸινυν [τὸ κακόν] ἐστὶν ὁ δράκων, [Ἰπρὸς αὐτοῦ θεοῦ γεγόνως· διδάσκει δὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπισχεῖν βουλόμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑψίστου (κρείττονος)]. (Meth., Aut., XVII; Vaillant 1930, 801, ll. 8-16; 803, ll. 1-4; reconstructed Greek text from the Slavic version in italics)

For no one can say that it [i.e. man’s disobedience] is without an origin, when its author had an origin. However, you will certainly ask whence this disobedience did arise; but this is clearly stated in the divine scripture, which is why I say that man has not been made by God as such, but I say that he has known it [i.e. disobedience] through the teaching of someone. Indeed, man had not received such a nature; for if this were the case, it would not have befallen him by teaching, because that very nature would have had control. A divine word says that man “has learned evil” [Jer 13:23]; I say that he has been taught to disobey God. For this alone is evil: what occurs in opposition to the wish of God. For man would not learn evil by itself. Therefore, he who teaches [evil] is the Serpent, created by that same God; it is he who teaches (evil) to man because he wants to prevent him from attaining the higher good.

Ուստի ոչ որ կարէ անարար ի[ն]չ եւ անձնաւոր գշարն ցուցանել եւ, դարձեալ, ոչ յարարչէն, այլ յանաստութենէ ղիպեալ ստունգանողին եւ յուրուր վարդապետութենէ ղրդեալ, զի ոչ եթէ այնպիսի ինչ հաստատեալ բնութեամբ գմարդն ցուցանել: Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ] եւ յաստուածեղէն Գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ղնծա[յ]անայր, որպէս սաւ ուրեր սաստուածական բարբառն, եթէ «Ի ման[կ]ութենէ մարդիկ ի ինամն չարի միտեալ են», զի ցուցցէ, թէ որ միտիւն, կամաւք միտի եւ ոչ ուրուր բռնութեամբ: Արդ, անաստութիւնն եւեթ, որ արտաքրոյ] մատուածոյ կամացն գործիցի, պատճառ չարեաց ինանայի է, եւ նմին՝ զայլ որ վարդապետ ծածուկ հաշ[ո]ւել, ղրդիչ եւ ոչ բռնադատիչ, որ գմարդն ի յաւութեանցն մերկանալ կամեցաւ: (Eznik, I, 11 (§ 45); Minasean 1992, 1: 162, ll. 477-88)

From this no one can show that evil is an uncreated and self-existent being, nor that (it came) from its author [i.e. man], but it befell the transgressor out of disobedience, and it was instigated by the teaching of someone, for (it cannot be) shown that man has been established as such by nature. If man had received such a nature, then a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of (a) creature and by the divine books, as the divine word says somewhere: “Mankind is inclined from childhood towards the solicitude of evil” [see Gen 8:21], which shows that whoever is inclined, is inclined willingly and not under someone else’s constraint. Now, only disobedience done outside the will of God should be taken as the cause of evils. And for this some other hidden teacher has been reckoned to be an instigator but not a constrictor, who willed to strip man of the good things.

<sup>13</sup> Galēmkearean 1919, 63-5; Mariès 1924, 104-12; Mariès, Mercier 1959a, 432-3; Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 708, endnotes 154-63; Abrahamyan 1970.

<sup>14</sup> Adonc’ 1926, 111-2; Minasean 1971, 175-9; Minasean 1992, 2: 69-71, endnotes on ll. 480-3.



A quick remark on my translation of the passage, before reviewing the history of its interpretation in modern scholarship. According to both Minasean's and Mariès' punctuation of the Armenian text,<sup>15</sup> one should consider յարարչէն and յանաստութենէ as two members of an adversative coordination: “From this no one can show that evil is an uncreated and self-existent being; moreover, it befell the transgressor not from the Creator but out of disobedience”. In that case, յարարչէն would be certainly referring to God, and this is how the clause is understood by Weber (1927) and Mariès (Mariès, Mercier 1959b). However, one could change the punctuation and consider յարարչէն as governed by ոչ որ կարէ [...] գչարն ցուցանել, which is what I do in my translation above.<sup>16</sup> In this case, too, յարարչէն could be evidently understood as referring to God.<sup>17</sup> Obviously, such a translation would fit perfectly both Eznik's views on the origin of evil (which does not originate from God) and his regular use of the term (as one might expect, there are several occurrences of արարիչ as referring to God in his work). However, τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτῆν ὄντος γεινητοῦ is unmistakably referring to man, as the whole point of this passage is to present disobedience/evil as something not innate in man but learned. It is therefore more practical to suppose that Eznik understood Methodius' text correctly. And, since Eznik has presented the disobedience of man as the cause of evil just few lines above, it makes better sense to assume that he is saying that evil and disobedience did not exist *ab origine* in their ‘doer’ or ‘author’ (i.e. man). For that matter, Eznik employs արարիչ as referring to man as ‘author’ of evil deeds elsewhere in his work.<sup>18</sup> If, as I think, this is the case also in this passage, punctuation should be changed as follows:

Ուստի ոչ որ կարէ անարար ինչ եւ անձնաւոր գչարն ցուցանել եւ, դարձեալ, ոչ յարարչէն. այլ յանաստութենէ դիպեալ ստունգանողին եւ յուրուք վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ.

**15** Mariès and Mercier's critical text reads as follows: Ուստի ոչ որ կարէ անարար ինչ եւ անձնաւոր գչարն ցուցանել. եւ դարձեալ ոչ յարարչէն, այլ յանաստութենէ դիպեալ ստունգանողին, եւ յուրուք վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ (Mariès, Mercier 1959a, 432 [§ 45]).

**16** See also Schmid 1900; Č'alyan 1968; Abrahamyan 1994; Orengo 1996; Zeilfelder 2004 (Blanchard and Young's translation of this clause is rather idiosyncratic, but it seems to me that they also understand it in this way).

**17** Which is what all other translations do; see Schmid 1900 and Zeilfelder 2004 [“Schöpfer”]; Č'alyan 1968 [“ճոր”]; Abrahamyan 1994 [“սասուց”]; Orengo 1996 [“Creator”]; Blanchard, Young 1998 (“creator”; with a small “c”, but clearly referred to God in the translation); Arevšatjan 2008 [“Создатель”].

**18** Ապա ուրեմն յիրաւի սահն մարդիկ արարիչք չարեաց (Eznik, I, 7 [§ 17]; Minasean 1992, 1: 158, l. 292; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, VIII); քանզի մասանց չարեաց գտանի մարդն արարիչ (Eznik, I, 9 [§ 34]; Minasean 1992, 1: 160, ll. 369-70; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XIII).

Galēmḳ'earean was the first to conjecture an omission in the transmitted text, which he restored “according to the original” (i.e. the Greek text) as follows:

Չի ոչ եթէ այնպիսի ինչ հաստատեալ բնութեամբ զմարդն ցուցանել *կարէ որ* : Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ *յուրը վարդապետտութենէ նմա դիպէր անաստութիւնն, այլ* ի բնութենէ արարածոյ : Եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր. որպէս ասէ ուրեք աստուածական բարբառն, եթէ «Ի մանկութենէ մարդիկ ի խնամս չարի միտեալ են». (Galēmḳ'earean 1919, 64 [Galēmḳ'earean's emendations in italics])

For no *one can* show that man has been established as such by nature. If man had received such a nature, then *disobedience would have befallen him not because of the teaching of someone, but because of (his) nature of creature. And* a teaching was given to him by the divine books, as the divine word says somewhere that “man-kind is inclined from childhood towards the solicitude of evil”.

The addition of *կարէ որ* seems necessary, as it supplies ցուցանել with a governing clause.<sup>19</sup> Galēmḳ'earean's emendation has the virtue of smoothing out some logical difficulties by considering ի բնութենէ արարածոյ as a complement governed by (ոչ) դիպէր and not by ընծայանայր; yet it creates an odd discontinuity with the sentence about the teaching given by the Bible, by interpreting it as a main independent clause and not as coordinated to the preceding unreal conditional clause.<sup>20</sup>

For this reason, Abrahamyan, while accepting Galēmḳ'earean's integration, disregards the changes he introduces as regards the punctuation, and suggests adding the negative ոչ before the verb ընծայանայր:

**19** In my translation above I read ցուցանելի է, which Minasean lists among the possible emendations to the text (Minasean 1992, 2: 69-70, endnote on l. 580).

**20** The emendation is accepted both by Schmid and Weber in their German translations, though the latter significantly changes the punctuation given by Galēmḳ'earean and interprets both ի բնութենէ արարածոյ and յաստուածեղէն գրոց as complements governed by ընծայանայր: “Wenn der Mensch eine solche Natur empfangen hätte, (so würde er nicht durch die Belehrung eines andern dem Ungehorsam verfallen sein), dann würde ihm auch nicht aus der Natur des Geschöpfes und aus der Heiligen Schrift die Belehrung zukommen. So sagt die Heilige Schrift an einem Orte, daß die Menschen von Jugend auf zu den Gedanken des Bösen geneigt sind” (Weber 1927, 46). Schmid follows Galēmḳ'earean's text more closely: “Wenn der Mensch eine solche Natur erhalten hätte, dann würde ihm nicht durch Jemandes Lehre der Ungehorsam zugestossen sein, sondern von der Natur des Geschöpfes, und es würde aus dem göttlichen Schriften die Lehre einfallen, wie an einer Stelle das göttliche Wort sagt: „Die Menschen sind von Kindheit an zur Ausübung des Bösen geneigt” (Schmid 1900, 46).

Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ յորևոր վարդապետութենէ նմա դիպէր անսաստութիւնն, այլ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ, եւ յաստոյածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ոչ ընծայանայր. (Abrahamyan 1970, 95 [Abrahamyan’s emendation in italics])<sup>21</sup>

If man had received such a nature, then disobedience would have befallen him not because of the teaching of someone, but because of (his own) nature of creature, and a teaching would *not* have been given to him by the divine books.

However, in both cases the emendation lacks its *raison d’être*, as the Armenian emended text does not really follow the original Greek: it does not translate what is supposedly missing in Armenian (which, as I will show below, is ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγενῆσθαι φημί; the rest of the Greek text is wholly represented – albeit sometimes idiosyncratically reworked – in the Armenian),<sup>22</sup> and basically rephrases the previous clause (յանսաստութենէ դիպեալ ստուգանդին եւ յորևոր վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ), eventually creating a doublet: οὐκ ἂν αὐτῷ κατὰ διδασκαλίαν τοῦτο προσεγένετο already has its Armenian correspondence in ոչ [...] նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր.

In his remarks on the passage, noting that Eznik gives a different biblical quotation from Methodius, Galémk’earean assumes that the Armenian author did not recognize the scriptural verse quoted in his *Vorlage* (Jer 13:23); therefore, he chose another one that he deemed fit for his argument (Gen 8:21), quoting it by heart according both to the Greek and the Syriac versions of the Bible, as ի խնամս չարի is found in the Greek (and Armenian) text, while the idea of ‘inclining towards evil’ (միտեալ են) is found in the Hebrew and Syriac versions (Galémk’earean 1919, 64 fn. 2). Galémk’earean probably thinks at (ἡ διάνοια [...]) ἐπιμελῶς ἐπὶ τὰ πονηρά as the Greek referent for ի խնամս չարի, and at ܘܥܘܠܘܬܐ [...] ܠܥܘܠܘܬܐ (“the ‘inclination’ [of man’s heart is] evil”) of the Peshitta as the Syriac source of միտեալ են. Whereas it is possible that Eznik knew this passage

**21** In his Eastern Armenian translation, Abrahamyan paraphrases as follows: Եթէ մարդն այնպիսի (չար) էություն ստացած լինէր, ապա նրա մէջ անհնազանդություն երևան կգար ոչ թէ մեկի հրահրումից, այլ (իր իսկ) արարածային էությունից, եւ Աստվածաշունչ գրքում էլ նրա վերաբերյալ այնպիսի ձեւակերպում չէր տրվի (Abrahamyan 1994, 37; see also 295-6).

**22** Διδάσκεισθαι δ’ αὐτόν φημι τὸ παρακοῦειν θεοῦ and οὐ γὰρ οὖν καθ’ ἑαυτὸν τὸ πονηρὸν ἄνθρωπος διδάσκειται are also missing in Armenian, but they come *after* the biblical quotation. For a criticism of Galémk’earean’s and Abrahamyan’s emendations as inconsistent with the views and language of Eznik (particularly as to the use of դիպեմ and the insertion of the negative ոչ), cf. Minasean 1971, 177-8.

both in Greek and in Syriac (and, obviously, in Armenian, while it seems unlikely that he knew it in Hebrew), it should be noted that ինսամ(ք) չարի could be regarded as a legitimate translation also of ܢܫܐ [...] ܠܥܝܘܒ.<sup>23</sup> I think that the textual form of Eznik’s quotation might depend more on some exegetical source than on a supposed mixed influence of the Greek Bible and the Peshitta. As a matter of fact, we find the same verse quoted as follows in the Armenian *Commentary on Genesis* attributed to Ephrem:

Կնճինն ամենայն մարդկան ի ինսամ չարի հաստատեալ է ի մանկութիւն իւրմէ. (Mathews 1998a, 66)

The knot of every man is fixed from his youth for the solicitude of evil. (Mathews 1998b, 62)

As noted by Mathews, the ‘knot’ in the Armenian text finds its explanation in a misreading of the original ܠܥܝܘܒ (‘inclination’) as ܠܥܝܘܒ, a participial form coming from ܥܝܘܒ, ‘to tie, to bind’ (Mathews 1998b, XXVI-XXVII). Therefore, there is actual evidence of the existence of a Syriac exegetical tradition known in Armenian that combined the ideas of ‘inclining towards evil’ and the ‘solicitude of evil’. However, the Ps.-Ephremean Armenian *Commentary on Genesis* does not pre-date the year 861 (Mathews 1998b, XLVI). Thus, if Eznik was familiar with this tradition, he must have known it from a different source. As it happens, a similar formulation – where a verb meaning ‘to be inclined towards’ is associated with the phrase ‘evil inclination’ (or simply ‘inclination’) – is found in Theodore of Mopsuestia’s second catechetical homily on Eucharist.<sup>24</sup>

It is common to (human) nature that it is [...] inclined (*netstle*) towards evil, as God said: “For the *yatsra* of the human being is busily set upon evil from his youth”. (Becker 2016, 198)

Significantly, such a disposition is said to have come about *after* the transgression of Adam (therefore, not from mankind’s birth) in another homily on Baptism by Theodore:<sup>25</sup>

And from the above sin death entered, and this death weakened [human] nature and generated in it a great inclination

<sup>23</sup> See Ciakciak 1837, 1: 677, where ինսամ is explained also as յաւժարութիւն, քերումն, մխոումն, and translated as “inclinazione, propensione”.

<sup>24</sup> *HC*, XVI, 8; Syriac text in Mingana 1933, 241.

<sup>25</sup> *HC*, XII, 8; Syriac text in Mingana 1933, 149.

(*metšalyanutha*) toward sin. (Becker 2016, 198)<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, Theodore links the inclination towards sin with man's "changeable nature" (McLeod 2005, 63),<sup>27</sup> an argument that Eznik uses to prove that Satan (and therefore evil) is not uncreated (Eznik, I, 13 [§ 51]). Some interesting considerations on the '(evil) inclination' as not being innate in man's nature are also found in Narsai's homilies for Lent, where parallels can be found also with the idea expressed by Eznik of man controlling such a disposition by means of his will:

Your *yatsra* is not bound in nature, like silent [entities] (i.e. beings without *meltha*, "word," "reason"). (Becker 2016, 190; Syriac text in Mingana 1905, 205)

My mind caused me to repent when I remembered | that your evil is not in [your] nature [...]

Nor also does our *yatsra* exist | substantially (*qnoma'it*) apart from the soul.

It is the discernment in the soul | that takes effect in its various forms.

The soul is the mistress of the human being, | which rules over the faculties and the senses,

And it guides nature | according to how its own will wants. (Becker 2016, 193; Syriac text in Mingana 1905, 236)

These similarities should not come as a surprise, since, as Gignoux has shown, Narsai and Eznik share some common views and exegetical traditions (1968, 502-9). In this case, too, as Narsai's dependence upon Theodore's ideas could be assumed also for his use of *ܡܝܬܐ* (Becker 2016, 193), these parallels could offer further evidence of the presence of the Antiochene exegetical tradition in Eznik's work, while at the same time shedding some light on the textual form of the scriptural quotation in the passage in question.

Commenting upon Galēm̄k'earean's conjecture, Mariès argues that the difficulty of the Armenian text originates from Eznik misreading *τοῦτο πεπονθῆναι λέγω* as an objection risen by the Heterodox in Methodius' dialogue, and not as the words of the Orthodox: "I say that he [i.e. the man] took it [i.e. evil/disobedience] passively", meaning that man was somewhat forced to do evil and disobey.

<sup>26</sup> Mortality is said to have made mankind inclined to sin also in Theodore's *Commentary to Romans*, where he argues that lust and greed would not have place in an immortal nature (Theod. Mops., in *Rom.*, V, 18-9.21).

<sup>27</sup> *HC*, I, 6; English translation in Mingana 1932, 21; Syriac text, 121.

Ce contresens et cette méprise une fois faits, il [Eznik] n’a plus saisi le sens exact des lignes suivantes, jusqu’à ... τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὰ ποιηρά, qu’il attribuait aussi à l’adversaire, ni la portée du texte de Jérémie allégué là. Il s’est alors cru obligé de réfuter pour son compte cette objection et il a forgé une réponse en recourant à un autre texte de l’Écriture : *Genèse*, VIII, 21. (Mariès 1924, 111-2)

In his tentative solution, Mariès emends the text to read  $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\epsilon\tau\omega\delta\iota\rho$  (‘by constraint’) and  $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\eta\iota\acute{\nu}$  (‘constraint’) instead of  $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\epsilon\tau\omega\delta\iota\rho$  (‘by nature’) and  $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\eta\iota\acute{\nu}$  (‘nature’), giving the following translation:

Car personne ne peut montrer que l’homme ait été constitué chose telle [*i.e.* : mauvais] ‘*par violence*’. Si l’homme avait subi quelque ‘*violence*’ de cette sorte [qui l’eût rendu mauvais] ce ne serait donc pas en vertu de (sa) nature créée [qu’il serait devenu mauvais], et un enseignement lui aurait été fourni (à ce sujet) par les divines Écritures, comme (de fait) la Parole divine dit quelque part [mais en donnant là un enseignement tout différent] que : « les hommes sont inclinés à faire le mal dès leur enfance ». (Mariès 1924, 109)

This emendation, though it is palaeographically tenable, has two fundamental shortcomings in terms of textual criticism and logic respectively: 1) it disregards the Greek text, which reads  $\phi\acute{o}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , to which  $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\eta\iota\acute{\nu}$  corresponds, and not  $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\eta\iota\acute{\nu}$ ; 2) Mariès correctly constructs the sentence as an unreal conditional clause (“if man had been forced”, meaning that he actually *had not* been forced, following Eznik’s argument), but this does not explain why, in the case man had actually been forced by some external ‘violence’, he would have needed a teaching from the Bible.<sup>28</sup>

I think that the mention of the “teaching from the divine books” as useless or unnecessary if man had innately known evil and disobedience must be understood here as a theological use of the Carneadean moral argument against astrological fatalism. According to this argument, “astrology denies freedom of the will, overthrows all systems of morality and justice, nullifies religious worship and renders prayer useless” (Hegedus 2007, 113).<sup>29</sup> As one would expect, Eznik resorts to the ‘classic’ Carneadean argument in his refutation of Chaldean astrology (Eznik, II, 15 [§ 229]); but it is significant that he employs it for the first time in his work precisely when he argues that evils depend on man’s will, a few paragraphs below the passage under scrutiny, when he ceases to follow the text of Methodius’ *De Autexusio* as his source (Eznik, I, 15 [§§ 58-9]). Replacing the original Carneadean

<sup>28</sup> For a criticism of Mariès’ conjecture, see also Adonc’ 1926, 111-2.

<sup>29</sup> Of the rather vast literature on the subject, still fundamental is Amand [1945] 1973.

‘fate’ with ‘natural evil’, Eznik uses the aforementioned argument both in its traditional formulation and in a reverse one, first maintaining the uselessness of laws and judgments if evil was innate in man’s nature, then concluding that, since kings and judges *do* command the punishment of those who break the law, all evils are intentional and result from a free choice:

If they [i.e. evils] are such by nature, why were laws laid down by kings, and commandments by princes, and punishments by judges? Is it not for cutting short evils? If evils are such by nature, it would not be necessary for the lawgiver to give laws, nor for the prince to impose punishments upon the evildoer. [...] Indeed, if we see that the king exacts vengeance for his laws, and deters injuries by requirement for vengeance, and the judge binds and tortures the thief and the highwayman [...] then it is clear that evils which are committed are spontaneous and not innate. ((Eznik, I, 15 [§§ 58-59]; Blanchard, Young 1998, 66-7)

The same argument is already made *in nuce* right before the passage analysed here:

Because if he had come into existence among the other beings who serve God by necessity, then he would have been unworthy to receive any reward for freedom; but if like an instrument of the Creator [...], then neither blame nor praise would be due him. [...] Because this is fair, when the worthy man receives in accordance with the deeds he has done. (Eznik, I, 11 [§ 44]; Blanchard, Young 1998, 55-6; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVI; Vaillant 1930, 797.799.801)

Therefore, by saying that man would not have needed the teaching of the Bible if evil and disobedience had been innate in him, Eznik joins in a long tradition of Christian writers that engage in the anti-fatalistic polemic, drawing the theological conclusions of the philosophical Carneadean argument.<sup>30</sup>

Eventually, Mariès partially rejected his own conjecture, leaving բնութեամբ and բնութիւն unemended, and surmising an omis-

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**30** See, for example, *Phil.* XXIII, 1, where Origen argues that astrological fatalism entails “la suppression radicale de notre liberté, donc également de la louange et du blâme, ainsi que des activités louables ou répréhensibles. S’il en est ainsi, c’en est fait du jugement divin qui a été annoncé, des menaces adressées aux pécheurs pour leur apprendre leur châtement [...]. Rien de tout cela n’aura encore raison d’être. [...] La foi deviendra vaine [...] comme toute l’économie de la loi et des prophètes” (Junod 1976, 133-5). On the major role played by Origen in giving a theological meaning to the traditional Carneadean moral argument, see Amand [1945] 1973, 318-25 (but cf. Hegedus 2007, 116, for a brief reassessment of Amand’s view).

sion resulting from a *saut de même à même* (ցուցանել  $\cap$  ցուցանել), which he reintegrated in the text a few words before the insertion of Galémk‘earean:<sup>31</sup>

Չի ոչ եթե այնպիսի ինչ հաստատեալ բնութեամբ զմարդն ցուցանել < այլ զի մարդն՝ ըստ ուրուք վարդապետութեան, եւ ոչ բոնութեամբ, ստունգաւող եղև՝ կարև որ ցուցանել >: Եթե այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր. որպէս սսէ ուրեք աստուածական բարբառն, եթե ի մանկութենէ մարդիկ ի խնամս չարի միտեալ են. (Mariès, Mercier 1959a, 432 [§ 45])

Car, point ne peut-on montrer que tel en quelque sorte l’homme ait été créé par nature; < mais, que c’est en suivant, de quelqu’un, endoctrinement, et point par contrainte, qu’indocile est devenu l’homme, on peut le montrer >. Si, quelque nature de cette sorte, l’homme avait reçue, conséquemment, point ne lui eût été, de par nature de créature et de par divines écritures, doctrine offerte ; comme dit quelque part la divine parole : « Dès l’enfance les hommes à s’occuper du mal sont enclins ». (Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 566-7 [§ 45])

However, again, the Greek text does not support the emendation, which, like Galémk‘earean’s integration, creates a doublet in the Armenian version compared to its supposed Greek *Vorlage*. Furthermore, the addition of եւ ոչ բոնութեամբ is totally uncalled for. The fact that few lines below Eznik describes man’s inclination towards evil as ‘willing’ (կամաւք) and unforced (stressing twice that man is not constrained to do evil – ոչ ուրուք բոնութեամբ; ոչ բոնադասիչ – whereas this specification is lacking in Methodius), does not legitimate speculating that “dans la partie omise, on aurait eu une première fois mention de cette contrainte” (Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 708, endnote 160). Moreover, the unreal conditional clause does not gain in perspicuity as far as ի բնութենէ արարածոյ is concerned.

In his edition, Minasean does not accept Mariès’ conjecture, yet he suggests in a note two possible emendations to the unreal conditional clause, both more economical in terms of textual criticism than those proposed by Galémk‘earean and Mariès. The first one assumes an omission in the transmitted text after արարածոյ:

Եթե այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ [վիղխէր], եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա

31 Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 708, endnotes 154-63.



վարդապետութիւն (նշ) ընծայանայր. (Minasean 1992, 2: 70, endnote on ll. 481-2)

If man had received such a nature of creature, then [he would not have changed] (his own) nature of creature, and a teaching would (not) have been given to him by the divine books.

In proposing this emendation, Minasean might have in mind another passage in Eznik’s work where the same argument is employed (though he does not quote it). In arguing that Satan is not uncreated, Eznik maintains that, since he is called a ‘rebel’ in the Bible, this means that he changed his own nature; this would show that he is a created being, for

Երթև անարար էր, ապա ոչ յիւրմէ բնութենէն փոխէր. (Eznik, I, 13 [§ 51]; Minasean 1992, 1: 164, ll. 593-4; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XIX; Vailant 1930, 815, ll. 15-6)

if he were uncreated, then he would not change his own nature. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 63)<sup>32</sup>

So, man too would not have changed his own nature, if God had made him prone to evil. But since the Bible *does* include a ‘teaching’ which says that “mankind is inclined from childhood [not from birth!] towards the solicitude of evil”, it would follow that man was not created as such and can change (or ‘rebel against’) his own nature (Minasean 1992, 2: 70, endnote on ll. 481-2).

It is tempting here to quote a passage from Methodius’ *Symposium*, where a similar argument is made on the impossibility of changing one’s nature: while arguing against astrological fatalism, Methodius says that if wicked persons were wicked by fate, they were not to be held responsible of their actions before the law,

ζῶντες κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν, ἐπεὶ μὴ δεδύνηται μεταβληθῆναι. (Meth., *Symp.*, VIII, 16; Musurillo, Debidour 1963, 256 [§ 228])

since they live according to their own nature, for they could not be changed.

However, there is no evidence that Eznik knew Methodius’ *Symposium*, even if they both resort to the moral argument in refuting as-

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**32** Note that here փոխէր translates ἀφίστημι, which, in this case, means ‘to rebel (against)’.

trological fatalism.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, even though Minasean’s emendation gives a sense to the passage that fits Eznik’s reasoning, it too disregards the Greek text of the *De Autexusio*, where no mention is made of a ‘change’ in man’s nature.

In his second conjecture, Minasean surmises a transposition of some words in the text, and emends the passage as follows:

Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր [] ի բնութենէ արարածոյ, [սպա եւ ոչ] յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր. (Minasean 1992, 2: 70, end-note on ll. 481-2)

If man had received such a nature by (his own) nature of creature, [then] a teaching would [not] have been given to him by the divine books.

Moving the conclusive conjunction *սպա* and the negative *ոչ* further in the text before the second agent complement *յաստուածեղէն գրոց*, helps clarifying the sense of the passage: if man had known evil and disobedience by nature because he had been created as such, then no teaching would have been given to him by the Bible about him being prone to evil from his childhood (and therefore not from his birth). Moreover, this is the only conjecture among those reviewed up to this point that does not require assuming a radical reworking of the original Greek: *ի բնութենէ արարածոյ* could well be an idiosyncratic translation of the genitive absolute *τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς οὕτως ἐχούσης*, which Eznik does not translate *verbatim* either because he does not understand correctly the Greek clause or because the underlying text is corrupted (note that no mention of any ‘creature’ is made in the Greek text).

However, in my opinion, the supposed transposition has no easy mechanical explanation, and I find it difficult to posit that such a change – which actually made the transmitted text more difficult to understand rather than facilitating its comprehension – could have been intentional. Therefore, I think that *սպա ոչ ի բնութենէ* is the original reading. If something has dropped from the text, it has to be reintegrated elsewhere.

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**33** The moral argument was a traditional one in Christian anti-astrological polemic and can be found in many other authors such as Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, Diodore of Tarsus, Nemesius of Emesa, all of whom could have been used as sources by Eznik; on this and, more in general, on Eznik’s refutation of astrological fatalism, see Lucca (forthcoming).

### 3 Two Hypothetical Readings

We all are *nani gigantum humeris insidentes*. As Mariès first surmised, my hypothesis – provided that the Armenian text has not been permanently corrupted – is that Eznik could indeed have misread part of the Greek text not as the words of the Orthodox but rather as an objection of the Heterodox. However, whereas Mariès conjectures that this happens from κατὰ δὲ τὴν τινος διδασκαλίαν τοῦτο πεπορθέναι λέγω το μεμαθηκέναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὰ πονηρά, I think that the misread passage is shorter, and is found previously in the text. As I have said above, the only part of the Greek text that is completely missing from the Armenian is ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι φημί. In adapting the dialogic form of his Greek *Vorlage*, Eznik reworks the rhetorical line addressed to the Heterodox by the Orthodox (πάντως δὲ πόθεν τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι ζητήσεις), answering to it by concocting the following clause: ալլ յանսաստուրեմէ զհպտալ ստունգաւննիհն. Note that, where in the beginning of the given passage Methodius speaks of παρεκοή, ‘disobedience’, Eznik has չար, ‘evil’. Which is why, in reworking the rhetorical comment of the Orthodox, he can say that “it [i.e. evil] befell the transgressor out of disobedience (τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι)”, thus linking the earlier remark to the previous assertion that evil is not an uncreated, self-existent being. Eznik might have regarded the words that in the Greek text follow the comment of the Orthodox (ἀλλὰ κείται σαφῶς ἐν τινι θείᾳ γραφῇ, ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι φημί) as the reply of the Heterodox, perhaps misreading οὐδέ in the second clause as οὖν δέ (or, he could have been working on a manuscript that already carried that reading), thus interpreting it as an affirmative instead of a negative clause. The Heterodox would have replied: “But this is clearly stated in the divine scripture, which, therefore (οὖν δέ), is why I say that man *had been made* by God as such!”. Significantly, Eznik does not translate the clause governed by ὅθεν.<sup>34</sup> At that point,

**34** Or is it this clause that Eznik reworks and translates with զարձեալ, զ յարարչէն a few lines before in the text? If this would be the case, then τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὴν ὄντος γεννητοῦ would be missing in the Armenian text (and յարարչէն would be obviously referring to God and not to man, contrary to what I have previously said). However, I found this unlikely, and less economical: it implies that Eznik omitted to translate τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὴν ὄντος γεννητοῦ, went on translating πάντως δὲ πόθεν τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι ζητήσεις (ալլ յանսաստուրեմէ զհպտալ ստունգաւննիհն), and then reworked ἀλλὰ κείται σαφῶς ἐν τινι θείᾳ γραφῇ, ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι φημί by transposing the first clause *further on* in the text (յաստուածեղէն գրոց), and the second clause *further back* (զարձեալ, զ յարարչէն). My hypothesis would spare this double (reverse) transposition in comparison with the Greek text: it surmises an omission (ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι φημί) and *one* transposition *further on* in the text (ἀλλὰ κείται σαφῶς ἐν τινι θείᾳ γραφῇ / յաստուածեղէն գրոց).

the Orthodox would have answered: “But (δέ) I say that he knew it [i.e. disobedience] through the teaching of someone”,<sup>35</sup> which Eznik translates as ոչ [...] յուրուք վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ, relating it directly to what he may have read as the last words of the Orthodox before the assumed reply of the Heterodox: πάντως δὲ πόθεν τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι ζητήσεις, so that in Armenian we have:

Այլ յանաստութենէ դիպեալ ստունգանողին եւ ուրուք վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ.

But it [i.e. evil] befell the transgressor out of disobedience, and it was instigated by the teaching of someone.

Then, after translating – albeit not *verbatim* – the two clauses that follow in the Greek text (οὐδὲ γὰρ τοιαύτην ἦν φύσις εἰληφῶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος and εἰ γὰρ οὕτως εἶχεν) with զի ոչ եթէ այնպիսի ինչ հաստատեալ բնութեամբ գմարդն ցուցանելի and եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, Eznik formulates a counter-objection to the untranslated objection of the Heterodox, conflating the mention of the “divine scripture” that he attributed to him (ἀλλὰ κεῖται σαφῶς ἔν τινι θεία γραφή) with the apodosis governed by εἰ γὰρ οὕτως εἶχεν, and changing the genitive absolute of the Greek (perhaps because he misunderstood it or could not grasp its meaning) into an agent complement:

Ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր

Then a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of (a) creature and by the divine books.

As for the mention of the divine books, what has been said above holds here too: had man known evil and disobedience by nature, then the Bible would have been useless (the theological consequence of the Carneadean moral argument); in particular, the biblical quotation that follows in the text would have been false (which, in Eznik’s line of reasoning, is obviously impossible). This brings us to ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ [...] նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր (“a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of [a] creature”), and to what it could mean here, considering that its protasis

**35** The misunderstanding could have been facilitated by the fact that in the Greek text both clauses contain a *verbum dicendi* – φημί and λέγω respectively –, which Eznik could have read as coordinated in an adversative fashion by the particle δέ, thus interpreting the sentence as an exchange between the Orthodox and the Heterodox: “I [i.e. the Heterodox] say that...”, “But I [i.e. the Orthodox] say that...”.

reads եթե այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր (“if man had received such a nature”).

I think that two solutions can be proposed: one that reads *արարածոյ* (in the genitive singular form, as all the editions of Eznik’s text have), and one that reads *արարածոց* (in the plural genitive form). The reading carried by the one extant manuscript is *արարածո*, which finds its explanation in the fact that final -յ is usually silent in both (post-)classical and modern Armenian (Godel 1975, 24; Vaux 1998, 20). Since յ and ց are often confounded in uncial Armenian script (*erkat’agir*), and mechanical corruptions of ց to յ are also commonly found in Armenian manuscripts, the reading *արարածո* can result from an original *արարածոյ* (*արարածոյ* > *արարածո*) or *արարածոց* read as *արարածոյ*, without necessarily being first copied as such (*արարածոց* [> *արարածոյ*] > *արարածո*). Therefore, both conjectures are equally palaeographically tenable, and both readings can be explained as mechanical errors. Moreover, as here Eznik expands and reworks his *Vorlage*, where no mention of any ‘creature’ is made, the interpretation of the Armenian text (whether one chooses to read *արարածոյ* or *արարածոց*) can also rest on internal, contextual analysis: provided that Eznik added the mention of the ‘creature/creatures’, *what* did he mean to say by that, and how does what *he* is saying relate to his Greek original?

I start by expounding the hypothesis that assumes *արարածոց* as the original reading, which I deem less probable (but still tenable). In this case, the Armenian text would read:

Եթե այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա  
նչ ի բնութենէ արարածոց եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա  
վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր.

Such a reading has been already conjectured – yet not (as far as I know) argued for – by Norayr Biwzandac’i in his notes on the text of Eznik (*non vidi*, but see Minasean 1992, 2: 70, endnote on ll. 481-2).<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, Eznik connects the nature of ‘creatures’ (*արարածոց*, in the plural genitive form) with the ‘divine books’ in two other passages of his work, where he says that both the Bible and the nature of creatures witness to the resurrection of the dead and to the existence of only three kinds of rational creatures – angels, demons, and man:

Եւ այսու յայտ առնեն, թե գյարութիւնն իսմ մարմն[յ] իսպիանել  
կամին, ուր աստուածական Գիրք եւ արարածոց բնութիւնք

<sup>36</sup> A reading *արարածոց* is supposed also by Č’aloyan in his Russian translation: Но если бы человек возымел такую природу, то это было бы не от природы сотворенных <существе> (1968, 53 [italics added]).

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անդադար վկա[յ]են գյարութենն մեռելոց: (Eznik, I, 18 [§ 79];  
(Minasean 1992, 1: 168, ll. 828-30)

And they show by this that they want to obstruct the resurrection of the body, whereas the *divine books* and the *nature* of creatures bear unceasing witness to the resurrection of the dead. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 75)

Զի չիք ինչ արարած բանաւոր արտաքս քան զայս երիս ջոկս՝  
զհրէշտակաց, զդիւաց եւ զմարդկան, յամենայն աստուածատուր  
Քրոց եւ ի բնութենն արարածոց յայտնի է: (Eznik, I, 24 [§ 122];  
(Minasean 1992, 1: 174, ll. 1129-31)

That no rational creature exists outside of these three, distinct ones: angels, demons, and man, is evident from all of *the divine books* and from the nature of creatures. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 91)

Therefore, one could understand in the same way also the passage analysed here: both the whole Creation and the Bible witness that man was not created innately evil and disobedient. And, turning this argument in an unreal conditional clause that rests on the opposite condition:

If man had received such a nature, a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of creatures and by the divine books.

But, following Eznik’s reasoning, the Scripture *does* say the opposite (“mankind is inclined from childhood [not from birth] towards the solicitude of evil”), and the same does the nature of creatures, for no animal or vegetable or atmospheric condition is innately evil or harmful to man, as Eznik himself argues further on in his text (Eznik, I, 15-16 [§§ 63-71]). True is that, if this is the case, Eznik would be anticipating here an argument that he would illustrate only later; nevertheless, the fact that twice elsewhere in his work he calls upon Scripture *and* Creation as witnesses against his adversaries, could be a point in favour of this reading.

If such an emendation is consistent with Eznik’s reasoning, the second hypothesis (արարածն < արարածոյ), which I regard as more likely, has the benefit of being more faithful to the general sense of the Greek. But first, supposing that արարածոյ is the original reading, one should ask *whose* nature Eznik had in mind, and *which* creature he was thinking of. Consistently with his emendation, Abra-

hamyan assumes that ի բնութենէ արարածոյ is referring to man.<sup>37</sup> Although he does not accept Galēm k’earean’s (and, consequently, Abrahamyan’s) emendation, Minasean thinks the same, even if he acknowledges the inherent imperspicuity of the text.<sup>38</sup> Mariès too shares this view, at least in his article of 1924,<sup>39</sup> whereas his French translation of 1959 is too literal to draw such a conclusion, and he does not comment upon the possible referent of the word in the end-notes.<sup>40</sup> Still, I think that Eznik is speaking here of someone else’s nature. As one of the arguments found in the passage is that man has come to know evil and disobedience through the teaching of someone else (κατὰ δὲ τὴν τινοῦ διδασκαλίαν / յորորոյ վարդապետութենէ), the creature whose nature actually gave a ‘teaching’ to man could be the one who, both in Methodius and Eznik, is referred to as ‘the teacher of evil’, i.e. Satan. Therefore, the meaning of the unreal conditional clause would be: had man known evil and disobedience by nature (i.e. in an innate way), he would not have needed to learn them from Satan, and the teaching of the Bible would have been useless/unnecessary. However, for the conditional clause to have such a meaning,

**37** Abrahamyan gives a translation of the passage in question where it is clear that he considers ի բնութենէ արարածոյ as referring to man’s own nature: Եթէ մարդն այդպիսի չար էութիւն ստացած լինէր [...], ապա անհնազանդութիւնը նրա մեջ երևան կգար ոչ թէ մեկի հրահրումից, այլ (իր իսկ) արարածային էութիւնից (Abrahamyan 1970, 96 [italics added]; see also Abrahamyan 1994, 37); the same translation (от его природной сущности) is found in Arevšatjan 2008.

**38** Եթէ մարդն ստացած լինէր այնպիսի [...] բնութիւն, ապա նրա արարածային բնութիւնից եւ աստուծային Գրքից բխող վարդապետութիւն կամ ուսուցում չէր ընծայուի կամ արուի նրան (Minasean 1971, 177 [italics added]); nevertheless, in his edition of the text, Minasean admits: “Անհասկանալի է, թէ ինչպէ՛ս մարդուն վարդապետութիւն է ընծայուում իր արարածային բնութիւնից” (Minasean 1992, 2: 70, endnote on ll. 481-2 [italics added]). Orenego, who follows Minasean’s critical edition, translates արարածոյ by preceding it with the indefinite article: “Se l’uomo avesse avuto una tal natura, non gli sarebbe stato offerto alcun insegnamento *dalla natura di una creatura* o dai libri divini” (Orenego 1996, 47 [italics added]); whereas he does not comment upon his translation choice, I would say that he does not regard ի բնութենէ արարածոյ as referring to man’s own nature.

**39** “Ce ne serait donc pas *en vertu de (sa) nature créé* [qu’il serait devenu mauvais], et un enseignement lui aurait été fourni (à ce sujet) par les divines Écriture” (Mariès 1924, 109 [italics added]).

**40** “Si, quelque nature de cette sorte, l’homme avait reçue, conséquemment, point ne lui eût été, *de par nature de créature* et de par divines écritures, doctrine offerte” (Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 566-7 [§ 45] [italics added]). Zeifelder, who translates Eznik in German according to Mariès’ edition, precedes her translation of արարածոյ with the definite article: “Wenn der Mensch eine solche Natur erhalten hätte, dann wäre ihm nicht durch die Natur *der Kreatur* und aus den göttlichen Schriften die Unterweisung gegeben” (Zeifelder 2004, 61 [italics added]); she too does not comment upon her translation choice, and it is unclear whether she understands “die Natur der Kreatur” as referring to man. Blanchard and Young, though they too follow Mariès’ critical text, elude the difficulty by *not translating* ի բնութենէ արարածոյ: “If man had received such a nature, then that teaching of the divine Scripture would not have been given to him” (Blanchard, Young 1998, 57); significantly, they do not signal the omission.

an omission should be conjectured. As already noted, the ‘teacher’ in question has already been referred to as ‘someone (else)’ in both the Greek and the Armenian text. Now, the genitive form of the Armenian indefinite pronoun/adjective for ‘someone, some other’ is *նորուք*, which, in the sequence *նորուք արարածոյ*, could have been unintentionally omitted by haplography due to *homoeogrammaton*, as *ն* and *ւ* can be very similar in minuscule Armenian script (*bolorgir*).<sup>41</sup> A scribe would have skipped from *նորուք* (visually perceived as *արար*, or maybe *արար*) directly to *արարածոյ*. Therefore, one can conjecture an original text that read as follows:

Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ նորուք արարածոյ եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր.<sup>42</sup>

If man had received such a nature, a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of some other creature [i.e. the devil] and by the divine books.<sup>43</sup>

This second hypothesis has the strong advantage of being mechanically explainable in terms of textual criticism as well as conveying the same (general) meaning of its Greek original, which is why I consider it as the most likely of the two. Even if Eznik did not understand the genitive absolute clause of his *Vorlage*, he nevertheless made sense of it by fashioning a clause that fitted the subject matter of the whole passage: evil and disobedience are not innate in man but (willingly) learned through the teaching of ‘someone else’ – a cunning վարդապետ ծածուկ, as Eznik would put it, who, ironically, if

<sup>41</sup> When used as an adjective, *նք* is usually postponed to the noun, yet sometimes it can be found placed *before* its referent (Minassian 1996, 370-1), as it would be in this way here if my emendation is correct. As it happens, Eznik uses *նք* precisely in this way in another passage of his work: եւ եթէ գազանք վասն վնասակարութեան ի չարէ *նւնքէ արարչէ կարծիցին* (Eznik, II, 11 [§ 201]; (Minasean 1992, 1: 183, 1702-3 [italics added]).

<sup>42</sup> Alternatively, an omission of *այոյ* (instead of *նորուք*) or *այոյ նորուք* could be surmised. But, while the meaning of the clause would remain roughly the same, I think that both cases are less palaeographically tenable.

<sup>43</sup> According to Adonc<sup>4</sup>, though this is the meaning to be given to the Greek original (այն ժամանակ սաստանայի վարդապետութեան պէտք չէր լինի, քանի որ մարդու բնութիւնը չար է կամ չար է ստեղծուած), Eznik has ի բնութենէ արարածոյ because he fails to understand the genitive absolute clause (τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς οὕτως ἐχούσης), as he cannot make sense of διδασκαλία / վարդապետութիւն as referring both to the devil *and* the Bible (Adonc<sup>4</sup> 1926, 111). Abrahamyan argues that վարդապետութիւն as referring to the devil should be given the meaning of ‘incitation, instigation’ (Abrahamyan 1970, 95). Accordingly, he translates it as *հրահրում* (see also Abrahamyan 1994, 37); however, even if վարդապետութիւն had been ‘polysemic’ in classical Armenian, as Abrahamyan claims (but cf. Minasean 1971, 177, for criticism), here it simply translates διδασκαλία of the Greek.



my conjecture is true, would have found a shrewd way to make himself ‘hidden’ also in the transmitted text.

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# A Little-Known *Dah-nāma*: 'Aishī's *'Ishrat-nāma*

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**Abstract** The present article offers an edition of the single known manuscript of 'Aishī Shīrāzī's *'Ishrat-nāma* in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Suppl. Persan 1142 (nr. 1642 in the catalogue of Blochet), a poem belonging to the *mathnawī* genre *dah-nāma*. In this genre, the evolution of the relationship of two lovers up to their union is described through their exchange of ten letters or, as is also the case here, ten verbal messages. It is argued that it was written between 874/1470 and 882/1478, namely, at the time of Aq-Quyūnlū Khalīl b. Uzun Ḥasan, during his governorship of Fārs, some seventy years later than Blochet's estimate. This is the first of two articles about this poem. The second article, in which the messengers – ten different musical instruments who convey the messages between the lovers – shall be discussed, will be published in the next issue.

**Keywords** 'Aishī Shīrāzī. 'Ishrat-nāma. Dah-nāma. 'Ināyat-Allāh Beg. Khalīl b. Uzun Ḥasan. Aq-Quyūnlū. Shiraz.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Dedicattee and Date of the Poem. – 3 The Poet 'Aishī Shīrāzī.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2018-02-05
Accepted	2018-04-17
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Beelaert, Anna Livia (2019). "A Little-Known *Dah-nāma*: 'Aishī's *'Ishrat-nāma*". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 199-226.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/007

## 1 Introduction

I offer here the first edition from the single manuscript<sup>1</sup> that seems to have survived of 'Aishī's *Ishrat-nāma* (Book of enjoyment [or pleasure]),<sup>2</sup> a poem of more than five hundred verses belonging to the *mathnawī* genre *dah-nāma*, lit. ten letters,<sup>3</sup> which exists in both Persian and Turkish from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In this genre the evolution of the relationship of two lovers up to their union is described through the exchange of ten letters or, as also the case here, ten verbal messages.<sup>4</sup> In Persian literary histories and in most studies that describe the *dah-nāma* genre, no mention at all is made of the *Ishrat-nāma*, and a couple of times it is only briefly listed.<sup>5</sup> Gandjei, in an article from 1971, is the only one who gave a some-

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\* A first version of this article was delivered as a lecture on November 18, 2016, at a Leiden University symposium in honour of Jan Schmidt, on the occasion of his leave-taking. The bibliography has been brought up to date as of December 2017. I would like to express my thanks to Peri Bearman (Harvard) who found and copied for me in Harvard's Widener Library secondary literature that would otherwise have been unavailable to me, and to four scholars who read a draft and made many useful comments: Paola Orsatti (Rome), Geert Jan van Gelder (Oxford), Eckhard Neubauer (Frankfurt), whose valuable suggestions concerned musicology, and Daniela Meneghini (Venice).

1 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Suppl. Persan 1142, Blochet, *Catalogue*, 3 [1928]: 247, nr. 1642. The poem is not mentioned in the extensive *catalogi catalogorum* by Munzawī, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā*, vol. 4; Dirāyatī, *Fihristwāra (Dinā)*; Dirāyatī, *Fihristagān-i nuskhahā (Fankhā)*.

2 A pun is intended with this title – given with 'Aishī's name in v. 91 – for if vocalized '*asharat-nāma* (although not possible here for metrical reasons), it is a synonym of *dah-nāma*.

3 Schimmel translates it more generally as a "ten[part] book" (*A Two-Colored Brocade*, 259), which is an apt translation for texts thus entitled that do not consist of love letters.

4 A number of studies on this genre exist; in chronological order: Syed Hasan, "Dah-namehs in Persian" (1963); Gandjei, "The Genesis and Definition of a Literary Composition" (1971); 'Aiważī, "Dah-nāma-gū'i dar adab-i pārsī" (1354/1976); Burhān Āzād, "Mahabbat-nāmahā yā dah-nāmahā" (2535/1976); 'Abbāsīya Kuhan, "Dah-nāma-sarā'i dar adab-i pārsī" (1372/1993); Khān Muḥammadī, "Dah-nāma-sarā'i" (1378/1999); Bāqirī, "Dah-nāma-niwīsī" (1380/2001); Furṣatī Jūibārī, "Dah-nāma-sarā'i" (1387/2008); Āryān-sirisht, "Radpāyī az maktab-i 'wā-sūkh't' dar dah-nāmahā-yi sabk-i 'Irāqī" (1389/2010); Khurāsānī, "Maṭāla'a-yi sākh'tārī-taṭbīqī-yi dah-nāmahā", 1389/2010; Khurāsānī and Dāwudī Muqaddam, "Taḥlīl-i dah-nāmahā", 1390/2011. None of the Persian studies mentions either Syed Hasan or Gandjei while Khurāsānī and Dāwudī Muqaddam (11) regard 'Aiważī's as the first study. The latter refer to Furṣatī Jūibārī's doctoral thesis at the Islamic Āzād University in Tehran (1387/2008), which was not available to me; the author summarises its findings in his above-referenced article.

5 It is briefly mentioned in the literary histories of Şafā (*TA*, 4: 461) and Nafīsī (*Tārīkh-i nazm u naṭr*, 1: 339). It is not mentioned by Syed Hasan, 'Aiważī, Burhān Āzād, Khān Muḥammadī, Bāqirī, Furṣatī Jūibārī, and Āryān-sirisht. 'Abbāsīya Kuhan ("Dah-nāma-sarā'i", 76a) lists it but because he repeats information that could have come from Şafā

what more detailed description, and even he devotes only ten lines to it.<sup>6</sup> The poem aroused my interest by the originality of the messengers who convey the messages, namely, ten different musical instruments. In the second part of this article I shall show that the choice of these instruments, and the way they are described, are not accidental but subtly convey the evolution of the protagonists' feelings.

## 2 Dedicatee and Date of the Poem

The manuscript of 27 folios<sup>7</sup> is written in elegant *nasta'liq*,<sup>8</sup> on leaves speckled with gold and framed in gold and blue.<sup>9</sup> Framed captions introduce the different sections. Although the manuscript is complete, it lacks a colophon and date. Blochet dates it to the beginning of the fifteenth century, from Isfahan or Shiraz; this provenance is possible, but it most likely dates from the last quarter of that century, soon after the composition of the poem itself – which, I shall argue, is later than Blochet's estimate. The manuscript is certainly not an autograph for it contains too many mistakes,<sup>10</sup> the metre is off at times, and nineteen verses are missing – there are 521 verses instead of the 540 mentioned in the penultimate verse.<sup>11</sup>

and continues with details on 'Aṣṣār, not on 'Aishī, he gives the impression that he has not seen it. 'Abbāsīya Kuhan promises a longer study "in the near future" (78c) but I have not located it and he died in 2010. Though aware of it, Khurāsānī and Dāwudī Muqaddam were unable to find it ("Taḥlīl-i dah-nāmahā", 23), while Anūsha's *Farhang-nāma* mentions the *'Ishrat-nāma* in the entry *dah-nāma* without any further details (the most recent publication in the bibliography is the article by 'Abbāsīya Kuhan). Cf. Beelaert, *Cure for the Grieving*, 47-8, 51, 193, where it is mentioned in the context of the literary motif of the messenger.

**6** Gandjei, "Genesis", 26 (it contains a number of errors, like Blochet he identifies "Khalīl Sulṭān" as the Timurid ruler – about this identification see below – erroneously adding that he ruled in Shiraz, and with 1405 mistakenly given for 812 AH).

**7** There are also two flyleaves at the beginning. On the first, another hand has written: *Dah-nāma-yi 'Aishī, musammā ba 'Ishrat-nāma. Dar in nazdīkhā az barā-yi pidar-i Āqā-Khān Mahallatī Shāh Khalīl-Allāh niwīshṭa shuda ast. Kitāb-i nafīs, taqrībān nawad sāl ast niwīshṭa shuda ast* ("Aishī's *dah-nāma*, called *'Ishrat-nāma*. It was written in the neighbourhood for the father of Āqā Khān Mahallatī Shāh Khalīl-Allāh. It is a valuable book written around ninety years ago"). As we shall see, the information concerning the poem's dedicatee is incorrect.

**8** The *gāf* is always written as *kāf*, and, with only a few exceptions, *pi* is written as *bi* and *chi* as *jīm*. There are nearly always three dots under the *sīn*. The *alef* at the beginning of words often lacks the *madda*. In my edition the spelling follows modern usage.

**9** As described by Blochet; the manuscript is not among those that the BN has digitized in full colour.

**10** Mentioned in the apparatus of the edition, some of them are pointed out in the second part of this article.

**11** The impression that some verses are missing is strengthened *inter alia* by a transition that is too abrupt, or by the addressee changing without notice.

We learn from 'Aishī (vv. 70-77) that he wrote the poem in Shiraz at the request, during a *majlis*, of one 'Ināyat, described as one of the amirs of a Sulṭān Khalīl (vv. 42-44),<sup>12</sup> upon whose arrival the city "became an Egypt by its loveliness" (v. 36). Blochet identified this Khalīl as Khalīl b. Mīrān-Shāh, Tīmūr's grandson, who, after having governed for a short time in Samarqand, came in the course of the year 812/1409 to rule as governor in Rayy and died there in 814/1411, and this identification has been followed ever since.<sup>13</sup> However, this identification is debatable – no *nasab* for Khalīl is given in the poem and, although Khalīl b. Mīrān-Shāh did indeed rule in the West, he had no special connection with Shiraz, as the governor in Fārs at that time was another Timurid, Bāiqarā b. 'Umar Shaikh.<sup>14</sup> I will venture here a more likely identification.

There might be no connection between Shiraz and Khalīl b. Mīrān-Shāh, but there is quite a close connection between that city and another Khalīl, the Aq-Quyūnlū Khalīl b. Uzun Ḥasan, who as governor of Fārs on behalf of his father lived in Shiraz for eight years until he became sultan in 882/1478.<sup>15</sup> His eventual rule as a sultan in Tabriz lasted only six months as he was killed in battle in Rabi' II 883/July 1478.<sup>16</sup>

By chance, an interesting contemporary document concerning Sulṭān Khalīl's office in Shiraz has come down to us, that is, Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī's *Arz-nāma*, a detailed eyewitness account of a three-day long military parade held by Sulṭān Khalīl at Band-i Mīr near Persepolis in 881/1476.<sup>17</sup> Among the officials figuring in this document are also "two great amirs" (*amīrain-i kabīrain*), the brothers Hidāyat-Allāh Beg and 'Ināyat-Allāh Beg, who are praised for their

**12** Therefore, not at the request of Sulṭān Khalīl himself, as stated by Ṣafā (*TA*, 4: 461); Nafīsī (*Tārīkh-i nazm u nathr*, 1: 339); 'Abbāsīya Kuhan ("Dah-nāma-sarā'ī", 76). Only Gandjei ("Genesis", 62) writes that it was at the request of 'Ināyat.

**13** For instance, Ṣafā, *TA* (no mention of Blochet, but no reference to any other secondary literature either); Gandjei, "Genesis"; 'Abbāsīya Kuhan, "Dah-nāma-sarā'ī"; Beelaert 2000, 48, 193 fn. 45.

**14** Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 271.

**15** Minorsky, "A Civil and Military Review in Fārs in 881/1476", 143. For a diagram showing the governorships under Uzun Ḥasan, see Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 101 fig. 10. In the *Arz-nāma* (see below), which relates an event during Sulṭān Khalīl's governorship, he is called "sultan" several times (and not only as part of his name), so Khalīl's also being called thus in the *Ishrat-nāma* (vv. 32b, 39a, 40a) should not pose a problem; indeed, he is also called *shāh* (vv. 32a, 34, 36, 38) and *shāhīnshāh* (v. 41).

**16** Sulṭān Khalīl is known as having been someone with a "lively interest in fine books", and a number of beautiful manuscripts commissioned by him are extant (Robinson, "The Turkman School to 1503", in *The Arts of the Book*, 241 and *passim*).

**17** I was unable to obtain the edition by Īraj Afshār (Tehran, 1335/1956), but Minorsky's excellent "Civil and Military Review" gives an abridged and annotated translation of it.



talents (*ist'idād*) and literary gifts (*sukhan-dānī*).<sup>18</sup> Since the 'Ināyat who commissioned the *'Ishrat-nāma* is also presented as *sukhan-dān* (v. 47) and a maecenas of poets (vv. 52-59), it is tempting to identify him with the latter amir, especially since the specific stipulations that he adds to his commission of this poem – to which I shall return in the second part of this article – corroborate this.

### 3 The Poet 'Aishī Shīrāzī

In the poem 'Aishī gives no particulars about himself; the scant, and possible reliable, information available comes from a single contemporary source only, a Persian 'translation' – actually adaptation – of the biographical collection (*taẓkira*) *Majālis al-nafā'is*, which Mīr 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī had finished in Herat in 897/1491-92.<sup>19</sup> This adaptation was written by one Ḥakīm Shāh Muḥammad Qazwīnī between 927/1521 and 929/1522-23, and posthumously dedicated to the Ottoman sultan Selim.<sup>20</sup> Qazwīnī lists 'Aishī Shīrāzī in an added section of contemporary poets who lived during Selim's reign and, as he adds, were "alive in 928".<sup>21</sup> The poet is said to have been called "Kal 'Aishī",

<sup>18</sup> Minorsky, "Civil and Military Review", 157. Hidāyat-Allāh Beg, in particular, was close to Sulṭān Khalīl – from the *'Arz-nāma* (Minorsky, "Civil and Military Review", 170-71) we learn that he was one of his *ināqs* (Tur. close companion; Ar. *naḍīm*). A copy of a Turkish *Dīwān* of one Hidāyat, written for the library of Sulṭān Khalīl, has been preserved in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. Minorsky (*The Chester Beatty Library* 1-3, no. 401) suggests that this Hidāyat may be identical to the Hidāyat-Allāh Beg of the *'Arz-nāma*. Since then, in 2008, this *Dīwān* has been edited by Ī. Sona, *Emir Efsa-huddīn Hidāyetullah Bey and His Divan* (I thank Jan Schmidt for bringing this edition to my attention).

<sup>19</sup> Some manuscripts include information until 904/1498-99, see Subtelny, "Mīr 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī", *EP*: 7, 91b.

<sup>20</sup> Hekmat made an edition of this and another 16th-century translation under the title *Galaxy of Poets*. Sultan Selīm 'the Grim' had died in 926/1520, and Qazwīnī presents him as deceased by the blessings he adds after his name (182). Nevertheless, he offers his translation to him, and not to his successor, Süleymān the Magnificent. On this translation, Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1.2: 791-9. This adaptation of the *Majālis al-nafā'is* is by far the oldest and only contemporary source on 'Aishī Shīrāzī. Of a century later (1016/1608) is *Khulāṣat al-ash'ār* by Mīr Taqī al-Dīn Kāshānī. In his section on poets from Shiraz he devotes a few lines to him, saying only that he was "in the service of the learned men" of the city and "profited from each of them in proportion to his talent" (406-7). He gives 927/1520-21 as date of his death and quotes two verses. In a note the editor adds information from Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i naẓm u naṭh* and Ṣafā, *TA* (for whom, see above, fn. 5). The other sources listed by Khayyāmpūr, *Farhang-i sukhanwārān*, 1: 661b, date from the nineteenth century onward.

<sup>21</sup> Hekmat, *Galaxy of Poets*, 359, 403. Nawā'ī himself does not include 'Aishī (I consulted his edition at <http://kutubxona.com>; search Alisher Navoiy under Mualliflar). The translation is divided into "paradises" (*bihisht*) the eighth and last of which, divided in two "gardens" (*rauza*), contains only material added by the translator Qazwīnī himself; 'Aishī is included in the second and last "garden", which deals with contempo-

as he was bald (*kachal*), and is portrayed as “a jester, facetious and witty, who often satirized people” (*shakhshī hazzāl wa maskhara wa pur ḥāl wa akthar mardum rā hajw mīnamūda*).<sup>22</sup> Some of his verses are cited, including a satire on people from Lār using some words in their dialect, but there is no mention of the '*Ishrat-nāma*.

This contemporary information that 'Aishī was alive in 928/1521 is probably correct. It provides support for my argument that his '*Ishrat-nāma* stems from the time of the Aq-Quyūnlū prince Khalīl's governorship of Shiraz, between 874/1470 and 882/1478, and not from the time of the Timurid Khalīl b. Mīrān-shāh in 812/1409, which would have made his life span impossibly long.<sup>23</sup> Persian authors could be very precocious, but it is unlikely that this *dah-nāma* was written by someone younger than, say, fifteen – even then, a fifteen-year-old in 812/1409 would have been 127 in 928/1521.<sup>24</sup> It stands to reason that the '*Ishrat-nāma* was written some seventy years later than Blochet's estimate.

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rary poets only. It is to be noted that there is a misprint in the table of contents of this edition on page 67: a date of 829 instead of 928. The date of 829 resurfaces in Anūsha, *Farhang-nāma*, 599b.

**22** This is paraphrased in Safā (*TA*, 4: 461), who allegedly has it from Nawā'ī but is actually quoting the adaptation, as *mard-i hazzāl wa hajw-pīsha wa shūkh-ṭab'*, “a jester, in the habit of writing satires, and witty (or impudent)”.

**23** Qazwīnī gives no information on 'Aishī's lifespan; Safā (*TA*, 4: 461), unsupported, writes that 'Aishī “lived a very long life”, which he might have concluded from the date of Qazwīnī's adaptation. Safā writes also, again without acknowledgement of a source, that 'Aishī lived until the rule of the Timurid sultan Ḥusain-i Bāiḡarā (r. 873-911/1469-1506).

**24** Šafā discusses also another poet named 'Aishī Harawī (*TA*, 4: 461-62), known from other biographical collections, with the caveat that the two should not be confused, but one has the impression that he might have done so himself, as Ḥusain-i Bāiḡarā is one of 'Aishī Harawī's patrons (*mamdūh*, 'praised one') (a later one was the Safavid shah Ismā'īl, r. 907/1501-930/1524). The year 870/1465-66 is given as his date of birth (tentatively by Dirāyatī, *Fihristagān*, 25: 297, and by Shahbāz Īraj, for whom see below), which would rule out an identification with 'Aishī Shīrāzi. Confusion seems inevitable, however, and although I do not think they are the same person, the possibility cannot be completely ruled out. This Ḥāfiẓ 'Alī b. Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Aishī Ghūriyānī Harawī was both a calligrapher and a poet. Only five of his poems, of the type *qaṣīda-yi maṣnū'a* (a *qaṣīda* in which each verse illustrates a different figure of style) have come down to us, two of them dedicated to Ḥusain-i Bāiḡarā. One, entitled *Mumtāz al-badāyī'* and written in 909/1503-4, has been published by Īraj, in *Ganjīna-yi Bahāristān*, 43-67. Īraj seems to base the date of 'Aishī Harawī's birth on Khwāndamīr, *Tārikh-i ḥabīb al-siyar*, 4: 360-61, but it is not found there. Šafā's account is partly based on Sām Mirzā's *Tuhfay-i Sāmī*, composed in or about 957/1550, 113. Dirāyatī (*Fihristagān*, 25: 297-8) lists manuscripts of all five poems. The date of the most recent one, dedicated to 'Alī, is given as 923/1517 by Dirāyatī and 933/1526-27 by Īraj. On 'Aishī Harawī, see also Khayyāmpūr, *Farhang-i sukhawārān*, 1: 661b.

## Bibliography

### Abbreviations

*EP* = *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*. Leiden: Brill, 1960-2005.

*Şafā*, *TA* = *Şafā*, *Ẓabīh-Allāh*, *Ta'rikh-i adabiyāt*, vols. 3/2 and 4. 4th ed. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Firḍaus, 1366/1987.

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## Appendix: 'Aishī, 'Ishrat-nāma, Paris Bibl. Nat. Suppl. Persan 1142, Blochet, 1642

بنام آنک پیدا کرد مارا  
 دل دانا و نفس کامل از اوست  
 خداوندی که این طاق معلق  
 زهی ساقی که او بی باده و خمّ  
 یکی را در دریای عدن داد  
 یکی را داد دامنه‌های پر از در  
 یکی را گوهر گنج و درم داد  
 یکی را پشم رندی داد و مستی  
 یکی را واقف سر ازل کرد  
 یکی را داد تخت و ملک و تاج  
 یکی را لطف کرده علم توحید  
 ببین قدرت که از روی مراتب  
 ز سعد و نحس و نفع و ضر افلاک  
 چه پرهیزد کسی از دام تقدیر  
 چو نیک و بد بجز حکم خدا نیست  
 نه بیند غیر حق چشم خدا بین  
 خدا دان و خدا بین و خدا گو

### در نعت حضرت نبی علیه السلام

زهی منعم که خود درویش دیده  
 بود گرد براقمت بافسر عرش  
 رخ محبوب دیده در مقابل  
 شراب وحدت از جام الاهی  
 ز خود بگذشت بردندش بمعراج  
 بحق چون پیشوای انبیا اوست  
 ورا زیبد قبای خاص لولاک

بچشم سر خدای خویش دیده!  
 نهاده پای رفعت بر سر عرش  
 نبوده در میانه هیچ حایل  
 بخود پیموده چندانگی که خواهی  
 نهادند از لعمرک بر سرش تاج  
 یقین سر دفتر اهل فنا اوست  
 که در یکدم مساحت کرد افلاک

۲۵ خداوندا بحق شاه سرمد! بحق جمله یاران محمد!  
که مارا جرعه نوش جام او کن! وجود ما طفیل نام او کن!

#### در مناجات باری تعالی

۳۰ الاهی جز گنه کاری ندارم  
الاهی از گناه بنده بگذر!  
الاهی ما همه غرق گناهیم  
الاهی نیست ما را اختیاری  
رها کن جرم و لطف خویش بنما!  
بدین بیچاره عاجز ببخشا!  
ز کردار بد خود شرمسارم  
گناه ما بروی ما میاور!  
ز شرم نامه خود رو سیاهیم  
زدست ما نیاید هیچکاری  
ز کردار بد خود شرمسارم  
گناه ما بروی ما میاور!  
ز شرم نامه خود رو سیاهیم  
زدست ما نیاید هیچکاری  
بدین بیچاره عاجز ببخشا!

#### در سبب نظم کتاب

۳۵ بعهد شاه عالم گیر کامل  
سزاوار سریر پادشاهی  
خلیل بت شکن شاه دلیران  
همی گوید ملک از چرخ نیلی  
زمین مقدم شاه سرافراز  
چنان باران عدلش کارگر شد  
رعیت مدح شاه از سر گرفتند  
چو ابر فیض سلطان ریخت ژاله  
چنان شد ظلم پاک از عدل سلطان  
امیران و بزرگان شهنشاه  
از آن جمله جوانمردی دلیری  
قضا در قبضه فرمان او بود  
به نیزه دست خود چون آزمودی  
بروز جنگ چون گشتی پریشان  
شعاع تیغ او چون دید خورشید  
عنایت بود نام آن سخن دان  
خدایش داد توفیق و عنایت  
ملاذ اهل استعداد و دانش  
از آن در فن عرفان شد حسابی  
پناه اهل فقر و اهل عرفان  
اگر فیض کف جودش نبود  
وگر لطفش نگشتی شامل ما  
اگر احسان او رهبر نبود  
اگر نه پیشه اش انعام بودی  
۵۰  
۵۵

شه صاحب قران سلطان عادل  
که بر عدلش ملک داد گواهی  
که شد اباد از وی ملک ایران  
شنای او بگلبنانگ خلیلی  
چو مصری شد بخوبی شهر شیراز  
که شاخ بید همچون نیشکر شد  
نکشته تخم حاصل بر گرفتند  
برآمد بوی مشک از برگ لاله  
که گرگ آمد بشاگردی چویان  
بدولت هر یکی تابنده چون ماه  
بمردی و هنر چون نره شیری  
بزرگی آیستی در شان او بود  
روان تاج از سر کیوان ربودی  
شدی از هیبت او شیر لزان  
ز دست تیغ خود گردید نومید  
ز الطاف و عنایتهای یزدان  
چو لایق بود بر فیض و هدایت  
خدایش داد علم و داد و دانش  
که ارثی داشت او هم اکتسابی  
سخن ورز و سخن گوی و سخن دان  
هنر و بوی بخشش کی شنودی؟  
کجا رونق بدی اهل سخن را؟  
کسی از شاعران کمتر نبودی  
کجا اهل سخن را نام بودی؟

- سخن در دور او درّ شمین شد  
 بسی شاعر ازو گشتند خشنود  
 بشاعر خدمت او بود لازم  
 بارباب سخن دایم نظر داشت  
 بکار من چو لطفش بود شامل  
 شبی در مجلس میر سخن ور  
 یکی از شعر و دانش باز میگفت  
 یکی را گوش جان با مثنوی بود  
 یکی میخواند اشعار شنیده  
 یکی علم معما گوش میکرد  
 یکی را چشم بر ساقی و می بود  
 یکی چون شمع در مجلس بر افروخت  
 یکی از عشق بردل سنگ میزد  
 یکی شد سر گران از آب انگور  
 که ناگه میر مجلس رو بمن کرد  
 بگفتا یکزمان با شعر پرواز  
 که باشد مونس هر دردمندی  
 که استادان بسی ده نامه گفتند  
 ولیکن قاصد از هر سوی یادست  
 بگو ده نامه غیر مکرر  
 که باشد قاصد از هر سوی سازی  
 میان عاشق و معشوق همدم  
 بحکم کار فرمای خردمند  
 بتوفیق خدا چون عزم کردم  
 توقع دارم از اهل مروت  
 کسی کو نیک باشد بد نگوید  
 که شعر من همه سحر حلال است  
 ببین نیکو تو در هر داستانی  
 از شعر اوحدی روییست با او  
 ز جان و دل برآمد از زبان نیست  
 کسی اینجا ز خیر و شر نگوید  
 نی کلکم دمامد در فشانست  
 ولیکن سقله کج طبع بدبین  
 خداوندا بسرّ اهل توحید  
 رسان این را بگوش اهل معنی
- ۶۰  
 ۶۵  
 ۷۰  
 ۷۵  
 ۸۰  
 ۸۵  
 ۹۰
- سخن ور نیز از و بالا نشین شد  
 برای آنکه خو\*\* اهل سخن بود  
 من بیچاره\*\* بودم ملازم  
 ولی با بنده زایشان بیشتر داشت  
 دلم را آستانش ساخت منزل  
 ز ارباب سخن مجلس منور  
 یکی با جام و ساقی راز میگفت  
 یکی را دل بدرس معنوی بود  
 یکی بحث غزل کرد و قصیده  
 یکی خود را ز می بیهوش میکرد  
 یکی را گوش بر آواز نی بود  
 یکی از ناله همچون عود می سوخت  
 یکی می می کشید و چنگ میزد  
 یکی را میل بر آواز طننبور  
 زبان بگشاد و بنیاد سخن کرد  
 برای عاشقان ده نامه ساز!  
 دوا یابد ازو هر مستمندی  
 بالماس هنر دردانه سفتند  
 مرا بسیار ازین اشعار یادست  
 بطور دیگران نه طرز دیگر  
 زیکسو نازو وز یکسو گذاری  
 نباشد غیر اهل ساز محرم  
 زبان بگشاد کلکم چون نی قند  
 بانداک روزی این را نظم کردم  
 که یکدم بگذرند از راه حجت  
 بد کس مردم بخرد نگوید  
 برای خاطر اهل کمال است  
 بیاب از خسرو و شیرین نشانی  
 ز مهر و مشتری بویست با او  
 که چون ده نامهای دیگران نیست  
 که بتواند کزین بهتر بگوید  
 وگر باور نداری در میانست!  
 نباشد غیر خبش کار و آیین  
 که پنهان کن ز چشم اهل تقلید  
 نگهدارش ز خبث اهل دعوی!

بکن شیرین بچشم خاص و عامش  
 جوانی عاشق مه پاره شد  
 نه خوابش بود شب نه روزش آرام  
 چو چشمش خسته و بیمار می گشت  
 ز حیرت پای تا سر گشته سودا  
 گهی زاری گهی میکرد فریاد  
 همی شد دیده و دامان پر از خون  
 بسر می برد روزی با دل تنگ  
 نشانی از رخ آن مه نمی یافت  
 بخود میگفت با صد ناله و آه  
 اگر او شرح حال من بدانند  
 ندارد هیچکس در کوی او راه  
 بدل گفتا جز از نی محرمی نیست  
 مگر این درد دل با وی بگویم

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نامه اول برسالت فرستادن نی را عاشق بنزد معشوق

زاهل سوزی دردی با تو همراه  
 بدین معنی گواهی روی زردست  
 زمانی بی غم هجران نه تو  
 ز سر تا پای سوز و وجد و حالی  
 زمانی همنشین مقبلانی  
 که در دل این همه سوراخ داری  
 تو میدانی که درد عشق چونست  
 همی نالد کسی کو حال دارد  
 نخواهم حال درد خود نهفتن  
 بحمدالله نه در بند هستی  
 نفس بشنو دمی پروای من کن  
 ازین معنی بهر جا راه داری  
 ز مویه موی شد وز ناله چون نال  
 ز چشمت تا بکی بیمار و خسته  
 بدرویش فقیری سر درازی؟

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فرد

بنوروز این غزل از من اوا کن  
 وگر درد دلی باشد دوا کن

۱۲۰



## غزل

من نالان چو نی در بند آنم که گردون می شنود آه و فغانم  
 زمانی همدم عشاق هستم دمی با بی نوایان در میانم  
 ز هجرانت جدا شد بندم از بند ننگه کن بند استخوانم  
 نخواهم بود بی یاد تو یکدم اگر زین غم برآید نیم جانم  
 اگر زلفت بگیرد دست عیثی زهی اقبال و بخت جاودانم ۱۲۵

## تمامی سخن

بکن رحمی بدین مسکین بی کس که می سوزد بنار عشق چون خس  
 چو بی یاد تو مسکین یکنفس نیست ترحم کن باو کش جز تو کس نیست  
 اگر حالم نمی گویی نگو نیست بگو زنه‌ار این سر مگو نیست  
 چون نی بشنید آن افغان و زاری چنان دیوانگی و بیقراری  
 چو غرق عشق دید آب و گل او ترحم کرد بر حال دل او  
 بگفتا غم مخور ای یار هم درد که عاشق را چه باکست از رخ زرد؟  
 ز جان و دل میان بندم بکارت حکایتها بگویم با نگارت  
 بگویم یک بیک پیغام و درد حدیث اشک سرخ و روی زردت  
 برون آرم ورا از کینه و خشم بخدمت می نهم انگشت بر چشم  
 بگفت این و روان گردید چون باد بخدمت رفت نزد سرو آزاد  
 زمین بوسید و بنیاد فغان کرد بصد آهنگ درد دل عیان کرد  
 بگفت آن داستان غصه و غم بصد زاری گهی زیر و گهی بم  
 طمع دارد وصالت ای پری زاد باین معنی مرا قاصد فرستاد  
 چو بشنید آن پری رو نام عاشق سراسر غصه و پیغام عاشق  
 ز قهر او پریشان کرد کاکل برآمد سرخ همچون لاله و گل  
 که گفتار تو ای نی جمله بادست مرا بسیار ازین افسانه یادست  
 نفس کوتاه کن افسانه بگذار! ازین پیغامها در خانه بگذار!  
 چرا هر دم به مویی و بنالی؟ که دایم اندرنت هست خالی  
 بفریاد خودی افتاده در بند از آن شیرین نی همچون نی قند  
 رها کن این حدیث بی سر و بن که نی خواهم ترا کردن بناخن  
 تو بی نامی بخود دردی نداری بغیر از چهره زرد نداری  
 همان بهتر که چشمت را بدوزند! بکوبندت بسنگ انکه بسوزند!  
 پروای نی که هرگز بر نیایی وگر آیی برای بوریایی  
 بسندش سربسر پیوند کردند نی مسکین هماندم بند کردند  
 چو نی در گوشه در بند بنشانند همان ساعت کمانچه پیش خود خواند ۱۴۰  
 ۱۳۰  
 ۱۳۵  
 ۱۴۰  
 ۱۴۵  
 ۱۵۰

## نامهٔ دوم برسالت فرستادن کمانچه معشوق جواب عاشق

بگفتا ای کمانچه زود بشتاب  
 که تو رندی و آزومی نداری  
 بگویش کای پریشان حال حیران  
 گدایی را چه حد آنک شاهمی!  
 مگر تو علت سرسام داری ۱۵۵  
 برو فکر دماغ خویشتن کن  
 سخنهای چنین دیوانه گوید  
 برو اندیشه ام از دل بدر کن  
 وگر گوید حدیثی نارسیده  
 وگر گوید که خواهم وصل دلدار ۱۶۰  
 وگر گوید حدیث باده و من  
 وگر گوید که میسوزم در آتش  
 وگر خواهد ز عشقم گفت و گویی  
 بگو این قصه را بگذر ازو بگذر  
 برو نزدیک آن بیخور و بیخواب!  
 چو یاران دگر شرمی نداری  
 به بیهوده دل خود را مرنجان!  
 به بیند یک نظر آن هم بماهی؟  
 ویا ماخولیای خام داری؟  
 وگر نه فکر تابوت و کفن کن!  
 چرا عاقل همه افسانه گوید؟  
 زمانی فکر سودای دگر کن!  
 بزنی سیخش همان ساعت بدیده!  
 به تیز نی دل ریشش بیازار!  
 هماندم بر سر او کاسه بشکن!  
 بزنی بر گردنش چندی کمانکش!  
 بیاوزش همانساعت بمویی!  
 وگر نه زود اینجا می نهی سر!

## فرد

۱۶۵ سزد گر این غزل از روی اعزاز بخوانی در حسینی ای خوش آواز!

## غزل

چرا در بند این افسانه تو؟  
 تو ای مسکین مرا یکبار دیدی  
 اگر هر دیده سازی بحر خونی  
 چه طرف از شمع رخسارم ببندی؟  
 برو عیشی ازین اندیشه بگذر!  
 چرا از بیخودی دیوانه تو؟  
 چنین سر خوش زیک پیمانۀ تو؟  
 کجا در خورد این دُر دانه تو؟  
 چو از بی طاقتی پروانه تو!  
 مگر عاقل نه دیوانه تو! ۱۷۰

## تمامی سخن

برو مسکین ازین اندیشه بر گرد  
 ز من هر گز نخواهی دید کامی  
 کمانچه چون شنید آن جور بیداد  
 بیامد پیش آن مهجور حیران  
 بناخن سینه را افگار کرده ۱۷۵  
 نکرده هیچ میل کشت و صحرا  
 نخورده هیچ غیر از غصه و غم  
 باشک سرخ ساز و چهرهٔ زرد  
 برو مسکین که می افتی بدامی  
 ز سهم او ز جا بر جست آزاد  
 بدیدش گوشهٔ بنشسته گریان  
 ز هجران روی بر دیوار کرده  
 بکنج بیخودی بنشسته تنها  
 نشسته همچو عاصی در جهنم

بامید پیام وصل دلدار  
 کمانچه چون بدید آن دل شکسته  
 بفریاد و فغان آن نامه بر خواند  
 بعاشق لریزه افتاد چون بید  
 بدل گفتا ازین پیغام ناخوش  
 نه صبر آنکه ترک یار گیرم  
 فرستم بار دیگر دف به پیغام

غریب و بی کس و مهجور و غمخوار  
 فقیر و دردمند و زار و خسته  
 شنید آنها و آشک از دیده میراند  
 ز گفتار کمانچه گشت نومید  
 فتادم باز در دریای آتش  
 بدست آرم وصالش یا بمیرم  
 مگر رحم آورد بر من دلارام

نامه سوم برسالت فرستادن دف را عاشق به معشوق

بدف گفت ای بتو مجلس منور  
 بدست تست هم بالا وهم پست  
 ندارد هیچ رونق بی تو سازی  
 ترا خود احتیاجی نیست با کس  
 من بیدل گرفتارم بدردی  
 چه باشد گر پیام این دل افگار  
 که تا کی دردمندی نا مرادی  
 ز هجرانت اسیر بند باشد  
 چه کم کرد از آن لبهای چون قند  
 چرا بیچاره سیرت نه بیند  
 کشم نازت بجان چون نازنینی  
 خدا را جور بگذار و وفا کن  
 ز سیم و زر که گوید جان و سر مست  
 من ازین در نخواهم رفت جایی  
 اگر سر میرد و فکر سرم نیست  
 منم دیوانه مشتاق رویت  
 من از این آستان سر بر نگیرم  
 بکویت بنده را مردن بود کام

بفریاد تو خرم چرخ و چنبر!  
 ازان رو می برندت دست بر دست  
 بمن کن گوش تا گویم نیازی  
 که در عالم همین آوازه ات بس  
 که در آن غم ندارم خواب و خوردی  
 ز روی لطف گویی نزد آن یار  
 که از زلف تو میجوید گشادی؟  
 باین دل بستگی تا چند باشد؟  
 اگر بخشی بعاشق بوسه چند؟  
 چرا زین گلستان یک گل نچیند؟  
 چرا با عاشق خود این چنبنی؟  
 تو شاهی رحم بر حال گدا کن!  
 وگر خواهی نگارا سیم و زر هست!  
 اگر بر من رسد هر دم بلایی  
 که جز کوی تو جای دیگرم نیست  
 اگر شمشیر می بارد بکویت  
 اگر صد بار می دوزی بتیرم!  
 چه ترسانی مرا از ننگ و دشنام

فرد

بنیریز این غزل زنهار بر خوان  
 چو هستی محرم عشاق حیران

غزل

منم دور از تو سرگردان و محزون  
 یقین لیلی بحالش رحم میکرد  
 کنار و دامنم از دیده پر خون  
 اگر چون من بسر میکرد مجنون

طبیبا رحم کن آخر دواپی  
من از کویت نخواهم رفت بالله  
که دردم میشود هر لحظه افزون!  
اگر هر دم شود آنجا دو صد خون!  
سخنهای مثال در مکنون  
بگوشت میکشم از شعر عیشی

تمامی سخن

ز هجرت جان نخواهم داد آسان  
چو دف بشنید آن افغان عاشق  
۲۱۰ بگفتا خویش را بیهوش کردم  
بسی سال است تا من باهل رازم  
دف آمد زود و نزد آن سرافراز  
بگفت ای آرزوی جان عشاق  
۲۱۵ پیامی دارم از من دل مرنجان  
چو دلبر دف بنزد خویش بنشاند  
دگر باره سهی سرو گل اندام  
بدف گفتا رها کن هرزه گویی  
تو از کم همتی چون می شوی مست  
۲۲۰ گهی جایب بغل باشد گهی دوش  
بهر مجلس روانی می برنندت  
دگر گاهی براری بانگ و فریاد  
کنی با آخری دوران بازار  
زنندت قحبقان از روی واز پشت  
۲۲۵ زودو چرخ جز رنگی ننداری  
بفرمایم که پیش دشمن و دوست  
نگویی این سخن گر هوش داری  
در آخر چون کسان کردند در خواست  
فرستادند پیش نی که بنشین

نامهٔ چهارم برسالت فرستادن قانون معشوق جواب عاشق

بقانون گفت ای همراز خوش خوان  
۲۳۰ همه فریاد تو بی حکمتی نیست  
زر وسیمت ببالا می فشانند  
نشان داری ز هر صاحب کمالی  
بسی ساز از تو در سوز و گدازند  
۲۳۵ چو تو کس قابل و موزون ندیدم  
بهر جا میروی از روی تعظیم  
خردمندی ز تصنیف حکیمان  
که چون تو در جهان همصحبی نیست  
ز حرمت بر کنارت می نشانند  
زهر استاد دیدی گوشمالی  
که صاحب دولتان می نوازند  
کسی هر گز بدین قانون ندیدم  
کنار دامنت سازند پر سیم

ندیدم قاصدی چون تو موافق  
 بگو ای ناکس همچو حیران  
 مجو چیزی که آن هرگز نیایی  
 بسیم و زر مرا مفرب دیگر ۲۴۰  
 طلب کردن وصال من درین باب  
 که میگوید که در غم روز و شب کن  
 ازین بستان نخواهی دید رنگی  
 بسی عاشق بلا و غم کشیدند  
 ۲۴۵  
 زمن هرگز نخواهی دید امید  
 دل خود را بهره کرده در بند  
 ملک با آدمی انسی نگیرد  
 که پیغامم رسانی نزد عاشق  
 به بیهوده دل خود را مرنجان!  
 تو پنداری که بیداری بخوابی!  
 ازین امید نا معقول بگذر!  
 حدیث مفلس و گنجست در خواب  
 زمن بگذر یکی چون خود طلب کن!  
 ز دربانم تو راضی شو بسنگی!  
 ز غم مردند و روی من ندیدند  
 چه نسبت ذره را با قرص خورشید؟  
 طمع بر کن دمی با خویش پیوند!  
 مگس در وصل شیرینی بمیرد!

## فرد

چه باشد گر ز روی نکته دانی بشه ناز این غزل آنجا بخوانی

## غزل

زهی بیچاره حیران دل تنگ  
 اگر صد معنی رنگین بیماری ۲۵۰  
 بدین قانون مشو عاشق و گر نه  
 کجا آینه رویم به بینی؟  
 برو عیسی مکن فریاد بسیار!  
 که در عشقت برآمد پای در سنگ  
 نخواهی دید از لعل لبم رنگ  
 نخواهد داشت هجر از دامت چنگ  
 چو نزدودی ز لوح دیده ات زنگ  
 که رسوایست چون خارج شد آهنک

## تمامی سخن

منم شمع و توی پروانه زار  
 که شمع از نار خوشتر بر فروزد ۲۵۵  
 دلم کی میشود غمگین ز بیداد  
 هلاک خویش می جویی حذر کن!  
 چو قانون این حکایت جمله بشنید  
 روان آمد بر آن عاشق زار  
 ز آب دیده پای او بگل دید ۲۶۰  
 چو دیوی کرده از مردم کناره  
 نفس هر دم بصد آهنک میزد  
 ز مژگانش فراوان خون بیسته  
 زبان بگشاد قانون همچو بلبل  
 مزن پر خویش را زآتش نگهدار  
 دو صد پروانه گر پیشش بسوزد!  
 بخون کردن بسی شادست جلاد!  
 برو فکر محال از سر بدر کن!  
 ز حیرت یکزمان بر خود به پیچید  
 بدید او را بدام غم گرفتار  
 برویش نقش بسته خون دل دید  
 گریباننش چو دامن پاره پاره  
 ز دست دل بسینه سنگ میزد  
 مثال آن گلی کز خار رسته  
 که ای بنشسته بر راه توکل!

- ۲۶۵ باین قانون کسی عاشق نگشته  
حکایتها که یار بی وفا گفت  
چو بشنید آن خبر عاشق ز قانون  
بخود گفتا من غمگین درویش  
نمی میرم کزو یابم خلاصی  
نه ترک عشق دلبر می توانم  
نخواهم غیر خون دیده همدم!  
۲۷۰ بخواری ترک یار خود نگیرم  
در بیچاره گی کارم خرابست  
فرستاد و رباب آورد فی الحال
- خدا خاکت بخون دل سرشته  
یکایک پیش آن کوه بلا گفت  
پریشان گشت از آن بخت دگرگون  
چه خواهم کرد یا رب با دل ریش!  
میان دوزخم چون گبر و عاصی!  
ازین سودا بخواهد سوخت جانم  
بجز آه و فغانم نیست محرم!  
بگیرم دامن او یا بمیرم  
رسالت این زمان کار ربابست  
بصد زاری بگفت ای صاحب حال!

نامه پنجم برسالت فرستادن رباب را عاشق بمعشوق

- ۲۷۵ تویی کز اهل عرفان یادگاری  
ازان معنی که از روی مراتب  
فراغت داری از هر خوب و زشتی  
به از وصفنت برونست از تصور  
چو تو یک عارف وارسته نیست  
چو هستی مونس رندان غمناک  
۲۸۰ بسی سالست تا در عشق بازی  
بجز میخانه ماوای نداری  
نه چون مردم بفکر ننگ و نامی  
کنون چشم مروت از تو دارم  
۲۸۵ بگو ای بی مروت در چه کاری؟  
مشو مغرور حسن پنج روزه!  
بکن با دردمند خود ترحم!  
چه می نازی بچیزی کش بقا نیست؟  
نمی ترسی زاه دردمندان؟
- ندیم عاشقان بیقراری  
شب و روزی تو با رندان مصاحب  
که در دنیا همی سازی بهشتی  
که هر گز نیستت عجب و تکبر  
چو من یک عاشق دلخسته نیست  
نداری از بد و نیک جهان باک  
میان اهل عشرت سر فرازی  
همی نالی و پروای نداری  
بحمدالله که درویش تمامی!  
که پیغام می رسانی نزد یارم  
همانا از خدا ترسی نداری؟  
مثال زاهدان از زهد روزه!  
مکن بر گریه عاشق تبسم!  
چرا میلت سوی این مبتلا نیست؟  
بکن رحمی بحال مستمندان!

فرد

- ۲۹۰ بگیر آهنگ پست ای یار پر حال  
بخوان این شعر دلکش را بعزال!

غزل

- زروی مرحمت ای ماه پاره!  
دلت برگریه های ما نشد نرم؟  
بحال عاشق خود کن نظاره!  
ز بارانش چه نقصان سنگ خاره!

بیایا از سوزن مزگان بهم دوز  
 بمزگانگت دل پر خون عاشق  
 ۲۹۵ منال از جور درد یار یا عیشی!  
 دل زارم که کردی پاره پاره!  
 چنان باشد که دلها برقناره!  
 که انجا غیر مردن نیست چاره!

### تمامی سخن

۳۰۰ غنیمت دان خدا را وصل عاشق!  
 وگر با من نمی آری فرو سر  
 رباب این غصه دل سوز بشنید  
 بگفت ای عاشق مسکین مخور غم!  
 روانی سوی دلدارت بپویم  
 بگردم آنچنانش در رگ و پی  
 به بیند زاری و سوز و گدازم  
 روان تا عاشق مسکین نگه کرد  
 بیامد نزد محبوب جفا کار  
 ۳۰۵ بترس از آه مظلومان مهجور  
 بترس از نالهای زار عاشق!  
 میادا همچو تو سروی بلندی!  
 دلی بیچاره را شاد گردان  
 جفا با عاشق بیچاره تا چند؟  
 ۳۱۰ از آن ترسم که در هجران بمیرد  
 چو بشنید از رباب آن شوخ زاری  
 همیشه کار من بیداد و جورست  
 چو استاد ازل در روز تقسیم  
 کسی کو در محبت هست محبوب  
 ۳۱۵ اگر چه کار او سوز و نیاز است  
 چه غم دارم اگر او هست خسته  
 رباب این می شنید و گوش میکرد  
 چو در طور سخن می یافت حالی  
 پری رخسار مغنی پیش خود خواند  
 بنزدیک خودش فی الحال بنشانند

### نامه ششم برسالت فرستادن مغنی را معشوق جواب عاشق

۳۲۰ بمغنی گفت ای یار خوش آواز  
 برو نزدیک آن غمگین بی کس  
 میا اینججا ور آیی گاه گاهی  
 بشو راضی که از دورم به بینی!  
 تویی همصحبیت یک روی یکرز!  
 بفریاد دل بیچاره اش رس!  
 نگه میکن برویم هر بماهی  
 چه حد داری که نزدیکم نشینی؟

۳۲۵ بفرمایم بنزدیکان درگاه که گر تو بگذری در گاه و بیگاه  
نیازازندت و هیچت نگویند که درکویم رقیبان تند خویند

فرد

بخوان در بو سلیک این شعر دلکش که افتد در میان آب و آتش

غزل

۳۳۰ برو ای عاشق دلتنگ مهجور رخ من آفتابست و ز دیدن  
منم آخر طیبیت ای ستم کش دل دیوانه ات کز غم خرابست  
برو عیشی که گر جام می نیست از این مستی نخواهی گشت مخمور  
بیک دیدار قانع باش از دور نمی گردد ملوث چشمه نور  
اگر گشتی ز درد عشق رنجور به تیر خود بخوادم ساخت معمور  
از این مستی نخواهی گشت مخمور

تمامی سخن

۳۳۵ اگر چون روزه داران گه شام  
چو مغنی دید این پیغام لایق  
بدید آن دردمند زار حیران  
ز بیماری تنش گشته چو مویی  
غم خود با دل غمگین همی گفت  
گهی درد دل خود باد می‌کرد  
همی گفستی میان گریه خون  
دمی این غصه ها از دیده میدید  
۳۴۰ بخون دیده میگردید یکدم  
پریشان حال و سرگردان و دل تنگ  
چو مغنی یکزمان در کار او دید  
بگفت ای عاشق بیچاره از نو!  
گذشت اندوه و محنت وقت شادیت!  
کسی کو محنت هجران نه بیند  
۳۴۵ اگر چندی جفا و جور دیدی  
اگر پروانه می سوزد بمحفل  
وگر از هجر او زهری کشیدی  
همه پیغام آن سرو سرافراز  
چو عاشق کرد آنها یکبیک گوش  
۳۵۰ تبسم کرد مسکین با رخ زرد  
ز شادی خود بخود باور نمی‌کرد  
همان ساعت ز شادی گشت بیهوش  
ز شادی خود بخود باور نمی‌کرد  
همان ساعت ز شادی گشت بیهوش  
ز شادی خود بخود باور نمی‌کرد



که چون نزدیک گردد وصل دلدار  
همان دم عاشق حیران مهجور  
فزون گردد غم عاشق بیکبار  
بگفتا پیش من آرید طنبور!

نامه هفتم برسالت رفتن طنبور از عاشق بمعشوق

چو طنبور آمد و عاشق درو دید  
زبان بگشاد و گفت ای مونس روح  
فغان و ناله همچون عود داری  
چو هست آواز تو غیر مکرر  
چو بلبل صد هزار آواز داری  
شهانرا دل بروی تازه تست  
ز مضراب تو در چرخست زهره  
بود آسان برت هر کار مشکل  
نوا یابد ز تو هر بی نوایی  
زمانی همنشینی با سلاطین  
تو از شاهان زروی نکته دانی  
بهر گوشه از آن کردی شب و روز  
خدا را پیش یار من خبر بر!  
برآور ناله و فریاد زنه‌ار  
چه گر بد بود با من فتنه شهر  
حدیث من بگو با یار زنه‌ار  
بخوان نقشی بر آن تازه گوهر

۳۵۵  
۳۶۰  
۳۶۵  
۳۷۰

فرد

بخوان این یک غزل آنجا بزابل  
که باشد رحمش آید خرمن گل

غزل

خدا را بیش از نیم زار مگذار  
تو در خواب خوشی در عین مستی  
ترحم کن نزن تیر پیاپی  
عزیزم ساز چون خوارم تو کردی  
خدا را عیشی مسکین ازین بیش

غریب و عاشق و بیمار مگذار!  
فقیرانرا چنین بیدار مگذار  
دل ریشم چنین افگار مگذار  
عزیز خویشتن را خوار مگذار  
ز هجران روی بر دیوار مگذار

۳۷۵

تمامی سخن

بگو تا بچند این بیچاره زار  
کنند روی از پریشانی بدیوار؟

- بس از عمری باین غمگین مهجور  
 بی‌تا روبروی هم نشینیم  
 میان عاشق و معشوق همدم  
 ۳۸۰ نشینیم و زمانی راز گوئیم  
 چه خوش باشد که نوشی ساغر مل  
 چو نیکو گوش کرد این قصه طنبور  
 مشو غمگین که هجرانت بسر آمد  
 ۳۸۵ روم انجا حکایت باز گویم  
 روان آمد بر دلدار طنبور  
 تویی سرخیل مه رویان طنناز  
 بسی سالست تا من در میانم  
 بدین شیوه ندیدم هیچ دلبر  
 ۳۹۰ تو میدانی که من از اهل رازم  
 حدیثم گوش کن از جور بگذر  
 که حیرانست او در صنع صانع  
 ز من بشنو نصیحت ای سر افزا!  
 که عمر و زندگانی را بقا نیست  
 ۳۹۵ چو طنبور این سخنها گفت پیوست  
 پری رخسار گفت اینها عیانست  
 همان دم گفت روح افزا بخوانید

نامه هشتم برسالت آمدن روح افزا جواب معشوق بعاشق

- چو روح افزا بیامد در برابر  
 بگفت ای مونس هر دردمندی  
 ۴۰۰ برو نزدیک آن غمگین بی خود  
 بگو ای پای بند دام هجران  
 به بیدادت فراوان آزمودم  
 نمودم با تو صد بیداد و خواری  
 طریق عاشق یکرنگ اینست  
 ۴۰۵ منم زان تو تا روز قیامت  
 اگر عاشق نه بیند جور بسیار

فرد

سزد گر این غزل در راست خوانی که خواهد برد از وی دل گرانی!

## غزل

خوش آن عاشق که او در عشقبازی  
 رخ از جور و ستم هر گز نتابد  
 نه عاشق اگر از خون دیده  
 بکش ناز و عتاب یار زنهار  
 بجو دیدار ای عیشی که در عشق  
 ندارد لذتی عشق مجازی

## تمامی سخن

کجا خرم نشستی پهلو ی گل؟  
 کجا هر گز بیابد وصل دلدار؟  
 سرش باید فکندن پیش جانان  
 که رو گردان نشد از غصه و غم؟  
 شنید از یار شد مانند آتش  
 بگفت ای طالع و بخت میمون!  
 ز اشک و آه گرم و سرد دیدی  
 زهی طالع که سندان نرم گردید!  
 چو غنچه عاشق دلتنگ بشکفت  
 بلی پیغام روح افزا چنین است  
 رخ زردم مثال ارغوان شد  
 شدم چون دسته گل تازه و تر  
 که تا بوسم مگر آن دست و ساعد  
 هزار چنگ هجران وا رهانند!

اگر بلسبل نکردی این تحمل  
 بجور از یار هر کو گشت بیمار  
 اگر عاشق رساند سر بکیوان  
 کسی را عشق بازی شد مسلم  
 چو روح افزا پیامی اینچنین خوش  
 بیامد پیش آن دلتنگ محزون  
 فراوان تیر آه از دل کشیدی  
 دل معشوق بر تو گرم گردید  
 چو پیغام بت عیار بر گفت  
 بگفتا مردی و یاری همین است  
 ز پیغامت دل من شادمان شد  
 من از پیغام روح افزای دلبر  
 دگر باره فرستم چنگ قاصد  
 مگر چنگم بکام دل رساند

## نامه نهم برسالت فرستادن چنگ را بنزد معشوق

چو پیش عاشق آمد در زمان چنگ  
 بگفت ای بر همه سازی مقدم  
 ندیدم چون تو پیری کار دیده  
 ز هر سازی ترا اندازه بیش است  
 ز آواز تو چرخ اندر خروشست  
 کسی کو شد بیچنگ غم گرفتار  
 بعالم جز دل خرم ندیدی  
 بسی سالست تا در شاد کامی  
 بهر مویی که بر اندام داری  
 درین مدت نیست از تو کسی طرف

بزد عاشق روان در دامنش چنگ  
 همیشه نزد شاهان معظم!  
 گواهدت بس بود قد خمیده  
 ز یاران همه آوازه بیش است  
 ز گلبانگ تو زهره چشم و گوشست  
 ز آواز تو آید باز در کار  
 بعمر خویش هر گز غم ندیدی  
 بعشرت همنشین \* خاص و عامی  
 ز درد عشق صد پیغام داری  
 بعشرت عمر خود را کرده صرف

ترا خواهم فرستادن بر یار  
بگو ای نازنین ناز پرورد!  
چه حاصل زین خیرها رحمتی کن  
چو بخشیدی باین درویش دلتنگ

۴۴۰

فرد

بخوان در پنج گاه این شعر زنهار  
که رحم آرد بر حال من یار!

غزل

غنیمت دان ببین گفتار عاشق  
نه گر لطف تو کار من بسازد  
بود پیکان تیرت همچو مرهم  
ببازار غم عشق تو سر باخت  
مخور غم بعد ازین عیشی که دلبر

۴۴۵

تمامی سخن

چو کارم بیخودی و بیقرار است  
دلی دارم مثال آبگینه  
به بینم سیر باری آن رخ خوب  
چو چنگ احوال عاشق کرد در گوش

۴۵۰

بیامد چنگ نزد آن جفاکار  
که خوبانرا چه گر جور است آیین  
ز من بشنو سخن زانرو که پیرم  
جفاها دید این درویش محزون

۴۵۵

بسی دیدم بعالم ماه رویان  
جووانی کو نه بیند پند پیران  
جووانمردی تو پند پیر بشنو  
ز نیک و بد چو پیر سال دیده

۴۶۰

سهی رفتار پند پیر بشنید  
بگفت از پند پیران سر نه پیچم  
چه نیکو گفت آن پیر خردمند  
حکیمی دارم و دانای کامل  
خردمندان مقام او ندانند  
فرستم عود را نزدیک عاشق

سختی زار است  
دلی در وی نه بینی هیچ کینه  
بیابد روشنی مانند یعقوب  
روانی چنگ را کردند در دوش  
زمین بوسید و گفتا ای دل آزار!  
نکرد این جور با فرهاد شیرین  
ندیم مجلس شاه و امیرم  
که کم کرد آن جفا لیلی بمجنون  
ستمها دیده ام از تندخویان  
کجا سازد خلاص از غم اسیران؟  
که این عالم نمی آزد بیک جو  
نصیحت کرد با قد خمیده  
برآمد سرخ و همچون گل بخندید  
وگر پیچیده ام دیگر نه پیچم!  
که عاقل نیست کو پیچد سر از پند  
سخن دان و سعادت‌مند و عاقل  
بدان آنرا که او را عود خوانند  
بگویم تا محلی خوب لایق

۴۶۵ بسازد تا دمی با هم نشینیم زمانی روی یکدیگر به بینیم

نامهٔ دهم برسالت آمدن عود نزد عاشق مژده وصل آوردن

چو عود آمد بر آن سرو بالا  
بنزدیک خودش بنشانند فی الحال  
تو عودی کز تو جانم گشت خوشنود  
فلان عاشق که همچون عود میسوخ  
بسی کردم ستم با آن دل افگار  
نبودش غیر جور و غصه حاصل  
مکن عیبم اگر هستی هوشیار  
بگریه چون دلم زیر و زبر کرد  
چه گر جان تازه دارد ناز دلبر  
کسی در ملک خوبی کامرانست  
فتد آتش در آن خرمن بناگاه  
کجا یابد زبان آن صاحب باغ  
بسی آزردم آن حیران دلتنگ  
اگر کام دل زارش نجویم  
برو ای عود نزد آن دل افگار  
مرا دور از تو پروای نفس نیست!

روانی ماه رو بر جست بر پا  
زبان بگشاد و گفت ای صاحب حال!  
بسازنی نغمه ها مانند داود  
ز آه خود بسوی دود می سوخت  
پشیمانم کنون از جور بسیار  
کنون بر حال او می سوزدم دل  
که حب از جانبین آمد پدیدار  
بسنگی قطرهٔ باران اثر کرد  
ولی گر نگذرد زاندازه بهتر  
که در بند مراد عاشقانست  
کز آن رندی نه بیند دامنی گاه  
که انگوری خورد زان بوستان زاغ؟  
نگردانید رو چون بود یکرنگ  
سیه گردد به روز حشر رویم!  
بگو ای دردمند خسته زار!  
خدا داند که یارم جز تو کس نیست!

فرد و غزل

بایکیات بر خوان این غزل را  
کسی کز یار خود جور و جفا دید  
ز بالایم رسد آخر بکامی  
بلای عشق بی حالی ندیدم  
بدست آرد سهی سروی گل اندام  
جفایی کز فراق دید عیشی

که ای بیچاره کامت شد مهیا!  
گر اوّل جور دید آخر وفا دید  
اگر از زلف پر چینم بلا دید  
که هر کو جور دید آخر دوا دید  
کسی کز آب دیده ماجرا دید  
ز لیلی آن جفا مجنون کجا دید؟

تمامی سخن

دلم ز اندیشهٔ تو دردناکست  
چو تو یک عاشق صاحب نظر نیست  
تویی آن عاشق پاک مجرد  
منم عاشق تویی معشوق دلخواه  
چو بشنید آن حکایتها ازو عود

که تو پاکی و عشقت نیز پاکست  
کنون زان تو ام گر هست ورن نیست  
که کردی پاک نقش هستی از خود  
یکی شد عاشق و معشوق بالله!  
به پیش عاشق آمد عود چون دود

ز دلبر مژده وصلت رسیده!  
 ز عود آمد ترا امید بهبود!  
 من و چنگش چنین چون موم کردیم  
 ز بهر عیش و عشرت خانه ساز  
 همی آیند عیشت شد میسر  
 بمهمانی همی آرد همایی  
 بر آمد شاد و جانش گشت خشنود  
 برفت و ساز کرد اسباب عشرت

بگفت ای عاشق محنت کشیده  
 فراوان سوختی در هجر چون عود  
 چو درد و فرقت معلوم کردیم  
 منت اکنون همی گویم بآواز  
 رسولان جملگی همراه دلبر  
 زهی طالع که چغدی بی نوایی  
 چو بشنید این سخنها عاشق از عود  
 بپا بر جست مسکین بهر خدمت

مجلس آراستن عاشق از برای معشوق بشادی و خرمی

بامید وصال آمد بباغی  
 چو جنت خالی از خار و خسی بود  
 تو گویی بود چون فرش منقش  
 اگر آنجا گذر کردی شدی تر  
 چو نرگس خورده جام و رفته از دست  
 ز لاله سرخ و از خیری معصفر  
 قلدح پر کرده و بر سر نهاده  
 ز حیرت سوسن آنجا گشته الکن  
 میان بسته بنفشه چون غلامان  
 شکوفه بر سراقق ریخت میری  
 بنرگس پوستین بخشید فی الحال  
 رسولان از طرفها صف کشیدند  
 روان بنشست در پهلو عاشق  
 فلک آنجا ز حیرت گوش بگرفت  
 زهی عیش و نشاط و عشرت و ناز!  
 همه کس را شود این عیش روزی  
 بآب دیده گریان عاشق  
 و گر درو دلی باشد دوا کن!  
 که کردم نظم از فیض عنایت  
 سراسر پانصد و چل بیت غرا  
 وگر بد گفته ام معذور میدار!

چو عاشق یافت از هجران فراغی  
 نه باغی کاندر و پای کسی بود  
 زمین از پرتو گلهای دلکش  
 سر حوضی چنان دلجو که کوثر  
 بنفشه سر به پیش افکند چون مست  
 هوایش مشکبو خاکش چو عنبر  
 شقایق از هوای جام باده  
 گشاده چشم نرگس پیش سوسن  
 زده گل خیمه غنچه گشته خندان  
 چو مدح گلستان بر خواند خیری  
 چو مستان بید مشک از غایت حال  
 در آن بستان\* دلکش چون رسیدند  
 ز روی مردمی یار موافق  
 می آوردند و نوشانوش بگرفت  
 فغان بر داشتند از هر طرف ساز  
 چه آسان باز رست از سینه سوزی  
 خداواندا بسوز جان عاشق  
 که هر کو حاجتی دارد روا کن!  
 خداایم داد توفیق و هدایت  
 بنظم آوردم این لؤلوی لالا  
 نکو بین و ز عیبش دور میدار

V. 54b: MS نبودى ; نبود MS نبودى ; v. 56b: MS نيز ; نيز MS نيز ; v. 57a: MS بسى ; بس MS بسى ; v. 57b: \*\* a blank after خو , and MS اهل ; هل MS اهل ; v. 58b: \*\* a blank after , ending in what might be ا س ; v. 84b: MS به موى و بنالى : 143a: v. 108a: MS بغير ; غير MS بغير ; v. 105b: MS دردى ; درد MS دردى ; بوييست MS بوييست ; v. 198a: MS نه موى و نئالى ; نه موى و نئالى MS نه موى و نئالى ; v. 215a: MS مرنجان ; مرنجان MS مرنجان ; v. 235a: MS موزون ; موزون MS موزون ; v. 235b: MS بد ; بد MS بد ; v. 239a: MS نيابى ; نيايى MS نيابى ; v. 242a: MS از وضفت ; از وضفت MS از وضفت ; v. 277b: MS بهشتى ; بهشتى MS بهشتى ; v. 265a: MS بكي ; بكي MS بكي ; v. 350b: MS ساعت ; ساعت MS ساعت ; v. 359b: MS آوازۀ ; آوازۀ MS آوازۀ ; v. 369a: MS بگو ; بگو MS بگو ; v. 374a: MS نزن ; نزن MS نزن ; v. 378a: MS باين ; باين MS باين ; v. 379b: \* MS را after هم ; هم MS را after \* MS را after ; v. 381a and b: MS كوييم ; كوييم MS كوييم ; v. 389b: MS ميسر ; ميسر MS ميسر ; v. 402a: MS فراوان ; فراوان MS فراوان ; v. 412b: MS لذت ; لذت MS لذت ; v. 434b: MS همنشئين ; همنشئين MS همنشئين ; v. 436b: MS بعسرت ; بعسرت MS بعسرت ; v. 442a: MS بين ; بين MS بين ; v. 443a: MS بسازد ; بسازد MS بسازد ; v. 475: this verse is repeated, the first time it is framed, as if it were a title. ; v. 482a: MS بايكيات ; بايكيات MS بايكيات ; v. 501a: MS فراغى ; فراغى MS فراغى ; v. 501b: MS باغى ; باغى MS باغى ; v. 510b: MS سرادق ; سرادق MS سرادق ; v. 511a: MS غايت ; غايت MS غايت ; v. 512a: MS بوستان ; بوستان MS بوستان ; v. 515a: MS عيش نشاط ; عيش و نشاط MS عيش و نشاط ; v. 515b: MS بر ; بر MS بر





# The Vedic Background of the Buddhist Notions of *Iddhi* and *Abhiññā* Three Case Studies with Particular Reference to the Pāli Literature

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**Abstract** This article begins with a brief introductory account of the vicissitudes of the academic studies on extraordinary capacities. Thereafter, the stereotyped passages in which *iddhi* and *abhiññā* occur as a meditative attainment achieved within a Buddhist path of liberation are presented and the interpretation of these two terms is discussed. After these preparatory opening remarks, the Vedic background of *iddhi* and *abhiññā* is treated with regards to three aspects. First, the speculative idea sustained by some scholars that would see the body made of mind (*manomaya-kāya*) as the base and tool to perform *iddhis* and *abhiññās* is discussed on the basis of the Vedic evidence. Secondly, the term 'divine' (*dibba*) that occurs in the description of some *abhiññās* is compared with the use of the corresponding Vedic terms and with the Vedic idea of a divine power behind the functioning of the faculties. Finally, the *abhiññā* called 'the knowledge of degeneration and ascent of beings' (*cutūpapātaññā*) is compared with a couple of narratives involving the oneiric state within the Upaniṣads, showing some similarities between the two accounts.

**Keywords** Buddhism. Pāli. Veda. Upaniṣad. Iddhi. Abhiññā. Manomaya-kāya.

**Summary** 1 Preliminary Remarks. – 2 Introduction. – 3 The Pericopes of *iddhis* and other *abhiññās*. – 4 Interpretation of the Terms *iddhi* and *abhiññā*. – 5 The Vedic Background: Three Case Studies. – 5.1 A Glance into the Vedic Background in Order to Solve a Problem. – 5.2 The Term 'Divine' (Pāli: *dibba*; Sanskrit: *divya/daiva*): What is There Behind the Linguistic Similarity? – 5.3 The Observation of the Action of *Kamma* (Sanskrit: *Karman*): A Faint Echo. – 6 Conclusion.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-28
Accepted	2019-04-02
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** De Notariis, Bryan (2019). "The Vedic Background of the Buddhist Notions of *Iddhi* and *Abhiññā*. Three Case Studies with Particular Reference to the Pāli Literature". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 227-264.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/008

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## 1 Preliminary remarks

The terms *iddhi* and *abhiññā* are used in the Pāli canon to designate extraordinary capacities, namely kinds of remarkable abilities and knowledges mostly attained during the path of awakening. At first glance, the decision to deal with *iddhis* and *abhiññās* separately may seem a little arbitrary. For instance, on many occasions in the Pāli canon the *iddhis* are regarded as part of *abhiññās*' classification, namely, *iddhis* are regarded as the first *abhiññā*. This is evident from the compound *chaḷabhiññā* 'endowed with the six *abhiññās*'<sup>1</sup> and from other similar expressions, such as: *cha abhiññā* (the six *abhiññās*; D, III, 281).<sup>2</sup> However, it should be highlighted that the word *abhiññā* does not appear within the exposition of the extraordinary capacities in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (D, 2), whereas the word *iddhi* is present. In the *Dīghanikāya*, a reference to the six *abhiññās* occurs in the *Dasuttarasutta* (D, 34; cf. D, III, 281), a proto-Abhidhammic text. From the point of view of the *Dīghanikāya*, the integration of *iddhis* within the group of the other *abhiññās* almost appears as a later development since only *Dasuttarasutta* mentions it. Moreover, although it seems that there has already been an established tendency in the Pāli canon to group together *iddhis* and the other *abhiññās*, there are examples from some texts later than the four principal *nikāyas* (*Dīgha*-, *Majjhima*-, *Samyutta*-, *Aṅguttara*-) that demonstrate that the Buddhist tradition has kept *iddhis* and *abhiññās* separated as well.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* devotes a chapter to the *iddhis* (*iddhi-kathā*; Paṭi, II, 205-14), and the *Visuddhimagga* devotes a chapter to the *iddhis* (*iddhividhā-niddesa*; Vism, 373-406) and another chapter to the other *abhiññās* (*abhiññā-niddesa*; Vism, 407-35).

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An earlier version of this paper was written during a period of stay at the University of Bristol (January-July 2018) under the supervision of Prof. Rupert Gethin. The Author first presented it at the 23rd Joint Postgraduate Conference on Theology and Religion, University of Exeter, 28 April 2018. He is grateful to his doctoral supervisor, Prof. Alberto Pelissero, and his co-supervisor, Prof. Andrea Drocco, for the help and suggestions he received. He wishes to thank Indaka Weerasekera for a final glance on the preprint version of the paper. Last but not least, he is also strongly indebted to Prof. Giuliano Giustarini, whose remarks drove him to improve his work. It goes without saying that all remaining errors are his own responsibility. All translations from Pāli and Sanskrit are his own unless otherwise noted.

**1** This compound appears, for instance, in S, I, 191; Vin, II, 161; Pug, 14 (quoted also in PED, 57, s.v. "*abhiññā*", which, however, made a mistake writing 'Vin, II, 16', whereas the right reference is 'Vin, II, 161').

**2** There is also mention in the Pāli texts of an enumeration of five *abhiññās*: *pañcanam abhiññānam* (S, II, 216).

**3** A widespread canonical reference of *abhiññās* that does not include *iddhis* is the notion of 'three knowledges' (*tisso vijjā*, often also in the adjectival form *tevijja* 'having three knowledges') which includes only the last three *abhiññās* of the six-*abhiññās* (*chaḷabhiññā*) systematisation. Some scholars regard the notion of 'three knowledges' older than *chaḷabhiññā*, in this regard see Endo 1997, 17 and Gómez [2010] 2011, 515.

## 2 Introduction

In the field of the study of Indian religions, the analysis of the extraordinary capacities achievable through the practice of meditation is a topic that still needs a thorough examination. For instance, it was noted by David G. White that the third chapter of the *Yogasūtra*, which deals with the supernatural powers of yogis, “has historically been the least studied portion of that text, in spite of the fact that it comprises over one fourth of the entire work” (2012, 61). It is possible to state that the study of extraordinary capacities has had a fluctuating trend throughout the centuries since in the early XX century, at the beginning of the study of yoga traditions, some scholars attempted to associate the study of yoga powers with the results achieved in psychological research (such as hypnosis) in the hope to improve our insight into human capacities. This tendency survived until studies on these psychological phenomena were carried out by universities.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the progressive affirmation of a secularising tendency has resulted in a gradual abandonment of this kind of research and, indeed, it is possible to identify a certain embarrassment on the part of scholars in dealing with these extraordinary powers.<sup>5</sup> In recent times, it seems that the study of miracles and extraordinary powers has once again become popular and, therefore, works on this argument have been published recently.<sup>6</sup> Until now, the trend towards extraordinary capacities with reference to Indian religions in general has been exposed, but what can we say about the general trend in Buddhist studies? It can be argued that, despite notable exceptions, the general trend that became established was the same tendency that occurred for the study of the broader field of Indian religions:<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> According to Kripal (2007, 183; see also Jacobsen 2012, 13), a change in the psychological studies was due to the emergence of behaviourism.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed sketch on the attitude towards the study of yoga powers, see Jacobsen 2012, 12-16.

<sup>6</sup> This new trend is confirmed by: 1) the renewed commitment of the universities, most notably, the doctoral thesis of David V. Fiordalis (2008); 2) the commitment of journals, such as volume 33 of the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* ([2010] 2011), which dedicated six articles to the study of miracles and superhuman powers in Buddhist traditions; 3) the publication of miscellanies, such as the volume edited by Knut A. Jacobsen *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration* (Leiden: Boston 2012), which deals with the study of yoga powers within many different traditions in different ages.

<sup>7</sup> Remarkable exceptions are, for instance, Demiéville (1927), La Vallé Poussin (1931), Conze (1952), French (1977). It is maybe thanks to maverick authors like these that the study of extraordinary phenomena started gradually to gain importance within the academia. For example, according to Gómez “[w]e owe it to Prof. Edward Conze to have contributed positively to break the spell of ‘Buddhist rationalism’ among Western students of the Buddhist texts, when he insisted, in his *Buddhism: Its Essence and Devel-*

The attempt to marginalize the practice of miraculous powers in the earliest Buddhist texts must be considered a feature of Buddhist modernism, and related to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century preoccupation with recovering a historical Buddha congenial to the rationalist and ethical sensitivities of certain Buddhist apologists. (Gethin 2011, 223)<sup>8</sup>

This tendency may have affected a huge number of scholars since the preoccupation towards the performance of miraculous powers flowed into the writing of the lemma '*iddhi*' within the *Pāli-English Dictionary*. Therefore, after the exposition of ten kinds of power, it is reported that

[t]here is no valid evidence that any one of the ten *iddhis* in the above list actually took place. A few instances are given, but all are in texts more than a century later than the recorded wonder. And now for nearly two thousand years we have no further instances. (PED, 107)

This last passage seems to reveal a certain anxiety towards powers as if to say to the reader to not take them too seriously.<sup>9</sup> However, the attitude of the Buddhist tradition towards the extraordinary capacities is exactly the opposite since these powers are treated as something that really exists and so needs regulation. Therefore, the monastic code, the *Vinaya*, contains some rules to regulate the performance and the attitude towards them. Hence, in the *Cullavagga* section of the *Vinaya*, the Buddha forbids monks to exhibit and flaunt the superhuman miracle of powers in front of lay people.<sup>10</sup> On another occasion, it is stated that claiming to have experienced the superhuman phenomena when it is not true is an offence that results in

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*opment, on the compatibility and frequent coexistence of magical belief and Buddhist philosophy*" (1977, 221).

**8** A similar kind of rationalistic approach affected the study of Indian philosophy in general: "[t]he promoters of the study of Indian philosophy often saw it as their job to emphasize the rational in Indian traditions against a Eurocentrism that saw rationality and philosophy mainly as an exclusively Western phenomenon" (Jacobsen 2012, 14).

**9** The same attitude was also noted by Harold W. French, who wrote that "[t]he texts themselves indicate different perspectives toward *iddhi* and modern interpreters exhibit the same tendency. Some, notably the Rhys Davids' and Oldenberg, seem embarrassed by the references, which are not insignificant, and are inclined to minimize the import of *iddhi* in the tradition" (1977, 42). Here, French is referring to both Mr. and Mrs. Rhys Davids and it is worth noting that Mr. Rhys Davids was one of the redactors of the *Pāli-English Dictionary*.

**10** *na bhikkhave gihīnaṃ uttarimanussadhammaṃ iddhipāṭihāriyaṃ dassetabbaṃ.* (Vin, II, 112)

the expulsion from the Monastic order.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the attainment of extraordinary capacities is also reported in a stereotyped account of the path of liberation, which is fully explained in the Pāli texts, for instance, in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, the *sutta* number two of the *Dīghanikāya*.<sup>12</sup> In this account, it is stated that a monk, after having cultivated morality, abandons the five hindrances (*pañca-nīvaraṇa*) and attains ever deeper meditative absorption states (*jhāna*) until the fourth level of absorption. Thereafter, he directs the mind (*citta*) for the sake of knowing and seeing (*ñāṇa-dassana*), discovering that the body is impermanent and that the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is attached to it. After raising awareness into the very nature of body and consciousness, the monk is able to create a new body made of mind (*manomaya*). At this point, the text lists a set of extraordinary capacities which culminate in the achievement of liberation. In later systematisations these capacities are called the six *abhiññās* (*chaḷabhiññā*), which consist of *iddhis*, in addition to the other five *abhiññās*.

### 3 The Pericopes of *iddhis* and Other *abhiññās*

After the creation of the body made of mind, the attainment of the extraordinary capacities is reported. These are listed hierarchically since the ending words that divide the attainments from each other state: “Oh Great King, this also is a visible fruit of the homeless life which is more advanced and exalted than the previous ones”.<sup>13</sup> The first pericope (or formulaic expression) that appears in this regard is a set of *iddhis* that the monk is able to perform:

When the mind is concentrated in this way, purified, cleaned, unblemished, freed from impurities, malleable, fit for work, steadfast, having attained impassibility, he directs and turns the mind to the variety of *iddhis*. He experiences variety of *iddhis* in many ways: having been one he becomes many, having been many he becomes one, he becomes manifested, he becomes concealed, he

<sup>11</sup> *yo pana bhikkhu anabhijānaṃ uttarimanussadhammaṃ attūpanāyikaṃ alamariyañāṇadassanaṃ samudācareyya iti jānāmi iti passāmīti, tato aparena samayena samanuggāhiyamāno vā asamanuggāhiyamāno vā āpanno visuddhāpekkho evaṃ vadēyya: ajānaṃ evaṃ āvuso avacaṃ jānāmi, apassaṃ passāmi, tuccham musā vilapin ti, aññatra adhimānā, ayaṃ pi pārājiko hoti asaṃvaso.* (Vin, III, 91)

<sup>12</sup> This stereotyped account of the path of liberation has had different classifications over time. Yit (2004, 16 fn. 34) proposes that it is from D, I, 62 to D, I, 85 and also provides references to the other scholarly classifications. An impressive account of the variations of this stereotyped path within *nikāyas* and *āgamas* will be provided by Gethin (forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> *idam pi kho mahā-rāja sandiṭṭhikaṃ sāmāñña-phalaṃ purimehi sandiṭṭhikehi sāmāñña-phalehi abhikkantataraṇa ca pañitatarāṇa ca.* (e.g. D, I, 77)

goes beyond walls, ramparts, mountains unattached by them just as he was in the ether, he sinks and emerges from earth just as he were in the water, he walks on the water without sinking in it just as he were on the earth, he goes cross-legged through the ether just as he were a winged bird, he touches and strokes with the hand the sun and the moon which have so great power and splendour, he goes even with the body as far as the Brahmā world.<sup>14</sup>

Successively, other *abhiññās* are listed, starting with the ‘element of the divine ear’ (*dibbasotadhātu*):

He hears, with the element of the divine ear which is purified and far beyond the human one, both sounds, divine and human, distant and close.<sup>15</sup>

The ‘knowledge by comprehension of the minds [of others]’ (*cetopariyañāṇa*):

He knows with the mind the ways of thought of other beings, of other individuals: when the mind is with passion he knows: ‘the mind is with passion’, when the mind is without passion he knows: ‘the mind is without passion’, when the mind is with hatred he knows: ‘the mind is with hatred’, when the mind is without hatred he knows: ‘the mind is without hatred’, when the mind is with delusion he knows: ‘the mind is with delusion’, when the mind is without delusion he knows: ‘the mind is without delusion’, when the mind is gathered he knows: ‘the mind is gathered’, when the mind is scattered he knows: ‘the mind is scattered’, when the mind is of great excellence he knows: ‘the mind is of great excellence’, when the mind is not of great excellence he knows: ‘the mind is not of great excellence’, when the mind is with a superior he knows: ‘the mind is with a superior’, when the mind is without a superior he knows: ‘the mind is without a superior’, when the mind is concentrated he knows: ‘the mind is concentrated’, when the mind is not concentrated he knows: ‘the mind is not concentrated’, when the mind is released he knows: ‘the mind is released’, when the mind is unreleased he knows: ‘the mind is unreleased’.<sup>16</sup>

**14** *so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudu-bhūte kammaniye thite ānejjappatte iddhi-vidhāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. so aneka-vihitaṃ iddhi-vidhaṃ paccanubhoti – eko pi hutvā bahudhā hoti, bahudhā pi hutvā eko hoti, āvibhāvaṃ tiro-bhāvaṃ tiro-kuḍḍaṃ tiro-pākāraṃ tiro-pabbataṃ asajjamāno gacchati seyyathā pi ākāse, paṭhaviyā pi ummujja-nimmujjaṃ karoti seyyathā pi udake, udake pi abhijjamāno gacchati seyyathā pi paṭhaviyaṃ, ākāse pi pallānkena kamati seyyathā pi pakkhi sakuṇo, ime pi candima-suriye evaṃ mahiddhike evaṃ mahānubhāve pāṇinā parimasati parimajjati, yāva Brahma-lokā pi kāyena va saṃvatteti* (D, I, 78). Anālayo (2016, 15 fn. 16) prefers the alternative reading *vasaṃ vatteti* in place of *va saṃvatteti* in the last phrase. However, this variation does not affect the present survey.

**15** *so dibhāya sotadhātuyā visuddhāya atikkanta-mānuskāya ubho sadde suṇāti, dibbe ca mānuse ca, ye dūre santike ca* (D, I, 79). Here and in the following *abhiññās* pericopes, the introductory phrase is omitted: *so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudu-bhūte kammaniye thite ānejjappatte* [specific power inflected in dative/genitive] *cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti*.

**16** *so para-sattānaṃ para-puggalānaṃ cetasā ceto paricca pajānāti – sa-rāgaṃ vā cittaṃ sa-rāgaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti, vīta-rāgaṃ vā cittaṃ vīta-rāgaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,*

The 'knowledge of recollections of former existences' (*pubbenivāsānussatiññā*):

He remembers the manifold past abodes in this way: one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many contracted aeons, many expanded aeons, many contracted and expanded aeons. 'I was over there, I had this name, this family, this caste, this food, I had experienced this happiness and this pain, I had this end of life. I disappeared from there and arose over there. Also there I was, I had this name, this family, this caste, this food, I had experienced this happiness and this pain, I had this end of life. I<sup>17</sup> disappeared from there and arose here'. Thus, he remembers the manifold past abodes in all their modes and in detail.<sup>18</sup>

The 'knowledge of degeneration and ascent of beings' (*cutūpapātaññā*):

He sees beings with the divine eye which is purified and far beyond the human one; he knows beings degenerating and ascending, reaching according to their *kamma* low [existences], excellent [existences], good conditions, bad conditions, good destinies, bad destinies. 'Oh venerables, Alas! These beings are endowed with the bad conduct of the body, endowed with the bad conduct of the

*sa-dosaṃ vā cittaṃ sa-dosaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
vīta-dosaṃ vā cittaṃ vīta-dosaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
sa-mohaṃ vā cittaṃ sa-mohaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
vīta-mohaṃ vā cittaṃ vīta-mohaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
saṃkhittaṃ vā cittaṃ saṃkhittaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
vikkhittaṃ vā cittaṃ vikkhittaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
mahaggataṃ vā cittaṃ mahaggataṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
amahaggataṃ vā cittaṃ amahaggataṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
sa-uttaraṃ vā cittaṃ sa-uttaraṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
anuttaraṃ vā cittaṃ anuttaraṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
samāhitaṃ vā cittaṃ samāhitaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
asamāhitaṃ vā cittaṃ asamāhitaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
vimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ vimuttaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti,  
avimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ avimuttaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti. (D, I, 79-80)*

**17** The Author followed the suggestion given by Giuliano Giustarini to read *so ahaṃ* in place of *so*.

**18** *so aneka-vihitaṃ pubbe-nivāsaṃ anussarati seyyathidaṃ ekam pi jātiṃ dve pi jātiyo tisso pi jātiyo catasso pi jātiyo pañca pi jātiyo dasa pi jātiyo visatim pi jātiyo tiṃsam pi jātiyo cattārisam pi jātiyo paññāsam pi jātiyo jāti-satam pi jāti-sahassam pi jāti-sata-sahassam pi aneke pi saṃvaṭṭa-kappe aneke pi vivaṭṭa-kappe aneke pi saṃvaṭṭa-vivaṭṭa-kappe. amutrāsiṃ evaṃ-nāmo evaṃ-gotto evaṃ-vaṇṇo evaṃ-āhāro evaṃ-sukha-dukka-paṭisaṃvedī evaṃ-āyu-pariyanto. tatrāpāsiṃ evaṃ-nāmo evaṃ-gotto evaṃ-vaṇṇo evaṃ-āhāro evaṃ-sukha-dukka-paṭisaṃvedī evaṃ-āyu-pariyanto. so tato cuto idhūpapanno ti iti sākāraṃ sa-uddesaṃ aneka-vihitaṃ pubbe nivāsaṃ anussarati. (D, I, 81)*

speech, endowed with the bad conduct of the mind, speaking evil of the nobles, having a wrong view, acquiring *kamma* through the wrong view. Cause the destruction of the body, they arose after death in an inferior destination, in a bad destiny, in a place of suffering, in a hell. Oh venerables, but these beings are endowed with the good conduct of the body, endowed with the good conduct of the speech, endowed with the good conduct of the mind, not speaking evil of the nobles, having a right view, acquiring *kamma* through the right view. Cause the destruction of the body, they arose after death in a good destiny, in the heaven world'. Thus he sees, with the divine eye which is purified and far beyond the human one, the beings; he knows beings degenerating and ascending, reaching according to their *kamma* low [existences], excellent [existences], good conditions, bad conditions, good destinies, bad destinies.<sup>19</sup>

The 'knowledge of extinction' (*khayañāṇa*) 'of the noxious influxes' (*āsava*):

He knows according to reality: 'this is suffering'; he knows according to reality: 'this is the origin of suffering'; he knows according to reality: 'this is the cessation of suffering'; he knows according to reality: 'this is the path which leads to the cessation of suffering'; he knows according to reality: 'these are the noxious influxes'; he knows according to reality: 'this is the origin of the noxious influxes'; he knows according to reality: 'this is the cessation of the noxious influxes'; he knows according to reality: 'this is the path which leads to the cessation of the noxious influxes'. When he knows and sees in this way, the mind is freed from the noxious influx of the sensual desire, is freed from the noxious influx of the existence, is freed from the noxious influx of the ignorance, in the liberation there is the knowledge '[the mind] is liberated', he knows: 'the birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done was done, from this life there will be not another one'.<sup>20</sup>

**19** so dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkanta-mānusakena satte passati cavamāne upapajjamāne, hīne pañite suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate duggate yathā-kammūpage satte pajānāti: ime vata bhonto sattā kāya-duccaritena samannāgatā vacī-duccaritena samannāgatā mano-duccaritena samannāgatā ariyānaṃ upavādakā micchā-diṭṭhikā micchā-diṭṭhi-kamma-samādānā. te kāyassa bhedā paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapannā. ime vā pana bhonto sattā kāya-sucaritena samannāgatā vacī-sucaritena samannāgatā mano-sucaritena samannāgatā ariyānaṃ anupavādakā sammā-diṭṭhikā sammā-diṭṭhi-kamma-samādānā, te kāyassa bhedā paraṃ maraṇā sugatiṃ saggam lokam upapannā ti. iti dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkanta-mānusakena satte passati cavamāne upapajjamāne, hīne pañite suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate duggate yathā-kammūpage satte pajānāti. (D, I, 82-3)

**20** so idaṃ dukkhaṃ ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ dukkha-samudayo ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ dukkha-nirodho ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ dukkha-nirodha-gāmini



#### 4 Interpretation of the Terms *iddhi* and *abhiññā*

As in the case for other Buddhist terms, the translation of *iddhi* and *abhiññā* is in some ways problematic. Taking first the term *iddhi*, it is possible to state that it derives from a Sanskrit root  $\sqrt{rdh}$ , therefore, the Sanskrit equivalent of *iddhi* is  $\mathit{rdhi}$ .<sup>21</sup> The term *abhiññā* derives from a Sanskrit *abhi- $\sqrt{jñā}$*  and, therefore, its Sanskrit equivalent is *abhijñā*. The term *abhiññā* could be literally translated as ‘super-knowledge’ since the prefix *abhi-* often means an intensification (cf. PED, 54) and the root  $\sqrt{jñā}$  means ‘to know’. However, this translation might sound a bit naive or unsophisticated, so the rendering ‘higher knowledge’ will be adopted. It is worth noting that the term could have another less specific meaning related to the action of knowing, namely ‘to know fully’. This meaning is connected with the use of the term within some texts, such as the *Suttanipāta*, which would show, according to some scholars, the older strata of the language.<sup>22</sup> The root  $\sqrt{rdh}$ , from which the term *iddhi* derives, means to grow, increase, prosper, succeed (cf. SED, 226). Therefore, there is not a satisfying literal English translation – or at least it has not yet been found. Some scholars have adopted some literal translations, through terms like ‘success’, ‘accomplishment’ (e.g. Gombrich

*paṭipadā ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti, ime āsavā ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ āsava-samudayo ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ āsava-nirodho ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ āsava-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti. tassa evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati bhavāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati avijjāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati, vimuttasmīṃ vimuttam iti ñāṇaṃ hoti, khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaniyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyā ti pajānāti.* (D, I, 83-4)

**21** It was highlighted by Fiordalis (2008, 157 fn. 18) and Overbey (2012, 129-31) as some scholars wrongly assumed an equivalence between *iddhi* and *siddhi*. On the basis of an etymological argument, indeed, the word *siddhi* derives from a different root, namely from  $\sqrt{sidh}$ . Therefore, in a Sanskrit version of a Pāli passage that explains the various kinds of *iddhis* (*so aneka-vihitaṃ iddhi-vidhaṃ paccaṇubhoti*; D, I, 78) the term *iddhi* is substituted by the term  $\mathit{rdhi}$ : *so'nekavidham ṛddhiviṣayaṃ pratyanubhavadati* (SbhV, II, 246).

**22** References to this use of the term *abhiññā* in the *Suttanipāta* are provided by Gómez [2010] 2011, 515 fn. 5. Some scholars who suggested that the *Suttanipāta* was part of the older stratum of the Buddhist texts are, for instance, Nakamura ([1980] 1987, 44-6) and Hirakawa (1990, 77). Norman ([1992] 2001, XXXI-XXXIII) discussed the relative date of some parts of the *Suttanipāta*, suggesting an old composition of some of them, and also highlighted that some *suttas* might be mentioned also in Aśoka's Calcutta-Bairāt edict ([1992] 2001, XXXIII-XXXIV). Some doubts about the supposed antiquity of the *Suttanipāta* have been put forward by De Jong (1991, 7; 1997, 97-8), whose observations, more recently, have been taken up by Cousins (2013, 18-9). The picture that emerges shows a difference of opinions though at least two chapters (*vagga*) of the *Suttanipāta* (viz. *Aṭṭhakavagga* and *Pārāyanavagga*) are still considered by some scholars one of the oldest records we have to the study of early Buddhism. In fact, Wynne and Gombrich recently wrote: “we believe that the *Aṭṭhaka-* and *Pārāyana-vaggas* (S[utta]n[ipāta] IV-V) are the key to understanding early Buddhism” (2018, 88; square brackets are added; italics in the original).

1997, 176; Gethin 2011, 221), however, these translations make complete sense only if the reader has a basic knowledge of Buddhism. The phrase ‘A monk can achieve various successes after the creation of a body made of mind’ does not give a real insight into what the monk achieves, whereas the phrase ‘A monk can achieve various psychic powers after the creation of a body made of mind’ is certainly more descriptive.<sup>23</sup> These attempts of a literal translation try to include – even if only partially – at the same time all ranges of meaning that the term *iddhi* covers. In fact, the term *iddhi* does not only mean the extraordinary capacities achieved by meditation, but it covers a wider range of applications.<sup>24</sup> King Mahāsudassana, for instance, was endowed with four *iddhis*: beauty, long life, good health, and he was beloved by Brahmins and householders (D, II, 177-8); The young Gotama, during his life as a prince, was endowed with a beautiful garden with lotus ponds, pleasant garments, different houses for different seasons, and good food (A, I, 145). *Iddhi* is also the craft of a hunter (M, I, 151-2) and the ability of a hunted animal to escape (M, I, 155). The ability of geese to fly is also called *iddhi* (Dhp, 175). This term could also mean a sort of richness since its opposite (*aniddhi*) means ‘poor’, ‘poverty’ (DOP, 374).<sup>25</sup> In spite of the large amount of meanings and applications, it can be argued that the use of the term *iddhi* within the account that lists the meditation attainments, namely the fruits of meditation practice, is very peculiar, whereas in many cases quoted above, the term *iddhi* means something like accomplishment, talent, or a particular beneficial condition. In some passages, it is particularly clear since the word *samannāgata* (D, I, 177-8; A, I, 145) is used, which means ‘endowed with’ (with the term *iddhi* in the instrumental case),<sup>26</sup> highlighting that *iddhis*, in that context, are something that one owns. When *iddhis* appear as meditation attainments the emphasis is not on the possession, but it is on the experiential factor. *Iddhis* are something that one can experience: *paccanubhoti* (D, I, 78).<sup>27</sup> So, the meaning, it seems, fluctuates between an

**23** However, it should be highlighted that the rendering ‘success’ works very well when the term *iddhi* occurs in combination with the verb *ijjhati* (which is from a root *√rdh* as well) since the latter could be translated as ‘to succeed’.

**24** A list of cognate terms is provided by Vibh, 217.

**25** Various applications of the term *iddhi* in different contexts are mentioned also in Rhys Davids 1899, 88 fn. 4; Fiordalis 2008, 123-4; French 1977, 43-4; Gethin 2011, 221. Cf. also the s.v. “*iddhi*” in PED, 107; DOP, 373-4; CPD, 291-2.

**26** See s.v. “*samannāgata*” in PED, 616.

**27** Here, it is worth reporting the remark the Author received from Giuliano Giustarini. He rightly pointed out that the meditator is often endowed with (*samannāgata*) factors earlier developed. This is exemplified by passages such as: *So iminā ca ariyena sīla-kkhandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya-saṃvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati-sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhiyā samannāgato* (D, I, 71). Nevertheless, the Author was unable to find any persuasive canonical refer-

‘endowment’ and an ‘experienceable achievement’. What all meanings of the word *iddhi* have in common is that the term refers to something positive that is peculiar of someone, in the sense that is not ordinary, just as the *iddhis* of a king or a nobleman are not shared by the folk people, and in the same way the craft of the hunter, the agility of the hunted animal, and the ability to fly of geese are, all of them, not widespread skills. This also applies to the monk who has the possibility to experience *iddhis*, performances which can not be accomplished by an ordinary person without prior having engaged in a mental training or at least making use of a sort of esoteric science.<sup>28</sup> The performance is clearly made through the power of the mind, “when the mind is concentrated in this way [...] he directs and turns the mind to the variety of *iddhis*” (*so evaṃ samāhite citte [...] iddhi-vidhāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti*; D, I, 78), all these *iddhis* that the monk is able to perform are marvellous actions made through the mind. They are ‘psychic accomplishments’ or ‘psychic attainments’. The Author of the present article likes the translation ‘psychic power’ for the term *iddhi*, despite the fact that this translation is open to criticism. In this regard, it was highlighted by Fior-dalis that:

ence to the association of the term *iddhi*, indicating extraordinary performances, with *samannāgata*. The only canonical reference in which ‘*samannāgata*’ is associated with ‘*iddhi*’ understood as ‘magical power’ is Kv, 456-8, which, however, does not fit exactly the context under analysis since it concerns the possibility to prolong one’s own lifespan. Undoubtedly, the fact that *iddhis* could also be regarded as a kind of possession cannot be completely ruled out, the term *iddhimant* ‘one who has *iddhi*(s)’ is a good example. Furthermore, in Vibh (217), which provides some synonyms for *iddhi*, some terms indicate an acquisition, such as *lābha* or *patti*. However, in the same passage, there are also some terms that clearly indicate the connection of *iddhi* with the field of experience, such as *phusanā* and *sacchikiriya*. The word *phusanā* is connected with the verb *phusati* ‘to touch’ (PED, 430), and the word *sacchikiriya* with the verb *sacchikaroti*, which means ‘to experience’ in the sense of ‘to see with one’s eyes’ (PED, 603). Both terms suggest that this is a direct experience, just as the one acquired through the sense organs. Overall, it seems to me safe to maintain the experiential characteristic as a prerogative of *iddhi* in this context.

**28** This is attested, for instance, in the *Kevaddhasutta* (D, 11), in which the formulaic passage of D, I, 78 is used to explain what the term *iddhi-pāṭihāriya* means (cf. D, I, 212). In this text, the Buddha explains to Kevaddha that a person without faith would not be impressed by the miraculous performances and he would state: “There is a spell called ‘Gandhārī’, through which this monk experiences variety of *iddhis* in many ways” (*Atthi kho bho Gandhārī nāma vijjā. Tāya so bhikkhu aneka-vihitaṃ iddhi-vidhaṃ paccanubhoti*; D, I, 213), a spell (*vijjā*) called Gandhārī occurs also in J, IV, 498-9. In the same way, a person without faith would not be impressed by the mind-reading (*ādesanā*) since he could affirm that “[t]here is an art that concerns talismans (*Maṇika*), through which a monk reads the mind and mental states of other beings and individuals” (*Atthi kho bho Maṇiko nāma vijjā. Tāya so bhikkhu parasattānaṃ parapuggalānaṃ cittaṃ pi ādisati cetāsikam pi ādisati*; D, I, 214). Moreover, it is certainly interesting the term ‘*Athabban-iddhi*’ in As, 92. Here, it is involved a magical power (*iddhi*) which derives from the implementation of the teachings contained in the *Atharvaveda* (*athabbana* = Sanskrit: *ātharvaṇa* ‘belonging to the *Atharvaveda*’).

psychic power does not give a sense for the diverse range of powers that fall under the category of *ṛddhi*, and elicits confusion with other superpowers, such as clairvoyance and telepathy. (2008, 123)

Fiordalis is basically stating that the term ‘psychic power’ could be also ascribed to some other *abhiññās* since the knowledge by comprehension of the minds [of others] (*cetopariyañāṇa*) is a kind of telepathy and the knowledge of degeneration and ascent of beings (*cutūpapātañāṇa*), in which the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*) is developed, can be considered a sort of clairvoyance. He is certainly right in pointing this out, but nevertheless, the partial overlapping of the terms *iddhi* and *abhiññā* does not allow – at least according to the Author – a really safe translation for the term *iddhi*. Therefore, the translation of the term *iddhi* also made by Fiordalis, who often prefers the rendition ‘superhuman power’,<sup>29</sup> could overlap with the other *abhiññās* since clairvoyance and telepathy are certainly not an average human ability. Given that *iddhi* turned out to be an ambiguous term, not only for its broad semantic applications but also for its partial overlap with *abhiññā*, we should consider its translation as provisional and conventional. What seems to differentiate *iddhis* from the other *abhiññās* is that the *iddhis* result in a physical performance, whereas the *abhiññās* result in a new knowledge (*ñāṇa*).<sup>30</sup> In the exposition of the *iddhis* it is stated that the monk can multiply himself, can disappear or appear at will, and can achieve freedom of movement and mastery of natural elements. In the expositions of other *abhiññās*, on the other hand, a new knowledge of something is attained: knowledge of sounds, knowledge of other minds, knowledge of recollections of former existences, knowledge of degeneration and ascent of beings according to their *kamma*, knowledge of extinction of the noxious influxes. The connection of the term *iddhi* with the term *ñāṇa* seems to be a later development, probably an outcome of the

**29** “Although I choose to translate *ṛddhi* as superhuman power, this is not a literal rendering of the term” (Fiordalis 2008, 122), on another occasion commenting the *Kevaladhasutta* (D, 11), he wrote regarding the term *iddhi*: “[m]y preference for translating it as ‘superhuman power,’ at least in this context, derives partly from the fact that Buddhist texts like this one sometimes gloss the term with *uttarimanussa-dhamma*, which can be translated more literally as a superhuman quality or characteristic” (Fiordalis [2010] 2011, 386 fn. 13).

**30** It should be pointed out that commentarial literature tried to ascribe the term *ñāṇa* to the *iddhi-vidha* (cf. DA, I, 222-3), however, the term *ñāṇa* was already naturally connected with four of the other *abhiññās* (e.g. *cetopariya-ñāṇa*, *pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, *cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*, *āsavakhaya-ñāṇa*) and in the other one, the element of the divine ear (*dibbasotadhātu*), it is easy to understand why it could be considered a *ñāṇa*, since it results in a kind of knowledge: the knowledge of sounds divine or human; far or near.

*Abhidhamma* production.<sup>31</sup> However, *iddhis* might be connected with knowledge even in the early texts. In some classifications, *iddhis* are one of the *vijjās* (e.g. D, I, 100) or one of the *paññās* (e.g. D, I, 124), and both *vijjā* and *paññā* are associated with the action of knowing. This may indicate that the experiential characteristic of *iddhis* can, somehow, lead to or be connected with knowledge.

## 5 The Vedic Background: Three Case Studies

*Iddhis* and *abhiññās* are not only terms that are difficult to translate, but they are also concepts well integrated within the path of awakening and, therefore, their analysis could be of benefit for the general understanding of the Buddhist tradition. Among the Vedic texts,<sup>32</sup> the closest ones to the Buddhist canon – not only in terms of chronology but also in terms of speculative arguments treated – are the Upaniṣads. However, not all scholars agree on the fact that Upaniṣads may have influenced early Buddhism. This controversy has been recently summarised by Cohen ([2017] 2018), who, however, has dedicated an unequal number of pages to the two points of view and the theory that asserts the Upaniṣadic influence on early Buddhism (Cohen [2017] 2018, 88-94) seems to prevail against the theory that assumes no direct relationship between the Upaniṣads and early Buddhism (88).<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding the academic controversies, a comparison between the Buddhist canon and the Upaniṣads is certainly of great benefit as to whether (1) the shared ideas between Buddhism and Upaniṣads are due to the common cultural *milieu*, or (2) that either Upaniṣadic ideas influenced Buddhism or Buddhist texts sometimes refer to or criticise Upaniṣadic concepts. In both cases, it seems safe to assume that a study concerning Vedic texts (especially the oldest Upaniṣads) could facilitate and support the reconstruction of the historical context in which Buddhism was born and developed.

**31** The oldest references to the compound *iddhividha-ñāṇa* occur mainly in Abhidhammic works, such as the *Paṭṭhāna* (e.g. Tikap, II, 166) or in the semi-Abhidhammic work known as *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (e.g. Paṭi, I, 111).

**32** The Author is aware of the complexity in defining what ‘Veda’ is. Therefore, the Author shall specify that he employs, in this work, the term ‘Vedic’ and other derivatives in a wide sense, including Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. What kinds of texts were considered part of the Veda depends by the historical period. Hence, in some old texts, such as the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, there is a mention about the three Vedas (*trayaṇa vedena*; ŚB 5.5.5.10) indicating that only the *mantras* were considered ‘Vedas’ at that time.

**33** The extensive work of Bronkhorst (2007) has been dismissed in a handful of lines.

## 5.1 A Glance into the Vedic Background in Order to Solve a Problem

Among these Buddhist extraordinary capacities, the *iddhis* are particularly interesting. As it was previously noted, the *iddhis* are marvellous performances made possible through the power of a mind trained in meditation. Since in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* the performance of *iddhis* is preceded by the creation of the body made of mind (*manomaya-kāya*),<sup>34</sup> some scholars argue that the performance of extraordinary capacities is realised through this mental body.<sup>35</sup> However, the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* does not specifically state it, and this assumption seems to be based on the fact that the body made of mind is created before attainment of the ability to perform *iddhis*.<sup>36</sup> This argument, however, could be subject to the logical fallacy named *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, namely the assumption that what happens before is the cause of what follows. As a matter of fact, the temporal connection does not necessarily imply a causal one. However, it should be noted that on the one hand, many steps of the path of liberation in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* seem to be connected to each other, such as the elimination of the five hindrances (*pañca-nivaraṇa*), which seems to lead to the attainment of the first level of meditative absorption (*paṭhamajjhāna*) (cf. D, I, 73). Yet, on the other hand some steps are not directly influenced by each other, such as the knowledge by comprehension of the minds [of others] (*cetopariyaññā*) that is not attained thanks to the previous one, the element of the divine ear (*dibbasotadhātu*). Obviously, the *iddhis* and the other *abhiññās* could be considered in a very scholastic and synchronic way as only one step, the *chalaḥabhiññā*, but this interpretation would not take into account the fact that this classification might have not yet been developed when this passage was composed, since the word '*abhiññā*' does not even appear within this *sutta* with this kind of meaning.<sup>37</sup> More-

<sup>34</sup> The exposition of the creation of the body made of mind in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* has been recently discussed by De Notariis (2018).

<sup>35</sup> This opinion is supported by Swearer 1973, 449; Harvey 1993, 36; Hamilton 1996, 162-3; Radich 2007, 257; Clough [2010] 2011, 417; Lee 2014, 67; Anālayo 2016, 16.

<sup>36</sup> This is the argumentation, for instance, of Radich (2007, 257) and Anālayo (2016, 16).

<sup>37</sup> Therefore, all these attainments are listed in a section that could be a "coherent and separate work, which occurs in many other suttas both in the Pali and non-Pali traditions" (MacQueen 1988, 179). The term *abhiññā* occurs in the phrasing *sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedeti* (D, I, 62), but here it is just a short form of the absolutive *abhiññāya* (from the verb *abhiññāti*). Finally, it should be specified that the Author does not rule out the possibility that the stages - or at least some of them - in the path of liberation are connected to each other, but he believes that other possibilities should be taken into account as well. In fact, even other stages such as the practice of the monk to be mindful and fully aware in all his activities (*sati-sampajañña*; D, I, 70-1) and the fact that the monk becomes content of his frugal life (*santuṭṭha*; D, I, 71) are not strong-

over, there is a paradox, namely that later texts regard the creation of the mind-made body as an *iddhi* (cf. Paṭi, II, 205 and Vism, 378), and not a requisite to perform *iddhis*. In conclusion, there is likely a reasonable doubt about the fact that the extraordinary capacities are performed through the body made of mind since it is not clearly stated what its function is.<sup>38</sup>

A solution to this problem may require to pay further attention to the Vedic texts, whose descriptions of extraordinary capacities are likely earlier than Buddhist ones. A very interesting example is found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* in a passage that deals with a self (*ātman*) which is “the person made of consciousness (*vijñānamaya*) among the breaths, the brightness inside the heart” (*vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hṛdy antarjyotiḥ puruṣaḥ*; BU 4.3.7). This self is able to move in the intermediate world, which is an oneiric state that connects this world with the other world: “he, being common to both worlds, moves across them, just so he contemplates them, just so he oscillates [among] them. Thus, having fallen asleep, he goes beyond this world, these forms of death” (*sa samānaḥ sann ubhau lokāv anusaṃcarati dhyāyatīva lelāyatīva | sa hi svapno bhūtvemaṃ lokam atikrāmati mṛtyo rūpāṇi*; BU 4.3.7). The oneiric state is the intermediate state between this world and the other: “for this or that person there are indeed two states: this [world] and the state of the other world. The state of dream is the third and it is the junction point. Staying in this rendezvous point, he looks at both states: this [world] and the state of the other world” (*tasya vā etasya puruṣasya dve*

ly linked to each other. Another instance is when the monk finds a secluded dwelling (*vivittaṃ senāsana bhajati*; D, I, 71), he does this endowed with (*samannāgata*) many factors earlier developed, not just the previous one. These examples highlight that it is too simplistic to assume that a stage is developed only on the basis of the previous one.

**38** This is also evident from the way in which scholars have asserted that the *iddhis* are performed by means of the body made of mind. By way of example three recent works will be considered. Hamilton wrote that: “though it is not explicitly stated in the text, it would appear that it is the mind-made body which is subsequently directed by the mind to perform the *iddhis*, use its divine hearing and seeing, have insight into the minds of others, and recall former existences, and ultimately eradicate the *āsavas*” (1996, 162-3). The fact that the statement is not certain is due to the modal verb ‘would’, which implies that Hamilton considered it as a possibility and not a certainty. Radich wrote that “[n]ow, I suggest that, though the text never explicitly says so, there is a clear implication here that the sequence we have just rehearsed is a sequence of *necessary prerequisites* for the elaboration of each successive step on the path [...] it is only on the basis of this thorough and clear-sighted disillusionment with the fleshly body that it is possible to elaborate the *manomayakāya*; it is only on the basis of the elaboration of the *manomayakāya* that it is possible to attain the superpowers” (2007, 257). As previously stated, this argument could be affected by the logical fallacy named *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Lee wrote, concerning the body made of mind, that “[t]his special body has the ability to perform many supranormal activities” (2014, 67), without providing any reference or justification for this statement. In brief, it seems that there was a deficiency in past academic research on this topic.



*eva sthāne bhavata idaṃ ca paralokasthānaṃ ca | sandhyaṃ tr̥tīyaṃ svapnasthānam | tasmīn sandhye sthāne tiṣṭhann ete ubhe sthāne paśyatīdaṃ ca paralokasthānaṃ ca; BU 4.3.9*). In this dreamlike state, this person made of consciousness displays the creative power of the mind<sup>39</sup> and so is able to manipulate matter to create objects and parts of the landscape:

When he falls asleep, having taken away the matter of this entire world, having taken apart from his own, having created by his own, he dreams with his own splendor, with his own light. Then this person becomes his own light. In that place there are no chariots, there are not what is yoked on chariots (i.e. horses), there are no roads. Then he emits chariots, what is yoked on chariots, and roads. In that place there is no happiness, delight, gladness. Then he emits happiness, delight, gladness. In that place there are no ponds, tanks, and rivers. Then he emits ponds, tanks, and rivers. Hence, he is the creator.<sup>40</sup>

This passage is also quoted by Sue Hamilton, who seems to suggest that, all in all, *viññānamaya* and *manomaya* could be synonyms to indicate the subtle body (*liṅgaśarīra*) in the early Upaniṣads.<sup>41</sup> However, it seems that she has underestimated the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* account in which the *viññānamaya* self is a level more rarefied than the *manomaya* self. In fact, in this text it appears in a list which develops from the grossest element to the most rarefied (e.g. TU 3.10.4-5). The list exhibits five kinds of self and each of them is made (-*maya*) of a different substance: food (*anna*), breath (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*), consciousness (*viññāna*), and bliss (*ānanda*). Hamilton (1996, 146) proposes the existence of a theory in the Upaniṣads according to which the reality and human existence is divided into three modes of existence and she relies upon the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* only to reinforce her argument, since the central part of the list of the five kinds of self (*prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *viññānamaya*) resembles a list found in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4.4.5 (*viññānamaya*, *manomaya*, *prāṇamaya*).

<sup>39</sup> As it was pointed out by Hamilton (1996, 147).

<sup>40</sup> *sa yatra prasvapity asya lokasya sarvāvato mātṛām apādāya svayaṃ vihatya svayaṃ nirmāya svena bhāsā svena jyotiṣā prasvapiti | atrāyaṃ puruṣaḥ svayamjyotir bhavati || na tatra rathā na rathayogā na panthāno bhavanti | atha rathān rathayogān pathaḥ sṛjate | na tatrānandā mudaḥ pramudo bhavanti | athānandān mudaḥ pramudaḥ sṛjate | na tatra veśāntāḥ puṣkariṇyaḥ sravantyo bhavanti | atha veśāntān puṣkariṇīḥ sravantiḥ sṛjate | sa hi kartā. (BU 4.3.9-10)*

<sup>41</sup> After arguing that in the Upaniṣads there is a subdivision of reality according to three modes of existences (quoting CU 6.5.1-4, cf. Hamilton 1996, 146), she writes, with reference to the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*'s passage: "[i]n this context, the term *manomaya* is not used to describe the intermediate level of sleep/dream, but three levels are nevertheless indicated. [...] In the early Upaniṣads, it is the terms *manomaya* and *viññānamaya* (and possibly dreams) which suggest the subtle self" (Hamilton 1996, 147).



Moreover, it may seem that in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*'s passage - in which the person made of consciousness is able to move in an intermediate oneiric world between this world and the other - *viññānamaya* has a very peculiar application. It can be argued that in this passage the word *viññāna* was not used in order to indicate the mind by chance. In this regard, within another *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* passage concerning a dialogue between Ajātaśatru and Gārgya, the one who is able to move in the oneiric state is, indeed, a person (*puruṣa*) made of consciousness (*viññānamaya*):

Ajātaśatru told him: "When he has fallen asleep, this person made of consciousness (*viññānamaya*), having taken consciousness by means of consciousness of these vital functions (*prāṇa*), settles down in the empty space inside the heart. When he takes these [functions], then this person is called 'sleeping'. The vital breath is seized, seized is the speech, seized is the sight, seized is the hearing, seized is the mind (*manas*). Wherever he roams into the dream, these worlds become his own, he becomes also a great king or a great brahmin, he settles in high and low [worlds]. Just as a great king, having seized the population (*jānapada*), would roam wherever he wants in his own country (*janapada*), exactly in the same way he, having seized the vital functions (*prāṇa*), roams by himself wherever he wants in his own body".<sup>42</sup>

Also, in this latter passage, which again concerns the oneiric world, a person made of consciousness (*viññānamaya*) is involved. One might be tempted to speculate about an equivalence between the terms used to indicate the 'mind': *citta*, *manas*, and *viññāna*. Buddhist texts, indeed, often lack a clear distinction between these terms. In the *Samyuttanikāya* there is even a passage which states directly the equivalence of these terms: *cittaṃ iti pi mano iti pi viññānaṃ iti pi* (S, II, 94; quoted also in Mrs. Rhys Davids 1914, 17). Moreover, Buddhaghosa in a specific context also accords the same meaning to these expressions used to designate the mind: *viññānaṃ, cittaṃ, mano ti atthato ekaṃ* (Vism, 452). However, although these terms are sometimes synonyms, it seems that frequently in Buddhist texts they also have specific applications. In the partial investigation made by

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<sup>42</sup> *sa hovācājātaśatruḥ | yatraiṣa etat supto 'bhūda ya eṣa viññānamayaḥ puruṣas tad eṣaṃ prāṇānāṃ viññānena viññānaṃ ādāya ya eṣo 'ntar hṛdaya ākāsas tasmīn chete | tāni yadā grhṇāty atha haitat puruṣaḥ svapiti nāma | tad grhīta eva prāno bhavati | grhītā vāk | grhītaṃ cakṣuḥ | grhītaṃ śrotam | grhītaṃ manaḥ || sa yatraitat svapnyayā carati te hāsyā lokāḥ | tad uteva mahārājo bhavaty uteva mahābrāhmaṇaḥ | utevoccāvacaṃ nigacchati | sa yathā mahārājo jānapadān grhītvā sve janapade yathākāmaṃ parivartetaivam evaiṣa etat prāṇān grhītvā sve śarīre yathākāmaṃ parivartate.* (BU 2.1.17-8)

Johansson<sup>43</sup> it is shown how *citta*, *manas*, and *viññāṇa* have some attributes in common, but also differ in some aspects (Johansson 1965, 209).<sup>44</sup> Therefore, for instance in the Pāli canon only the term *manas* is used to indicate that a body (*kāya*) is made of mind: *manomaya*. Alternative options such as *\*cittamaya* and *\*viññāṇamaya* are not attested within both canon and commentaries.<sup>45</sup> This could also be the case in the Upaniṣadic passages examined above, wherein the mention of a person made of consciousness (*viññānamaya*) might reveal a specific way to indicate the personification or embodiment that acts in the oneiric state. It is worth noting that this person seizes the vital functions and among them there is also the mind (*manas*): *tad grhīta eva prāṇo bhavati | grhītā vāk | grhītaṃ cakṣuḥ | grhītaṃ śrotam | grhītaṃ manaḥ* (BU 2.1.17). Therefore, *viññāna* and *manas* should not be regarded as synonyms in this context since they carry out different functions.

So, if *viññānamaya* and *manomaya* are not perfect synonyms, it would seem that to demonstrate that the extraordinary performances were really made through the body made of mind we should find a direct reference to it. In this regard, it might be useful to quote a passage from the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, a text probably older than the Upaniṣads. The text states:

He should meditate on the self which is made of mind (*manomaya*), whose body is vital breath, with a luminous appearance (*bhārūpa*), with an ethereal essence, which has the form it desires, which is swift as the thought, which has the desire of the truth, which supports the truth, which consists of all odours, which consists of all tastes, which extends and pervades throughout the whole regions, which is speechless, which is disinterested.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> 'Partial' was chosen, since Johansson stated that: "[a]s this is not a statistical investigation, no completeness was aimed at, but an attempt was made to include as many different contexts as possible: I aimed at semantic completeness" (1965, 166).

<sup>44</sup> It seems that although these terms correspond to different mental functions, they are also strongly connected to each other. Therefore, Swearer writes: "in the Pāli *suttas* the terms *citta*, *mano*, and *viññāṇa* were used either synonymously or as essentially related aspects of the same empirical consciousness" (1972, 358). Years later a similar statement was written by Somaratne: "[i]n sum, *citta*, *manas* and *viññāṇa*, though notionally, can separately be identified on the basis of their specific mental functions, though the three are aspects of the same mind" (2005, 201).

<sup>45</sup> It is remarkable that the term *viññānamaya* is found in late sub-commentarial literature, such as in the *purāṇaṭīkā* of the *Dīghanikāya*, in which, however, it appears in a passage that is an Upaniṣadic quotation: *'Annamayo pāṇamayo manomaya ānandamayo viññānamayo' ti pañcadhā attānaṃ Vedavādino vadanti* (DA-ṭ, 202). The sub-commentary refers here to the doctrine of the five kinds of self presented in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, oddly inverting *ānandamayo* and *viññānamayo*.

<sup>46</sup> *sa ātmānam upāsita manomayaṃ prāṇasarīraṃ bhārūpam ākāsātmanam kāmārūpaṇaṃ manojavasam satyasamkalpaṃ satyadhṛtiṃ sarvagandhaṃ sarvarasam*

This self made of mind demonstrates to have a mastership on the physical matter, since it 'has the form it desires' (*kāmarūpin*), it is endowed with a super-velocity since it 'is swift as the thought' (*mano-javas*), and also 'extends and pervades throughout the whole region' (*sarvā anu diśaḥ prabhūtaṃ sarvam idam abhyāptam*); basically, it is free to move wherever it wants, such as the monk who performs *iddhis* 'goes beyond walls, ramparts, mountains unattached by them just as he was in the ether' (*tiro-kuḍḍaṃ tiro-pākāraṃ tiro-pabbataṃ asajjamāno gacchati*; D, I, 78).

This *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*'s passage shows a self made of mind (*manomaya*) that is endowed with extraordinary capacities, just like the person made of consciousness (*vijñānamaya*) in the oneiric state within the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*'s passage. So, it would seem that *manomaya* and *vijñānamaya* could actually represent similar functions, although the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*'s account and the peculiar presence of the person made of consciousness (*vijñānamaya*) in the accounts concerning the oneiric state do not allow them to be regarded as perfect synonyms. It could be stated that at least part of the Vedic tradition would justify a connection between a self made of mind and the acquisition of capacities that are extraordinary. Therefore, the linguistic similarity of the term *manomaya* among distinct traditions reveals some shared features, though the contexts in which it occurs should always be carefully analysed in order to avoid a leveling of its function and use within different Indian traditions and different contexts within the same tradition.<sup>47</sup>

## 5.2 The Term 'Divine' (Pāli: *dibba*; Sanskrit: *divya/daiva*): What is There Behind the Linguistic Similarity?

On the basis of the formulation of some of the Buddhist *abhiññās*, it is possible to detect both change and continuity with the Vedic thought. In this regard, it is interesting to consider the 'element of the divine ear' (*dibba-sota-dhātu*) and the development of the 'divine eye' (*dibba-cakkhu*) within the *abhiññā* called the 'knowledge of degeneration and ascent of beings' (*cutūpapātāñña*). The point of interest is the Pāli adjective *dibba*<sup>48</sup> (Sanskrit: *divya* or *daiva*), which

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*sarvā anu diśaḥ prabhūtaṃ sarvam idam abhyāptam avākkam anādaraṃ.* (ŚB 10.6.3.2)

<sup>47</sup> A detailed analysis concerning some shared features of *manomaya* in Buddhism and Upaniṣads will be provided by De Notariis (forthcoming).

<sup>48</sup> Within the late Pāli commentarial literature, when the term is associated with the mind-made body of some gods, it is explained that "[the term] '*dibba*' [refers to something] produced in the divine world" (*dibbo ti devaloke sambhūto*; DA, I, 120 = Vibh-a, 509). A similar kind of explanation also occurs regarding the divine ear and the divine eye. Taking the divine ear as an example, it is stated that: "in this

means 'divine' and allows one to discover a certain connection with the Upaniṣads and Vedic texts. In the Buddhist passage the divine eye was developed through the action of the mind, and it is also possible in a passage of the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* (8.12.5) to detect a connection between the divine eye and the mind:

Then, one who understands: 'considering this', which is the self; the mind is his divine (*daiva*) eye. This, indeed, enjoys - seeing with the mind, with the divine eye - these desires (*kāma*), which are in the world of *brahman*.<sup>49</sup>

In other Upaniṣadic passages it is possible to find that the adjective 'divine', connected with some faculties, produces marvellous results, such as in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* (1.5.18-20):

From fire and earth, divine (*daivī*) speech enters him. This very divine speech by which whatever one says, it happens.

From sky and sun, divine mind enters him. This very divine mind by which one becomes one who has happiness and therefore does not suffer.

From waters and moon, divine breath enters him. This very divine breath, which moving or resting does not waver nor receives harm.<sup>50</sup>

It is also attested that a natural manifestation, namely the thunder, could be considered a divine voice, most likely the voice of the sky (*div/dyu*) which is divine (*daivī*):

context, 'with the element of the divine ear', the term divine here [is used because] has similarity to the divine. The gods have only the element of ear purified and divine which is able to catch a [sound] object even if far since it is free from impurities, is unobstructed by bile, phlegm, blood, etc.; it is created thanks to their result of good conduct. And this element of ear devoted to knowing of this monk, which was developed by the power of mental culture and energy, is, indeed, of such quality, which is divine because it has similarity to the divine one. Moreover, it is divine even because it is attained through divine dwellings and because itself relies on divine dwellings" (*Tatra dibbāya sotadhātuyā ti ettha dibbasadisattā dibbā. Devānaṃ hi sucaritakammaṇibattā pīttasemharuhirādīhi apaḷibuddhā upakkilesavimuttatāya dūre pi ārammaṇaṃ sampaṭicchanasamatthā dibbappasādasotadhātu hoti. Ayañ cā pi imassa bhikkhuno viriyabhāvanābalanibattā nāṇasotadhātu tādisā yevā ti dibbasadisattā dibbā. Api ca dibbavihārasena paṭiladdhattā attanā ca dibbavihārasannissitattā pi dibbā; Vism. 407 = Ud-a, 201; Paṭi-a, I, 353*). A similar explanation concerning the divine eye occurs in *Vism*, 423; *Ud-a*, 73; *It-a*, II, 27; *MNidd-a*, II, 376; *Vin-a*, I, 162-3; *Paṭi-a*, I, 53.

**49** *atha yo vededaṃ manvānīti sa ātmā | mano 'sya daivaṃ cakṣuḥ | sa vā eṣa etena daivena cakṣuṣā manasaitān kāmān paśyan ramate ya ete brahmaloke.* (CU 8.12.5)

**50** *prthivyai cainam agneś ca daivī vāg āviśati | sā vai daivī vāg yayā yad eva vadati tat tad bhavati || divas cainam ādityāc ca daivaṃ mana āviśati | tad vai daivaṃ mano yenānandy eva bhavaty aho na śocati || adbhyas cainam candramasā ca daivaḥ prāṇa āviśati | sa vai daivaḥ prāṇo yaḥ saṃcaramś cāsaṃcaramś ca na vyathate 'tho na riṣyati.* (BU 1.5.18-20)

Just this, the divine voice, the Thunder, repeats: 'Da! Da! Da!'. Be tamed (*dāmyata*)! Donate (*datta*)! Be compassionate (*dayadhvam*)! One should yearn for the same triad: self-control (*dama*), donation (*dāna*), compassion (*dayā*).<sup>51</sup>

These examples make clear that although the higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) are extraordinary capacities more properly Buddhist, their exposition is, in some ways, still in connection with the late Vedic thought. Furthermore, it would be possible to state that the sensorial faculties were connected with the terms '*deva*' and '*devatā*' because of the Vedic tendency to establish analogies and connections between different realms of existence. From the time of the *Ṛgveda*, as attested for instance by the very famous *Puruṣasūkta* (RV 10.90), the Indian tradition established correspondences between human body and cosmos, which are respectively the microcosm and the macrocosm. Regarding these kinds of correspondences already present in the *Ṛgveda* (although not systematically worked out as in later texts), the mundane or microcosmic level is called *adhyātma*, whereas the cosmic one is *adhidevata* or *adhidaiva* and the level of sacrifice is *adhiyajña* (cf. Jamison, Brereton 2014, 23-4). Such correspondences were often called *bandhu* 'bond', and they were also of great importance for later Vedic texts, such as Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads.<sup>52</sup> It is possible to find a good example of how these correspondences work at the very beginning of the *Aitareyopaniṣad*. The account starts with the creation of the worlds by the self (*ātman*), who was alone in the beginning. Thereafter, he created a man (*puruṣa*)<sup>53</sup> and this creation is reported as the creation of the bodily parts, to which functions and cosmic divinities correspond. The creation of the bodily parts begins after he had extracted the man from the waters,<sup>54</sup> made him solid (*amūrchayat*) and instilled heat into him (*abhyatapat*).<sup>55</sup> The

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**51** *tad etad evaiṣā daivi vāg anuvadati stanayitnur da da da iti | dāmyata datta dayadhvam iti | tad etat trayam śikṣed damam dānam dayām iti* (BU 5.2.3). The Author suspects that this Upaniṣadic passage is echoed in the *Dighanikāya*: *Tiṇṇam kho me idaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ kammānaṃ vipāko, yenāhaṃ etarahi evaṃ mahiddhiko evaṃ mahānubhāvo, seyyathidaṃ dānassa damassa saṃyamassa.* (D, II, 186)

**52** Cf. Gonda 1965; Olivelle 1998, 24; Smith 1998, 78-81; for a list of other terms used to indicate connections, see Smith 1998, 78 fn. 134.

**53** With the word 'man', the male of human species to which the word *puruṣa* refers to in Vedic contexts is meant (for more information, see Killingley 2006, 80). In this context, this translation is incontrovertible since among the created bodily parts there will be also the penis (*śiśna*).

**54** Since *udbhya* 'from out of these' is an ablative plural, Connolly wrote that "the *puruṣa* was derived from all the worlds created by the self and not just from the waters" (1997, 32). However, it should be highlighted that also 'waters' is plural, so it seems that the text allows more than one interpretation.

**55** *so 'dbhya eva puruṣaṃ samuddhṛtyāmūrchayat || tam abhyatapat.* (AU 1.1.3-4)

first part of the body to be listed was the mouth, from which speech and fire came out: “the mouth (*mukha*) hatched like an egg, from the mouth [came out] the speech (*vāc*), from the speech [came out] the fire (*agni*)” (*mukhaṃ nirabhidyata yathāṅdam mukhād vāg vāco 'gñih*; AU 1.1.4). So, a bodily part (*mukha*, ‘the mouth’) is associated with a function (*vāc*, ‘speech’), and with a divinity (*agni*, ‘fire’). This schema is repeated for other parts of the body, functions, and deities, resulting in the following correspondences (cf. AU 1.1.4):

mouth ( <i>mukha</i> )	nostrils ( <i>nāsikā</i> )	eyes ( <i>akṣi</i> )	ears ( <i>karṇa</i> )	skin ( <i>tvac</i> )	heart ( <i>hṛdaya</i> )	navel ( <i>nābhi</i> )	penis ( <i>śiśna</i> )
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
speech ( <i>vāc</i> )	breath ( <i>prāṇa</i> )	sight ( <i>cakṣus</i> )	hearing ( <i>śrotra</i> )	body-hair ( <i>loman</i> )	mind ( <i>manas</i> )	digestive breath ( <i>apāna</i> )*	semen ( <i>retas</i> )
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
fire ( <i>agni</i> )	wind ( <i>vāyu</i> )	sun ( <i>āditya</i> )	directions ( <i>diś</i> )	plants ( <i>oṣadhi</i> ) and trees ( <i>vanaspati</i> )	moon ( <i>candramas</i> )	death ( <i>mṛtyu</i> )	waters ( <i>ap</i> )

\* For the translation of the term *apāna* in this context, see Brown 1919, 109; Connolly 1997, 32; Pelissero 1998, 107. Anyway, it should be specified that the translation of *apāna* is a contentious issue.

Fire, wind, sun, directions, plants and trees, moon, death, and waters are named ‘deities’ in the *Aitareyopaniṣad*, i.e. *devatā*.<sup>56</sup> These deities, once they were created, after having sprung from the primordial *puruṣa*, plummeted into a great chaotic mass of water (*arṇava*) and so they requested: “identify us a dwelling in which once established we can eat food”.<sup>57</sup> A cow and a horse were offered to these deities, but they were deemed inadequate abodes. Thereafter, a man (*puruṣa*) was offered, which meets the expectations and any deity, after having become the respective faculty, enters in its physical *locus* within the body. For instance, “the fire, after having become speech, enters the mouth”.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *tā etā devatāḥ sṛṣṭā*. (AU 1.2.1)

<sup>57</sup> *āyatanam naḥ prajānīhi | yasmin pratiṣṭhitā annam adāma*. (AU 1.2.1)

<sup>58</sup> *agnir vāg bhūtvā mukhaṃ prāviśat* (AU 1.2.4). Connolly (1997, 32) seems to consider as *devatā* also the functions such as speech (*vāc*), breath (*prāṇa*), etc. However, the subject that enters into the dwelling is *devatā*, understood as the deity transformed into the faculty. In this regard, it is written that “[the *ātman*] said to them [*tā(h) = devatā*]: ‘enter in your respective dwelling!’” (*tā abravīd yathāyatanam praviśateti*; AU 1.2.3) and so the one which enters (*pra-√viś*) is the deity (e.g. fire, i.e. the *devatā*), after having become the faculty (e.g. speech).

Accounts, just like the one described in the above exposition of *Aitareyopaniṣad* (1.1-2) that has just been exposed, show that there is something divine behind the activity of the physical organs according to the Vedic thought. A divine and cosmic power underlies the normal functioning of the human body and a series of correspondences aim to identify at which part of the human body a certain divinity is allocated and which function it performs.<sup>59</sup> It is worth noting the strongly established idea that, among the faculties, the mind (*manas*) is regarded as divine. Therefore, besides the aforementioned passage in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* (1.5.19), in which a mind that is divine appears (e.g. *daivaṃ mano*), as early as the *R̥gveda* it occurs a mind which is divine: *kavīyamānaḥ ka iha pra vocad devam manaḥ kuto adhi prajātam* (RV 1.164.18).<sup>60</sup> The mind is even called in the late *Praśnopaniṣad* the supreme deity and is the place in which the other faculties are grouped together during the sleep.<sup>61</sup> It is this deity (*deva*) who experiences dreams.

In Buddhism, the sensorial faculties are connected with a divine-sphere (*dibba*) only when the aim is to indicate that they are able to operate beyond the normal physical boundaries. A connection with a power able to affect and interact with the universe is maintained by the mind and, therefore, extraordinary capacities such as *iddhis* and *abhiññās* are developed only after a mental purification.<sup>62</sup> In this regard, it could be useful to highlight that the canonical Buddhist texts might represent an initial stage in the process of departure from the Vedic understanding of the sensorial faculties. Unfortunately, a comprehensive treatment of the sensorial faculties within Buddhist texts would exceed the limits of the present survey. However, it would be worth noting how the late Theravāda exegesis developed a mechanical explanation of the sensorial faculty process (in this case the process of seeing), which does not leave any room for the idea that the sensorial process is still in connection with cosmic powers or divinities:

<sup>59</sup> There are, in the Upaniṣads, many other lists of faculties with respective deities that differ from the list in the *Aitareyopaniṣad* taken into account in terms of faculties, functions, deities and the correspondence between these. However, the underlying thought is the same. More Upaniṣadic lists, with a particular reference to pentads and their relationship with *Sāṃkhya*, have been analysed by Killingley (2016).

<sup>60</sup> This kind of reference appears also within other Vedic texts, such as *Atharvaveda* and *Vājasaneyisaṃhitā* (i.e. AV 1.1.2 and VS 34.1), cf. Wijesekera ([1944] 1994, 155-6).

<sup>61</sup> *evaṃ ha vai tat sarvaṃ pare deve manasy ekībhavati* (PU 4.2).

<sup>62</sup> See for instance: “when the mind is concentrated in this way, purified, cleaned, unblemished, freed from impurities, malleable, fit for work, steadfast, having attained impassibility, he directs and turns the mind to the variety of *iddhis*” (*so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudu-bhūte kammaniye ṭhite ānejjappatte iddhi-vidhāya cittam abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. so aneka-vihitam iddhi-vidham paccanubhoti*; D, I, 78).

When the thought 'I will look ahead!' is generated, together with this very thought the wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*) caused by the thought, which brings forth the information (*viññatti*),<sup>63</sup> is produced. Thus, through the diffusion of the wind element due to the action of the thought, the lowest eyelid sinks down and the uppermost eyelid jumps up; there is not anyone who opens it through a mechanism. Then the sight-consciousness, which performs the function of seeing, is produced.<sup>64</sup>

It is as if the mental thought generates the electric impulsion (*vāyo-dhātu*),<sup>65</sup> which causes the eye to open through the eyelid shift and, after that, the sight consciousness arises and allows the individual to see.

So, it was noted that in Buddhism some faculties (seeing, hearing) may become divine if the mind is properly trained. This would seem a residue of the Vedic conception of the human being in its relation with the cosmos. However, although the old correlation between physical body parts, functions and deities is well attested in the Upaniṣads, an emerging tendency towards the new development occurring in Buddhism could be traced back to the Upaniṣadic texts, in which the adjective 'divine' is attributed to some faculties when they perform a particular function beyond the normal human reach or even non-human (e.g. BU 1.5.18: 'divine speech is that which makes whatever one says happen', or when the voice of a thunder is called divine, i.e. BU 5.2.3). So, this would lead us to expect that it would be possible to recover other faded images in the Upaniṣads of what would be further developed in later time by Buddhist tradition.

**63** On the Abhidhammic concept of '*viññatti*', see Harvey (1993, 34-5) and Karunadasa (2010, 189-98), who translate it as 'intimation'.

**64** '*Ālokessāmīti' pana citta uppajjamāne ten' eva cittena saddhiṃ citta-samuṭṭhānā vāyo-dhātu viññattim janayamānā uppajjati. Iti citta-kiriya-vāyo-dhātu-vipphāravasen' eva hetthimaṃ akkhi-dalaṃ adho sīdati, uparimaṃ uddhaṃ laṅgheti. Koci yantakena vicaranto nāma n' atthi. Tato cakkhu-viññāṇaṃ dassana-kiccaṃ sādheṇṇaṃ uppajjatīti* (DA, I, 194). '*vāyo-dhātu-viññattim'* was emended '*vāyo-dhātu viññattim'* on the basis of the parallel passages in MA, I, 262; SA, III, 191; Vibh-a, 356.

**65** Cf. Harvey 1993, 35, for the comparison of *vāyo-dhātu* with the modern concept of electrical discharge in the nerves. See also Killingley (2006, 103 endnote 15), who interprets *vāyu* as a kind of shock, the motion or the kinetic energy.



### 5.3 The Observation of the Action of Kamma (Sanskrit: *Karman*): A Faint Echo

During the exposition of the *abhiññā* called the 'knowledge of de-generation and ascent of beings' (*cutūpapātañña*), it is stated that, thanks to the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*), the rebirth in an inferior or superior plane of existence according to *kamma* is observed (*so dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkanta-mānusakena satte passati cavamāne upapajjamāne, hīne paṇīte suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate dug-gate yathā-kammūpage satte pajānāti*; D, I, 82). Now, it will be argued why this particular *abhiññā* might have connections with the Upaniṣads.

As previously stated, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, during the oneiric state, a person made of consciousness (*vijñānamaya*) is able to perform activities that are beyond the common human capacities. The freedom of movement and the creative power of the mind found in this passage resemble the marvellous actions performed by a monk who experiences *iddhis*. However, within the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*'s account there is a detail that is less striking, but likewise interesting. Therefore, in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4.3.7-38 there is often mention to the fact that the person made of consciousness, standing in the place between this world and the other world, sees both evils and joys (*pāpmana ānandāṃś ca paśyati*; BU 4.3.9) and later, indeed, it is repeated many times that this person has seen the merit (*puṇya*) and demerit (*pāpa*) (*dr̥ṣṭvaiva puṇyaṃ ca pāpaṃ*; e.g. BU 4.3.15). The terms *puṇya* and *pāpa*, which have been translated as 'merit' and 'demerit', are a little controversial. As Bodewitz stated, "[i]n post-Vedic texts in which *puṇyam* is mentioned together with *pāpam*, good and bad actions in general (and their resulting merits and demerits) are definitely meant" (2013, 44). This implies that the interpretation of *puṇya* and *pāpa* as 'merit' and 'demerit' is not valid for all passages in the Vedic texts, but mainly for the post-Vedic texts. So, in spite of the fact that Bodewitz found some Upaniṣadic passages in which *puṇya* and *pāpa* refer to good and bad activities and their results (e.g. BU 3.2.13, cf. Bodewitz 2013, 47), he asserted that:

B[ṛhad]Ā[raṇyaka]U[paniṣad] 4, 3, 15; 4, 3, 22 and 4, 3, 34 have *puṇyam* and *pāpam* as the objects of an other verb than *kar*, namely the verb 'to see'. In the state of dreams one sees (i.e. experiences) good and evil, which have nothing to do with moral distinctions but refer to pleasant and unpleasant experiences. (Bodewitz 2013, 47; square brackets added)

The Upaniṣadic verses quoted are part of the oneiric account. In this passage, Bodewitz interprets the verbs denoting 'to see' (in the cases mentioned, it is used *dr̥ṣṭvā*, a gerund form from the root *√dr̥ś*)

with the meaning ‘to experience’. He does not really provide evidence for this statement and, furthermore, the meaning ‘to experience’ does not appear in Monier-Williams’ *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* as an explanation for  $\sqrt{drś}$  (cf. SED, 491) and in the *sub voce*  $\sqrt{pāś}$  it does not seem at all the primary meaning (cf. SED, 611). However, the rendering ‘to experience’ actually seems to fit the context of the passage as it will be shown below. Bodewitz also stated that the good and evil experienced “have nothing to do with moral distinctions but refer to pleasant and unpleasant experiences”, whereas the Upaniṣadic passage seems to indicate exactly the opposite, since it specifies that what one sees in that state does not follow him (*sa yat tatra kiñcit paśyaty ananvāgatas tena bhavati*; BU 4.3.15).<sup>66</sup> Therefore, analysing the Sanskrit text, it is possible to note that the verses 4.3.15-7<sup>67</sup> repeat almost the same phrasing with reference to three different states:

1. the serenity (*samprasāda*, i.e. the mental state during the deep sleep);
2. the dream (*svapna*);
3. and the waking condition (*buddhānta*).

However, it is possible to note that the phrase “whatever he sees there, he is not followed by it” (*sa yat tatra kiñcit paśyaty ananvāgatas tena bhavati*) occurs only for the first two states that are related to the act of sleeping, whereas it does not occur in the third one, the waking state. This may indicate that whatever one ‘sees’ in the waking state, he is ‘followed’ (*anvāgata*) by it, whereas if he had been in the other two states, he would not have been followed (*ananvāgata*) by it. It would seem that actually the verb ‘to see’ may convey the meaning of ‘to experience’ (as Bodewitz stated), and that these experiences have no results if they take place during sleep (i.e. not follow), but they get results if they take place in the waking state (i.e. follow). So, the person made of consciousness sees/experiences actions that may or may not have results according to the state in which these actions are experienced (waking or sleeping state). In the Buddhist text, the monk sees (*passati*) the different kinds of rebirths of

<sup>66</sup> He is not followed by merit and demerit: *ananvāgataṃ puṇyenānavāgataṃ pāpena* (BU 4.3.22).

<sup>67</sup> *sa vā eṣa etasmin samprasāde ratvā caritvā drṣṭvaiva puṇyaṃ ca pāpaṃ ca punaḥ pratinyāyaṃ pratiyony ādravati svapnāyaiva | sa yat tatra kiñcit paśyaty ananvāgatas tena bhavati | asaṅgo hy ayaṃ puruṣa iti | evaṃ evaitat yājñavalkya | so ’haṃ bhagavate sahasraṃ dadāmi | ata ūrdhvaṃ vimokṣāyaiva brūhīti || sa vā eṣa etasmin svapne ratvā caritvā drṣṭvaiva puṇyaṃ ca pāpaṃ ca punaḥ pratinyāyaṃ pratiyony ādravati buddhāntāyaiva | sa yat tatra kiñcit paśyaty ananvāgatas tena bhavati | asaṅgo hy ayaṃ puruṣa iti | evaṃ evaitat yājñavalkya | so ’haṃ bhagavate sahasraṃ dadāmi | ata ūrdhvaṃ vimokṣāyaiva brūhīti || sa vā eṣa etasmin buddhānte ratvā caritvā drṣṭvaiva puṇyaṃ ca pāpaṃ ca punaḥ pratinyāyaṃ pratiyony ādravati svapnāntāyaiva.* (BU 4.3.15-7)

beings. On the one hand, there is the observation of actions meritorious and not (Upaniṣadic account), and, on the other hand, there is the observation of the results of the actions of others (Buddhist account). The action of seeing/experiencing (Sanskrit: *paśyati*; Pāli: *pasati*) is an action that takes place in the mind in both the Upaniṣadic oneiric state and Buddhist account, but this does not imply that the experience is devoid of objectivity. Within the Upaniṣadic account, it is stated that the person made of consciousness sees/experiences merit and demerit in the dreamlike state and in deep sleep, as well as in the waking state. It seems from BU 2.1.18 that the oneiric experience is something that occurs inside the body, but, as W. Doniger stated, “[t]he fact that the dream exists only inside the body of the dreamer does not, however, imply that it is unreal, as such a dichotomy (inside vs. outside, private vs. public) might imply in Western thinking” (1984, 15).<sup>68</sup> Within the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*’s exposition of the *cutūpapātāñña*, it is not clear how to develop the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*), nevertheless it is clear that the action of the mind is implied (*so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudu-bhūte kammaniye t̥hite ānejjappatte pubbenivāsānussati-ññāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti*; D, I, 82). The instructions to perform this *abhiññā* are provided only by the later compendium of Buddhist doctrine called *Visuddhimagga* ‘The Path of Purification’. In this text (cf. *Vism*, 427-9), it is explained that one who wants to develop the divine eye should achieve the dwelling place of the access *jhāna* (*upacārājjhānagocara*) using the meditative object called *kaṣiṇa*, choosing one among the three *kaṣiṇas* of fire (*tejas*), white (*odāta*), and light (*āloka*), and should mentally extend it without getting the full absorption (*appanā*).<sup>69</sup> Among these three *kaṣiṇas*, the light *kaṣiṇa* is the best for this kind of performance.<sup>70</sup> The text continues stating that it is possible to see visible forms into the range of extension of the *kaṣiṇa*.<sup>71</sup> The objects seen through the divine eye are probably mental images, which are as much real as the objects seen with the physical eye:

In this context, when this form – inside the belly, belonging to the heart-base (*hadayavatthu*), under the surface of the earth, beyond walls, mountains, and ramparts, or in another sphere of existence

<sup>68</sup> A recent overview concerning the concept of ‘dream’ into the Vedic texts is provided by Pellegrini (2011, 11-29) in his excellent PhD dissertation.

<sup>69</sup> *tejokasiṇaṃ odātakasiṇaṃ ālokakasiṇaṃ ti imesu t̥isu kaṣiṇesu aññataram āsannaṃ kātappaṃ; upacārājjhānagocaraṃ katvā vaḍḍhetvā upetappaṃ, na tattha appanā uppādetabbā ti adhippāyo.* (*Vism*, 427-8)

<sup>70</sup> *Imesu-ca pana t̥isu ālokakasiṇaṃ yeva seṭṭhataram.* (*Vism*, 428)

<sup>71</sup> *Vaḍḍhitatṭhānassa anto yeva rūpagataṃ passitappaṃ.* (*Vism*, 428)

(*paracakkavāla*) – which does not come into the range of perception of the fleshly eye of the monk, reaches the range of perception of the eye of knowledge (*ñāṇacakkhu*), and it is as seen with the fleshly eye; then the divine eye has arisen.<sup>72</sup>

In this regard, it is worth remembering that since in Buddhism the mind (*manas*) is considered a sense, namely the sixth sense, the nature of the mind's experience is not different from the other sensory experiences.<sup>73</sup>

In both Upaniṣadic and Buddhist accounts, the observation/experience is mental, but it does not mean that it is not real. Moreover, in both accounts it seems that the karmic theory (definitely within the Buddhist account and most likely in the Upaniṣadic one) is involved. Finally, in order to support this hypothesis that would read a connection between the two accounts, the Author would like to highlight a couple of dichotomous elements present in both traditions.

Starting with the Buddhist exposition of the *cutūpapātañāna*, it is possible to note that through the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*), the rebirth of beings in an inferior or superior plane of existence according to the *kamma* is observed. The text provides a list of opposite pairs: *cavamāne upapajjamāne, hīne paṇīte suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate dugate* (D, I, 82). With this phrasing, it indicates the possibility of degenerating (*cavamāna*) in negative conditions (*hīna, dubbaṇṇa, dugata*), or ascending (*upapajjamāna*) in positive conditions (*paṇīta, suvaṇṇa, sugata*). The negative conditions *par excellence* are rebirths in hells, whereas the positive conditions are rebirths in heavens. The suffix *-māna* used to create the present passive participle of the verbs *cavati* and *upapajjati* might indicate that the action occurs automatically, and the beings involved are just passive subjects of the action. Therefore, the *kamma* is clearly understood as a sort of natural law, which acts automatically at the moment of death, leading to the following rebirth. It makes sense to consider the verb *cavati* as indicating a fall from one state to another<sup>74</sup> and the verb *upapajjati* indicating an ascent towards more elevated states.<sup>75</sup>

**72** *Tattha yadā tassa bhikkhuno maṃsacakkhussa anāpāthagataṃ anto kucchigataṃ hadayavathunissitaṃ heṭṭhā pathavitalanissitaṃ tirokuḍḍapabbatapakāragataṃ paracakkavālagatan ti idaṃ rūpaṃ nānacakkhussa āpāthaṃ āgacchati, maṃsacakkhuno dissamānaṃ viya hoti, tadā dibbacakkhu uppannaṃ hoti.* (Vism, 428-9)

**73** Cf. Johansson 1969, 48; Clough [2010] 2011, 417; Clough 2012, 86. Johansson wrote about the *abhiññās* that “[s]ome of the supernatural forms of knowledge (*abhiññā*) may be understood as ideations interpreted as *real*” (1969, 48).

**74** Cf. s.v. “*cavati*” in DOP, 125; BHSD, 226.

**75** As stated by the PED (128) s.v. “*upapajjati*”, the etymology of *upapajjati* is a bit controversial since it is not really clear if it derives from *upa-√pad* or from *ud-√pad*. The dictionary, therefore, highlights as *upap-* and *upp-* are almost written in the same way

Similar dichotomous elements are present in another Upaniṣadic passage (BU 2.1.16-20) that involves a person made of consciousness within the oneiric state. In this passage, it is stated that this person *uccāvacaṃ nigacchati* (BU 2.1.18). Since the compound *uccāvaca* means high (*ucca/uccā*) and low (*avaca*) without specifying anything else; it is not immediately clear how to translate it. The expression 'high and low' could refer to high and low regions (see, for example, Olivelle 1998, 63), states, worlds. However, it could also indicate high and low conditions (e.g. in the Śāṅkara's comment on this compound: *utāpy uccāvacaṃ uccaṃ ca devatvādy avacaṃ ca tiryaktvādi, uccaṃ ivāvacaṃ iva ca nigacchati*; BUBh ad 2.1.18).<sup>76</sup> In spite of possible translations, and likewise the Buddhist account, it is possible to observe that it involves a movement or a shift and a settlement (*nivṛgam*) in a higher situation or in a lower one. It may be possible that these two translations are not mutually exclusive because in order to visit another realm one could assume the life conditions of this realm. This seems to occur sometimes in the Buddhist texts, which state often that one of the characteristics of some gods in certain realms is to have a body made of mind (*manomaya*) (cf. e.g. D, I, 17), and so no wonder in S, V, 282 it is stated that the Buddha can visit the world of Brahmā with both the physical body and the body made of mind (*manomaya*).

Drawing conclusions from this analysis, it is possible to state that:

1. Buddhist and Upaniṣadic accounts seem to involve the karmic theory, although in the Buddhist account it is more evident than in the Upaniṣadic passages.
2. The action of 'seeing' is involved in both traditions and the experience is as much mental as real. Seeing rebirth according to *kamma* with the divine eye is not very different from seeing merit and demerits in the dream; both are actions that take place in the mind, one during meditation and one during sleep. In these cases, the action of seeing is a mental action, which, on the one hand, implies being a spectator, and, on the other hand, implies an all-pervasive experience.
3. Similar dichotomous elements are present in both traditions. The Buddhist text indicates the possibility of degenerating (*cavamāna*) in negative conditions (*hīna, dubbaṇṇa, duggata*), or ascending (*upapajjamāna*) in positive conditions (*paṇīta*,

in Sinhalese script. In any case, both prefixes could indicate an upward direction (cf. s.vv. "upa-" and "ud-" respectively in PED, 123 and 118).

**76** The text formatting has been slightly edited. This interpretation could be also coherent with the fact that the previous phrase states that the person made of consciousness may become a great king or a great brahmin (i.e. he experiences a very good and high condition): *tad uteva mahārājo bhavaty uteva mahābrāhmaṇaḥ | utevoccāvacaṃ nigacchati* (BU 2.1.18).

*suvāṇṇa, sugata*). The Upaniṣadic account involves a movement or a shift and a settlement (*nigacchati*) in high (*ucca/uccā*) and low (*avaca*) regions, states, worlds, or conditions (*uccāvacaṃ nigacchati*; BU 2.1.18).

## 6 Conclusion

In line with the growing interest in the study of extraordinary capacities within the Indian traditions, this paper has (hopefully) shown the importance of the comparison between the Buddhist and Vedic texts with reference to the widespread Buddhist notions of *iddhi* and *abhiññā*. At first, the interpretation and translation of these two terms have been discussed, and despite that the Author has expressed his preferences with regard to the rendering of the terms into English, he does not consider his argumentations as conclusive. In fact, it should always be remembered that a translated word is consistently drawn from a context and it is translated in order to satisfy a specific audience. Although a certain degree of arbitrariness is acknowledged, however, there could always be better or worse translations inasmuch as the context of use of the translated term and the target audience are taken into account. Therefore, translations such as ‘psychic power’ and ‘higher knowledge’, for the terms *iddhi* and *abhiññā* respectively, may fit the context in which they stand for capacities developed through the meditative practice and satisfy a broad audience that may not consist solely of scholars. Nevertheless, translations such as ‘superhuman power’ or ‘success’ for the term *iddhi* can not be ruled out, and according to the authors’ preference and/or to the context and audience, could be certainly adopted.

Thereafter, in order to better understand the concepts of *iddhi* and *abhiññā*, some connections with the Vedic texts have been analysed. At first, the thorny problem concerning the involvement of the body made of mind (*manomaya-kāya*) in the execution of the extraordinary capacities was taken into account. Although many scholars sustained that these kinds of marvellous performances were thought to be performed through the body made of mind, no one provided strong evidence to support this thesis. A glance into the Vedic texts that deal with similar topics has shown that it could be reasonable to believe that the body made of mind is involved in these kinds of extraordinary performances. However, it should be stressed that this does not mean that the use of the body made of mind is mandatory to perform these extraordinary acts. It is attested, for instance in the *Samyuttanikāya*, that the Buddha was able to go to the Brahmā world (i.e. the last *iddhi*) with both the physical body (*cātumahābhūtikena kāyena*, lit. the body composed of the

four great elements) and the body made of mind (*manomayena kāyena*).<sup>77</sup>

The investigation within the Vedic texts continued with the analysis of the term 'divine' (Pāli: *dibba*; Sanskrit: *divya/daiva*) since it occurs in the description of some *abhiññās*. It turned out that this use of 'divine' is still in some ways connected with the Vedic one, but it certainly shows a development (started already in the Upaniṣads) according to which a faculty is called 'divine' when it performs a function in a way that is beyond the normal or average use. Within the Vedic thought, all faculties were connected with a divine power, whereas in Buddhism it seems that this connection with a power able to affect the reality was maintained only by the mind, which, once purified, can improve the range of action of the normal faculties (i.e. seeing and hearing). The later Theravāda exegesis has indeed developed a mechanistic explanation in order to explain the sensorial process (e.g. the process of seeing), showing that there was a trend of a progressive abandonment of the idea that there is a magical or divine power behind the functioning of the senses (and other faculties). Although it is beyond the aims of the present discussion, it is nonetheless interesting to note that there seems to be a connection with the Max Weber concept of 'disenchantment of the world' (*Entzauberung der Welt*).<sup>78</sup>

Finally, the *abhiññā* called the 'knowledge of degeneration and ascent of beings' (*cutūpapātāñña*) was compared with a couple of accounts involving the oneiric state in the Upaniṣads (i.e. BU 4.3.7-38 and 2.1.16-20). Some similarities were recovered<sup>79</sup> and this fact might

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *abhiññāti nu kho bhante Bhagavā iddhiyā manomayena kāyena Brahmālokam upasaṅkamitā* [...] *abhiññāti kho pana bhante Bhagavā iminā cātumahābhūtikena kāyena iddhiyā Brahmālokam upasaṅkamitā* (S, V, 282).

<sup>78</sup> "Thus the growing process of intellectualization and rationalization does *not* imply a growing understanding of the conditions under which we live. It means something quite different. It is the knowledge or the conviction that if *only we wished* to understand them we *could* do so at any time. It means that in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle *control everything by means of calculation*. That in turn means the disenchantment of the world" (Weber [1864-1920] 2004, 12-3). In this regard, it is worth noting that the Buddhist exegetical account in which the function of seeing is described in a very mechanistic way occurs within sections that are related to the practice of mindfulness (*sati*), just as in DA, I, 194 that is part of a section entitled by the editor of the commentary (Mr. Rhys Davids) as '*sati-sampajañña*', or in MA, I, 262 that is part of the comment on the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* (M, 10). Rephrasing the Max Weber's statement from a Buddhist point of view we can say that: the bodily and mental process through which the function of seeing is performed is not part of our average awareness under which we live. But it is a kind of knowledge that if *only we wished* to have we *could* get it at any time. It means that in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle *be aware of everything by means of mindfulness*.

<sup>79</sup> In this regard, this case study is in line with the findings of Black (2011), who spotted similarities between the narratives involving the Buddhist character of Ambaṭṭha and the Upaniṣadic character of Svetaketu.

justify further speculations. For instance, could there be a connection between the Upaniṣadic oneiric state and the Buddhist meditation? It can be argued that the answer might depend on the sources consulted. Glancing at the Theravāda exegesis, it would seem evident that the action of dreaming and the meditative absorption (*jhāna*) would involve a different mental activity and so they would seem in no way compatible.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, the Upaniṣadic accounts of the oneiric state have some details that cannot go unnoticed. For example, in BU 4.3.7 the person made of consciousness (*viññānamaya*), able to move within the oneiric state, moves across the worlds (this and the oneiric one) and contemplates them (*ubhau lokāv anusamcarati dhyāyatīva*). The verb *dhyāyati*, which has been loosely translated as ‘contemplates’, is from a root *√dhyai*, just as the Buddhist meditative absorption state is called *jhāna*, which is in Sanskrit *dhyāna*, and so is from the same root. Remarkable is also the fact that extraordinary capacities are displayed by the person made of consciousness in the Upaniṣadic oneiric state and that in the Buddhist texts a body made of mind (*manomaya-kāya*) could be involved in similar kind of extraordinary performances.

In conclusion, the comparison of the Buddhist notions of *iddhi* and *abhiññā* has shown that Buddhism did not come out from impenetrable darkness, but it was immersed into a rich environment of ideas. Buddhism, just as any historical phenomenon, is in dialogue with the historical period in which it lives, is influenced and tries to influence its environment and, therefore, it is part of a historical picture, which developed in many ways during the flowing of time.

**80** A comparison between dreaming and meditating is provided by Harvey (1995, 162-4). Without going into the details of the articulated Theravāda theory of mental process, it is possible to state that during the dream there is a rapid alternation of the passive state of consciousness called *bhavaṅga* and the state of *javana*, often translated as ‘impulsion’, whereas during the meditative absorption there is an uninterrupted sequence of *javanas*.



## Abbreviations

A	<i>Aṅuttaranikāya</i>
AU	Aitareyopaniṣad
As	<i>Atthasālinī (Dhammasaṅgaṇi-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
AV	Atharvaveda
BHSD	Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary (see Edgerton)
BU	Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad
BUBh	Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya
CU	Chāndogyopaniṣad
CPD	Critical Pāli Dictionary (see Trenckner et al.)
D	<i>Dīghanikāya</i>
DA	<i>Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Sumaṅgalavilāsinī)</i>
DA-ṭ	<i>Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
DOP	Dictionary of Pāli (see Cone)
It-a	<i>Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)</i>
J	<i>Jātaka</i>
Kv	<i>Kathāvatthu</i>
M	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>
MA	<i>Majjhimanikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Papañcasūdanī)</i>
MNidd-a	<i>Mahāniddeśa-aṭṭhakathā (Saddhammapajjotikā)</i>
Paṭi	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i>
Paṭi-a	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā (Saddhammappakāsinī)</i>
PED	Pali-English Dictionary (see Rhys Davids and Stede)
PU	Praśnopaniṣad
Pug	<i>Puggalapaññatti</i>
ṚV	Ṛgveda
S	<i>Samyuttanikāya</i>
SA	<i>Samyuttanikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Sāratthappakāsinī)</i>
ŚB	Śatapathabrāhmaṇa
SbhV	Saṅghabhedavastu
SED	Sanskrit-English Dictionary (see Monier-Williams)
TU	Taittirīyopaniṣad
Tikap	<i>Tikapaṭṭhāna</i>
Ud-a	<i>Udāna-aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)</i>
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Vibh-a	<i>Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā (Sammohavinodanī)</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>
Vin-a	<i>Vinaya-aṭṭhakathā (Samantapāsādikā)</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
VS	Vājasaneyisaṃhitā

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# Between Mughal Art, Ethnography and Realism On Nicolò Manucci's Artistic Patronage in India (1680-1720)

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**Abstract** Nicolò Manucci (or Manuzzi) (ca. 1638-1720) is a well-known figure among scholars: a Venetian adventurer, artilleryman and doctor in Early Modern India. He was a dynamic man, who frequented for a long time both the Mughal courts and the European agents of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century trade companies, leaving meaningful testimonies of his age, and thus becoming an important (and controversial) historical source on South Asia. In spite of the celebrity gained by his biography and his work, Manucci's role as European patron of Indian artists has been undervalued so far, with scholars often preferring to define him as a mere collector of works of Indian miniatures. Through an historic and artistic examination of his work, of other coeval works of art and contemporary sources, the aim of this paper is to show that Manucci was actually an important patron of Indian painting, a paradigmatic precursor of figurative didactic works mainly illustrated by (unfortunately anonymous) Indian artists under his guidance, and at the same time mediated by his bias and his culture, following an interesting and original hybrid format that bridges European figurative culture and Indian art.

**Keywords** South Asian Art. Nicolò Manucci. Indian Painting. Connected History & Global History.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Travelling Books and Wandering Firangis: Flight from the Deccan, Escape from Golconda. – 3 Making and Unmaking *Libro Rosso*. – 4 The Friar and the Doctor: Voyage in the European Enclaves of Southern India. – 5 Of Hindus, Ascetics and Temples: Unveiling *Libro Nero*. – 6 Conclusion.



#### Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-12
Accepted	2019-03-14
Published	2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Dubbini, Gianni (2019). "Between Mughal Art, Ethnography and Realism. On Nicolò Manucci's Artistic Patronage in India (1680-1720)". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 265-316.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/009

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## 1 Introduction

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, during the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, a European self-educated doctor established himself as a patron interested in the vast possibilities of South Asian artistic expression. This singular experience resulted in the creation of two important figurative works. They are known as *Libro Rosso*, with court portraits of Indian princes – especially, but not exclusively, of the Mughal dynasty – and *Libro Nero*, with descriptions of the manners and the rites of Hindus of the southeastern coast. Nicolò Manucci, who commissioned these works, was an exceptional figure, with a remarkable life story and destined for great fame. For several centuries (the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with also a brief parenthesis in the eighteenth) his adventures fascinated scholars, who devoted to him various publications.<sup>1</sup>

Manucci was the son of humble spice grinders living in the dark intricacy of the *calli* in San Stin quarter, near the Basilica dei Frari. At the age of fourteen he ran away from Venice in mysterious circumstances. He went across Turkey, Armenia, Persia and reached India following in the footsteps of Lord Henry Bard, Viscount of Bellomont, secret ambassador of Charles II, King of England (Irvine 1907, 1: 72-83; Lockhart 1966, 97-104). If we believe Manucci's version of events – the only one we have, since in the sources referring to Lord Bellomont no hint is made at the young and flamboyant Venetian – they reached Surat, gateway to India, in January 1653 (Irvine 1907, 1: 8-60; Subrahmanyam 2011, 141). As a young immigrant in search of a job and a career, endowed with extraordinary adaptability and a remarkable talent for learning local idioms, Manucci soon managed to enroll as an artilleryman with the Mughal. He was later able to establish himself as a European doctor at the courts of the Indian subcontinent. Critically for historians, he left one of the most important testimonies of any European living in India in the Early Modern period: the monumental *Storia do Mogor*, a hybrid of very complex origins and a work embellished by miniatures made by Indian artists (Irvine 1907, 1: lxxi, xvii-lxxxviii; Subrahmanyam 2011, 136-72).

The Bibliothèque Nationale de France holds two revealing portraits of Manucci, which both show him wearing an Indian dress. In one of the portraits Manucci is holding an Indian patient's wrist, who is probably Muslim, since he is wearing devotional clothes and

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This essay is dedicated to the memory of Dott.ssa Orfea Granzotto, librarian at the Sala Manoscritti of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (Venezia) for her invaluable help, sympathy and generosity.

<sup>1</sup> Catrou 1705; Foscarini 1752; Irvine 1907; Gasparrini-Leporace 1963; Falchetta 1986; Zorzi 1986; De Valence, Scrick 1995; Subrahmanyam 2011, 136-72; Moneta 2018.





**Figure 1** Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Codex OD 45 Rés (*Libro Rosso*). Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, *Portrait of Nicolò Manucci Dressed in Indian Clothes as Doctor While Holding the Hand of an Indian Patient*. Watercolour on paper with gilded inserts, 1680 ca., 38,5 cm (© BNF)

a turban [figs. 1-2]. Manucci is portrayed in middle age, relaxed in a precious gold-embroidered Mughal robe and a pair of local coloured slippers. In the other portrait Manucci is shown collecting medicinal plants in a hilly setting. This piece is characterised by strong influences from Flemish figurative imagery. Manucci himself seems younger, and sports a long beard and a traditional pakol cap, which is still used today in the region between Northern India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. He also wears an indigo robe and a pair of red and white striped trousers, essentially the classic Indian kurta pajama.



**Figure 2** Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Codex OD 45 Rés (*Libro Rosso*). Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, *Nicolò Manucci as Doctor Gathering Medical Plants in a Landscape*. Watercolour on paper with gilded inserts, 1680 ca., 38,5 cm (© BNF)

Manucci commissioned both of these portraits for his books. Some details in these portraits, particularly in the one where the doctor is holding the patient's wrist, may be connected to the wide current of Indian images that represent European subjects. The bibliography on this theme is so vast that it cannot be mentioned here, but one detail that connects Manucci's portrait to an example of such imagery is so notable it must be drawn attention to. The traditional Indian cap he is wearing in the miniature with the patient is very similar to the one of another European portrayed with his family in a Deccan kalamkari

fabric kept at the New York Metropolitan Museum and made in 1640-50 (Sardar 2011, 148-61). Wearing Indian clothes was becoming, for Europeans, a rather common custom and artists were interested in portraying this, often in works commissioned by Westerners. Therefore, Manucci's cap is a symbol that characterises him as a socially identifiable figure - the 'firangi' who adopts Indian attire. We might take the liberty of considering this detail as constitutive of the very essence of his condition in the world and his history. Quoting Daniel Arasse, "within the classic idea of imitation, every detail constitutes, to all effects, a part of a whole device - the picture - and this latter is built in accordance to a process of cutting and assembling" (Arasse 1992, 127). Thus, in a work of art the detail establishes the emblem of a device built in order to make the 'machine' of representation visible (127).

## 2 Travelling Books and Wandering Firangis: Flight from the Deccan, Escape from Golconda

Between 1682-84 and 1686 Manucci embarked upon a new phase of his life, first serving as a young artilleryman at the court of Dara Shikoh, during the violent war of succession to the throne, and later as the trusted surgeon of Prince Muazzam-Shah Alam, at the courts of Delhi, Lahore and Aurangabad. In those years, it can be argued, he became a 'cultural mediator' through art: a delicate and complex role that he was able to play due to his position as a traveller, a patron, and an interpreter of the Indian culture. In order to become a cultural mediator in the field of art (a designation we can only give to Manucci in the light of following centuries), however, Manucci had to first become a political mediator. A political mediator, or, more precisely, an 'agent' between the Mughal empire and the European powers settled in coastal India. Here a brief summary of the political events in which Manucci became involved will be traced.

In 1683 Emperor Aurangzeb had planned to besiege the city of Goa, in order to launch an attack from there on the territories of Shambaji, first son of the famous warlord Maratha Shivaji, who had died in 1680. Realising that the army of Prince Muazzam-Shah Alam was threateningly advancing on the heights over Goa, the Portuguese promptly sent a messenger to the Mughal sovereign, in a desperate attempt to negotiate peace (Irvine 1907, 2: 272-3). Here Manucci entered the game. He was recruited by the Portuguese with the primary goal to turn the awful situation in their favour. He was escorted to the fortress of Santiago, near Goa, with a letter signed by Muazzam-Shah Alam. The negotiations were successful. The Portuguese allowed the Mughal army to pass out of the city centre, on the condition that they did not ransack their territories. In turn, the Mughal army could besiege and continue the war against the Marathas. Ma-



Figure 3 View of the Golconda fort, photo by the Author (© G. Dubbini)

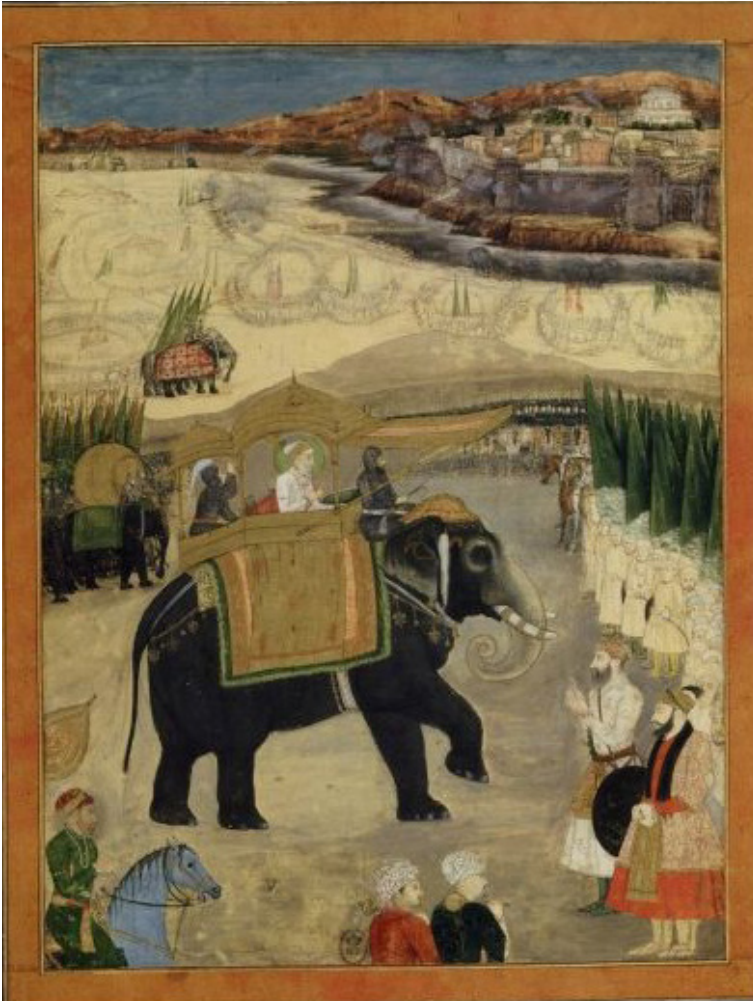
nucci proved to be a diplomatic success. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed a Knight of the Order of Santiago by the Portuguese, an important noble title which brought him a great deal of money and prestige (Irvine 1907, 2: 282-3).

After this experience Manucci decided he did not want to continue living in the Indian Muslim courts as a *hakeem firangi* (foreign doctor). He wished instead to seek fortune elsewhere. He dared to confess his wishes to Prince Muazzam-Shah Alam, who reacted rather despotically and continued to demand his services as a court doctor. In response to this refusal, Manucci ran away.<sup>2</sup>

It is believed that Manucci commissioned and assembled his first artistic work, the *Libro Rosso*, prior to his departure from the court of Prince Muazzam-Shah. Between 1678 and 1682, his career was stable, and he had access to the Mughal Prince's library in Aurangabad. For greater accuracy, pages of the manuscript kept at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice (Ms. It. VI 134=8299), in which Manucci reports the adventurous vicissitudes of the *Libro Rosso* miniatures in first person, will be quoted. They are short fragments, which scholars have rarely taken into account so far.

<sup>2</sup> Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (BNM), Ms. It. VI 134 (=8299), cc. 154v-155r.





**Figure 4** BNF, Cabinet des Estampes, Réserve Od 44 f. 46. Anonymous artist, *Emperor Aurangzeb at the Siege of Golconda*. Watercolour on paper-gouache, 1690 ca., 45 x 32 cm (© BNF)

Coming from my escape, I had my books sent away from the field by my trusted spies, who walked with no fear, allowing me to carry with me many golden rupees.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> BNM, Ms. It. VI 134 =8299, cc. 154v-155r. The translation into English is made by the Author.

This excerpt shows that every time he moved, Manucci took care to have his manuscripts sent away: among them there might have been the *Libro Rosso*, the work that had absorbed so much of his energy. Then the Venetian fled to Golconda, the opulent fortress and capital city of the Qutb Shahis and their sumptuous kingdom. Manucci arrived there aware that, once he had reached the domains of the Golconda sultans, he would be safe, because he would be outside the Mughal territorial jurisdiction. However, he could not imagine what would shortly happen to the kingdom that kept the world's principal diamond mines.

In 1686-87, after several months of siege, and in blatant transgression of the diplomatic relations that for centuries had guaranteed the reciprocal state of non-aggression between states, Aurangzeb conquered both Bijapur and Golconda. These historic events were unprecedented, because both states paid the tribute to the sovereign. The campaign against the kingdom of Bijapur and its 'puppet king', the fifteen-year-old Prince Sikander, last king of the Adil Shahi dynasty, was a particularly dishonourable action by Aurangzeb. After the conquest of Bijapur, the emperor turned his attention to Golconda and its fortress [figs. 3-4]. In 1687 Aurangzeb's troops laid ferocious siege to the city. Golconda resisted for months, until, in September, a traitor opened the eastern gates, allowing the besiegers to break in during the night (Richards 1975, 46-51; Sardar 2007, 171; Richards 1993, 221-2). The sovereign of Golconda, Abul Hasan, surrendered to the Mughal troops and was imprisoned in the fortress of Daulatabad until his death. The events mentioned above marked the end of the dynasty and the state of Golconda became part of the Mughal empire. After conquering the territory and taking the substantial booty of the fortress of Golconda (over 60 million rupees in golden and silver coins), the noble Qutb Shahis were enrolled in the local army and administration (Richards 1993, 222).

Meanwhile, Manucci had promptly escaped, and in so doing he became one of Prince Muazzam-Shah Alam's most wanted fugitives. The prince demanded that the Venetian be sent to him, along with tributes in the form of elephants, jewellery and weapons (Irvine 1907, 2: 294). However Manucci, with his usual shrewdness, had managed to flee from Hyderabad-Golconda when Aurangzeb's troops were nearing the city. Had he been captured and accused of high treason, he would possibly have been sentenced to death. Instead, Manucci fled Hyderabad around March 1686, carrying with him the *Libro Rosso* miniatures - his own work under his arm, we might say. After his daring escape, he eventually managed to reach Madras, an English maritime enclave on the southeastern coast. He stayed there until his death, living an altogether quieter life in Madras and Pondichéry, devoting himself to culture, art, and medicine. In the light of the historical events related above, it is now important to examine the facts connected to *Libro Rosso*.

### 3 Making and Unmaking *Libro Rosso*

Codex 45 Rés of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, entitled *Histoire del'Inde depuis Tamerlank jusqu'à Orangzeb par Manucci* (*A History of India from Tamerlane to Aurangzeb by Manucci*) and commonly named *Libro Rosso* [fig. 5], currently contains fifty-six figures. The pictures of the sovereigns characterising this collection were commissioned by the Venetian to a group of Indian artists led by Mir Muhammad, librarian of Muazzam-Shah Alam at Aurangabad, a figure unknown to scholars<sup>4</sup>. We know that Manucci had thought of the pictures as figures to be assembled and accompanied by an explanatory text, which would interpret them according to his ideas and, obviously, according to his biases. According to his own declaration, it appears that Manucci did not feel comfortable (although he lived there for a long time,) either with the Mughals or with the 'Gentiles' - the term by which the Europeans would define the Hindus, differentiating them from people of Muslim religion.

The style of the sovereigns' portraits, both Muslim and Hindu, is hard to define. It could be attributed to that of the school of miniatures in Aurangabad, where they were made. Otherwise, they could be connected to the stylistic influence of the Indian bazaars of the Golconda school (Kruijtzter 2010, 161-82). Manucci's cultural compass (and the one represented by his books) was that of bazaars, and of the people's perception of the powerful; a compass that had only limited access to the matters of the court, unlike what the Venetian would claim (Subrahmanyam 2011, 170).

In this way his works are rather different from those of Tavernier and Bernier, other famous travellers across India at that time (170-1). The French doctor François Bernier, a rival of Manucci, as Pauline L. Scheurleer has recently pointed out, offered through his work an interesting description of court painting, of the portraits of the emperor and of the highest rank officials, and of bazaar typology of painting. Using Bernier as a source of support, it is possible to argue that some local artists looking for patronage among both Hindus and Muslims could accept occasional jobs on the basis of their availability and even for short periods, complying with the tastes and the aesthetic principles of different clients, many of whom were foreigners (Lusingh Scheurleer 2017, 44). Bernier and Tavernier were of a higher cultural level and had greater cultural access than Manucci, and they did not commission Indian artists to produce their works.

While analysing the paintings Manucci commissioned, one surely meets with a minor genre of Deccan painting. As Mark Zebrowski

<sup>4</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF, *Libro Rosso*), Codex 45 Rés, *Histoire del'Inde depuis Tamerlank jusqu'à Orangzeb par Manucci*, f. 1v.



**Figure 5** Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cod. OD 45 Rés. Red cover of the *Libro Rosso* by Manucci and his artists. In the centre of the cover the Lion of Saint Mark can be seen. It is circled by four gilded eagles, i.e. the symbol of Napoleon Empire. These were executed after the illustrated book was taken from the Saint Mark Library in 1797 by Brumet, Napoleon's High Commissioner for Venice (© BNF)

has cleverly argued, this was, however, the result of the extraordinary cosmopolitanism of the region, which was composed, ethnologically and culturally speaking, not only of Muslim Indians and Hindus, but also of wide and powerful communities of Turks, Persians, Arabs and Africans, settled in the courts together with merchants, holy sufis, and generals – all generous patrons, who financed painters and calligraphers (Zebrowski 1983, 9). In those courts the milieu was certainly multicultural, undoubtedly characterised by a Shiite predominance, whereas the other ethnicities and cultures fed on the dialogue between Hindus and Sunnis and Africans and Afghans, and the central power developed a strong Iranian influence thanks to the good relations with the Persian Safavid empire (Zebrowski 1983, 9). Therefore, the Deccan became, at least until the 1687 Mughal conquest, a huge patronage centre, crucial for the developing of court arts, where miniatures and calligraphy had great importance in relation to power (Zebrowski 1983, 9).

Manucci could gain his own space in the patrons' circle, although, as a doctor, his economic power was limited (Manucci's financial fortunes went up and down at various points in his life). In spite of this condition, he managed to finance a singular and noteworthy pictorial cycle. The case of Manucci – a European playing the role of patron to local Indian artists, unconventional in the domineering social structure – is almost unique for that time. Patronage of local artists, then, was not the prerogative of the sovereign or of his aristocratic circle, but of anyone having the skills and the money to plan and finance these types of artistic enterprises.



If we consider the textual references in *Libro Rosso* and in the works of some contemporaries, we can argue that these pictures were commissioned in Aurangabad. It is more likely, then, to connect them to the local school of miniatures, rather than to Golconda's (Krujtzter 2010, 161-82). But it is highly improbable (if not even impossible, considering the historical facts) that Manucci commissioned the portraits of the princes when he was living as a fugitive in Golconda-Hyderabad. To obtain miniatures from Indian artists, a European had to settle in a court, with the approval of his patron, and had to have much time, if not years, to gather and lead a team of Indian miniaturists and to become the interpreter of their works. In fact he escaped towards Golconda in 1686 (Moneta 2018, 162).

The creation of *Libro Rosso* must have taken place in the Deccan, where Manucci lived for a long time, even if it may have been finished (for example, as far as the captions are concerned) in the European enclaves of the southeastern coast. Another declaration included in Manucci's work affirms this belief, so it merits quotation in its entirety. Manucci himself states that he commissioned the pictures for *Libro Rosso* in a Mughal court.

Before leaving the Mughal kingdom, I commissioned [...] all these portraits of kings and princes, from Tamerlane to Aurangzeb, and of the latter's children and grandchildren.<sup>5</sup>

This fragment offers motives for discussion. The first and primary one, to which scholars have strangely never given sufficient weight, is that Manucci did not collect the paintings, but he commissioned them to Indian artists and assembled them before leaving the Mughal kingdom. The Mughal kingdom could therefore not be Golconda, capital city of the Qutb Shahis. Moreover, this can be confirmed by the style of painting, as well as by the fact that the Deccani Mughal court where Manucci stayed longer was certainly Aurangabad, during the years 1678-82.

It seems that the jigsaw is taking a clear and stable shape. We can also realise that paintings similar to the Venetian's are to be found in a European-influenced milieu - if not of patronage, of collecting practices and stylistic similarities. Some plausible comparisons between Manucci's *Libro Rosso* miniatures and some contemporary Deccan paintings can be made, which is significant.

An album at the Rijkmuseum in Amsterdam offers a first good point of comparison with a similar work by a provincial Mughal atelier. It was created for a Dutch collector and is very similar, in subject and style, to the miniatures commissioned by Manucci. It is the *Wits-*

<sup>5</sup> BNF, *Libro Rosso*, f. 1v. The translation into English is mine.



**Figure 6** Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Witsen Album. Anonymous 17th-century Indian artist, *Portrait of the Emperor Aurangzeb with Hailoo*. Watercolour on paper, 1686 ca., 61 mm x 308 mm (© Rijksmuseum)

*en Album* [fig. 6] (Subrahmanyam 2011, 152 fn. 48; Lusingh Scheurleer 1996, 167-254; Forberg 2016, 213-47; Kruijtzter, Lusingh Scheurleer 2005, 48-60). It is named for collector Nicolaes Cornelisz Witsen who was a wealthy patrician of the Dutch Republic, mayor of Amsterdam and administrator of the VOC, the Dutch East India Company.

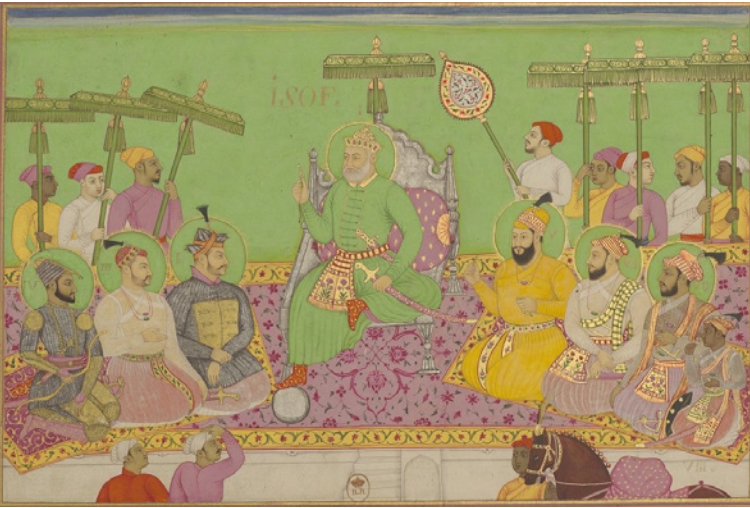
A portrait of Emperor Aurangzeb in the *Witsen Album* had a clear stylistic influence on a picture of the old sovereign in Manucci's *Libro Rosso*. In both miniatures [figs. 6-7], the almost ascetic sternness of the emperor, a fervent Muslim, is highlighted: Manucci's artists portrayed him on horseback and wearing an immaculate white robe while in the Witsen miniature he is shown standing. Since this picture is accompanied by a text, it is clear that it was commissioned for a European market (Lusingh Scheurleer 1996, 167-254). In both



**Figure 7** Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, OD45 (*Libro Rosso*), f. 13r. Anonymous 17th-century Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, Aurangzeb. Watercolour on paper, 1680 ca., 38,5 cm (© BNF)

pictures, the one commissioned by Manucci and the other collected by Witsen, Aurangzeb's gestures are remarkably graceful. In one of the portraits, he smells a white flower with an absorbed expression and, concentrated on the scent, his thoughts seem far from the mundane realities of life.

Along with the miniature of Aurangzeb created for Witsen, another page of Manucci's *Libro Rosso* deserves comparison with a different work in the pictorial style of the Deccan. This is the miniature portrait of the Adil Shahi dynasty [fig. 8] (Subrahmanyam 2011, 152 fn. 52). This dynasty of kings governed the city of Bijapur from 1498 to 1686, the year of Aurangzeb's conquest. As shown in the picture, the dynasty's power is expressed by the figure of Yusuf Adilshah, who reigned from 1489 to 1509 and patronised court customs and visual



**Figure 8** Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, OD 45 Rés, Cabinet des Estampes (*Libro Rosso*), f. 38. Anonymous 17th-century Indian artist, *The Household of Bijapur*. Watercolour on paper, 1680 ca. (© BNF)

and literary culture of Persian influence (Zebrowski 1983, 60). The word “ISOF” is visible, which connects this picture to Yusuf in Manucci’s miniature.

Manucci’s anonymous artists represented the dynasty of Bijapur on a green background without the Flemish influences on the landscape that characterized the Venetian’s miniature self-portrait. The nine sultans of the Bijapur dynasty are all portrayed here, and on the far right of the painting there is the last sovereign, the adolescent Prince Sikander, deposed by Aurangzeb. This image of Manucci’s is marked with a Roman figure, which refers to an accompanying caption.

Now we trace a comparison with a miniature held at the New York Metropolitan Museum, portraying the royal house of Bijapur [fig. 9]. The work has many similarities to Manucci’s, and in particular to the image of *Libro Rosso*, and may be used as an interesting term of comparison. In the MET picture, the sovereign Yusuf is receiving the keys to the kingdom from Ismail, the Iranian founder of the Persian Safavid dynasty, follower of Shiism [fig. 9] (Zebrowski 1983, 150). He is sitting on a splendid golden throne and is receiving a golden key, symbol of royalty. His turban is undoubtedly Iranian. As Zebrowski has affirmed, this painting reveals a clear purpose: to highlight the Shiite belief in the dynasty, in blatant contrast to the values and the religion





**Figure 9** New York, MET, Kamal Muhammad and Chand Muhammad. *The House of Bijapur*. Ink, opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper, 1680 ca. 41,3 × 32,5 cm. Photo by the Author (© MET)

of the new Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb – an uncompromising Sunni. According to Zebrowski, the MET painting is the most important work created during the reign of young Prince Sikander (Zebrowski 1983, 150). It was commissioned for the king from two artists, Kamal Muhammed and Chand Muhammed, and the attribution is confirmed by an inscription in Persian on the left side of the picture (Haidar, Sardar 2015, 154). Aspects pointed out by the curator of the Metropolitan

**Figure 10** New York, MET, Kamal Muhammad and Chand Muhammad. *The House of Bijapur*. Ink, opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper, 1680 ca. 41,3 × 32,5 cm. Detail from the same image showing a European vessel, probably Portuguese or Dutch (photo by the Author) (© MET)



Museum, Navina Haidar – the overlapping perspectives and the staircase on the bottom, leading, with no architectural support, to the court carpet – encourage further observations. The rocks in the background appear to be very similar to those of Manucci's miniature portraying Prince Shah Alam hunting for deer, as well as to the backdrop of the Venetian's self-portrait as a doctor. This scenery, however, shows some features which are undoubtedly related to Flemish paintings, both in the buildings and in the geological landscape, and reveals a mixture of Mughal pictorial influence with the same European subject. Indeed, as Navina Haidar has pointed out, the scene aims at demonstrating, through the landscape, the power of the last Bijapur dynasty on the earth and on the sea, which was actually vanishing. The ship in the background is a Portuguese or Dutch caravel, reminding us of the by then strong Western influence on the internal questions of the Indian states [fig. 10] (Joshi 1939, 162-9; Overton 2014, 233-64). The carpet, with flower patterns inspired by local flora, is identical to the one in Manucci's picture, as well as the staircase at the feet of the carpet itself (in Manucci's image, however, the perspective is more complete); in both works one can see, on the foreground, three court servants; in both, the figure on the bottom right is flanked by a horse. The main difference between the two pictures is that, in the MET one, aureoles – symbol of regality – are missing, whereas they are present in the work commissioned by Manucci. As to the aureole, a recurrent theme in Mughal painting, which marks the difference between the two pictures, other aspects may be pointed out.

The Vatican Apostolic Library holds a collection of Mughal paintings that greatly precede Manucci's works, dating back to between 1628 and 1659, on the basis of the dates appearing in the caption of



**Figure 11** Rome, Vatican Library, Cod. Barberini Orientale nr. 136, f. 11. Anonymous 17th-century Indian artist, *Genealogy of the Emperor Jahangir*. Miniature on a gouache technique on paper (© BAV)



**Figure 12** Rome, Vatican Library, Cod. Barberini Orientale nr. 136, f. 10. Anonymous 17th-century Indian artist, *Genealogy of the Emperor Shah Jahan*. Incomplete drawing, miniature on a gouache technique on paper (© BAV)

the pictures, studied by Otto Kurtz in the 1960s [figs. 11-12] (Kurtz 1967, 251-71, 253; Subrahmanyam 2011, 152 fn. 49). In the collection there are some incomplete 'round' portraits of Mughal power (Kurtz 1967, 252). They come from a little volume, kept in a restored lacquer casing, with Indo-Persian decorations, although it was made in Europe (252). The following inscription is evident: *Collection of Chinese Drawings and Miniatures. Ten drawings, fifteen miniatures VII 80*. The erroneous attribution "Chinese drawings" in the nineteenth century was rectified and the miniatures were attributed to the age of the greatest grandeur for Mughal India and its empire, as the inscriptions in Persian from the era of Jahangir and Shah Jahan testify (252). Otto Kurtz pointed out that the album in the Vatican collection is not one of the refined *Murraqa'* (Mughal court imperial albums) the Europeans loved collecting, but rather a collection of sketchy portraits - an artist's sketchbook, gaining strength from its own incompleteness, that satisfied the taste of the noble Barberini, who were clearly interested in Asia and Oriental scenery (252).

We should now return to Southern India at the turn of the seventeenth century, where Manucci lived in a territory between French, English and Portuguese domains. Another declaration, by a Southern Indian Discalced Carmelite friar will be given here.<sup>6</sup> His report, consulted and copied down in the Vatican Apostolic Library, offers some interesting information on Manucci's work as a patron, but also on the European enclaves in coastal India. The work is useful for contextualizing Manucci's second work of patronage, the so-called *Libro Nero*, which treats of Hindu customs and traditions.

#### 4 The Friar and the Doctor: Voyage in the European Enclaves of Southern India

«His state, a picture of the golden age,  
So oft the subject of the Bard and Sage;  
When men united in a friendly band,  
And Truth presided o'er the guiltless land.  
Of Christian tenents little trace remains;  
Two chapels only grace these verdant plains»  
(Irwin Eyles, *Saint Thomas Mount, a Poem*, 1774)

On the afternoon of May 8th 1699, the Discalced Carmelite friar Francesco Maria di San Siro (born Antonio Gorla) was in Madras, the main commercial centre of the East India Company in Southern

<sup>6</sup> Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), *Itinerario Orientale in cui si contengono varie notizie della Turchia, della Persia, di una gran parte delle India. Fatto, e composto da un religioso converso dell'Ordine de Carmelitani Scalzi...* Ms. Borg. lat. 317.



India.<sup>7</sup> He had made a long journey, very similar to the one Manucci had made almost fifty years before.<sup>8</sup> The journey had taken him to Smyrna, in Turkey, then to Constantinople where he stopped briefly, to Trebizond, to the Kurdish regions of Erzurum, on to Tabriz, and then to Isfahan (capital of Safavid Persia), where he stayed for a considerable period of time. In 1696, some of the most important Christian missionaries in Asia had settled there and a Carmelite had been named bishop (Pagano 1998). From Isfahan, Gorla had travelled, following a caravan, along the deserts of Southern Iran, and had embarked at Bandar Abbas, on the Strait of Hormuz. He then finally reached the coasts of the Subcontinent.

When he arrived there, the area of Madras was an important mercantile centre controlled by the English. The city had many jurisdictions and was part of the manifold and politically diverse identity of the coast. A few kilometres from Madras there was another significant Portuguese settlement, definitely declining at that time: the fortified city of São Tomé. Not far from both, the boundless territories of the Mughal empire.

The harbour of Pondichéry, administered by the French East India Company, 150 kilometres south of Madras following the coast, was in the neighbouring area. It was then a thriving French enclave, founded under Minister Colbert's instructions – a city with a regular urban plan and a prosperous harbour (Suali 1940, 1: 255). At the end of the century, the exclusive power of the Dutch – as had happened with the Portuguese some years before – was progressively decaying in favour of the English. The commercial and military competition in India had been replaced by two ferocious rivals: the British and the French. These two powers, especially the East India Company had almost definitely expelled the Dutch from the eastern coast of India (Margolin, Markovitz 2015, 178; Colli 2016, 50-1).

The area between Madras and São Tomé, with which Gorla had entered into contact for the first time, has been defined by the historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam “an irregular urban complex” and a “hybrid city” (Subrahmanyam 2001, 221-39, 224-5). It is in Madras that the terms ‘White Town’ and ‘Black Town’ are used almost for the

**7** BAV, Ms. Borg. lat. 317, c. 335.

**8** The Author followed the footsteps of Nicolò Manucci from Venice to Croatia and Greece, and then to Izmir (Smyrna). The itinerary continued across Turkey, Armenia and Iran until Bandar Abbas and Hormuz Island. The Author and his colleague, photographer and academic Angelica Kaufmann, followed this itinerary between July 2015 and December 2016. It resulted in more than 10,000 km on caravan routes, crossed by private and public transports through Turkey, Georgia, Armenia and Iran during very tense geopolitical times for the Middle East. It was the first expedition ever conducted tracing ‘young Manucci’ itinerary, resulting in three photographic exhibitions between Venice and Milan. It included also a section tracing Manucci's partial itinerary in central and northern India.

first time in the language of urbanism: they refer to an Asian city, as to its physical organisation, but actually administered by the Europeans. These terms contribute to marking the first evident separation between 'white' communities – English merchants, functionaries, and officers in Madras – and the Indians, who were diverse as to religion and traditions, and constituted a highly heterogeneous social and cultural melting pot (Nightingale 2012, 47-58).

Far from the centre of Madras, to the south, near the famous Saint Thomas Mount, a sort of free zone existed. Gorla had decided to reach it, "three leagues far", because he knew that a rather influential Italian had chosen to live there.<sup>9</sup> The hill where this man lived has maintained its Tamil name, *Parangi Malai*, which means 'the mountain of frangis' (the Persian word meaning 'foreigners') (Harris 2015, 274-5; Irvine 1907, 3: 73) [figs. 13-14].

According to the European tradition, Saint Thomas, after evangelizing Malabar and Coromandel coasts in the second half of the first century AD, was martyred at the very feet of the mountain: the sanctuary held the stone on which the Christian saint had been killed by the Indians (Subrahmanyam 2001, 229). Besides being a pilgrimage stop for travellers, in the second half of the seventeenth century the slopes of the mountains became one of the Europeans' favourite places for refreshment – especially for the English officers of the East India Company, who found there an easy escape from the suffocating heat of Madras, as well as some land to be cultivated thanks to the excellent microclimate (229). Other foreigners also lived there.

From Gorla's report we learn that he met a man with a bizarre and adventurous past.

After lunch, I wanted to go to Saint Thomas mount, where a Venetian doctor lived. His name was Signor Nicolao Manucci. Forty-eight years after his arrival in India [...] he had retired three leagues far from Madrastapatan, under the Great Mogul's jurisdiction. He had bought some land there and had built a Persian-like palace.<sup>10</sup>

Here we find the former Venetian described as a fugitive again. He had settled in that 'free zone', at the furthest borders of Shah Alam's territories, in order to flee from the prince and his emissaries. The prince, whom Manucci had served for a long time in Lahore, Delhi, and Aurangabad, had become emperor some years before, after his father Aurangzeb's death in 1707, taking the dynasty name of Bahadur Shah I. He did not stay long on the throne, because he died of an

<sup>9</sup> BAV, Ms. Borg. lat. 317, cc. 335-337.

<sup>10</sup> BAV Ms. Borg. lat. 317, cc. 335-337. The translation into English is made by the Author.



**Figure 13** Venice, Gianni Dubbini's private collection. François Valentijn, *Mount Saint Thomas and Plan of the City of São Tomé*. Dutch engraving, 1726, 45 × 23 cm. Photo by the Author (© G. Dubbini)

illness, rather young, in 1712, during a sojourn in Lahore. His fearsome father, on the contrary, had died in his eighties, and during his last years had shown a strict spiritual adherence to Islam. The fact that Shah Alam died of an illness – without Manucci as his doctor – is an ironic fate for the young Indian sovereign, one of the last Mughals to maintain effective power over his empire, fragmented as it was by wars, crises and revolts.

After arriving in that coastal area, Manucci felt safe. The place where he had settled was very close to the territories administered by the English of the East India Company and the Europeans of the coastal enclaves, with whom he would have privileged relations – especially with the leaders of the Madras merchants' company, as well as with the officials of the French East India Company.

Manucci had managed to re-establish his role as a 'political mediator' with the English. In 1686 he had been ordered by the governor of Madras, William Gyfford, to negotiate with the parties as to



**Figure 14** London, The British Library. James Hunter, *A View of Mount Saint Thomas Near Madras*. Coloured aquatint from *Picturesque Scenery in the Kingdom of Mysore*, London, W. Bulmer for E. Orme, 1805 (© BL)

some Mughal assaults against the East India Company factories in Bengal, at Hugli (Irvine 1907, 3: 90, 92-3). As a mediator between the Mughal governors of Arcot and the British, Manucci had become a member of the Madras elite (Subrahmanyam 2001, 232). He was also on very good terms with François Martin, the first general governor of Pondichéry, which he had founded in 1673 (Froidevaux 1932, 193-216). However, he longed for stability, to be able to face old age serenely, after years and years of adventures and sudden displacements. On October 24th 1686, he married the widow of Thomas Clarke, an English translator. The bride's name was Elizabeth Hartley Clarke: she was a Catholic, probably of Portuguese origins (Archer 1970, 104-13, 105).

We should now go back to 1699, to Gorla's text and to his travel notes. His description of Madras, which the Author copied down in the Vatican document, can easily catch the image of the identity of the city and of its commerce: Madras was then a political, military and administrative centre, vital for the East India Company, which operated important relations with its commercial stations in Bengal from there. At the turn of the century, the city probably had at least

a hundred thousand inhabitants – a remarkable figure for a fortified mercantile settlement (Prakash 1998, 148). Here is Gorla's report:

Only one league far from São Tomé there is the city of Madrastapatán, governed by the English, who built a farm there. [...] Vessels from every nation arrive there, particularly Armenian, Muslim, Gentile and English. The English govern the city and have business in Manila, China, Siam, Bago, Bengal, Achem [,] Surat, Persia, Mecca [...]. The ships set off and land every day: the city is inhabited by English people, Armenians, French people, Malabar Christians, Gentiles and Muslims, and I met some Italians there.<sup>11</sup>

He praises the European architecture and the urban structure, likes the military architecture and highlights the differences among the several areas and the several inhabitants, emphasising the multicultural nature but also the segregation of the place. In this report, Gorla's sharpness and spirit of observation are very evident. He shows the same qualities in his accounts of meeting Manucci at the feet of Mount Saint Thomas: this testimony is fundamental to understanding the Venetian's artistic work in the area. Gorla stayed at Manucci's house and reveals important aspects of his host's work.

While I was staying there, he was writing a History, divided into three volumes in folio, about the empire of the Great Mogul, its times of peace and its times of war, beginning from 1655, when he had arrived in India. He gathered in his History sixty figures of princes of the Great Mogul's dynasty, beginning from the great Tamerlane, the founder of the empire, and of all the Gentile princes, the Generals, and the main ministers of the court that he had met. The figures had been taken from the original portraits in the house of the King. [Manucci] had gathered them from Prince Shah Alam's library, paying much money, thanks to a friend of his, an official. He wanted to insert them in the final version of his History. I think this work will be much admired in Europe, being a curious and rare one.<sup>12</sup>

Here Gorla allows us to guess that he saw *Libro Rosso*, possibly inside Manucci's house. This is a crucial report, both to date the work – as a *terminem ante quem* – and for the rare judgement of a contemporary. This passage confirms that Manucci fled the Mughal territories carrying with him his album of miniatures. This fact is also confirmed

<sup>11</sup> BAV, Ms. Borg. lat. 317, cc. 350-352. The translation into English is made by the Author.

<sup>12</sup> BAV, Ms. Borg. lat. 317, c. 339. The translation into English is made by the Author.

in the preceding documents and it is likely that Manucci wrote the captions for the pictures exactly there. In the context of European accounts of Southern India's Hinduism, Gorla's (purely textual) work is useful because it has many analogies with Manucci's, and, it is believed, may have been influenced by him. It is very likely that Manucci saw in person some of the scenes he ordered the Indian artists to represent in *Libro Nero*, in the most realistic way. Before analysing these issues, a description of *Libro Nero*, of its composition, its style, and its modes, will be given.

## 5 Of Hindus, Ascetics and Temples: Unveiling *Libro Nero*

While moving to and from different coastal towns and exploring Hindu territories, Manucci planned and commissioned his last artistic work to another group of Indian artists, this time artists of the Madras area. *Libro Nero* is not easily classifiable within a definite genre of Indian art: it mediates between the European culture of textual interpretation and the figurative culture of the southern region of the Subcontinent. This pioneering work is highly syncretic: combining influences from textiles, manuscripts, print culture, and painting as well as from varied Indian and European styles and cultures. This form finds correspondences with the political, territorial, cultural and urban identity of its time (Subrahmanyam 2001, 236). We will see below how this happened.

*Libro Nero* is a voluminous manuscript, richly illustrated with sixty-six drawings, and is held at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana of Venice: Codex Ita. VI. 136 (=8300). Its name derives from the dark colour of its cover [fig. 15]. It is a collection of pictures, almost always accompanied by captions in Italian and in French. This work remained in Venice, where it can be consulted today, because in 1797 it was considered by Brumet, Bonaparte's commissary, a minor work in comparison with the collection of Mughal miniatures in *Libro Rosso* (Zorzi 1990, 65).

*Libro Nero* is definitely different in theme from the preceding work, commissioned some years before. Indeed, it is a collection of ethnographic figures that offers information on the habits, costumes, and rites of the Hindus, their cosmology and their religion, their traditions, their cultural processions, their sacrifices, the marriages in the several castes, and the ascetics' rites. The ethnographic-didactic commitment, already evident in *Libro Rosso*, is even more accentuated in *Libro Nero*, even if one can also find Manucci's unflattering prejudices against the Gentiles - the European term for the Hindus - that are very strongly expressed here (Subrahmanyam 2011, 165-168). However, Manucci's ethnocentrism and racism should be interpreted in the light of the mentality of his age; in spite of his



**Figure 15** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*. The dark leather cover of the Manuscript explains its Italian name, *Libro Nero*, meaning 'Black Book' (photo by the Author) (© BNM)

author's embarrassing deprecative opinions, the work is, in its complexity, a pioneering figurative treaty of Indian ethnography. Moreover, it is significant for its still valid and accurate representations, which can be confirmed today by reflections of the practices he records in the complex mosaic of present-day Indian society. It is something of a *tour de force* in the figurative culture of southern India, and in particular of the coastal region between Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.

The illustrations and the captions ordered by Manucci form a cultural synthesis made by a European, with the purpose, controversial and yet unequivocal, of cultural comprehension and of an attempt at interpretation which could explain Indian culture to European contemporaries. In all the representations gathered in the work there is a very close relationship between text and picture, which confirms the role of Manucci as an interpreter, a patron and an executor. He worked next to local artists as well as to scribes for the writing of the texts; he did not only collect the pages for the work, but he also commissioned them according to his own purposes, his cultural agenda, and his instructions.

The figurative nature of *Libro Nero* is, as it was mentioned above, multiform. At the beginning we find the main deities of the Hindu pantheon, such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva (Rudra), and Ganesh [figs. 16-17]. Then there are the Hindu ceremonies, like weddings, funerals, religious processions with carriages, and the celebrations of lunar eclipses, with habits such as the burning of the widow, who throws herself into the flames of her husband's pyre. This Hindu custom was officially abolished by the so-called *Sati Act* in 1829, under Lord Bentinck, then British governor of India (Hawley 1994, 4-12).





**Figure 16** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*. Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, Lord Vishnu depicted with the cosmic snake and some devotees. Watercolour on paper, 1700-10 ca., 415 × 250 cm (© BNM)

Other rites represented in *Libro Nero* can still appear bizarre, incomprehensible or shocking, under Western eyes. Notwithstanding this, they were pictured without censure by Manucci's artists. These customs still survive in photographs of ascetics engaged in difficult yoga poses or in the ecstatic ritual consumption of drugs, along with radical deprivations, which today reach their utmost celebration during the *Khumb Mela*. As the English scholar Mildred Archer has argued, the typology of these images corresponds to a genre of artistic





**Figure 17** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*. Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, Shiva represented as Rudra with his vehicle the sacred bull Nandi. Watercolour on paper, 1700-10 ca., 415 × 250 cm (© BNM)

representation which has always fascinated the Europeans, accentuating their propensity for the 'exotic' (Archer 1970, 104-13). This happened during the seventeenth century, but also in the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, when British colonial influence became predominant in India, with enormous consequences for systems of representation as well.

*Libro Nero* was composed on paper, in watercolour rather than in gouache, by Indian artists of the Madras area who were working un-



**Figure 18** Folio nr. 70 of a manuscript representing the Virata Pravan showing the scene of the Mahabharata when Arjuna and Uttara retake the sacred cows. The drawing was executed in 1680-90 ca. in Tirupati and is an example of portable pilgrimage art (Losty 2013, 158) (© Losty 2013)

der Manucci's direction. Such format was not common for the artists, paper was not a common material for them: Manucci himself provided them with it (Archer 1970, 112). Instead, these artists were used to drawing their pictures on cotton fabric made in the area, the already mentioned kalamkari (Subrahmanyam 2011, 165).

As to the dating of the work, many interpretations exist and there is no agreement on it. It was certainly composed between the late seventeenth century and the first decade of the eighteenth century. Some scholars have tried to suggest more precise dates: between 1702 and 1706, according to Anna Libera Dallapiccola; between 1701 and 1705, according to Mildred Archer (Dallapiccola 2010, 18-19; Archer 1970, 112). In Subrahmanyam's opinion, these pictures date back to the end of the seventeenth and the very beginning of the eighteenth century (Subrahmanyam 2011, 164-5).

Besides dating, other important issues must be discussed here. For example, we should ask ourselves: to what can *Libro Nero* be compared, if observed from the perspective of the Hindu art of southern India, in the area around Madras? The answer is multifaceted and definitive conclusions are somewhat elusive.

We could certainly try to draw a comparison between the kalamkari (painted fabrics) of the Madras area and the precious fabrics of southern India, in particular those in Telegana style (Dallapiccola 2010, 18-19). For example, a picture held at Musée Guimet in Paris represents a Nayaka sovereign in the zenana. This picture comes



**Figure 19** Warsaw, Warsaw University Library (476):. Anonymous Indian artist for a French commercial agent of Andhra Pradesh, *The Avatar of Vishnu, Vamana*. Watercolour on opaque European paper, 1680-1700 ca. (© Warsaw University Library)

from a kalamkari cloth of the Tamil Nadu region, probably from Thanjavur or Madurai, even if it is much older than piece under analysis here: it dates back to the second quarter of the seventeenth century. A still better-fitting picture is the one represented on a large cotton cloth in the Tapi collection of Surat, where a Nayaka dynast is celebrating spring (vasantotsava): this work has been analyzed in detail by John Guy (Guy 2011, 162-75). Other good comparisons with the Indian painting of Andhra Pradesh can be proposed here, in particular the nayaka paintings coming from the murals of Thanjavur temples (Guy 2011, 162-75). Besides fabrics, some manuscripts on paper are interesting for the comparison. One page of *Virata Parvan*, for example, presents the scenes of the famous and monumental Hindu *Mahabharata* epic. Composed (ink on paper and gold) in southern India, in Tirupati, in 1680-90, this appears very similar to the style of Manucci's pictures, especially as to the format and the quasi-caricatural stylization of the figures and of the faces of deities and heroes [fig. 18].

Manuscript 476 of the Library of Warsaw University, probably commissioned by a clergyman or a French agent working in the trade

stations of Coromandel coasts (maybe in charge with enriching Louis XV's collections), is useful for a still more convincing comparison [fig. 19]. The pictures are similarly accompanied by captions. It gathers about one hundred images of Hindu deities, a choice of main scenes from *Ramayana* and Krishna legends, and the images of deities from southern temples (Michell 2003, 265; Jakimowicz-Shah 1988, 1-29). Due to limitations of space, it has not been possible to explore the Warsaw manuscript and its implications to understand Manucci's work in this essay. However, the interpretations of Marta Jakimowicz-Shah can be ultimately considered valid as to the stylistic attribution: she defines Manucci's work a hybrid, created by Indian artists in Telegu, style, but composed in Madras (Jakimowicz-Shah 1988, 14).

This work also offers a resemblance with a collection of coloured watercolours on European paper kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France that were collected between 1727 and 1758 by a French agent called Abraham Pierre Porcher des Oulches, chief of the French East India Company in Masulipatan. This collection of images is kept under the name *Histoire et figures des dieux des Indiens ou Théogonie des Malabariquais*. It is a document in four volumes that includes 644 miniatures in gouache and watercolour in different formats [fig. 20]. The main subject of this images is Shivaite and in style it very much resembles the pieces commissioned by Manucci. On the other hand it is, unlike Manucci's *Libro Nero*, multilingual and was assembled during a slightly successive historical period.

It is now necessary to resume the treatment of the meeting of Gorla and Manucci in Madras, fundamental for understanding the origins of Manucci's Hindu pictures and of the Vatican Library manuscript. It was an important exchange of knowledge and opinions, rich in cultural consequences and reciprocal influences. In many cases, Manucci's attitude bordered on ethnographic interest for the Hindus and a true attention to their culture – not only to denigrate their customs or to express prejudices, which have always been part of the participant observer's mentality even in twentieth-century anthropology. It is not a surprise, then, that Manucci mentioned in his writings the presence in southern India of the extraordinary Jesuit Father Roberto De Nobili. As a respectful observer of the Indian culture, De Nobili converted the Hindus to Christianity thanks to a special permission of the prince of Tanjore, but he did so by assuming the habits and the clothes of a Brahmin (Irvine 1907, 3: 105-6; Tucci 1949, 171-4).

By following in these steps, at the end of his life Manucci managed to handle a format of artwork and an Indian figurative culture he had not dealt with before, choosing Indian art to express the images and the fortune of his work. Reading Gorla's report in the Vatican Library, it appears likely that Manucci's illustrated work on Hinduism coincides (at least as far as the captions are concerned) with the





**Figure 20** Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. *Shurapadma et le siens dans la magnifique ville de Viramahendrapatnam qu'il fit édifier par son beau-père.* Watercolour on paper (Karikal-Tanjore) from the *Histoire de Shiva* assembled by the French agent Abraham Pierre Porcher des Oulches. BnF OD 39 f. 91v-92, Cat. RH nr. 298 a-b. (© BNF)

time of Gorla's second visit, that is, between 1699 and 1710. Nobody could give Gorla better information on Hindu costumes than Manucci: he had been living in India all his life and was an expert, because he was writing his work just at that time.

Some pictures in *Libro Nero* are strikingly accurate for its time. Such level of accuracy could only be gained by a long and detailed observation in person. This is confirmed by Manucci's report of his own experiences.

In my preface to this section I have said that several persons have written upon the manners and customs of the Hindūs. To this I have to add that the reader must remember that any difference found between what is said by me and by others is due to the difference in the places we have visited and the people we have come across. [...] The inhabitants of these places differ in their costumes, as well as in their mode of life, the ceremonies at their temples, and the doctrines of their religion. It should be remembered that what I have recorded refers to the manners and costumes of the Hindūs subjects of the Great Moghul and the Malabarīs, these be-

ing the countries I have seen and through which I have travelled.  
(Irvine 1907, 3: 90)

Manucci's anthropological attitude is particularly evident when he focused on the architecture and on some rituals practiced by Hindu ascetics. These observations are believed to have been carried out on the spot, and then reported on paper by the artists who worked for him with great accuracy, scrupulously following their patron's instructions. These merits could 'justify' some ethnocentric passages in the work's captions, which appear very controversial. The value of the work is that it sets a European's artistic representation free from the Ancient Regime's superstitions, by means of formats and modes still unknown at that time. These features are certainly useful in that they inserted in the work a more empirical dimension, which aimed at a precise picture of the otherness it was treating.

One of the more suggestive places in southern India, which Manucci describes in detail, and which he had his group of Indian artists represent on a splendid page of watercolour on paper, is the Hindu sanctuary of Tirupati [fig. 21]. The sanctuary is situated in the Andhra Pradesh inland, on a hill more than 100 km from Madras, and is one of the most important destinations of Hindu pilgrims, called 'the temple of seven hills'. It is the earthly representation of the seven heads of Adishesha, the king of snakes (*naga*) according to the corpus of the Puranas - one of the mythological entities that started creation, on which Vishnu lies during his cosmic rest. The Tirupati sanctuary is devoted to its incarnation: Sri Venkateswara. The deity is here worshipped in its apparition (*darshan*), which can save mankind from the catastrophes caused by Kali Yuga, the age of Kali, the present age, according to Sanskrit sources, the age of conflict and of destruction. The image (*murti*) of the god Venkatesvara, to whom the *sancta sanctorum* of the temple is devoted, is, according to current beliefs, a representation of the god that will remain for the whole Kaliyuga.

The representation in *Libro Nero* of the temple of Sri Venkateswara on top of Tirumala hill includes some interesting considerations. First of all, we should remember that the Tamil word Tirumala means 'holy mountain' (*mala* = mountain; *tiru* = holy). Moreover, it is clear that Manucci was there in person, as it can be inferred from his detailed description of the place [figs. 22-23]. This is not improbable, because the journey by land from Madras to Tirupati was not particularly challenging, especially if the traveller had money - and Manucci did.

The description accompanying the picture of the temple is rather accurate, although much idealised. The site plan is not as precise as a map of today, but the *gopuram* of the temples and the pediments of the pagodas of access to it are realistically represented by the artists. Very realistic (though not in perspective) is the disposition of the water basins for ablution rituals. Moreover, this picture of the Tiru-



**Figure 21** The sanctuary of Tirupati from a contemporary photography (© Google Images)

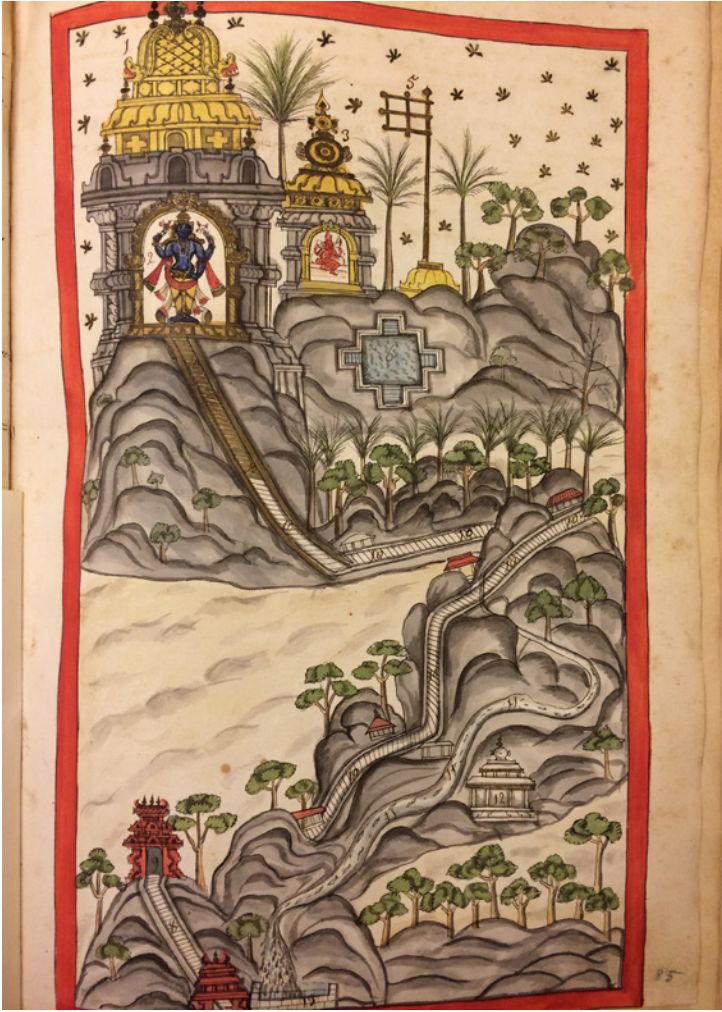
pati temple is very similar to a wall painting of the rock-cut temple of Ramnad, a painting made in about 1720 under the royal patronage of the Setupati dynasty (Howes 2003, 40).

About the sanctuary, considered at the time by the Europeans a sort of 'Eastern Eldorado', especially during the religious festivals and their widespread and solemn celebrations of habits and richness (Subrahmanyam 1995, 338-90), Manucci wrote:

In the Karnātik, inland six leagues from Madras, is a famous and ancient temple called Tirpiti [Tirupati]. Here assemble many people from all parts of India. The shrine is very wealthy from the large and frequent offerings presented. (Irvine 1907, 3: 143)

The precision of some of his observations makes us think that he was there in person, as it can be read in this report.

This temple is on a rather high hill, the ascent of which occupies two hours. There are various shelters in which there are many hermits, and hollows occupied by Brahman priests [...] Impelled by their barbarous religion, all the devout go there, and every year there is a festival for fifteen days. A large number of people assemble, and take up their quarters in a village at the foot of the hill. Others shelter themselves in tents or camp under trees [...] On this pilgrimage people must shave their heads in order to be cleansed of their sins [...] Many also do penance by climbing the hill on all



**Figure 22** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*, c. 85. Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, *View of the Temple at Tirupati*. Watercolour on paper, 1700-10 ca., 415 × 250 cm (© BNM)

fours, or on their knees, others at full length, rolling their body over and over. Others carry up water to wash the temple, et cetera. (Irvine 1907, 3: 143-4)

In the manuscript held at the Biblioteca Marciana the Tirupati picture is not the only illustration of a temple: it is clear that in Manuc-





**Figure 23** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*, c. 85. Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, *View of the Temple at Tirupati* (detail). Watercolour on paper, 1700-10 ca., 415 × 250 cm (© BNM)

ci's view this topic was very interesting for a European readership. One of these illustrations represents the significant southern Indian architectural complex in the Tamil Nadu region: the Kanchipuram temple (Manucci writes "Cangivaron" in his caption), one of the most relevant religious sites ever built in southern Tamil Nadu. In his manuscript, Manucci offers highly accurate – for their time – representations of the two main Hindu temples of the Kanchipuram site, which is confirmed by modern site plans and Manucci's description (Irvine 1907, 3: 243). They are the Ekambareshvara temple, devoted to Shiva, and the Kamakshi temple. As to the Ekambareshvara temple, which is worth analysing in detail, it is clear that Manucci understands the Shivaite nature, because he has his artists illustrate the holy *lingam*, the main symbol of Shiva, always present in the *sancta sanctorum* of the temples of this god and visible at the centre of this representation.

The accurateness of the drawing is indubitable, because in one of the two pictures the central courtyard of the sanctuary of the *lingam* can be seen clearly: here the mango tree is perfectly visible, as re-



**Figure 24** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*, c. 81 r. Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, *The Temple of Kanchipuram*. Watercolour on paper, 1700-10 ca., 415 × 250 cm (© BNM)

cent photographs show.<sup>13</sup> The colonnaded rooms and the majestic red *gopuram* (the towers through which the holy yard of the temple

**13** Accordingly to a colleague who recently visited the Ekambareshvara temple, the mango tree has been recently hit by a thunder that damaged it severely. The Author would like thank Dr. Lia Wei for this information.



**Figure 25** A contemporary photo of the ancient mango tree inside the main courtyard of the temple (© Lia Wei)

can be accessed) are faithfully represented. Both are datable to the period of greatest expansion of the reign, between the fifteenth and the sixteenth century. The representation of the Kanchipuram temples by the Indian artists is again the result of a first-person observation [figs. 24-25]. Manucci was clearly interested in architecture, but even more in any tangible cultural expression of Hinduism. Besides architecture, the Venetian obviously considered ethnography highly relevant: this field of research would gain its definitive expression and importance at the beginning of the eighteenth century, persisting all through the colonial period.

Among the figures of Hindus in *Libro Nero*, those which receive more attention are the yogis, the Hindu ascetics. From a young age yogis follow the *sadhana*, the path of yoga; Manucci defines them *samnyasin*, a Sanskrit term indicating those who renounce everything in the final phase of their lives, when the asceticism becomes extreme and deprivations become harder and more rigorous. Moreover, *samnyasa* means withdrawal (indicating the ascetic) and it is the Hindu fourth stage of life (as taught in Manavadharmashastra, Manu's Code of Law). The realism in the representation of yogis' rituals, especially as regards Mughal miniatures, has already been emphasised by SOAS Professor James Mallinson, who has repeatedly affirmed that Indian artists, while working on Mughal miniatures with





**Figure 26** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*, c. 116v. Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci. Watercolour on paper, 1700-10 ca., 415 × 250 cm (© BNM)

Hindu motifs, did not idealise the subjects, but portrayed them faithfully, through empiric observation (Mallinson 2013). The same perspective may be found in [figs. 26-27].

One of the pictures features a yogi who has vowed to stand on one foot all through his life. He must not put his foot down. To be able to do so, he carries with him a support, a sort of swing with ropes against which he can lean, so that his foot will never touch the ground. The yogi is helped by an attendant, who follows him everywhere. These practices still survive in India: they are the extreme



**Figure 27** The same yoga posture, *kukkuṭāsana*, meaning 'the cock pose' executed by a yogi in our times and captured by photography (© James Mallinson)

forms of devotion of Hinduism, which can even have dangerous effects on the ascetic's health. The leg, forced in that position for long, can atrophy and gangrene can set in, as shown in the picture where the penitent's leg is rather swollen [figs. 28-29].

Another image, produced at a similar moment to Manucci's *Libro Nero*, representing yogis in their asana (ritual poses), is a painting of mediocre quality on a spoiled paper scroll held at the cabinet de curiosités of Saint Geneviève Library in Paris [fig. 30]. It represents twenty-nine yogis in different asana. It was very likely made in southern India, and became part of the collection along with fossils, archeological finds, and natural history curiosities, before 1672 (Zehnacker, Petit 1989). This picture captured the interest of Abbot Claude du Moulinet, who inserted it in a plate of his *Le Cabinet de*



**Figure 28** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*, 1700-10 ca., 415 × 250 cm (© BNM)

*la Bibliothèque de Sainte Geneviève*, published in 1692 (Du Molinet 1692) [fig. 31]. In spite of the low artistic quality, there are many similarities with the yoga poses that Manucci ordered his Indian artists to represent on paper. Moreover, these portraits of yogis in the context of the French Ancien Régime practice of collecting is rather thought-provoking.

Besides yogis' poses, Manucci wanted to report other habits that he could observe during religious celebrations in southern India.



**Figure 28** The same image available in the context of contemporary India where the penitent is standing like in the Manucci painting on one single leg and is smoking most likely cannabis and its derivatives (© James Mallinson)

I have seen Hindūs who, on festival days, through religious fervour, climbed up a mast where there was a wheel bearing two iron hooks, and fixing these into their loins at the back, hung down, and praised the idol, swung round three times, making various gestures with their hands and feet. Such persons are held by Hindūs in great esteem. (Irvine 1907, 3: 145)





**Figure 30** Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève. Indian drawing on a scroll showing a variety of yogi asana, from Southern India (© BSG)

Here Manucci is describing something that modern ethnography defines by the term 'ordeal'. In southern India this custom is known as 'hook-swinging' [figs. 32-33]. During hook swinging the Hindu penitent's body hangs by means of metallic hooks, which pierce the elastic skin of his back. By this wound the body can stay hanging for a long time, while the other members of the faithful rotate the ascetic by means of a perch connected to a winch. An important aspect of this religious performance is that the penitent's injuries must not be serious (Brighenti 2012, 104).

After these descriptions of Hindu practices, still surviving today in the varied culture of southern India, it is now time to conclude our study of the Venetian and his figurative universe created by local artists.

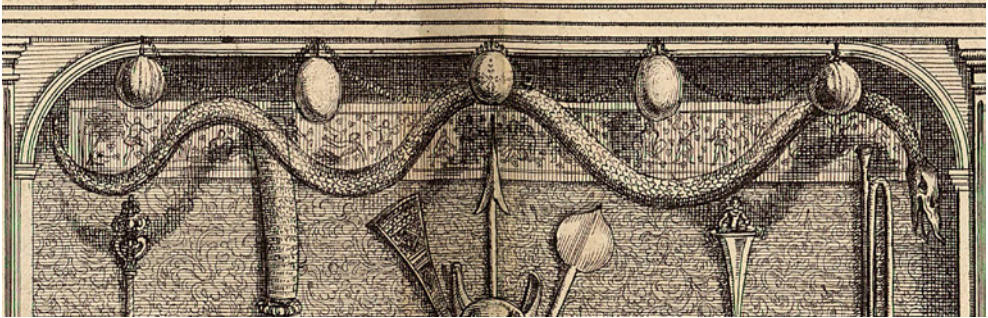
## 6 Conclusion

As a patron and supervisor of the illustrated works called *Libro Rosso* and *Libro Nero*, Manucci clearly aimed to play a political and diplomatic role, by offering the Venetian state visual and written information of value. In his old age he expressed the desire that his works would be sent to Europe, and dedicated them to the *doge* of Venice, hoping they would become best-sellers, like his rival's Bernier's work that had been published a few years before. In doing this he hoped to achieve high social standing in Venice on his return home, which is understandable, particularly if we consider his humble origins. This never happened, however, because he spent the last days of his life in India. One of the practical purposes of the composition of his illustrated books was therefore probably to secure himself and his family a pension and a better life.

Manucci's work raises many questions. Among them: how could a self-taught man have understood the importance of a publication based on pictures accompanied by descriptive texts?

The global circulation of printed books on foreign customs and traditions may be the answer. As the American scholar Bronwen Wil-





**Figure 31** Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Claude du Molinet, *Le Cabinet de la Bibliothèque de Sainte-Geneviève...*, Paris, Antoine Dezallier avec le privilege du Roi, 1692, pl. 4. In this engraving the very previous image of the yogis asana from the Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève is represented. It highlights the objects in the context of the decorated room of an Ancient Régime *Cabinet des Curiosités* (© BNF)



**Figure 32** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*, cc. 38v-39r. Anonymous Indian artist for Nicolò Manucci, *Representation of the Cerimonies During the Festival of Kali, Hindu Goddess that Takes Place in the Month of November*. Watercolour on paper, 1700-10 ca., 415 × 250 cm (© BNM)



**Figure 33** Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Codex Ita VI 136 (=8300), *Libro Nero*, cc. 38v-39r. A detail of the same image showing an Hindu penitent involved in the practise of hook-swinging where the ascetic is attached through his body with hooks to a high pole rotating 360° upon itself (© BNM)

son has observed, the illustrations representing customs, costumes and traditions had a wide circulation (Wilson 2005, 71). In this way, Europeans could get to know an entire world through pictures, and the books of customs expressed just this fascination for geographical classification and its spread (71). If we observe European art, we can find an example similar to Manucci's (although its patronage is of a completely different social level), more than one century before: the work of Nicolas de Nicolay. As the Royal Geographer of France, de Nicolay ordered sixty life-drawn portraits of men and women of different ethnic groups (De Nicolay 1568). In the works of both Manucci and De Nicolay, each category is rendered by precise illustra-

tions of customs, identified by a caption and an explanation in the accompanying text. Customs and traditions of foreign people, including sexual practices, religious beliefs, and funeral rites, are associated with performative acts of the body and of the identity.

Many other examples can be found in the famous illustrating works by Pietro Bertelli and Theodor De Bry, and, further expanding the research field, even the books on Venetian costumes by Cesare Vecellio and Giacomo Franco can be included in the group (Bertelli 1589; Boissard 1585; De Bry 1590-1634; Franco 1596, 1610; Vecellio 1590). Of this vast corpus only some of the main works are mentioned here, with the purpose of associating *Libro Rosso* and *Libro Nero* with a kind of artistic expression that aimed to transcend centuries, cultures, and fashions. As Victor Stoichita has recently affirmed, the representation of 'the other' and of cultural diversity is a fundamental *fil rouge* in the history of modern art (Stoichita 2014).

It is very likely that Manucci consulted these printed works in the French, Portuguese and English settlements, or in the missions of the Capuchins and of the Discalced Carmelites, with whom he met during his journeys across the Subcontinent. Maybe he saw them thanks to the Europeans at the Mughal courts, or even thanks to the Mughal themselves, who were used to printed pictures, in a mutual and global exchange of visual works (Ramaswamy 2007, 751-82).

As regards aesthetic quality, Manucci's books are not an example of stately art or of the heyday of court art. They are products of a 'bourgeois' art, destined for different social categories, with the purpose of satisfying personal needs and then for wide cultural dissemination. In spite of its less than excellent artistic quality, this kind of art is highly significant if observed as a social phenomenon, which managed to create a new paradigm based on the empirical observation of Indian art (Dubbini 2018).

Both recently and in the past, scholars have proposed affiliating Manucci's and his artist's work in the *Libro Rosso* and *Libro Nero* to the artistic style known *Company School* (Archer 1970; Becherini 2016). *Company School* works were paintings commissioned by European patrons (specifically officers and dignitaries of the East India Company) to Indian artists. However, this definition cannot be applied to the books of the Venetian adventurer. Manucci's contacts with European commercial companies existed (both with the East India Company and its French counterpart,) but were too occasional and fragmentary to make us consider him a 'Company man' or to allow the works he patronised to be absorbed fully into the *Company School* category. In his writings there is no mention of an inner desire to dedicate his figurative work to a European private company or to serve their duties. Moreover, the term *Company School* in itself appears increasingly ambivalent today and has been criticised by authors who prefer the term *firingee paintings*: paintings com-

missioned to local artists by firangis (as we said in Persian language term for 'foreigners'), usually European adventurers or mercenaries (Lafont 2000, 119-49).

The only feeling of political allegiance expressed in Manucci's books was for the final addressee of the *opus*, the *doge* of the 'Most Serene Republic' of Venice. Manucci probably thought that realistic pictures, based on the empirical observation of both Mughal customs and Hindu traditions, commissioned to Indian artists, could (if printed) give prestige to Venice (and to himself) especially if they had been reproduced from the original manuscript in hundreds of copies and distributed in an international circuit.

This did not happen until the twentieth century, although a complete version in English and in Italian of the entire Manuccian *opus* does not yet exist (the extraordinary efforts of William Irvine were pioneering, but his work is now old-fashioned and contains several mistakes). It would be of great service to the scholarly community if the globally dispersed academic specialists on the subject should re-unite with the goal of collaborating to fill this gap, and to create a multidisciplinary (and probably multi-volumed) critical edition of Manucci's writings and illustrations.

A final, now completely forgotten and posthumous figurative celebration of Nicolò Manucci occurred in Venice - his hometown - with the restoration of the map room of the *Sala dello Scudo* at the *Doge's Palace* (1760-1763). This happened under the patronage of the Venetian Senate. The results of this original visual operation, backed by the enthusiasm of the erudite *doge* Marco Foscarini, the 'enlightened' geographer Francesco Grisellini and a late Baroque painter, Giustino Menescardi, produced an epitaph dedicated to him on the very walls of the Venetian seat of power (Dubbini 2018, 195-235) [fig. 34]. This has never been explored by scholars but is in fact highly significant. As a document of the Venetian State Archive illustrates, the objective of this propagandistic restoration of the room was to shine a light of glory on the Venetian past in a way that could exhort the weak, declining Republic and its senators to "imitate again the intrepid travellers of the past" who, since Marco Polo, had crossed the routes of Asia and "to celebrate their illustrious memory".<sup>14</sup> On the walls of the room, looking at Grisellini's *Map of Asia* the visitor can read among the names of the Venetian travellers to the East Indies such as Nicolò De Conti, Gasparo Balbi, Cesare Federici, that of Manucci himself.

Denique Nicolaus Manutius in Aula Mogoli Regis  
Dilittissime Versatus Omigenam Earum Regio

<sup>14</sup> ASVe, Riformatori allo Studio di Padova, f. 29, cc. 58-61.





**Figure 34** Venice, MUVE, Palazzo Ducale. Francesco Grisellini and Giustino Menescardi, *Portrait of Nicolò Manucci*, 1760-73 (© MUVE)

Num Historia Saeculo XVII  
Conscriptis Quae in Bibliotheca D. Marci Servatur.<sup>15</sup>

Even more interestingly, not only an epitaph was produced for this occasion in the *Sala dello Scudo*, but also a circular portrait (*tondino*) of Manucci dressed in Indian clothes, directly copied from his own *Libro Rosso* and also adapted by Menescardi from the work of the Venetian artist and engraver Giovanni Grevembroch (Dubbini 2018, 230-3).

It can be now said that on the walls of the *Doge's Palace*, visible in the *Sala dello Scudo* to the eyes of millions of tourists that visit the place every day, lies a portrait directly inspired by an Indian painting. Certainly, the adventurous Venetian could not hope for a better place for the celebration of his fame, his images and adventures.

**15** "And indeed Nicolò Manucci, who, while was living at the court of the Mughal emperor, being an excellent expert of all what concerns that kingdom, in the XVIIth century wrote its history, which is now kept at the Saint Mark Library". The translation into English is made by the Author and is adapted from a first translation from Latin into Italian made by Dr. Ivan Matijasac.

## Acknowledgements

This article is part of the Author's wider PhD thesis (Dubbini 2018) and forms the core of a lecture he gave in London at the Indian Art Circle of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) on 13th February 2019, thanks to the invitation of organisers Dr. Crispin Branfoot and Dr. Mehreen Chida Razvi. The Author completed his doctoral thesis in Art History on Manucci and the European patrons of Indian artists (1680-1820) at the University of Venice Ca' Foscari (defended on 15th March 2018) under the supervision of Giuseppe Barbieri, Paola Lanaro and Elisa Bizzotto, and would like to formally express his gratitude to them once again here for their guidance and support. He also wishes to express his gratitude to a number of scholars and friends.

In Italy: Stefano Beggiora, Cinzia Pieruccini, Marino Zorzi, Franco Ferrari Delfino, Giovanni Levi, Giampiero Bellingeri, Marica Milanese, Andrea Colli, Paolo Dian, the wonderful staff of the manuscripts room at the Marciana Library, the staff of the Correr Library and of the Venice State Archive, the staff of the Vatican Library in Rome, Ivan Matijasic and Piero Falchetta.

In the UK: Crispin Branfoot, Bruce Wannell, Jeremiah P. Losty, James Mallinson, George Michell, Mehreen Chida Razvi, Francesca Galloway, Christine Ramphal.

In Austria, France, Holland and Belgium: Ebba Koch, Jean-Marie Lafont, Pauline Lunsingh Scheeurler, Gjis Kruijtzter, Lia Wei.

In India: Jagdish Mittal, William Dalrymple.

In the USA: Navina Hajar Haidar, Cleo Nisse for the invaluable editing of the English text.

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# Corpo e lamento funebre Alcune riflessioni sulla traduzione dell'*Agiavilāpa* dell'indologo Giuseppe Turrini (1826-1899)

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**Abstract** Ernesto De Martino's theorization and the considerations on the 'crisis of presence' represent a milestone in the field of Religious Studies. The crisis reveals itself in the daily events of the human being, such as death. Starting from the methodological frames provided by de Martino's studies on the lament in ancient world, and the recent attention dedicated to the bodies, this article will analyse one of the most famous episode of *kāvya* literature as translated by nineteenth-century Italian Indologist Giuseppe Turrini: King Aja's lament (*vilāpa*) upon his wife Indumatī, and particularly the stanza of *Raghuvamṣa* 8.43. The Italian translation reveals some element related to the Western opposition between body and soul, which challenge the original attention paid by Kālidāsa and the ancient Greek literature to the physiological effects produced by suffering.

**Keywords** Funerary lament in ancient world. Body. Ernesto De Martino. *Raghuvamṣa*. *Ajavilāpa*.

**Sommario** 1 Premessa. – 2 Il lamento di re Aja e le forme stereotipe del lamento funebre. – 3 L'*Agiavilāpa* nel 'volgarizzamento' di Giuseppe Turrini. – 4 Ferro fuso e membra 'sciolte': *Raghuvamṣa* 8.43 e le ricadute fisiologiche del patire tra Kālidāsa e letteratura greca. – 5 Conclusioni.



#### Peer review

Submitted	2019-01-28
Accepted	2019-03-26
Published	2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Crafa, Alberico (2019). "Corpo e lamento funebre. Alcune riflessioni sulla traduzione dell'*Agiavilāpa* dell'indologo Giuseppe Turrini (1826-1899)". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 317-340.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/010

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## 1 Premessa

Il lavoro di ricerca condotto presso il fondo dell'indologo e letterato trentino Giuseppe Turrini (1826-1899)<sup>1</sup> ha permesso di portare alla luce manoscritti inediti che, insieme a quanto pubblicato in vita dal medesimo,<sup>2</sup> hanno portato a individuare una linea di ricerca costante tra i molteplici ed eclettici interessi dello studioso trentino: il tema della morte e del lamento funebre. L'attenzione del Turrini verso dette tematiche ha trovato riscontro anche nelle letture con le quali l'indologo nutriva i propri interessi nei più svariati ambiti del sapere scientifico dell'epoca.

L'indagine sulle biblioteche private di studiosi e intellettuali presenta l'opportunità di ricostruire il percorso di formazione intellettuale, di ricerca e, soprattutto, gli interessi collaterali rispetto alle discipline di riferimento dei vari studiosi. Le biblioteche private offrono inoltre una finestra straordinaria sullo 'spirito del tempo'. Esse, infatti, «permettono anche di guardare a una particolare stagione della storia intellettuale con gli occhi di un contemporaneo [...]». Queste biblioteche delimitano infatti lo spazio della memoria di un individuo e di una generazione, configurandosi come microcosmi culturali» (Canadelli 2010, 5). Ciò vale anche per quanto riguarda il Turrini, la cui attenzione verso alcuni degli episodi funebri dell'epica e della lirica sanscrita rivela al suo interno un percorso intellettuale già battuto all'epoca, di cui offrono testimonianza due studi, il primo dei quali figura anche nella biblioteca personale<sup>3</sup> dello studioso

**1** Il presente lavoro si inserisce - per premesse, contenuti e finalità - all'interno del ciclo di lezioni seminariali tenute presso il corso magistrale di Scienze delle religioni dall'Università di Padova e l'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia dal titolo *Il corpo in scena: pratiche, tecniche e simboli tra passato e presente*. I miei ringraziamenti vanno al Prof. Simone Cristoforetti, per avermi spinto a indagare la figura del suo concittadino Giuseppe Turrini e per l'ospitalità accordatami durante il periodo delle mie ricerche presso la Biblioteca Comunale di Trento. Di aiuto sono stati i preziosi consigli e l'attenzione rivolta verso il presente lavoro da parte della Prof.ssa Chiara Cremonesi. Ringrazio inoltre i due *peer reviewers* anonimi per le osservazioni e le indicazioni suggeritemi. Il Fondo Turrini si trova oggi presso l'Archivio storico della Biblioteca Comunale di Trento ed è composto per la maggior parte da manoscritti inediti, appunti, traduzioni. Di particolare interesse il carteggio del Turrini con personaggi illustri e studiosi italiani ed europei di metà Ottocento. Cito, come esempi più noti, le corrispondenze con F. Max Müller, M. Émile Guimet, G. Willem Leitner, Gaspare Gorresio, Silvestro Centofanti.

**2** Esigua - se paragonata a quella degli orientalisti e agli studiosi a lui contemporanei - risulta essere la produzione del Turrini. Una raccolta delle sue pubblicazioni è riportata nel memoriale composto da Pullé (1898, V-XIV).

**3** L'intera biblioteca personale si trova oggi presso l'Archivio storico della Biblioteca Comunale di Trento (d'ora in poi ASCTn) e conta 5.426 tra volumi e numeri di periodici accademici di argomento linguistico-filologico, indologico, storico-religioso, archeologico, letterario (lettere classiche greche e latine, letteratura trecentesca, letteratura europea), e 'orientalistico', indicando col termine tutta quella letteratura scientifica

trentino: *Dei costumi dell'isola di Sardegna comparati con gli altri popoli antichissimi orientali* - con attenzione particolare al capitolo relativo al «Lamento funebre sardo» (Napoli: Civiltà cattolica, 1850, 314-44) - dell'etnografo Antonio Bresciani,<sup>4</sup> e la *Storia comparata degli usi funebri in Italia e presso gli altri popoli indo-europei* (Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1873) di Angelo De Gubernatis.<sup>5</sup> Entrambe le opere testimoniano il crescente interesse anche in Italia verso il folclore e l'etnologia,<sup>6</sup> nonché i rapporti tra quest'ultima e l'orientalistica italiana nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento (Bordas 2005, 103-4).

Tali letture non possono pertanto essere disgiunte dalla produzione del Turrini, con particolare riferimento a due lavori, il primo dei quali pubblicato solo nella prima delle due parti previste<sup>7</sup> sotto il titolo de *Il lamento del re Agia sopra Indumati sua moglie di Kalidasa*.

ca che - all'interno della biblioteca turriniana - ha come oggetto di studio ciò che non è 'occidentale' (Vicente 2012, 36-7). La biblioteca privata venne donata su volontà del Turrini, come recita l'art. 4 del testamento scritto di suo pugno e datato 24 gennaio 1889: «Lascio tutti i miei manoscritti, le varie lettere di diversi uomini insigni d'Italia e fuori a me indirizzate e tutti i miei libri, alquanto rarissimi di gran pregio, alla Biblioteca comunale della Città di Trento» (Cetto 1956, 149-50).

**4** Antonio Bresciani (1798-1862), gesuita, letterato e etnografo trentino, autore di uno studio sui costumi funerari dell'entroterra sardo, verrà ripreso più volte all'interno dell'opera di De Martino [1958] 2008. Tutte le opere a stampa - qualora si riferiscano a opere contenute nella biblioteca privata del Turrini - vengono citate nell'edizione in possesso dello Stesso.

**5** Angelo De Gubernatis (1840-1913) è una figura di primo piano tra gli orientalisti italiani del XIX secolo. Attivo tra Firenze e Roma, fu il grande promotore dell'orientalismo fiorentino e dell'apertura degli studi orientali italiani al resto d'Europa. Docente di sanscrito e mitologia comparata presso l'Istituto di Studi Superiori di Firenze già all'età di ventitré anni, fu promotore del Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti che si tenne proprio a Firenze nel 1878. Al pari di altri intellettuali del periodo, De Gubernatis fu un personaggio dai numerosi interessi e attivo nel campo sociale della neonata nazione italiana. Da accademico si contraddistinse soprattutto per la prolifica produzione scientifica, nella quale è possibile distinguere alcuni interessi ricorrenti: quello verso la letteratura e la cultura religiosa indiana, e quello verso la mitologia che lo resero pioniere, in Italia, del metodo comparativo dell'amico Max Müller (si vedano Fabbri 2017, 2018). Lo stesso modello verrà poi impiegato anche sul versante delle ricerche di stampo etnologico e demologico, in particolare verso le tradizioni e gli usi popolari nuziali e funebri in Italia e presso gli altri popoli indoeuropei (Benedetti 2014, 311-18, 323). Sulla figura del De Gubernatis la bibliografia è abbastanza ricca. Si vedano i contributi nei volumi curati da Taddei 1995-2001 e l'ultimo di Sorrentino 2004. Sull'orientalismo fiorentino, si vedano Stasolla 2013; Vicente 2012.

**6** Si deve proprio all'italiano Paolo Mantegazza (1831-1910) la fondazione nel 1869, a Firenze, del Museo Nazionale di Antropologia ed Etnologia. Due anni più tardi, nel 1871 - e in ritardo di diversi decenni rispetto a Parigi (1839), New York (1842) e Londra (1843) - si costituirà sempre nel capoluogo toscano la Società Italiana di Antropologia ed Etnologia.

**7** L'opera manca, infatti, di tutto l'apparato di note e del glossario previsti nella seconda parte e mai dati alle stampe a causa della scomparsa del Turrini. I manoscritti e gli appunti della prima parte dell'opera, insieme a quelli (incompleti) della seconda - circa 1.300 fogli e pagine di appunti, traduzioni e note - si trovano all'interno del fondo Turrini (ASCTn mss. 2851; 2852).

*Coi commenti di Mallinata* (Bologna: Regia Tipografia, 1899), mentre il secondo invece – come spesso accade per i lavori dell'indologo trentino – solo in forma di appunti manoscritti dal titolo *La morte del figlio romito* (ASCTn, ms. 2849/4).

La lettura di tali scritti, delle note e dei commenti del Turrini insieme alla celebre opera di Ernesto De Martino consacrata allo studio del lamento funebre, ha permesso alcune riflessioni sui 'corpi' protagonisti dell'evento funebre: il corpo 'soggetto', attivo nell'atto performativo del lamento con formule, gesti, mimiche, e il corpo 'oggetto' dell'atto, il corpo del defunto, l'alterità assoluta. Il corpo senza vita della principessa Indumatī, il corpo di Ettore dopo il supplizio subito per mano di Achille – a sua volta protagonista di un delirio che si manifesta con forme di mortificazione del corpo alla vista del compagno Patroclo – innescano dinamiche che coinvolgono con gesti e formule verbali topiche i corpi dei presenti e dei cari, secondo quelle procedure e quei bisogni che Ernesto De Martino raccoglie e presenta in *Morte e pianto rituale nel mondo antico. Dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria* ([1958] 2008).

Il presente lavoro – è bene precisarlo fin da subito – non si pone l'obiettivo di offrire una rapida disamina diacronica e sincronica attorno al tema del lamento funebre in Sudasia. Procedere lungo questo percorso di analisi si discosterebbe dal tema del seminario entro cui esso è stato concepito e il cui oggetto di indagine è il corpo con le sue declinazioni e i rapporti che lo legano alla realtà culturale, religiosa e sociale sia nell'ambito pratico sia nell'ambito simbolico. Anche nel momento del lamento infatti il corpo inscena, interagisce con la realtà, subisce e 'produce' cultura. Si richiami qui all'attenzione come, secondo il pensiero demartiniano, il farsi presente dell'uomo a una data situazione, il suo esercitare un ruolo attivo di discernimento e il suo essere in grado di agirvi, costituisca una nozione chiave della riflessione intorno al 'sacro' e, nello specifico, intorno ai momenti del divenire dell'uomo in cui la criticità è tale che il rischio di arresto – inteso come condizione psico-fisica di interruzione dell'attività valorizzatrice – è massimo. Momento critico del divenire per eccellenza è proprio la morte, e il lamento – come argine al rischio di perdita della presenza<sup>8</sup> – si riversa anche a livello fisiologico, sotto forma

<sup>8</sup> Il problema della presenza dell'uomo nel mondo è al contempo punto di partenza e di approdo della riflessione demartiniana sulla dimensione del 'sacro'. Prendendo le mosse dagli scritti demartiniani pubblicati da M. Massenzio (De Martino 1995) è possibile ricostruire con chiarezza maggiore la riflessione ierogenetica di De Martino a partire proprio dai concetti-chiave di 'presenza' e di 'rischio' ad essa collegata. Entrambi i concetti – 'presenza' e 'crisi della presenza' – erano già stati presentati da De Martino nel *Mondo magico* ([1948] 1973), e saranno sempre oggetto di costanti riflessioni nella successiva produzione intellettuale. *L'esserci* dell'uomo nel mondo, la sua 'presenza' dinamica – al pari, come si dirà, del 'sacro' – non è garantita *a priori* e, in quanto tale, non è esente da rischi. La presenza dell'uomo nel mondo richiede un costante sforzo,

di performance attorno alla quale si raccolgono formule codificate, gesti, posture. In questa prospettiva quindi, per concludere sul rapporto tra crisi del cordoglio e le esigenze fisiologiche del corpo del soggetto umano, si ricordi come «[the] lament performances involve particular uses of the whole body» (Wilce 2009, 41).

## 2 Il lamento di re Aja e le forme stereotipe del lamento funebre

L'episodio del lamento funebre del re Aja per la scomparsa improvvisa della moglie Indumatī raccontato nelle strofe del *Raghuvamśa*<sup>9</sup> («La stirpe di Raghu», canto VIII), poema epico in 19 canti (*sarga*) del celebre poeta e drammaturgo indiano Kālidāsa (IV-V d.C.), rappresenta - insieme all'analogo lamento di Rati nel *Kumārasambhava* («L'origine di Kumāra», 4.1-38) - uno dei passaggi più famosi del *kāvya* indiano. Il Turrini, nelle parole fatte precedere alla volgarizzazione delle quarantuno strofe dell'VIII canto del poema, riflettendo sul lavoro svolto, fornisce al lettore alcune avvertenze circa il metodo da lui seguito per rendere accessibili i sentimenti e il pathos racchiuso nell'episodio del re afflitto di fronte al corpo esanime della consorte:

Dirò francamente che in questa traduzione m'ingegnai di mantenere per tutto interi l'anima, la vita, il calore, il moto che mi mostra il testo. In somma, quando mi posi a questa non lieve fatica

che si traduce in un «movimento che trascende la situazione nel valore» portandola ad essere «ethos primordiale umano, volontà di storia che ininterrottamente si spiega, [...] stimolata dalla ininterrotta esigenza di ritornare sempre a decidere il divenire via via che esso diviene» (De Martino 1995, 103-4). Genesi della 'crisi della presenza' sono quei momenti di «particolare contenuto emozionante» (De Martino [1948] 1973, 92) di fronte ai quali la presenza non è più 'garantita'. Quando la presenza vacilla, quando la crisi è in atto, ecco come «tutto può diventare tutto, che è quanto dire: il nulla avanza» (149). Su queste premesse si inserisce la riflessione demartiniana sul processo ierogenetico, imperniata sul binomio sacro/presenza in crisi, che vede nel primo non un *a priori*, bensì il frutto di ragioni culturali, di un processo interamente umano e motivato attraverso il bisogno di controllare e portare a soluzione l'andamento della crisi, controllandone e disciplinandone le insorgenze servendosi di strumenti quali, ad esempio, la presenza e l'iterazione rituale (Tullio-Altan, Massenzio 1998, 55-8).

<sup>9</sup> Al poema di Kālidāsa il Turrini non riserva certo un giudizio estetico positivo, com'è evidente dalla lettura di alcune pagine dei suoi appunti manoscritti: «Il *Raghuvamśa*, tranne il Lamento, la è cosa bruttissima - ma come opera d'arte; certo non è un mirabile poemetto e un bel testo di lingua saṃscrita, ma un libriccino, una sconciata obbrobriosa. E però io dò non l'opera intera, ma quella parte che a me pare più feconda d'idee nuove e più alta a rendere fruttuosi gli esempi antichi» (ASCTn ms. 2852, *Il lamento di re Aja*, f. 2). Per 'esempi antichi' da comparare e ai quali ricollegarsi il Turrini - oltre a riferirsi agli esempi offerti dalla letteratura epica greca e latina - indica la grande produzione lirica trecentesca italiana, con particolare attenzione alle opere di Caterina da Siena, Jacopone da Todi, Francesco d'Assisi, Dante, Cavalcanti.

ebbi a cuore di far sì che un giovane di buon intendimento e molto studioso potesse gustare da sé il nostro eccellente poeta, che tanto sentì ed espresse di nuove e diverse cose ignare a noi [...] e farci quelle riflessioni comparative di lingua, di concetto e di frasi che tanto conferiscono a fare conoscere le più riposte ragioni del bello e del vero. (Turrini 1899, 9-10)<sup>10</sup>

A tale premessa l'autore fa seguire una nota sul titolo dell'VIII canto dell'opera di Kālidāsa in cui si sofferma sul termine sanscrito *vilāpa* («lamento»):

विलाप «vilāpa», s. m. Lamento, corrotto, piagnisteo, cioè il pianto che si fa ai morti. Viene dalla radice लप «lap» (Cl. 1, par.) che suona propriamente parlare, e col prefisso वि «vi», lamentare, far lamenti, rammaricarsi, dolersi, querelarsi. - Confronta la radice saṃskrita लप «lap», parlare, co latino «loq-uor», mutata la labiale «p» nella gutturale «q», come per l'appunto nel verbo «coquo», che risponde al saṃskrita पचामि «pacāmi», io cuocio, da पच, scambio di पक «pak», cuocere, che è affine allo zendo «pac», coquere, al greco πέσσω, coquo; pinso, io pesto; al serbo «pečem», io cuocio, io pesto, e all'antico slavo «pekuñ». - Vicinissimi alla radice लप «lap», parlare, sono anche il borusso «laip», comandare, e da ultimo il lituano «lê'pju», io comando. Paragonisi oltre a ciò il nome saṃskrito लपनम «lapana-m», la bocca, (tema लपन «lapana», s. n. bocca) col latino «labium».

Il Lamento di Agia. Traduco «Il Lamento» e non «La Lamentazione», che il lamento non è cosa ignobile, quando chiami efficace sollievo ai nostri e più agli altrui mali, a' quali non possiam porre rimedio da noi stessi, e quando facciasi senza detrarre alla nostra né all'altrui dignità. La lamentazione è più querula del lamento e dice la debolezza dell'animo che patisce. (Turrini 1899, 17-9)

Col termine *vilāpa* gli studiosi indicano generalmente un sottogenere della poesia epica sanscrita con caratteristiche stilistiche condivise con il genere letterario dell'epica. Come evidenziato di recente (Peterson 2003, 59; Boccali 2018, 21-2), i due grandi poemi epici della tradizione letteraria del Sudasia, *Mahābhārata* e *Rāmāyaṇa*, offrono al lettore - visto il susseguirsi di eventi catastrofici, scontri e passaggi dolorosi - esempi o riferimenti alla pratica di intonare lamenti riconducibili al *vilāpa gaṇa* (canto funebre) tutt'oggi diffusa nel Subcontinente Indiano (cf. Omchery 1967). Nel *Mahābhārata*

<sup>10</sup> Segnaliamo come qui, e in tutte le citazioni del Turrini a seguire, si è riportato il testo normalizzato secondo l'uso corrente dell'accentazione.



(11.16.1-26.1) un riferimento al lamento intonato da donne all'indirizo di Kṛṣṇa viene dalle parole di Gāndhārī, madre di Duryodhana e moglie di Dhṛtarāṣṭra, che a sua volta piange la morte del figlio prediletto in un lamento che termina col soprano dei Kuru esanime a terra (Hudson 2012, 109-15, 126-8, 132-3).<sup>11</sup> Nel *Rāmāyaṇa*, invece, il famoso precedente vede protagonista Rāma che, ignaro del rapimento della sposa Sītā per mano del demone Rāvaṇa, ne piange disperato la morte. La scena del lamento dell'epica classica indiana verrà poi ripreso da quella che – seppur in maniera impropria – viene definita la 'lirica' indiana: «The lament became one of the 'set pieces' that the *kāvya* poets took over from the epic – Aja's lament for Indumatī and Rati's for the slain Kāma are among the most celebrated passages in Kālidāsa's *mahākāvya*s» (Peterson 2003, 59).

Sempre nel *Raghuvamśa*, questa volta nel IV canto, si troverebbe – secondo l'interpretazione data dal commento di Mallinātha<sup>12</sup> – un interessante riferimento 'etnografico' circa l'uso da parte delle donne degli Eftaliti di percuotersi le guance per via del dolore causato dalla scomparsa dei mariti (Prakash 1955, 77).<sup>13</sup> Così traduce Kale (1922, 67):

There the exploits of Raghu, the prowess whereof was displayed on the husbands of the Hūṇa ladies, became a teacher of ruddiness in the cheeks to them (or came to have the redness of their cheeks for a record).

Se il passaggio contenuto nel *Raghuvamśa* (4.68) è piuttosto vago,<sup>14</sup> e quella del commentatore Mallinātha si presta a essere niente di più che un'ipotesi, resta un dato incontrovertibile la conoscenza, al tempo del commentatore, di pratiche di autolesionismo del corpo in uso presso popolazioni centroasiatiche durante le occasioni di lutto. Si può scorgere in questo tipo di pratiche che coinvolgono il corpo quell'insieme «limitato di stereotipie mimiche» attraverso le quali si

**11** Sulla grammatica e lo stile del lamento di Dhṛtarāṣṭra si veda Hudson 2012, 111 nota 20. Per un'ulteriore disamina e rassegna di episodi di lamenti all'interno del *Mahābhārata* si veda il lavoro interamente dedicato al tema di Hudson 2012.

**12** Celebre commentatore sanscrito vissuto tra il 1350 e il 1450. Lo studio più completo sulla figura di Mallinātha è quello di Lalye 2002.

**13** Il passaggio, senza dubbio interessante, meriterebbe di essere approfondito, alla luce dei progressi compiuti dagli studi storico-archeologici sugli Eftaliti (noti anche come 'Unni bianchi') dell'Asia Centrale (cf. ad es., Hyun 2016, 44-65; Kurbanov 2013).

**14** Nelle note dell'edizione curata da Kale si legge: «The Hūṇa ladies had given up drinking which used to impart a red flush to their cheeks. But now that their husbands were killed in battle, they slapped their faces through grief which reddened their cheeks again. Thus Raghu ordered back, as it were, the red flush on their cheeks. Malli. suggests the alternative construction [...] of which the red hue was an indicator i.e. it became as it were a writing to keep up the memory of Raghu's valour» (1922, 114).

compie la «ritualizzazione del *planctus*» finalizzata a «dar orizzonte al discorso della lamentazione» (De Martino [1958] 2008, 186). Tra le stereotipie individuate e raccolte da De Martino nell'antico lamento funebre rituale vi sono: «incidersi le carni, graffiarsi a sangue le gote o gli avambracci, percuotersi (il viso, la testa, la fronte, il petto, le gambe)» e poi «decalvarsi, strapparsi la barba» o viceversa (ovvero farseli crescere), e ancora «voltolarsi nella polvere o nella cenere o cospargersene il capo, stracciarsi i vestiti, scalzarsi» (186).

A questo punto è necessario soffermarsi su una questione rilevante, già evidenziata sempre da De Martino e sulla quale hanno lungamente indugiato i lavori di quegli studiosi che hanno prestato attenzione allo studio di tutte le manifestazioni rientranti nella categoria del lamento funebre. Si tratta del rapporto che intercorre tra attestazioni relative a pratiche funebri nel mondo antico e quanto invece l'etnografia registra oggi, nel mondo contemporaneo. La riflessione muove attraverso due prospettive metodologiche, quella dello studio del lamento e delle pratiche funebri in una prospettiva diacronica e sincronica, e quella del rapporto – soprattutto per quanto riguarda il mondo antico – tra la fonte testuale e le molteplici pratiche attraverso le quali si manifesta e si controlla quella che De Martino definì come «crisi del cordoglio». Per primo De Martino ha constatato come le lamentazioni attestate nella letteratura del mondo antico (principalmente nell'epica, nella tragedia e nella lirica greca) rappresentino non già 'rito in azione', bensì un'elaborazione in forma poetico-letteraria che rende pertanto difficile cogliere il carattere 'rituale' del lamento stesso (De Martino [1958] 2008, 56). Lo storico delle religioni ha individuato, tanto nel metodo comparativo quanto nei relitti folklorici euromediterranei registrabili, la possibilità di ricostruire il rito funerario della lamentazione indirizzata a persone storiche defunte (182-3).

Tale precisazione, di natura non esclusivamente metodologica, si può estendere a quei contesti culturali in cui, a fronte di un dato testuale dell'antichità, si documentino nella contemporaneità pratiche e usi che rimandino a quanto direttamente o indirettamente attestato. Quanto detto è ben sintetizzato e messo in pratica nello studio di James M. Wilce, che si sforza di tenere assieme e di affrontare temi quali la 'testualizzazione' del lamento<sup>15</sup> nella letteratura antica quanto nei tempi recenti, e il modo in cui si esplicita e si manifesta poi la performance, attraverso il coinvolgimento del corpo. La performance del lamento infatti

**15** Traduco così infatti il concetto di *entextualization* preso in prestito da Wilce, a sua volta basatosi sulle riflessioni di Bauman e Briggs: «Entextualization is the packaging or organizing of discourse as text, i.e. some 'thing' that is coherent, memorable, and extractable from context [...]. To speak of laments' entextualization focuses our attention on their textuality or coherence; and indeed, even improvised laments are often structured [...] so as to make them memorable» (Wilce 2009, 32).

is embodied. We find similar uses of the voice, throat, face, limbs, etc. in lament around the world. Local definitions of lament typically include melody, tears, and a crying voice characterized by pharyngeal constriction and 'cry breaks'. Wailers in various times and places have also put their arms around each other's necks. Such features exemplify the coherent set of signs that defines textuality the regularities that render texts quotable, portable. Producing tuneless texts about the departed or one's own grief, or performing without crucial embodied features, is unimaginable in traditions of improvisatory texted weeping. (Wilce 2009, 36-7)

Raffrontare fonte testuale antica e dato empirico e stabilirne il rapporto è - come abbiamo osservato sopra - una circostanza già affrontata da De Martino. È evidente come la questione continui a essere oggetto di una riflessione da cui è impossibile prescindere e con cui confrontarsi all'interno di tutta la letteratura scientifica dedicata al tema delle pratiche e degli usi registrati durante i periodi di lutto. In particolare, sul rapporto tra performance corporea registrata dall'etnografia moderna e letteratura, iconografia e statuaria del mondo antico è ancora Wilce ad affermare come

Just as there are long histories of borrowing or alluding to textual dimensions of lament [...] there are histories - stretching across millennia - of reproducing kinesic forms proper to lament. Wickett (1993) [...] found contemporary women's laments replicating the very postures and gestures - 'lament kinesics' - depicted in ancient Egyptian tomb paintings of women lamenting and dancing at funerals [...]. Wickett finds the corporeal continuities across 4,000 years of Egyptian history at least as significant as the continuity in discursive themes of ancient and recent laments. (Wilce 2009, 37-8)

### 3 *L'Agiavilāpa* nel 'volgarizzamento' di Giuseppe Turrini

Entrando nel merito dell'opera di Kālidāsa, possiamo soffermarci su alcuni passaggi tratti dalla traduzione che il Turrini offre dell'episodio<sup>16</sup> che vede protagonista il re di Ayodyā, Aja, figlio di Raghu, afflitto dal dolore per la morte improvvisa della consorte Indumatī. L'attenzione sarà posta su alcuni passaggi chiave dell'VIII canto del *Raghuvamśa*: la crisi e le parole di re Aja contengono, infatti, alcu-

<sup>16</sup> L'opera del Turrini conta quarantuno strofe, il cui inizio però non coincide con quello dell'edizione critica dell'opera di Kālidāsa. L'episodio tradotto e commentato dall'indologo trentino è estrapolato a partire dalla strofa 30 alla strofa 71 dell'*VIII sarga*. Da qui in avanti, inoltre, per le strofe si è scelto di mantenere gli a capo corrispondenti nella traduzione originale.

ni elementi familiari al discorso storico-etnografico del lamento funebre: formule stereotipe del *planctus*, il ricordo delle gesta e delle opere buone compiute in vita dal congiunto il cui corpo, ormai senza vita, giace tra le braccia del sovrano nel contesto agreste, quasi ameno, di un boschetto fuori la città di Ayodhyā.<sup>17</sup>

L'episodio del lamento di re Aja non introduce il lettore *in medias res*: a un prologo di apertura (1-7) segue, dall'ottava strofa in poi, l'avvio della narrazione e la descrizione della morte improvvisa della regina Indumatī:

- 8 La donna dell'uomo prestantissimo  
sguardato ch'ebbe quel serto che un sol mo-  
mento d'ora avea cinte le sue bellissime mam-  
melle, ecco esanime chiuse gli occhi, siccome  
il lume della luna quand'è rapita da Rāhu.<sup>18</sup>
- 9 Ella cadendo al suolo col corpo da' sensi  
abbandonato, faceva cadere anco il marito: for-  
sechè non vien meno la fiamma della lucerna  
Con insieme la goccia dell'olio sparto in terra?<sup>19</sup>

Si noti subito, alla fine dell'ottava strofa (*Ragh.* 8.37), l'accostamento dell'immagine degli occhi della regina ormai chiusi per sempre con «il lume della luna quand'è rapita da Rāhu»<sup>20</sup> (*hṛtacandra tamaseva kaumudī*). L'accostamento dell'astro notturno alla bellezza del vol-

**17** Ricche pagine sono state dedicate al tema della natura e alle suggestive immagini evocate all'interno del *kavyā* da Boccali 2017, 2011, 2007.

**18** *kṣaṇamātrasakhīṃ sujātayoḥ stanayostāmavalokya vihvālā | nimīla narottamapriyā hṛtachandrā tamaseva kaumudī Ragh.* 8.37. Nel riportare le strofe si è rispettata la struttura metrica e il capoverso dell'edizione a stampa dell'opera del Turrini. Poiché il presente studio è condotto sulla traduzione operata dall'indologo trentino, il testo delle strofe del *Raghuvamśa* qui riportate fa riferimento all'edizione critica impiegata dal Nostro e fatta precedere al 'volgarizzamento' (Turrini 1899, 37-47). Sebbene il Turrini non citi l'edizione critica del testo impiegata per la traduzione, un indizio potrebbe essere l'edizione pubblicata in tre volumi, tra il 1869 e il 1874, curata da Shankar P. Pandit, *The Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa with the Commentary of Mallīnātha* (Bombay: Indu-Prakash, 1869-74). Tuttavia, la biblioteca privata donata dal Turrini alla Biblioteca Comunale di Trento è mancante del secondo dei tre volumi dell'opera, che comprende i canti VII-XIII.

**19** *vapuṣā karaṇojjhita nā nīpatantī patimapyapātayat | nanu tailaniṣekavindunā saha dipārcirupaiti medinīm (Ragh.* 8.38).

**20** Il 'rapimento' cui si fa riferimento è l'oscuramento, attribuito al demone Rāhu, personificazione dell'oscurità (*tamas*), del sole o della luna durante le eclissi: «Rāhu, 'the Seizer' - a mythological and astronomical dragon-like demonic character who swallows the sun and moon during eclipses [...]. Rāhu is a prominent figure in the literatures and arts of both peninsular and insular Southeast Asia. In Mediaeval Indic lore, Rāhu is presided over by the demonic aspect of Śiva known as Kāla ('the Black/Dark One', or 'Time', as devourer of everything) or Bhairava» (Acri 2017, 86). Per un appro-

to dell'amata (più raramente a quello dell'amato, nonostante in sanscrito il termine sia sempre maschile) è un'immagine assai frequente all'interno del *kāvya*.<sup>21</sup> Il termine si presta inoltre a molteplici similitudini 'antropomorfe'. Nel *Kumārasambhava*, ad esempio, sempre Kālidāsa accosterà lo sviluppo delle membra e del corpo della principessa Satī allo sviluppo delle fasi lunari (Boccali 2018, 53). Con un altro accostamento più avanti, alla strofa 13 (*Ragh.* 8.42), questa volta è il colorito che il corpo senza vita ha assunto ad essere paragonato al pallore della luna mattutina, sulla cui superficie le macchie ricordano la forma di un cerbiatto (*mṛgalekhāmuśasīva candramāḥ*):<sup>22</sup>

- 13 Il marito tenendosi in grembo quella  
bellezza esanime e priva affatto di colore, pareo  
quasi come la luna mattutina le cui macchie  
tengono forma e figura d'un cerbiatto.<sup>23</sup>

La similitudine tra il corpo che giace senza vita, oramai freddo ed esangue e la luna mattutina, è giustificata dalle caratteristiche associate alla luna nella letteratura indiana, come messo in evidenza da Boccali, infatti, «frequentissimi sono i due modelli 'dai raggi freddi' o 'dalla luce fredda' [...] ispirati a idee popolari sulla luna. Il primo genera un'infinità di realizzazioni concrete con i termini per 'freddo' [...], 'gelo' [...], 'neve'» (Boccali 2000, 430).<sup>24</sup>

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fondimento sulla figura di Rāhu all'interno della mitologia e dell'astronomia indiana si veda Zimmer [1946] 1972, 175-84.

**21** Si vedano ad esempio la *Śataka* (Centuria d'amore) di Amaruka (VII sec.?), strofa 58 (Boccali 2002, 110) e nel *Caurisuratapañcāśikā* (Le cinquanta strofe dell'amor furtivo) di Bilhaṇa (XI-XII sec.), I, 29-41; II, 42; III, 8, sempre tradotte da Giuliano Boccali (2002, 157, 160, 187).

**22** Il Turrini con «le cui macchie tengono forma e figura d'un cerbiatto» traduce il composto sanscrito *mṛgalekhāmuśasīva*, riferito alla luna (*chandramāḥ*). L'immagine è tipica del *kāvya* e trae ispirazione dall'immaginazione popolare indiana. Per altri esempi o formazioni linguistiche simili si veda Boccali 2000, 429-30; Boccali 2002, 218.

**23** *patirāṅkaniṣaṇṇayā tayā karaṇāpāyavibhinnavarṇayā | samalakṣyata bibhradāvīlāṃ mṛgalekhāmuśasīva candramāḥ || Ragh.* 8.42.

**24** Sull'utilizzo dell'immagine e del valore cromatico-simbolico della luna in relazione alla scienza dell'*alamkāra* (lett. 'ornamento', nel senso restrittivo il termine indica le figure retoriche) si veda Bronner 2010, 251-7.

#### 4 Ferro fuso e membra 'sciolte': *Raghuvamśa* 8.43 e le ricadute fisiologiche del patire tra Kālidāsa e letteratura greca

Nella strofa seguente (*Ragh.* 8.43), come in un climax, il protagonista è re Aja che, realizzato quanto accaduto, comincia ad abbandonarsi a quelle forme che, come già anticipato, sono topiche della crisi del cordoglio:

- 14 Con pianto di lacrime e singhiozzi languivasi egli molto duramente, smarrita eziandio la innata sua forza; l'istesso ferro riscaldato e tutto inceso dal fuoco ammolisce, or dunque come no l'animo?<sup>25</sup>

Sappiamo, dalla bibliografia a disposizione del Turrini sull'argomento, e da un altro suo manoscritto inedito menzionato precedentemente,<sup>26</sup> che lo studioso trentino guardava al «pianto di lacrime e singhiozzi» (*vilāpa sa vāṣpagadgadam*) di re Aja con in mente le numerose scene offerte dall'epica classica e da quella indiana. Prescindendo dalla risoluzione poetica di Kālidāsa, il *planctus* di Aja - qui, nella strofa d'esordio, come nelle restanti fino alla strofa 41 - si mantiene estremamente lontana dalla crisi del *planctus* irrelativo e dalle manifestazioni di furore a esso collegato, come ad esempio quello di Achille alla notizia della morte di Patroclo,<sup>27</sup> o di Andromaca a quella di Ettore.<sup>28</sup>

Aja è abbattuto e, vinto dal dolore, il suo corpo è privato della forza e del vigore della vita abituale (*sahajāmapyapahāya dhīratām*).<sup>29</sup> Che

25 *vilāpa sa vāṣpagadgadam sahajāmapyapahāya dhīratām | abhitaptamayo'pi mādavaṃ bhajate kaiva kathā śarīriṣu.* (*Ragh.* 8.43)

26 Si tratta, ricordiamolo, del ms. 2849/4 dal titolo *La morte del figlio romito*, con riferimento in particolare all'episodio del lamento di Andromaca verso lo sposo, Ettore.

27 Si veda, ad es., *Il.* 18, 22-35: «con entrambe le mani prese la cenere arsa e se la sparse sul capo, sfigurando il bellissimo volto; cenere nera copriva la tunica profumata; nella polvere giaceva lui stesso, lungo disteso, e con le mani insozzava e strappava i capelli [...]. Dall'altra parte Antiloco si lamentava piangendo e teneva le mani di Achille, che singhiozzava dal profondo del cuore; temeva che con un'arma l'eroe si tagliasse la gola». Il dolore è così grande da spingere Achille a invocare la morte a sé (*Il.* 18, 98).

28 *Il.* 22, 460-515. Sugli episodi che vedono come protagonista del lamento Andromaca, nello specifico, si veda Gagliardi 2006.

29 Sembra opportuno, giunti a questo punto, motivare una metodologia così in discontinuità rispetto al tradizionale approccio filologico - tanto in contesto sudasiatico quanto altrove - richiamandosi a Furey 2012, evidenziando come i lavori non solo dei filologi, ma in generale degli studiosi che si muovono nel campo dei *religious studies* abbiano tratto giovamento inserendosi nel solco tracciato negli ultimi decenni a questa parte: «the sheer volume of books, articles, and conferences in the past three decades, work on the body and social power has transformed religious studies. This attention to body and society corrected the Protestant-style tendency to equate religion with inte-

il lamento nella letteratura antica sia avvertito come una minaccia per l'integrità psicofisica del corpo umano è ben chiaro, ad esempio, dall'analisi semantica condotta sui termini omerici impiegati per indicare le diverse modalità di lamento. Il verbo κλαίω ('piangere') è la reazione del corpo a un'emozione che colpendo il complesso viscerale causa un'alterazione fisiologica, per la precisione un turbamento cardiaco (Spatafora 1997, 1-4); il verbo γοάω - da cui il sostantivo γόος, che fino al V sec. a.C. designa l'intimo cordoglio manifestato da parenti e cari del defunto (Palmisciano 1999, 187) - indicherebbe invece un lamento 'terapeutico', capace di liberare il corpo dalle forze destabilizzanti originatesi dal dolore della perdita, agendo quindi come strumento «capace di ristabilizzare l'equilibrio psico-fisico dell'uomo» (Spatafora 1997, 7). Di fronte ad una notizia dolorosa la reazione psicofisica è quella dell'οἰμῶζειν, un «gemito istintivo di un corpo che è piegato assolutamente dal dolore» (12). Certamente di maggiore interesse per il nostro caso è la semantica del verbo ὀδύρομαι (lett. 'consumo il mio corpo lamentandomi'), termine connesso alla consunzione fisica causata dalle varie modalità del lamento. Tra queste, ὀδύρομαι, specie nei poemi omerici, è associato proprio all'atto del versare lacrime, atto collegato all'idea dello 'scioglimento del corpo' (14-7).

In *Ragh.* 8.43 il lamento, il versare lacrime e la perdita della tempratura naturale di re Aja è accostato per similitudine all'immagine di un ferro che, riscaldato dal fuoco, comincio a fondere («l'istesso ferro riscaldato e tutto inceso dal fuoco ammolisce»). Per cogliere meglio il senso della similitudine e la sua corrispondenza con la semantica del verbo greco, riporto la traduzione di Kale (1922, 64-5) della medesima strofa:

Having given up even his natural firmness he began to cry in accents choked by tears (in a thone faltering through the flow of tears). Even iron (when) heated becomes soft; what need we (then) say of those possessing bodies?

La medesima scelta viene operata in traduzione dal Formichi [s.d. (1913?), 128]:

Si lamentava egli singhiozzando, privo ormai della naturale sua forza; ma il ferro stesso, quando è molto arroventato si rammolisce; figuriamoci l'uomo, il gramo possessore d'un frale corpo!

Si noti come si discosti decisamente dalla lettera del testo la traduzione del Turrini evidente soprattutto nella scelta del termine 'ani-

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riority and belief, and encouraged religionists to think about materiality, sex, and gender as theoretical categories rather than facts on the ground» (Furey 2012, 8-9). Si veda, inoltre, Holdrege 1998, 341-6.

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mo' per rendere il sanscrito *śārīṣu* - locativo plurale del neutro *śārīra* - con il quale invece si indica chiaramente il corpo 'solido', 'fisico', ma anche il 'corpo morto' (Monier-Williams 1899, 1057a), il 'cadavere', affine all'impiego originario del greco σῶμα (Vernant 1986, 23-4). In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* 1.2.6, ad esempio, il termine *śārīra* indica chiaramente il corpo privo delle sue funzioni vitali (*prāṇa*), quindi il 'cadavere' («So, when his vital breaths had departed, his corpse began to bloat», *tat prāṇeṣūtkrānteṣu śārīraṃ śvayitum adhriyata*, Olivelle 1998, 38). Nel passo seguente (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* 1.2.7) risalta il differente livello di impiego rispetto al termine *ātman*: «Then he had this desire: 'I wish that this corpse of mine would become fit to be sacrificed so I could get myself a living body (*ātman*)!'» (*so'kāmayata medhyaṃ ma idaṃ syādātmanvyanena syāmiti*, Olivelle 1998, 38-9). Appare perciò evidente la distinzione rispetto ad *ātman*<sup>30</sup> o, se si vuole, al termine *tanū* il quale - tra i tanti che la lingua sanscrita dispone per indicare il 'corpo' con vari livelli di impiego<sup>31</sup> - indica il corpo nella sua completezza. Malamoud (1986), infatti, segnala come già in contesto vedico con il termine *śārīra* si indicasse esclusivamente il corpo materiale, mentre la lingua vedica «emploie d'ordinaire, pour nommer le corps des dieux et des hommes vivants, le terme *tanū*, qui [...] se réfère à la personne tout entière» (113).

La ricaduta fisiologica del dolore causato dalla morte dell'amata consorte è chiaro come si ripercuota *nel* corpo 'fisico' di re Aja, laddove invece il Turrini - fervente cattolico, è bene adesso dirlo<sup>32</sup> - scelga liberamente di tradurre con 'animo', rinviando al dominio 'spirituale' gli effetti scatenati dall'infausto evento. L'anima, nella prospettiva e nelle parole del Turrini, «è la vita del corpo» (155). Tale 'logica disgiuntiva' ha attraversato - seppur in un complesso orizzonte non riducibile ai modelli monisti o dualisti - la sensibilità e il pen-

**30** Sempre in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* (3.2.13), Olivelle afferma quindi: «A distinction is made here between *śārīra* [...] and *ātman* [...]. The *ātman* here may thus refer to the vital aspects of the body, as opposed to the corporeal» (1998, 507).

**31** Le differenti concezioni del corpo nell'India antica si riflettono infatti nella ricchezza del repertorio lessicale che la lingua sanscrita mette a disposizione per indicarlo, con connotazioni che variano a seconda dell'impiego e dell'etimologia: *śārīra*, *kāya*, *deha*, *vigraha*, *aṅga*, *vapus*, *kalevara*, *tanus*, *gātra*, *śava*, *kuṇapa* (Wujastyk 2009, 190).

**32** Così il Turrini commenta la deriva dei suoi tempi: «Procuriamo noi insegnanti [...] di non prendere il Cristianesimo a trastullo, siccome fanno a' nostri giorni molti mitografi, politici, storici». Essa contrasta, nella concezione del Nostro, con lo spirito dei popoli antichi, «che guardavano sul serio la fede» (Turrini 1899, 137-8). L'obiettivo ultimo per l'umanità intera e per l'anima, sempre nelle parole del Turrini, non può che essere Dio e il «pieno godimento di lui» (153). Si avrà modo di trattare più nel dettaglio la questione in un successivo lavoro condotto questa volta su un manoscritto inedito del Turrini (ASCTn ms. 2853/1) che raccoglie interessanti riflessioni storico-religiose sull'idea di dio in India.



siero occidentale<sup>33</sup> (cf. Nannini 2002). Inaugurata da Platone con l'idea di un'anima individuale - concetto consolidato nella tradizione giudaico-cristiana con Agostino e Tommaso - passando per Cartesio e oltre,<sup>34</sup> essa ha tracciato quindi una distinzione tra una dimensione spirituale e una materiale, tra anima/mente e corpo, di cui se ne avverte traccia nella sensibilità dello studioso trentino.

Come il ferro esposto lungamente al calore del fuoco (*abhitaptamayo'pi*) cominci a fondere perdendo la sua naturale durezza (*mārdavaṃ bhajate*), così i corpi (*śarīriṣu*), e non l'animo dunque, vengono piegati e 'sciolti' dal dolore. L'immagine del ferro che *sur-riscaldato* raggiunga il suo punto di fusione è ben chiarita nella scelta del verbo *taptam* (participio passato passivo, *vtap*) preceduto dal preverbo *abhi*<sup>35</sup> (i.e. *abhitapta*), che letteralmente traduce 'sur-riscaldare', 'sovrariscaldato'. Sono il corpo e le membra di re Aja a fornire quella *vera risposta* a un evento che sconvolge, a un sintomo che *dà corpo* all'emozione generata dalla perdita improvvisa. In tale circostanza il corpo «resta l'unico 'campo espressivo' dell'uomo che ormai incapace di [...] affrontare un mondo, si trova a singhiozzare, a tremare, a impallidire a svenire» (Galimberti [1983] 2013, 303).

Si ricordi come l'Eros che Esiodo tratteggia nella *Teogonia* venga presentato negli effetti che esercita sugli uomini come λυσιμελής,<sup>36</sup> 'che scioglie le membra', capace di sovrastare e sconvolgere tanto

**33** La *vexata quaestio* attorno all'unità disfatta', se tanto ha impegnato (e tutt'ora impegna) la filosofia e le scienze cognitive occidentali, diversamente può dirsi per le tradizioni filosofiche hindu (Holdrege 1998, 347), che spostano il discorso sulla relazione tra «the psychophysical organism [...] and the Self - variously termed Ātman, Brahman, or Puruṣa - which is represented as the ultimate reality» (Holdrege 1998, 347). Per una recentissima disamina della questione si veda Ram-Prasad 2018.

**34** Una rilettura aggiornata del dualismo cartesiano è data da Scribano 2015; per un'attenta panoramica sul recente dibattito internazionale e interdisciplinare circa il rapporto tra emozioni e corpo si veda Giacomoni 2017.

**35** *abhi*-, PIE *h<sub>3</sub>ebʰi* (Beekes [1995] 2011, 247) 'verso', 'fino a', 'contro', 'in', 'oltre', 'su', 'sopra' è soggetto in alcuni casi alla perdita dell'originale senso direzionale/posizionale in favore di uno slittamento che indica 'aumento', 'intensificazione', 'eccellenza', si veda ad es. *abhi-vbhū*, 'be dominant' (Lowe 2017, 84). Ulteriore conferma di tale intensificazione conferita dal preverbo sta nell'impiego del solo verbo *tapta* che, associato sempre a un oggetto di ferro, indica semplicemente qualcosa di 'riscaldato', 'arroventato'. Si noti, ad es., tra le punizioni prescritte nel *Mānavadharmasāstra* per coloro i quali si siano macchiati di adulterio, o abbiano avuto rapporti sessuali con donne più anziane, il contatto con una superficie di ferro rovente: *Mānavadharmasāstra* 8.372: *pumāmsaṃ dāhayetpāpaṃ śayane tapta āyase | abhyādadyuśca kāṣṭhāni tatra dahyeta pāpakṛt* («He should have the male offender burnt upon a heated iron bed; they should stack logs and burn up that villain there», Olivelle 2005, 187); 11.104: *gurutaḷpo'bhībhāṣyainastapte svapyādayomaye | sūrmīm jvalantiṃ vāśliṣyenmṛtyunā sa viśudhyati* («A man who had sex with an elder's wife should proclaim his crime and lie down on a heated iron bed, or embrace a red-hot metal cylinder», 220).

**36** L'arcaicità e l'ampia diffusione della figura di Eros, come anche dell'epiteto, tragono conferma da un componimento del VII sec. a.C., composto con probabilità a Calcide, in Eubea, in cui è già definito λυσιμελής (Fasce 1977, 17, 168-70).

gli dei immortali quanto gli uomini<sup>37</sup> (cf. Clay 2003, 95-8). In Omero il termine<sup>38</sup> – che ancora non indica quel principio cosmogonico alla base dell'attività generatrice della natura descritto da Esiodo – è associato a termini impiegati per indicare gli effetti della morte,<sup>39</sup> del sonno, del destino (Fasce 1977, 11) o ancora a verbi come 'spezzare', 'uccidere', 'sopraffare' (Thornton 1997, 14-15). L'epiteto è impiegato ugualmente nella lirica d'amore per indicare gli effetti della passione amorosa<sup>40</sup> (Calame [1992] 1999, 36-8), e specialmente con Saffo – allo stesso modo di Alcmane, Pindaro, Ibico, ecc. – si carica di attributi negativi: una potenza invincibile, che richiama l'idea di mostruosità, una forza che agita e tormenta (Fasce 1977, 132). Senza addentrarci troppo, il rapporto e la percezione che i greci avevano dell'eros sono ben sintetizzati nelle parole di Thornton (1997, 35): «To the Greeks, sexual desire is a plague, a syndrome like AIDS that attacks the body and mind [...] ultimately leading [...] to death».

## 5 Conclusioni

Quanto segue nelle strofe di qui sino alla fine è un susseguirsi di esclamative e di interrogazioni stereotipate che Aja pone a sé stesso o che rivolge alla defunta consorte, e nelle quali è possibile scorgere una certa somiglianza con moduli verbali comuni all'interno di quel 'discorso protetto della lamentazione' documentato e descritto da De Martino, tanto nel campo etnografico quanto in quello dell'epica antica (De Martino [1958] 2008, 80-96). Aja interroga sé stesso sul destino crudele, che lo ha ingiustamente colpito (strofe 15-18), e interroga Indumatī sulle ragioni del suo abbandono (22, 24, 26), per poi riporre speranza in un suo ritorno o nel suo risveglio (strofa 23, 24):

- 22 Per addietro io non t'ho mai fatto,  
no, nemmeno del pensiero, nulla di spiacevole:  
perché cagione tu m'abbandoni? Forse son io  
signor della terra solamente di nome? In te

**37** Hes. *Th.* 120-2: ἦδ' Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι Θεοῖσι, | λυσιμελής, πάντων τε Θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων | δάμανται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλὴν; *Th.* 909-10: ἔρος εἵβετο δερκομενάων | λυσιμελής.

**38** Per una recente proposta circa l'etimologia del termine si veda Musso 2012.

**39** Il legame non pare limitarsi ai passi omerici o all'accostamento di vocaboli identici, ma è parso trovare conferma anche nell'ambito delle pratiche funerarie, specialmente della Grecia arcaica (cf. Fasce 1977, 117-8; Vermeule 1979, 145).

**40** Sapph. fr. 130: Ἔρος δηῖτέ μ' ὀ λυσιμέλης δόνει | γλυκῶπικρον ἀμάχανον ὄρπετον.

sola poi è tutto quel piacere e diletto che la mia propria natura possa trovare.<sup>41</sup>

- 23 O donna dalle morbide e delicate coscine, l'aura movendo i tuoi ricciuti capelli, avvolgolati e intessuti di fiori, splendidi del colore delle negre api, fa l'animo mio sperante nel tuo ritorno.<sup>42</sup>
- 24 Perciò, o sposa mia dolcissima e amabile, di presente svegliati, risentiti e piacciati discacciar l'affanno mio, così come nelle caverne dell'Himālaya l'erba di notte folgoreggiando dissipa le tenebre.<sup>43</sup>
- 26 Alla luna ritorna la notte, all'augello Ciakravāka l'amata femmina, e così a questo modo eglino due portano in pace altre separazioni: ma tu perché cagione senza fine m'ac cuori in perpetuo abbandonandomi?<sup>44</sup>

L'invocazione di re Aja all'indirizzo di un suo risveglio (*tadapohitumarhasi priye pratibodhena*) è tipica delle lamentazioni funebri,<sup>45</sup> così come l'idea che il corpo del defunto non giaccia in stato di morte ma sia solo addormentato (*kimidaṃ kinnarakaṇṭha supyate*):

- 34 O dalla voce dei Kinnara, perché ti sei tu addormita prima ancora d'aver compiuta questa leggiadra cintura, la cui metà meco abbellisti co' fiori di Vakula, menanti il soavissimo odore dell'alito tuo?<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *manasāpi na vipriyaṃ mayā kṛtapūrbhaṃ tava kiṃ jahāsi mām | nanu śabdapatih kṣiterahaṃ tvayi me bhāvanibandhanā ratiḥ.* (Ragh. 8.52)

<sup>42</sup> *kusumotkhacitān balībhrtaḥ calayan bhṛṅgarucastavālakān | karabhoru karoti mārutaḥ tadupāvartanaśaṅki me manaḥ.* (Ragh. 8.53)

<sup>43</sup> *tadapohitumarhasi priye pratibodhena viśādamāsu me | jvalitena guhāgataṃ tamaḥ tuhinādreriva naktamośadhiḥ.* (Ragh. 8.54)

<sup>44</sup> *śāśinaṃ punareti śarvarīdayitā dvandvacaraṃ patatṛiṇam | iti tau virahāntarakṣamau kathamatyantagatā na mām daheḥ.* (Ragh. 8.56)

<sup>45</sup> Come registrato da De Martino ([1958] 2008, 138), tra i rischi della crisi del cordoglio vi è il rifiuto dell'evento luttuoso, e di conseguenza il rapportarsi con il corpo del defunto come se si trattasse di un dormiente o di una persona assente.

<sup>46</sup> *tava niḥśvasitānukāribhiḥ vakulairardhacitām samaṃ mayā | asamāpya vilāsamekhalāṃ kimidaṃ kinnarakaṇṭhi supyate.* (Ragh. 8.64)

Infine, le strofe in cui Aja rievoca le virtù dell'amata (*guṇakīrtana*) e lamenta - opponendola alle gioie dei ricordi passati - il patimento nel quale si trova adesso causato dalla separazione (*viraha*) rappresentano un altro modulo tipico del genere della lamentazione, tanto nell'epica del mondo antico quanto nella contemporaneità, e che richiama al bisogno «di riappropriarsi di ciò che del morto effettivamente è permanente e non patisce morte» (De Martino [1958] 2008, 84):

- 29 Ai cuculi tu lasciasti la dolce e soave  
tua voce, a' cigni il portamento per amore lan-  
guido, il tremulo tuo sguardo alle cervice, e l'  
giocolar alle piante per un picciolo vento mosse.<sup>47</sup>
- 30 Queste tue doti, pur bramosa di salire  
al cielo d'Indra, di certo per lo mio amore tu  
hai lasciate quaggiù: e tuttavolta elle non val-  
gono punto punto a consolar il mio cuore per  
la tua separazione e partimento addolorato a  
morte.<sup>48</sup>
- 37 Consorte, consigliatrice, intima amica,  
amata discepola nella soavissima arte del canto,  
dimmi: che mai non mi fu rapito dalla morte,  
la quale priva d'ogni pietà, a un tratto mi ti  
tolse?<sup>49</sup>

In conclusione, come riportato nelle premesse, il presente contributo ha posto l'attenzione su una figura poco conosciuta dell'indologia italiana, Giuseppe Turrini, e in particolare su un interesse specifico nei suoi studi - quello degli episodi funebri - e sull'attività traduttologica a essi collegata. Profittando delle riflessioni demartiniane e post-demartiniane attorno al tema della lamentazione funebre nel mondo antico, e senza mai prescindere dal dato filologico del testo, si è in principio chiarito il distacco rispetto alla lettera del testo sanscrito volutamente ricercato dalla sensibilità del traduttore, reminiscenza 'poetica' di quella scissione tra anima-corpo e matrice - esattamente come un sistema numerico binario zero-uno - di una lunghissima serie di discorsi, immagini, rappresentazioni tanto nell'ambito filo-

<sup>47</sup> *kalamanyabhṛtāsu bhāsitaṃ kalahaṃsīṣu madālasaṃ gataṃ | pṛṣṭiṣu vilolamīkṣitaṃ pavanādhūtalatāsu vibhramāḥ. (Ragh. 8.59)*

<sup>48</sup> *tridivotsukayāpyavekṣya mām nihitāḥ satyamamī guṇāstvayā | virahe tava me guruvyatham hṛdayam na tvaivalambitum kṣamāḥ. (Ragh. 8.60)*

<sup>49</sup> *grhiṇī sacivah sakhī mithaḥ priyaśiṣyā lalite kalāvidhau | karuṇāvimukhena mrtyunā haratā tvām vada kiṃ na me hṛtaṃ. (Ragh. 8.67)*

sifico-epistemologico quanto in quello artistico-letterario. Sgombrato dunque il campo dall'interpretazione data dal Turrini del passaggio di *Raghuvamśa* 8.43, si è avuto modo di mostrare – secondo una modalità di procedere di recente applicata al panorama della tradizione letteraria classica (cf. ad es. Gagliardi 2006, 2007, 2010) – l'attenzione di Kālidāsa verso le ricadute fisiologiche in atto sui corpi protagonisti dell'episodio in questione. Tale espressione letteraria ha mostrato – anche in contesto letterario sudasiatico – l'attitudine a individuare nel lamento fatto seguire alla morte di Indumatī una minaccia all'integrità psico-fisica. Si è cercato in parallelo di scorgere, all'interno del medesimo episodio, tracce di quel formulario topico, raccolto per primo da Ernesto De Martino, all'interno del genere letterario della lamentazione nel mondo antico, con riferimento particolare all'epica classica. Il genere letterario della lamentazione (*vilāpa*) nella letteratura sudasiatica, in particolare nell'epica e nel *kāvya*, manca di uno studio sistematico e circoscritto ai soli episodi che qui, per sommi capi, si è cercato di segnalare. Tale analisi, seguendo la metodologia di ricerca qui delineata e in linea con quanto avvenuto nel contesto classico, dovrebbe preliminarmente circoscrivere la natura e il senso dei brani riconducibili al genere del *vilāpa*, e al contempo definire il rapporto di questi con la tradizione reale del contesto di riferimento, non già per stabilire in maniera arbitraria corrispondenze e/o continuità<sup>50</sup> quanto per poter meglio definirne (e apprezzarne) la 'natura artificiale', ossia quella rielaborazione poetica di episodi certamente vissuti nella vita quotidiana reale di ogni tempo.

**50** Senza ritornare sul dibattito post-demartiniano circa il rapporto, le affinità e le eredità del dato testuale fissato in forma poetica dei lamenti funebri antichi con la tradizione folclorica reale del lamento raccolto invece nel dato etnografico, mi limito a segnalare la sintesi proposta in fase di esposizione della propria metodologia di lavoro da Gagliardi 2010, 110-12. Le conclusioni alle quali si giunge – fermo restando che ci si muove in quell'ambito 'euromediterraneo' individuato da De Martino – propongo una mediazione e una conciliazione tra prodotti culturali lontani nel tempo e nello spazio, valorizzando e dando credito alle analogie tra il dato testuale (del repertorio omerico) e l'elemento folclorico registrato a distanza di secoli anche nonostante la sovrapposizione del cristianesimo. Tale continuità infatti è giustificata e garantita non già dalla vicinanza o meno a livello temporale/geografico tra due fenomeni culturali, quanto da quella funzione di controllo del dolore in occasione di una morte che riveste il rituale funerario, e in particolare il lamento funebre, funzione sulla quale si è sviluppata a punto la riflessione demartiniana.

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# Le prime traduzioni latine del 'Giusto mezzo' (Zhongyong 中庸)

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Il *Zhongyong* è uno dei documenti centrali dell'incontro intellettuale tra Cina e Occidente. Il testo è così aperto, e a tratti criptico, che possiamo registrarne numerose traduzioni; ciò significa che la sua interpretazione non è ancora stata a tutt'oggi completata. Uno dei traduttori moderni, Andrew Plaks, sostiene che il testo sia 'troppo facile' e che proprio questa caratteristica costituirebbe un ostacolo alla traduzione (1999, 311-31). Già il titolo del libro, per quanto breve, è stato tradotto in una molteplicità di modi diversi: *Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Mean*, *On Center*, *The Inner*, *The Equilibrium*, *The Unwobbling Pivot*, *The Constant Mean*, *The Middle Use*, *Focusing the Familiar*, *Centrality and Commonality*, *The Mean in Action*, tanto per elencare solo alcune delle espressioni in inglese. Tra le traduzioni in francese si può citare *Le juste milieu*, *L'invariable milieu*; in russo troviamo *Sakon neprelozhnyi*, e in olandese *Overanderlijkheid in het midden* (Plaks 1999, 315 ss.). Delle traduzioni latine si discuterà tra poco.

La paternità del *Zhongyong* viene attribuita a Zisi, nipote di Confucio, e l'opera, che in realtà è solo un capitolo del canonico *Libro dei riti*, a partire dall'XI secolo attrasse l'attenzione dei letterati cinesi (detti anche 'Neoconfuciani'), che dalla pura erudizione volevano giungere a un messaggio religioso, vedendo nei testi classici una sorta di appello rivolto a ogni individuo. Mentre il carattere *zhong* indica inequivocabilmente il 'centro' o il 'mezzo', per la seconda parte del titolo dell'opera (*yong*) possiamo identificare almeno due significati: il primo è 'uso' (si veda ad esempio 'the middle use'), il secondo (al più tardi dal XII secolo) 'durevolezza', 'regolarità'. Il testo non



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

Submitted  
Published

2019-01-23  
2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Lackner, Lackner (2019). "Le prime traduzioni latine del 'Giusto mezzo' (Zhongyong 中庸)". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 341-362.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/011

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intende una posizione di mezzo in senso geometrico o aritmetico: si tratta piuttosto di un continuo tentativo di catturare due estremi, per contendersi costantemente la posizione di mezzo, un processo incessante per riguadagnare un equilibrio di volta in volta compensatorio.<sup>1</sup>

La storia delle traduzioni latine del *Zhongyong* inizia presumibilmente con Matteo Ricci, dalla cui corrispondenza possiamo desumere che tra il 1591 e il 1593 fu impegnato con la traduzione dei Quattro Libri. Tuttavia nessuno di questi testi è giunto sino a noi; è piuttosto la traduzione di un confratello di Ricci, Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607), a essere inserita in parte nella *Bibliotheca Selecta* di Antonio Possevino, pubblicata nel 1593.<sup>2</sup> In ogni caso, due delle tre traduzioni del *Zhongyong* a noi giunte sono state molto più influenti. Tra il 1667 e il 1669 la traduzione di Prospero Intorcetta SJ (1626-1696) viene pubblicata a Goa in *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis*; nel 1687 il *Zhongyong* compare come seconda parte della raccolta *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (che comprendeva tre dei Quattro Libri);<sup>3</sup> e nel 1711 l'*Immutabile Medium* è parte integrante dello scritto *Sinensis imperii libri classici sex*, tradotto dal fiammingo François Noël SJ (1651-1729).<sup>4</sup> Anche la traduzione del *Zhongyong* nel *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* è con molta probabilità opera di Intorcetta (Luo Ying 2016, 10-11), nonostante l'opera completa sia il risultato - in termini contemporanei, cosa che ci appare molto moderna - di uno sforzo collettivo di missionari gesuiti sotto la direzione del fiammingo Philippe Couplet.

La Professoressa Luo Ying della Beijing Foreign Studies University ha recentemente messo a confronto, in un suo contributo, la storia delle origini e altre peculiarità di queste tre traduzioni (Luo Ying 2016, 1-23). Luo Ying giunge tra l'altro alla conclusione che la prima traduzione di Intorcetta sia servita prioritariamente come libro di testo per il cinese classico, e che Intorcetta abbia poi cambiato la sua strategia di traduzione nel *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*; così si trova ad esempio il concetto di *shangdi* tradotto nella *Scientia Politico-Moralis* come «supremus imperator», mentre nella traduzione del 1687 si è

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**1** Da qui il titolo di Tiziana Lippiello: *La costante pratica del giusto mezzo*. Venezia: Marsilio, 2010.

**2** Lundbaek 1979, 1-11. Questa è solo un'ipotesi che Luo Ying (2016), tratta dettagliatamente. Sono grato a Daniel Canaris per la seguente comunicazione personale: "Possevino says that he received his information on China from Ruggieri and Ricci first mentions his translation of 'il principale libro morale di questi regni' in a letter of 15 November 1594. The *Bibliotheca Selecta* received its imprimatur in 1592 and was published in 1593. While Ricci had completed this translation a few years before (*Gli anni addietro volti in latino*), he hadn't sent it to Rome yet".

**3** Intorcetta, Prospero; Herdtrich, Christian; Rougemont, François de; Louvemont, François; Couplet, Philippe (1687). *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus sive scientia sinensis latine exposita*. Paris.

**4** L'opera venne pubblicata a Praga; una ristampa si trova in Christian Wolff 2011. Il *Zhongyong* si trova alle pagine 32-73.

optato per «Deus». Ciò riflette l'elaborazione della convinzione secondo cui certe verità di fede cristiana, nel senso di una *Prisca theologia*, fossero contenute nei testi cinesi più antichi, e solo in tempi successivi fossero state corrotte. Qui potremmo riconoscere uno stadio precoce o preliminare del cosiddetto 'Figurismo' che si sarebbe manifestato più tardi; tuttavia in Intorcetta non troviamo quella ricerca sistematica delle tracce di una 'religione naturale' che praticavano i Figuristi.<sup>5</sup>

Di seguito presenterò un confronto tra alcuni brani delle due traduzioni (la prima di Intorcetta e poi quella di Noël), anche perché entrambe hanno contribuito in maniera determinante alla formazione dell'immagine della Cina in Europa: il *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* fu letto da Leibniz e Montesquieu, mentre Christian Wolff fu un entusiasta lettore di Noël: fu infatti grazie alle sue letture che Wolff trovò l'ispirazione per il suo famoso discorso sulla 'filosofia pratica' dei cinesi (*Oratio De Sinarum Philosophia Practica In Solemni Panegyri Recitata*, 1726). Tuttavia, la prima traduzione di Intorcetta non era destinata in primo luogo a un ampio pubblico europeo.

Nonostante un'analisi dettagliata delle differenze tra le due traduzioni sarebbe certamente auspicabile, non è questo il mio obiettivo. Secondo la pratica editoriale, ho identificato tutte le citazioni del *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* con il nome del preminente curatore Couplet; la traduzione italiana è dovuta a Tiziana Lippiello (2010).

## Capitolo 1, paragrafo 1

Prendiamo anzitutto in considerazione il primo paragrafo del *Zhongyong*.


天命之謂性，率性之謂道，修道之謂教。

Per natura umana si intende ciò che si riceve per decreto del Cielo; per Via si intende ciò che è conforme alla natura umana e la guida; infine, per educazione si intende il processo di coltivazione della Via. (45)

**I**D quod à czelo est homini inditum dicitur natura rationalis : quod huic conformatur natura & eam consequitur, dicitur regula, seu consentaneum rationi, restaurare quoad exercitium hanc regulam se suaque per eam moderando, dicitur institutio, seu disciplina virtutum.

Intorcetta

<sup>5</sup> Per questo modo di procedere cf. Lackner 1993, 23-56.

1.  Æli lex est ipsa natura; hujus naturæ ductus est recta agendæ via; hujus viæ directio est recta vitæ disciplina, seu recta vivendi præcepta.

Noël

Intorcetta sceglie la traduzione *natura rationalis* per *xing*, mentre Noël opta per *ipsa natura*. In questo caso, in un certo senso, il tomismo si oppone alla fedeltà al testo: nella *natura rationalis* di San Tommaso la più elevata capacità umana può avvicinarsi alla più bassa capacità degli angeli (*natura intellectualis*). Il contesto cinese non parla in questi termini della natura umana. *Caeli lex est ipsa natura* (Noël) è invece vicino all'originale.<sup>6</sup>

Generalmente nelle traduzioni premoderne non è possibile riscontrare al cento per cento la fedeltà al testo. Queste traduzioni fanno ampio uso di parafrasi, e ciò vale anche per Noël, che deve integrare la *recta vitæ disciplina* (che in cinese altro non è se non la '[giusta] dottrina') con *recta vivendi præcepta*. Qui Intorcetta è molto più complicato: *dao* (in tedesco 'Weg' e in inglese 'the Way' ovvero 'la Via' - alcune traduzioni italiane utilizzano anche 'norma'), divenuta *regula*, e la traduzione viene ulteriormente rinforzata - per sottolineare la razionalità dell'intero brano - con *seu consentaneum rationi*. Possiamo facilmente supporre che una tale razionalizzazione non abbia mancato di impressionare Voltaire, facendo divenire la Cina, per così dire, la madrepatria della ragione.

## Capitolo 1, paragrafo 2

道也者，不可須臾離也，可離非道也。是故君子戒慎乎其所不睹，恐懼乎其所不聞。

Dalla Via non ci si può separare per un solo istante; se ci si potesse separare, non sarebbe la vera Via. Pertanto, l'uomo nobile d'animo è cauto verso quel che non vede e nutre timore per quel che non ode. (45)

<sup>6</sup> Tuttavia in altri punti, ad esempio nel capitolo 22 del *Zhongyong* (paragrafo 97), si trova anche in Noël il concetto di 'natura rationalis'. Il *Zhongyong* riconosce *xing* non solo come natura umana: nel capitolo 22 infatti si parla anche di 'natura delle cose'. Ed è interessante notare che Noël, che in questo capitolo crede di capire la natura umana, scelga *natura rationalis*, mentre nel passo che tratta la natura delle cose (stesso concetto, *xing*), tralasci l'aggettivo *rationalis*: *cetera animantia et viventia possint juxta naturae suae ordinem vivere*.

**D**ICTA Regula cùm sit naturæ rationali intrinseca nunquam potest, nec verò debet vel uno temporis momento abesse aut separari ab homine; quod si posset aliquando abesse aut separari, jam non esset regula seu ratio à cælo naturæ insita. Atque hæc est causa cur perfectus vir adeò semper sollicitè attendat sibi, atque invigilet in his etiam quæ non percipiuntur oculis, uti sunt minimi motus animi; cur itidem adeò timeat & paveat in his etiam quæ non percipiuntur auribus; ut ita, cum aliquid faciendum fuerit, ne momento quidem defleat à norma rectæ rationis sibi impressa.

Intorcetta

2. Ab hac autem recta agendi via non licet cordi nostro vel momento recedere, quin erret & declinet. Si enim unquam cordi nostro liceret ab illa recedere, ita ut vel sic non erraret, aut declinaret; jam illa non foret recta eius via; Ideò cor Sapientis semper est sollicitum, nè unquam ab hac sua via aberret; nec tantum in iis, quæ sensu percipiuntur, curam adhibet; sed etiam illa, & quæ oculus non videt, cautè examinat; & quæ auris non audit, providè metuit.

Noël

Anche in questo paragrafo si percepisce la tendenza di Intorcetta a proiettare il concetto di 'razionalità' nel testo cinese. La *regula* viene nuovamente parafrasata con *sive ratio*; la percezione dei sensi tramite vista e udito emerge certamente in entrambe le traduzioni, tuttavia 'prudenza' e 'preoccupazione' vengono rafforzate ancora in modo macchinoso dall'espressione *norma rectae rationis sibi impressa*, non contenuta nel testo cinese. Noël, che ha tradotto solamente la percezione dei sensi, inserisce un 'cuore' (*cordi nostro*), scelta non completamente azzardata, se si pensa che i tre caratteri che esprimono 'prudenza' e 'preoccupazione' (*shen* 慎, *kongju* 恐懼) sono tutti scritti con il radicale 'cuore'.

### Capitolo 1, paragrafo 3

莫見乎隱，莫顯乎微。故君子慎其獨也。

Non vi è nulla di più evidente di quanto si celi nell'oscurità, nulla di più manifesto di quanto si occulti nel mondo sottile. Ecco perché l'uomo nobile d'animo è vigile su se stesso quand'è nella solitudine. (45)

**M**Otus namque animi d ferè sunt, quod non apparet, quia reconditi & sibi soli noti; sunt item id quod non est manifestum, quia admodum subtiles & minimum quid; ideòque perfectus vir tam sollicitè invigilat cordis sui secreto, & cautus est in internis quæ solus ipse intuetur; quo deinde fit, ut qui aliis reconditi & abstrusi sunt, intimi scilicet cordis recessus, ei tamen soli patefiant; qui item subtilissimi sunt ac percipi vix possunt, minutissimi scilicet animi motus, sive ad bonum, sive ad malum, ei tamen soli manifesti omninò fiunt.

Intorcetta

3. Deinde primi illi & subtiles motus, qui in secretissimo cordis penetrati, vel in bonum vel in malum tendunt, etsi aliis necdum sint cogniti; ei tamen, cui insunt, maximè spectabiles apparent: unde de illis dicitur: nihil tam spectabile, quàm id quod est occultum; nihil tam visibile, quàm id quod est subtile. Quia autem ex his subtilissimis & absconditis motibus tota aut honestatis aut turpitudinis diversitas profluit; idcirco vir sapiens internæ isti sui cordis solitudini, quam ipse solus novit, studiosissimè invigilat, veritus ne procul à recta agendi via ipsum abripiant paulatim succrescentes illæ occultæ cupiditatis commotiones.

Noël

Nel paragrafo 3 troviamo alcune locuzioni paradossali, che evidentemente hanno messo in grande difficoltà entrambi i traduttori: basti confrontare la lunghezza del testo originale con quella delle versioni latine. Nel testo cinese si incontra dapprima solo una dichiarazione impersonale, che fa riferimento al *junzi*, 'l'uomo nobile d'animo' o il 'signore', solo nella seconda parte della frase. I due traduttori invece - come per tutte le traduzioni del paragrafo 2 (cf. 'a noi non è possibile'; *ab homine; non licet cordi nostro*) - devono introdurre sin dall'inizio un soggetto umano, o con *animi motus 'sibi soli (noti)'* come fa Intorcetta, oppure come Noël che resta fedele al suo 'cuore': *in secretissimo cordis*, quindi di nuovo una persona la cui camera più segreta del cuore ospita movimenti sottili. Questo non sembra dovuto tanto alla lingua latina (anche gli scrittori antichi, come gli stoici, fanno uso di paradossi), quanto a un'incapacità dei gesuiti di lasciare semplicemente inalterate le locuzioni paradossali senza introdurre un soggetto umano.

Questa chiave di lettura ha nulla a che fare con la tradizione esegetica cinese: il commentario di Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), frequentemente utilizzato dai traduttori, che lo confessino o meno, vede solo una differenza tra quello che gli altri non vedono e quello che il *junzi* vede. Non si tratta quindi di una differenza tra mondo percepibile con i sensi e un 'a sé' o 'in sé' delle cose.

Tra l'altro, anche qui ci troviamo di fronte alla differenza tra 'ragione' (*motus animi*) e 'cuore', ed è proprio il 'cuore' - per nulla estraneo



al pensiero della Cina tradizionale – che rimanda al luogo dei ragionamenti intellettuali ma al tempo stesso anche emozionali. Le traduzioni moderne possono ammettere questo tipo di dichiarazioni paradossali impersonali: basti vedere la traduzione italiana sopra riportata: «Non vi è nulla di più evidente di quanto si celi nell'oscurità, nulla di più manifesto di quanto si occulti nel mondo sottile», o la versione tedesca di Richard Wilhelm: «Es gibt nichts Offenbareres als das Geheime, es gibt nichts Deutlicheres als das Allerverborgenste» (Wilhelm 1930, 4). Andrew Plaks sente la necessità di inserire un 'sembra' o 'appare': «nothing is more visible than what appears to be hidden» (2003, 25).

La necessità di 'rendere soggettivo' lo stile impersonale, per così dire 'oggettivo' del cinese, tramite il riferimento agli uomini, che abbiamo visto ormai in vari esempi, rimanda a differenze fondamentali tra la retorica latina e la retorica classica cinese. Christoph Harbsmeier si è espresso in proposito come segue: «One may present what one has to say as an objective presentation of fact, or one may acknowledge the transitory subjectivity of one's perspective and of one's motivations for saying things». <sup>7</sup> È molto più tarda l'opera del missionario gesuita Séraphin Couvreur (1835-1919), che nel 1895 redasse una traduzione in francese e una in latino dei Quattro Libri. Anche lui vede la necessità di inserire sia un soggetto (nonostante lo scriva in corsivo: *ei*) sia una distinzione tra la percezione soggettiva e i 'fatti': «Nihil *ei* magis patet quam abscondita (scilicet ea quae insunt in animo suo); nihil *ei* manifestius quam subtilia (rerum iudicia)».

## Capitolo 1, paragrafo 5

致中和，天地位焉，萬物育焉。

Se si perverrà al giusto mezzo e all'armonia, l'ordine dominerà in Cielo e in Terra e i diecimila esseri ne trarranno nutrimento. (45)

**U**BI igitur perspecta fuerint medium & consentaneum, cum demum Cœli quodque ac terræ status quietus, permanens ac pacificus, & omnium rerum uniformis propagatio vigorque consequitur. Nam ( ut Interpretes addunt ) si homo agat semper juxta rectam rationem, quandoquidem hic unum veluti corpus cum universo efficiat, consequens erit, ut etiam cœlum & terra juxta normam sibi inditam agant, Planetæ influant absque vitio, quatuor anni tempestates absque defectu decurrant, Juvenes optatos vitæ annos, Senes finem naturæ consentaneum, res denique omnes debitorum sibi statum & locum consequantur.

Intorcetta

<sup>7</sup> Harbsmeier, Christoph. *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi des langues* [manoscritto non pubblicato].

5. Cùm autem vir in statu tranquillitatis perfectam tranquilli Medii rectitudinem conservare, & in statu commotionis perfectam commoti Medii concordiam tenere potest; tunc in illo omnia se bellè habent sicut in mundo, in quo Cælum ac Terra debitum suum locum servant, & universæ res pacifico modo aluntur & crescunt.

Noël

Nel paragrafo 5 ci imbattiamo per la prima volta nel ricorso ai commenti in Intorcetta, il quale si basava soprattutto su Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582), autore di un'introduzione di facile comprensione per il principe erede che a quel tempo aveva dieci anni. È fuor di dubbio che qui si faccia appello a una dimensione cosmica, che giustifichi il dettagliato commento in cui si parla di pianeti, di stagioni e di norme per le età degli uomini. Tuttavia, mentre nel commentario si parla solo di *dao*, la traduzione scrive di una *norma sibi indita*, che potrebbe contenere per i lettori di buona fede un cenno nascosto a un creatore che abbia 'posto' o 'generato' la 'norma' (*indare, inditus*). La domanda se l'armonia del mezzo' possa essere generata dall'uomo rimane aperta: Noël introduce un uomo (*vir*) che in stato di quiete conserva la completa *Rectitudo* del mezzo; Intorcetta resta relativamente vago (*ut perspecta fuerint medium et consentaneum* - ma per chi?); Richard Wilhelm, che nella prima metà del XX secolo tradusse i classici cinesi, vi vede un imperativo («Bewirke Harmonie der Mitte», ovvero 'Generi/provochi l'armonia del mezzo').

### Capitolo 13, paragrafo 38

子曰：「道不遠人。人之為道而遠人，不可以為道。」

Il Maestro disse: «La Via non è mai lontana dall'uomo. Se si ritiene che la Via sia lontana dall'uomo, non si tratta certo della Via». (69)

**C**onfucius, ut probet omnes promiscuè ad eam, quæ homini insita est, regulam suo modo posse pertingere, explicans illud axioma, quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris: Sic ait: Regulatationis ( quæ versatur, Ex. gr. inter Regem & subditum, inrer Patrem & Filium, Maritum & Uxorem, Majores natu & Minores, denique Amicos inter ) Non longè abest ab ipsomet homine; illa verò, quam homines sibi fabricant regula, & longè abesse volunt ab ipsomet homine ( cujusmodi sunt exotica & ardua quædam principia, quæ modò dictis quinque hominum ordinibus haudquaquam concordant ) non potest censerì regula & ratio.

Intorcetta

38. Haec recta immutabilis Medii via non procul abest ab hominibus, aiebat Confucius; siquidem in consuetis humanae vitae actionibus, quae ab omnibus & fieri & exerceri facillimè possunt, consistit: ( nihil enim aliud, addit Interpres, præter debitum Regis & Subditi, Patris & Filii, mariti & uxoris, Senioris & Junioris, amici & amici munus spectat.) Si quis ergo hanc viam ire aggressus, ista obvia & facilia spernar officia; sed una ardua & insolita spectet, longèque ab aliorum hominum more semota & cognoscere & agere ambiat; hic non potest censeri veram immutabilis Medii viam servare.

Noël

È veramente interessante osservare come entrambi i traduttori sentano la necessità di spiegare il laconico testo cinese servendosi di un altro scritto, e precisamente della *Regola d'oro*, anch'essa formulata da Confucio. Sono presenti anche le 'cinque relazioni' (sovrano/suddito, padre/figlio, marito/moglie, fratello maggiore/minore, amico/amico), che - come la *Regola d'oro* - compaiono solo nei paragrafi seguenti. L'umanesimo europeo costituiva già in Matteo Ricci un modo per mostrare analogie nella letteratura della saggezza di entrambe le civiltà (ad esempio nell'*Enchiridion* di Epitteto); in questo brano si tratta ora di avvicinare a un pubblico occidentale questa 'sommiglianza di famiglia', per riprendere un'espressione di Wittgenstein. Possiamo inoltre notare che una *regula rationis* (Intorcetta) si contrappone a una *recta immutabilis Medii via* (Noël), laddove in cinese si parla solo di *dao*. Nessuna delle due traduzioni corrisponde all'originale, alle cui intenzioni si avvicina maggiormente Noël rispetto al razionalismo quasi ossessivo della prima traduzione.

### Capitolo 13, paragrafo 39

«詩»云:『伐柯伐柯, 其則不遠。』執柯以伐柯, 睨而視之, 猶以為遠。故君子以人治人, 改而止。

Recita l'Ode: «Nel forgiare il manico di un'ascia con un'ascia, il modello non è lontano.» Se brandiamo il manico di un'ascia per forgiare il manico di un'altra ascia e poi le osserviamo da lontano, le due asce ci appariranno distinte. Similmente l'uomo nobile d'animo governa l'uomo prendendo a modello l'uomo e quando lo avrà rettificato si arresterà. (69)

**C**onfirmat hoc à simili ex Oda petito, quæ sic ait : *Cædito manubrium, cædito manubrium; hujus exemplar seu regula non longè abest; quippe in manu artificis est manubrium ipsum, quo rude lignum dolat, ut efformet aliud. Confucius explanans simile sic ait : Artifex manu arripit manubrium, ut securi excindat formetque alterum simile manubrium; idem oblique contuetur, & explorat an exactè respondeat ipsi, quod in manu est, manubrii formæ & regulæ; adhuc tamen hanc ipsam abesse longius existimo, quam absit illa, quæ à cælo homini indita est, regula, quia hæc intrinseca, extrinseca est illa; & in cædendo manubrio unum ab alio diversum est : ideo vir perfectus dum instituit hominem, non per extrinsecum quid & remotum ab homine; sed per ipsummet hominem instituit regitque hominem, nec assimilatur cædenti manubrium qui diversum cædit ab eo quod manibus tenet : Etenim inest homini lumen idem rationis; hoc unum excitat & esse jubet pro regulâ, quo facto si id assequatur, ut his corrigatur & emendetur, tum demum acquiescit, & sistit, operosiori scilicet institutioni superledens.*

Intorcetta

39. Unde idem Confucius legens hunc textum libri *Carminum* tom. *Que Fum*, odâ *Fa Ko*: *dum vir arrepto securis manubrio dissecat lignum, ut aliud manubrium conficiat, conficiendi forma non est illi procul advocanda; præ manibus enim ipsam tenet*: sic aiebat; Cùm vir ille securis manubrium arripit, ut dissecto ligno manubrium conficiat, aliud est manubrium quod manu tenet, aliud lignum quod securi dissecat; adeoque artifici & hoc & illud illimibus oculis contuenti, conficiendi manubrii forma etiam vel sic videtur adhuc procul advocata: Sapiens autem ut homines regat, & verâ vitæ humanæ formâ ac disciplinâ imbuat, non sic se habet: cùm enim ista reetè vivendi forma sit unicuique homini à Cælo infusa, illique intima & connaturalis; ideo vir sapiens, ut alios regat, fornet, perficiat, utitur tantum eâ vitæ formâ, quam ipsi à natura habent; efficitque, ut illam formam vitæ deformatam ipsimet naturâ duce reformat; nihilque aliud procul & extrinsecum advocat: eâ reformatâ, mox sistit.

Noël

Qui è sufficiente una breve osservazione sull'approccio dei traduttori nei confronti di testi redatti molto prima del *Zhongyong* e che in esso si ritrovano: Intorcetta è molto più vicino al testo della poesia dal *Libro delle Odi* (con la sua ripetizione: *caedito manubrium, caedito manubrium*). Ciò vale per tutta la sua traduzione, ma non avanzo alcuna ipotesi riguardo a questo fenomeno. Sulla notevole differenza di lunghezza tra l'originale e le traduzioni e sulla comparsa di *lumen rationis* in Intorcetta non serve che mi dilunghi ancora.

### Capitolo 13, paragrafo 40

忠恕違道不遠, 施諸己而不願, 亦勿施於人

Lealtà ed empatia non sono lontane dalla Via; non imporre agli altri quel che non desideri per te. (69)

**R**URSUM ait : Quisquis omni cum fide & sinceritate ex se metitur alios, hic utique discedit à regulà & lege naturali non procul; seu à regulà illà dirigitur, quam in se ipse habet; quippe cujus primum ferè dictamen hoc est: quæ fieri sibi quis non optat, ea itidem ne faciat alius.

Intorcetta

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40. Proinde qui tantùm ritè noverit innatum sui cordis ductum omninò explere, & ex seipso alios metiri, hic à recta immutabilis Medii via non procul abest. Qui autem innatum cordis ductum omninò explere & ex se ipso alios metiri possit, hoc uno verbo illud expono; quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri nè feceris.

Noël

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In questo paragrafo risulta evidente che entrambi i traduttori fanno uso implicito dei commentari cinesi. Non sarebbero altrimenti concepibili le rispettive aggiunte (*ex se metitur alios* o *se ipso alios metiri*, misurarsi con gli altri tramite se stessi), che non sono dovute a parafrasi ma fanno riferimento alla già citata introduzione di Zhang Juzheng. Noël ha però tradotto i due concetti di *zhong* e *shu*, letteralmente 'fedeltà' e 'indulgenza', molto liberamente come *innatus (sui) cordis ductus*, probabilmente perché il commentario da lui utilizzato considera le due parole come un composto, il cui significato alla fin fine corrisponde a 'magnanimità' (*magnanimitas*). *Fides et sinceritas* (Intorcetta) sono molto più letterali.

### Capitolo 16, paragrafo 52

子曰:「鬼神之為德, 其盛矣乎!

Il Maestro disse: "Immensa è la potenza di spiriti e dei! (77)

**C**onfucius, ut ostendat, ad supradictam medii virtutem ad eam amplam & sublimem, constanti conatu enitendum esse, exemplum defumit à spiritibus, quorum uti vis intellectiva est excellentior, ita & in operando est efficacia magna: sic igitur ait: Spiritibus inest operativa virtus & efficacia; & hæc o quam præstans est! quam multiplex! quam sublimis.

Intorcetta

**¶2. Rursum Confucius, ut hujus doctrinæ tum vastum usum, tum subtilem substantiam explicaret, sic aiebat: Numquid sanè spiritus producentis & destruentis virtus, potestas, natura est insignis & admirabilis?**

Noël

Nel capitolo 16 giungiamo a una questione determinante per la missione cristiana in Cina: il rapporto con la credenza negli spiriti. Non è facile identificare posizioni diverse sulla base delle due traduzioni. In questo brano Noël considera entrambi gli aspetti degli spiriti cinesi, quello demoniaco, spesso associato agli spettri dei morti (*gui* 鬼), e quello 'spirituale' (*shen* 神) nel senso più stretto, che egli traduce con *virtus* e *potestas, spiritus producentis et destruentis*. Intorcetta invece non fa differenza tra i due aspetti: cita solamente *spiritus* al plurale, e li avvicina, ancora in senso tomistico, alla *vis intellectiva*, cui potrebbe collegarsi una velata allusione agli angeli dell'universo tomistico-cristiano.

La concezione cinese di *guishen*, soprattutto a partire dall'XI secolo, ha assunto un duplice aspetto: da un lato vengono mantenute le antiche rappresentazioni, secondo le quali si tratta effettivamente di esseri sostanziali, dall'altro invece il concetto – al più tardi nell'opera del filosofo Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1078) – viene usato nel senso di forze naturali astratte come un aspetto dello Yin e dello Yang.<sup>8</sup> Non dobbiamo tuttavia pensare che queste due forme fossero viste come radicalmente separate: Zhu Xi conosce tanto gli spiriti, che fischiando provocano danni sui ponti, quanto la dimensione delle forze naturali, senza ritenere necessario distinguerle nettamente.

Per una migliore comprensione di *guishen*, nell'accezione che si afferma nelle traduzioni, esaminiamo il paragrafo seguente:

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich, Michael; Lackner, Michael; Reimann, Friedrich (1996). *Chang Tsai: Rechtes Auflichten. Berichtigung falscher Vorstellungen der Jugend oder Richtiges Verständnis unklarer Stellen in den Klassikern. Aus dem Chinesischen übertragen und mit Einführung, analytischem Kommentar, Quellennachweisen, Literaturhinweisen und Indices herausgegeben*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 8 (cap. 1), dove *guishen* viene definito come 'eccellente capacità' delle due forme dell'energia vitale, il *qi*.

Capitolo 16, paragrafo 53

視之而弗見, 聽之而弗聞, 體物而不可遺。

Li cerchiamo con lo sguardo ma non li vediamo, li ascoltiamo ma non li sentiamo; eppure pervadono tutte le cose al punto che nulla può da essi prescindere. (77)

**D**ocet Confucius inesse spiritibus suprà memoratis vim quamdam prorsùs eximiam & ordinis superioris ; quia cùm res omnes corporeæ cadant sub sensum , soli spiritus hunc fugiunt. Verum quidem est, inquit, quod visu percipimus illos quodammodò, quatenus in effectis suis identidem se produnt ; sed tamen reverà non videmus. Rursùs auditu percipimus illos quodammodò dum contemplamur tot effectuum qui ab illis procedunt tam concordem discordiam & quasi harmoniam ; sed ipsos tamen non audimus ; denique adeò intimè fociantur & incorporant se se, ut ita dicam, rebus omnibus ; aut (ut alii explicant ) exercent operationes suas circa res omnes sic, ut res non possint eos à se dimittere ; seu, nequeant consistere sine eorum directione.

Intorcetta

53. Vides illum (nempe in effectis), & non vides (nempe in seipso); audis & non audis: vel ita intimè res penetrat, ut hæ ab eo separari nequeant;

Noël

Ancora una serie di caratteri cinesi paradossali: difficili per Noël, che traduce sì in modo relativamente laconico e conciso, ma non può fare a meno di distinguere almeno tra 'effetti' (*in effectis*) e 'a sé'/'in sé' (*in seipso*) affinché il paradosso possa risolversi. Di gran lunga più significativa è però la sua svolta al singolare, già presente nel paragrafo precedente (*spiritus producentis et destruentis*; questo potrebbe nel migliore dei casi riferirsi anche a una dualità), ma qui molto evidente *vides illum*: non ci sono spiriti, bensì solo uno spirito. Ritorrerò più avanti su questo punto. Intorcetta conserva il suo plurale, ma distingue anche lui tra 'effetti' (*in effectis*) e 'cosa reale' (*revera*). L'affermazione personale: 'Andare a vederli e non vederli, stare a sentirli e non sentirli'<sup>9</sup> viene soggettivata (*vides/videmus; audis/audimus*) e viene introdotta una differenza artificiale tra percezio-

<sup>9</sup> La traduzione in italiano «li cerchiamo...» rimane personale.



ne sensoriale (*in effectis*) e mondo spirituale (*revera, in seipso*), perché il modo di pensare occidentale di quel tempo evidentemente non sopportava la dichiarazione impersonale di una paradossalità. Troviamo una bella conferma della teoria di Christoph Harbsmeier relativamente all'assenza di uno 'stile parentetico' nel cinese classico, nell'inserimento di *ut ita dicam* in Intorcetta. In onore del già citato Séraphin Couvreur, va detto che egli introduce gli spiriti (lui usa il plurale) come oggetto dell'affermazione paradossale, mantenendo per il resto la fedeltà all'originale: *Oculos intendis eis et non vides; aures intendis eis et non audis* (Couvreur 1895, 40).

L'ipotesi che la scelta del singolare in Noël non sia casuale diviene molto più chiara osservando con attenzione il brano seguente:

#### Capitolo 16, paragrafo 54

使天下之人齊明盛服，以承祭祀，洋洋乎如在其上，如在其左右。

Fan sì che gli uomini di tutto il mondo digiunino, si purifichino e indossino splendidi vesti per partecipare ai sacrifici. Poi, fluttuanti, si recano ovunque, sul nostro capo, a destra e a sinistra. (77)

**A** Tque hæc est causâ, cur spiritus efficiant, ut orbis homines sese præcipuè quidem à vitiis; & ut animus sit purus ac mundus; corpus item splendidiore habitu adornatum; ut sic eâ quâ decet reverentiâ offerant sacrificia quò tempore dum contemplantur illam spirituum multitudinem, velut mare quoddam, omnia implentem; ita eos venerantur ac si assisterent ipsis supernè, ita quoque reverentur ac si adstarent ipsis ad lævam & dextram.

Intorcetta

§4. Unde efficit, ut homines ad exhibendos ceremoniales Cy honores, rerum diversarum abstinentiam præmittant, corpus lavent, speciosas vestes induant, perinde ac si sive sursum, sive à sinistris, sive à dextris adesset, rotum aërem complendo & commovendo.

Noël

Si può con giusta ragione supporre che lo *spiritus* di Noël sia vicinissimo, in modo addirittura sensazionale, allo Spirito Santo; di conseguenza gli uomini non offrono sacrifici, come nel testo cinese (*ji* 祭祀), ma fanno *ceremoniales et honores*. Inoltre, queste traduzioni escludono che i sacrifici (di qualsiasi natura) vengano offerti appunto agli spiriti, cosa che si può certamente dedurre dal testo origina-



le. Intorcetta ha una visione ben diversa; da un lato si parla di *sacrificia*, che si riferiscono in modo piuttosto evidente agli spiriti (sempre al plurale), dall'altro la sua traduzione rimanda anche alla dimensione cosmica che viene evocata dagli spiriti: *velut mare quoddam*, una resa efficace dell'"oceano" (*yangyang* 洋洋) del testo originale.

## Capitolo 16, paragrafo 55

«詩»曰:『神之格思, 不可度思! 矧可射思! 』

Recita l'Ode: «L'avvento degli dèi non si può presagire! Ma ancor meno lo si può ignorare!». (77)

**C**onfucius auctoritate libri *Xi kim* dicti probat hanc illis deberi reverentiam. Oda sic ait: An spiritus adveniant & appropinquent sacrificantibus, eorumque vota suscipiant, non potest facile conjici nedum determinari; magis ne vero determinari poterit si negliger colantur, & in eorum obsequio homines languescant? Seu si hi qui omni cum veneratione iis sacrificant, nequeunt eorum praesentiam facile percipere, quantum minus percipient ii qui oscitanter ac remisè & cum tædio illos colunt?

Intorcetta

55. Hinc ait liber Carminum tom. *Ts ja*, odâ *Te*: quamvis profundissimam reverentiam afferas, non potes tamen conjicere aut judicare utrum ille adveniat, seu gratum habeat tuum obsequium; quantum minus id poterunt conjicere aut judicare illi, qui irreverenter & socorditer se gerunt.

Noël

In questo paragrafo, il *Libro delle Odi* viene chiamato in causa come autorità. In realtà qui si parla solo di *shen*, non di *guishen*, ma questo non deve spingerci a supporre che si tratti di un singolo spirito, come suggerisce nuovamente Noël (*ille*). Intorcetta deve nuovamente ricorrere a una personalizzazione distintiva, risolvendo la frase cinese: 'Ma ancor meno lo si può ignorare' o 'come si possa disprezzarli' in un gruppo di uomini, che 'sacrificano loro con venerazione' (*cum veneratione iis sacrificant*) e altri, che 'esercitano loro il culto con negligente indifferenza e con disgusto' (*qui oscitanter ac remisè et cum tædio illos colunt*).

La differenza tra la sfera della percezione sensoriale da un lato, e quella in un certo senso più elevata e spirituale dall'altro, non corrisponde alla concezione cinese delle relazioni tra gli spiriti (che si pos-

sono anche chiamare tranquillamente 'divinità'). Questa relazione, appunto, nella Cina tradizionale non è verticale, bensì viene intesa in senso orizzontale: gli spiriti ci circondano, sono onnipresenti e appartengono alla stessa sfera degli uomini. In questo universo non c'è alcuna separazione fra un sopra e un sotto; e infatti il testo originale recita 'sopra, a sinistra e a destra' come espressione di questa ubiquità.

È anche chiaro che François Noël può essere considerato in un certo senso un 'figurista' a giudicare dalla sua interpretazione di questo brano, nonostante egli sia entrato in contatto con i rappresentanti di questa corrente solo superficialmente o forse per nulla (Luo Ying 2016, 17). Per riconoscere nel cinese *guishen* delle allusioni allo Spirito Santo, è necessario un considerevole sforzo filologico, che si manifesta tra l'altro anche nell'insolita lunghezza della traduzione - altrimenti relativamente laconica - dell'originale in questo paragrafo. Allo stesso tempo riconosciamo nondimeno il motivo per cui Christian Wolff apprezzava la traduzione di Noël: «Tuttavia ammetto che né gli antichi cinesi né Confucio erano atei. Poiché un ateo è qualcuno che nega l'esistenza di Dio; ma non si può negare Dio, se non si capisce chiaramente cos'è Dio [...]. Gli antichi Cinesi avevano quindi un concetto confuso della divinità, e comunque nessun concetto chiaro» (Wolff 2011, 14; trad. dell'Autore). Infatti, nella traduzione di Noël del capitolo 16 del *Zhongyong* si tratta solo di allusioni, e non si trova mai una vera e propria identificazione con lo Spirito Santo.

#### Capitolo 16, paragrafo 55

La prevalenza dell'uso del singolare rispetto al plurale vale anche l'interpretazione del seguente paragrafo, e così pure per quanto detto sui paradossi.

夫微之顯，誠之不可掩如此夫。

La manifestazione delle forze sottili, l'impossibilità di nascondere la loro realtà autentica, ecco cos'è! (77)

**H**ÆC spirituum tam arcana subtilitas, nec minor per effectus suos manifestatio, quamvis spiritus in se adedò occulti sint, usque adedò clara est, ut revera tamen non possint occultari; ita planè se res habet.

Intorçetta

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56. Itaque ex his verbis vides, quamvis spiritus ita sit subtilis, ut nec videri nec audiri possit; posse tamen sensibiles suæ virtutis radios patenter emittere; cum enim ille verè existat, ideò sic manifestis effectis suam vim patenter exerit, nec ullo modo abscondi potest. Hactenus Confucius. Pari modo, addit Interpres, immutabilis Medii doctrina subtilis simul & patens est, abscondita & radiosissima.

Noël

Il *Zhongyong* è anche un testo mistico, nonostante ciò possa non apparire chiaramente a molti interpreti (compresi i moderni, come Andrew Plaks). Questa dimensione diventa particolarmente chiara nella figura del 'santo' (*shengren* 聖人), in cui coincidono l'ordine cosmico e quello umano.

Capitolo 27, paragrafo 116 e seguenti

大哉, 聖人之道!

Grande è la Via del Saggio! (115)

**Q**UAM magna & latè patens sancti viri lex & virtus, quam ille numeris omnibus explet.

Intorcetta

116. Enimverò quàm grandis & immensa est illa via, quam vir summa & veræ scientiæ & veræ virtutis perfectione absolutissimus tenere debet!

Noël

In questi paragrafi viene evocato in modo enfatico l'evento cosmico dello *shengren*; molto concisa risulta la traduzione di Intorcetta (*sancti viri*), mentre Noël sovrabbonda di *epitheta ornantia*: *vir summa perfectione et veræ scientiæ et veræ virtutis absolutissimus*. Possiamo trarre conclusioni da questa differenza? Intorcetta ha tradotto il termine *dao* riferito al santo con *lex et virtus*, fatto che attenua un po' l'effetto cosmico di questa figura. Analizziamo nel dettaglio il seguente paragrafo:

Capitolo 27, paragrafo 117

洋洋乎發育萬物, 峻極于天。

Scorre traboccante sino a nutrire i diecimila esseri e raggiungere le infinite altezze del Cielo! (115)

**QUAM** in immensum diffusa, Oceani instar exundans, & omnibus rebus sese insinuans concurrat ad productionem, & conservationem omnium rerum. Adeoque sua celsitudine ac sublimitate pertingit etiam ad ipsum cælum.

Intorcetta

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117. Si enim totam ejus magnitudinem generatim spectes; ita vasto cursu hunc orbem implet, ut in omnium rerum productionibus augmentisque reperiat; & ita sublimi volatu se sursum effert, ut ad ipsum usque cælum cælique effectus peringat.

Noël

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Notiamo subito che Intorcetta conferisce allo *shengren* un ruolo attivo nella creazione e mantenimento di tutti gli esseri (*concurrat ad productionem et conversationem omnium rerum*), mentre per Noël, 'si ritrova' semplicemente nella creazione e riproduzione di tutte le cose (*ut [...] reperiat*). Indubbiamente anche per Noël lo *shengren* 'adempie' alla realizzazione del mondo o 'riempie' (*implet*) il mondo. Molto riuscita la traduzione di Noël di *yangyang*: *Oceani instar exundans*. In questo paragrafo, il mondo cosmico viene associato al mondo umano: cosmo naturale e umano sono indivisibili nello *shengren*.

## Capitolo 27, paragrafo 119

待其人然後行。故曰：苟不至德，至道不凝焉。

... si dovrà attendere un simile uomo affinché siano praticate. Ecco perché si dice: «Senza un'eccelsa forza morale l'eccelsa Via non potrà assumere forma concreta». (115)

**I**dcirèd cùm ejusmodi virtus sit adeo sublimis & obtentu difficilis, expectandum est quoad veniat ejusmodi summè sanctus vir; & tum demum sperari poterit, ut adeo excellens virtus illo Duce ac Magistro in actum prodeat, atque ab hominibus opere perficiatur.

**I**DEO dici solet, nisi maxima sit virtus ac sanctitas, summa quoque lex & ratio nequaquam coalescet, hoc est, summæ legis observatio nequaquam erit omnibus numeris absoluta.

Intorcetta

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119. Ut ergo tota hujus vitæ perfectio in praxim redigi possit, expectandus est vir summâ & veræ scientiæ & veræ virtutis excellentiâ absolutissimus. Idcirco dicitur, nisi quis sit summa virtutis perfectione præditus, non potest summam hujus vitæ perfectionem in se colligere.

Noël

Questo paragrafo è divenuto per certi figuristi una sorta di cardine che indicherebbe il preannuncio di un Messia. Diversamente da Intorcetta, Noël - non di regola, ma spesso - dà molto peso alla coerenza terminologica: lo dimostra anche qui con la ripetizione di tutti i predicati del santo precedentemente citati. Tuttavia, nell'originale cinese si trova solamente l'attesa 'di questo uomo' (*qi ren* 其人), cui corrispondono - in senso riflessivo - tutte le qualità prima citate. Il *summe sanctus vir* di Intorcetta necessita però degli sforzi degli uomini affinché l'eccellente virtù possa entrare in azione in lui come capo e maestro' (*ut adeo excellens virtus illo Duce et Magistro in actum prodeat atque ab hominibus opere perficiatur*). Dai brani tradotti, possiamo trarre una conclusione riguardo a un'attesa messianica proiettata nello *shengren*? Vi è differenza tra *summe sanctus vir* e *vir summa perfectione et veræ scientiæ et veræ virtutis absolutissimus*?<sup>10</sup>

#### Capitolo 31, paragrafo 141

溥博淵泉，而時出之。溥博如天，淵泉如淵。

Vasto e onnicomprensivo, profondo come una sorgente, manifesta le sue virtù incessantemente. Vasto e onnicomprensivo come il cielo, profondo come una fonte. (129)

**T**anto igitur virtutum comitatu, tantisque ornamentis ac præfidiis instructus, amplius admodum est atque diffusus, placidus & profundus, atque rerum omnium fons & origo quædam: adeoque suis temporibus, cum scilicet ratio & bonum universi id postulat, sese prodit exeritque; alioqui suâ se involvens virtute, seque uno contentus sibi que sufficiens, placidissimæ quietis orio perfruitur.

Intorcetta

<sup>10</sup> Un'interpretazione messianica è espressamente indicata nella "Vita Confucii" (*Scientia Sinica*, 1662), nella *Sinarum scientia politico-moralis* (1667-9) e soprattutto nel *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687) dove il brano è collegato al famoso sogno dell'imperatore Ming della dinastia Han.

141. Proh ! quàm vasta & immensâ hæc virtus ! quàm profunda & abundans !  
hinc juxta varias rerum , locorum , temporum vicissitudines apertissimè se  
prodit.

Noël

Le metafore naturalistiche, comuni in cinese, danno filo da torcere ai nostri traduttori. Intorcetta conosce certamente la *fons et origo*, poi però, che la fonte dispensi acqua, può essere - semmai - espresso solo per vie traverse. Noël attribuisce *profunda et abundans* alla *virtus*, e non allo *shengren*. Per quanto riguarda i brani sullo *shengren*, si può affermare che non si riscontra alcun riferimento al Messia, perlomeno esplicito, neanche in un commento. La dimensione cosmica di cui si parla nel testo originario non viene ripresa dai traduttori: per loro *shengren* resta un essere dalle eccelse qualità morali.

## Conclusione

Questo sguardo iniziale alle traduzioni premoderne di due gesuiti di un testo centrale per la storia del pensiero cinese ci ha mostrato che entrambi lavorano con una gran quantità di parafrasi e inserti parentetici; quasi a esprimere una sfiducia o diffidenza verso la capacità del lettore di riuscire a capire appieno il testo d'origine, se privo di modifiche e adattamenti. Questa sfiducia era certamente giustificata per i lettori del XVII e XVIII secolo, ai quali le traduzioni permettevano un primo contatto con la cultura cinese. Concetti e strutture implicite venivano appositamente resi espliciti. Dobbiamo tener conto che questo costituiva il 'messaggio' della Cina, quello cioè che doveva imprimere nei pensatori europei l'immagine stessa della Cina.

Abbiamo poi esaminato le potenzialità come pure i limiti di queste traduzioni: le formulazioni impersonali dovevano essere correlate a dei soggetti, e i paradossi nella maggior parte dei casi andavano smussati o neutralizzati. Le metafore naturalistiche (se di metafore si trattava) restavano spesso ignorate. Allo stesso tempo, occorreva anche accennare a paralleli con la letteratura della saggezza europea (ad esempio, la 'Regola d'oro'). Nell'umanesimo europeo si trova forse anche il perché di una resa così efficace delle parti poetiche del testo. Non si possono disconoscere alcune precise idiosincrasie per ciascun traduttore: Intorcetta insiste sulla razionalità della natura umana, Noël fa passare sotto silenzio il carattere plurale degli 'spiriti', probabilmente a favore dello Spirito Santo.

Sulla questione dei concetti si è molto speculato nella letteratura sulla missione gesuita in Cina; ad esempio, traduzioni 'corrette' di 'cielo' o 'Dio' costituirono una parte importante della 'controver-

sia dei riti', scaturita dopo la morte di Matteo Ricci. Ciò nonostante, i cristiani cinesi, sia protestanti sia cattolici, vivono tutt'ora con due diverse concezioni di Dio (*shangdi* 上帝 e *tianzhu* 天主), senza che la loro devozione ne risenta. È per questo che, a prescindere dalla definizione della natura umana come 'razionale' nelle traduzioni analizzate, questo mio contributo non si è concentrato su problemi terminologici, ma su questioni di retorica e stilistica di ordine pratico, dietro le quali si scoprono e si celano immagini del mondo che possono esercitare un effetto ben maggiore dei meri concetti.

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# Breaking Up From What? The Corporeal Politics of Values in the Duanlie *yundong* (Rupture Movement)

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**Abstract** This study, which provides close readings of short stories written by 朱文 (1967-), Han Dong 韩东 (1961-) and Dong Xi 东西 (1966-), major exponents of a Nanjing-based group of writers called *Duanlie* 断裂 (Rupture), suggests that for these writers the body is represented in terms of human capital (*suzhi* 素质) in a way that resonates well with what the political scientist Crawford Brough Macpherson has defined as “possessive individualism”. In fact, their characters’ individual private body is for them the most important capital as well as the primary object of self-investment; they owe nothing to society; they regard personal relations as market relations breaking free from traditional kinship bonds and, finally, they regard themselves as ‘proprietors of themselves’. What these middle-class intellectuals introduce in their writings is the newly-born middle-class consumer willing to celebrate, as Paterson says, “carnavalesque consuming bodies celebrating popular pleasures, not of the mind, but of the body” (2005, 105).

**Keywords** Body. Rupture Movement. Possessive Individualism. Chinese Values. Chinese Middle-class Consumers.

**Summary** 1 The *Duanlie* 断裂 (Rupture) Movement and the Question of Values. – 2 Zhu Wen: Dollars, *Renminbi*, and the Trans-lation of Values. – 3 Han Dong’s *Meiyuan yingguo renminbi* 美元硬过人民币 (Dollars are Harder than *Renminbi*). – 4 Dong Xi’s *Shangpin* 商品 (The Commodity). – 5 Conclusion.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2019-04-05
Accepted	2019-06-11
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Pirazzoli, Melinda (2019). “Breaking Up From What? The Corporeal Politics of Values in the *Duanlie yundong* (Rupture Movement)”. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 363-394.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/012

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## 1 The Duanlie 断裂 (Rupture) Movement and the Question of Values

The decade of the nineties was both fascinating and complex for Chinese society. During these ten years, radical economic, social, political and ideological changes occurred as a consequence of the transition from a planned to a market economy. It is not surprising, therefore, that such a transformation inevitably triggered off debates about the relationship between material (economic) and social, political, ethical and aesthetic values. As Luigi Tomba has once remarked, “the legitimacy of the post-Mao communist regime has relied on the simultaneous development of two aspects of civilization: material (*wuzhi* 物质) and spiritual (*jingshen* 精神)” (2009, 591). He has also convincingly highlighted the pivotal role played by the spiritual side - “individual behaviors and commitment to the values of civility, order and stability” (592) - within the Chinese Communist Party’s civilising project whose most important actor is “the urban, educated and resource-rich middle class” (592).

Ann Anagnost has demonstrated that the interconnectedness between this newly born Chinese middle-class spiritual values and consumer culture can be best understood if we focus on the concept of *suzhi* 素质, which “roughly translates as culture” and “encompass[es] the minute social distinction between defining a person of quality in practices of consumption and the incitement of a middle-class desire for social mobility” (2004, 190).

As Tamara Jacka has amply demonstrated in her study, it is impossible to provide an unambiguous definition of *suzhi* since it is a keyword that connects a wide array of discourses:

*Suzhi*, which refers to the innate and nurtured physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, and ideological qualities of human bodies and their conduct, is, in Raymond Williams’s terms, a “keyword”. In its contemporary usage, it has become widespread only since the 1980s. However, it intersects with, and contains powerful traces of, other keywords, such as civilization and modernity, whose histories are long and fraught and entangled with developments across languages and cultures. Laden as it is with cultural and historical associations, *suzhi* is of critical importance to contemporary China’s booming, globally oriented market economy and to new, ‘post-socialist’ forms of state governance and social control. It plays a central role in contemporary processes of citizenship, simultaneously contributing to understandings of the responsibilities, obligations, claims, and rights that connect members of society to the state; to determinations of which individuals and social groups are included in this set of rights and responsibilities and which are excluded; to discourses on how to produce the ‘ideal’ citizen as well as what

to do about the less-than-ideal citizen; and to processes and institutions that produce and reproduce boundaries and gradations between different types of citizenship and citizen. [...] Suzhi is very much a part of contemporary public culture, being reproduced by numerous different social actors and in a variety of popular, as well as official, discourses. It is both a common, taken-for-granted word and a 'difficult' term whose meaning and function vary and are much contested but which nevertheless seems to distill a set of values that are central and specific to particular historical and social conditions. (2009, 524)

The Chinese Communist Party's political zeal to promote discourses on how to produce the 'ideal citizen' and on how to discipline and regiment "the urban, educated and resource-rich middle class" had a profound impact on Chinese writers and writings in the early nineties. Neorealist writers belonging to the *Zhongguo zuojia xiehui* 中国作家协会 (China Writers Association) such as Liu Heng 刘恒 (1954-), Liu Zhenyun 刘震云 (1958-), Fang Fang 方方 (1955-) and Chi Li 池莉 (1957-) among others, reacted polemically by devising a new form of realism that represented in minute details the degrading daily lives and the derogate bodies of sexually repressed common people whose desire for upper social mobility was thwarted by an unjust social system.<sup>1</sup> A group of young urban writers – the so-called *Wansheng dai* 晚生代 (Late-Born Generation) or *Xinsheng dai* 新生代 (Newly Born Generation) – preferred instead to focus on the material aspects of civilisation, more specifically on the bodily pleasures and practices of consumption of the newly born Chinese middle class consumers. In their stories and novels, however, they do not endorse the Chinese Communist Party's civilising project either. In fact, they represent young urbanites who, while enjoying all the advantages of the new market economy, eschew all forms of 'responsibilities and obligations' towards society and the state.

The present study aims to discuss the innovative literary achievements of Zhu Wen 朱文 (1967-), Han Dong 韩东 (1961-) and Dong Xi 东西 (1966-), major exponents of a Nanjing-based group of writers within the *Wansheng dai* called *Duanlie* 断裂 (Rupture). These writers also seriously reflect upon notions such as the status of writers and writing, embodied values, and middle-class consumer culture not from *within the institutions, but against them*.

Jason McGrath thus explains the appearance of the *Duanlie* movement on the literary scene:

<sup>1</sup> A detailed analysis of neorealism is provided in the second and the third chapter of Chen Xiaoming 陈晓明 (1997), *Shengyu de xiangxiang: Jiushi niandai de wenxue xushi yu wenhua weiji* 剩余的形象: 九十年代的文学叙事与文化危机 (*Residual Imagination: Literary Representation of the Nineties and the Cultural Crisis*).

As Chen [Xiaoming] gleefully proclaimed, with the Rupture group, “The Chinese literary scene unexpectedly had a community of people dare to suddenly make public an attitude which clearly defined themselves as an alternative outside the dominant culture, the first time in over half a century such a bizarre absurdity had appeared”. With the Rupture authors, “those serving as the subject of literature, those literary writers most able to hit the mark on contemporary life, are no longer part of the general literary institution”, and yet “they have suddenly emerged on the surface of history to occupy the primary position in contemporary literature”. This was clear evidence that “the tradition of literature from its socialized organizational structure to its spiritual essence” had “undergone a fundamental transformation”. It also indicated a legitimacy crisis occurring in the general institution of contemporary Chinese literature – that is, a welcome one in which the establishment corresponded to a new unprecedented degree of self-determination. (2008, 78)

While it is certainly true, as Jason McGrath points out, that the Rupture movement was not the first one to assert institutional autonomy because writers such as Wang Shuo 王朔 (1958-) and Wang Xiaobo 王小波 (1952-1997) had already “shattered the mystery enshrouding the literary institution and demonstrated the multifaceted feasibility of writing outside the system” (78), it was nevertheless the first one to address the interconnectedness between the individual body and the Chinese middle-class consumer values engendered by the new market economy.

This study, which provides close readings of short stories written by Zhu Wen, Han Dong and Dong Xi, suggests that while these writers represent the body in terms of human capital, they nevertheless show no commitment to the values of civility, order and stability. On the contrary, in their fictional production there is a clear disconnect between the individual body and the state/civil society. Their representation of the body, instead, resonates well with the logic of what the neoliberalist political scientist Crawford Brough Macpherson has defined as “possessive individualism”.

According to Macpherson,

1. What makes a man human is freedom from dependence on the wills of others.
2. Freedom from dependence on others means freedom from any relations with others except those relations which the individual enters voluntarily with a view to his own interest.
3. The individual is essentially the proprietor of his own person and capacities, for which he owes nothing to society.
4. Although the individual cannot alienate the whole of this property in his own person, he may alienate his capacity to labor.
5. Human society consists of a series of market relations... (1962, 263-4)

The literary works of the Rupture movement reflect all the characteristics of possessive individualism. In fact, their characters' individual private body is for them the most important capital as well as the primary object of self-investment; they owe nothing to society; they regard personal relations as market relations breaking free from traditional kinship and social bonds and, finally, they regard themselves as proprietor of themselves. What these middle-class intellectuals introduce in their writings is the newly-born middle-class consuming body, which as Paterson suggests, celebrates "popular pleasures, not of the mind, but of the body" (2005, 105).

## 2 Zhu Wen: Dollars, *Renminbi*, and the Trans-lation of Values

当然出门前我没忘了把压在席子下的钱统统揣上。那是我所有的积蓄，我要把它们花完，一个子也不剩，那是一件快活无比的事情。可惜我从来没有过很多的钱可供我挥霍，我真不走运。但是我相信自己会有那么一天变得大名鼎鼎，然后一开门就有大把大把的支票劈头盖脸地冲我砸过来，躲也躲不掉。那种叫美元的东西，满是让人神往的异国情调。一张美元在半空中又化为更多的人民币支票，就像魔术一般，往下飘呀飘呀，我双手展开眼望蓝天，满怀感激地领受着这缤纷的幸福之雨。我不会因此感到苦恼的，给我一个机会，我就做一次给你看看，我就想做一次让你激动不已的永不锈蚀的花钱机器。最后正如我朋友预言的那样。晚年的我必将在贫穷和孤独中死去。(Zhu 1995, 379-80)

Naturally, I took out all the money I had stuffed under the mat. It was everything I had saved; I wanted to spend it all, didn't want a single cent left at the end of the day – I could think of nothing more than satisfying myself. Sadly, I didn't have much money to squander in the first place; maybe I've just been so unlucky so far in my life. But one day I am sure I'm going to make it big, great handful of bills will hit me in the face whenever I open the door; there will be nowhere to hide. Dollars, they have this intoxicating generosity of spirit. The way a dollar bill can generate endless *renminbi* out of thin air, it's just like magic; down they float into your outstretched hands, your eyes raised heavenward, gratefully receiving this riot, this shower of fortune. Just give me a chance and I'd show the world exactly what kind of carefree rust-less spending machine I could be. Then after throwing it all away, just as my friends have predicted, I'd live out my years in lonely poverty. (Zhu 2007a, 10)

This is an excerpt of the highly acclaimed novella *Wo ai meiyuan* 我爱美元 (I Love Dollars) written in 1995 by Zhu Wen. This was a year characterised by an increasing interest on the part of intellectuals in the debate about the interconnectedness between Chinese spiritual

and economic values. In May, Jiang Zemin 江泽民 (1926-) commented that “if the Chinese people were to neglect traditional moral teachings, China would become a vassal of foreign particularly Western culture” (quoted in Dynon 2008, 94). In 1996, “resolutions had called for the Party to carry the cream of [Chinese] national culture, prevent and eliminate the spread of cultural garbage, [and to] resist the conspiracy by hostile forces to ‘westernize’ and ‘split’ the country” (94). Not surprisingly, in 1996 and in 1997, leading Chinese conservative intellectuals published two important nationalistic best sellers, *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* 中国可以说“不” (China Can Say No) and *Wo xiangxin Zhongguo* 我相信中国 (I Believe in China) (94).

In this context, it is clear not only the import of Zhu Wen’s revolutionary story “I Love Dollars”, but also the meaning and the scope of the literary contribution of the Rupture movement, which aspired to suggest the incompatibility and the oddities between the newly imported consumer cultural values and the bombastic rhetoric of the Chinese Communist Party. It is a rupture with both the past and present institutional cultural, ethical and social values.

Dollars, in this passage, seem to have an intoxicating power, a power of seduction that Chinese *renminbi* seem to lack. By displacing traditional Marxist process of fetishization of the commodity to a foreign currency, Zhu Wen creates a brand-new concept of value, a value that must be searched for in what is now commonly defined as consumer culture. Dollars’ ‘intoxicating generosity of spirit’ is a metaphor of the transmutation of the foreign currency into something almost transcendent and metaphysical that is not easily distinguishable from a fetish.

Zhu Wen represents consumption in a way that appears to sing the praises of consumer culture and consumer habits of late-capitalist society, as “a way to experiment [with] new modes of subjectivity” (Paterson 2005, 49). Indeed, as such a pseudo-metanarrative describing the adventures of a writer celebrating the birth of consumer culture, “I Love Dollars” is conceived as a novella that aims to establish close connections between practices of consumption and different categories of culture in order to reflect upon the role of writing and writers in post-socialist China.

The text narrates the feats of the protagonist, a writer quite tellingly named Zhu Wen, who is interrupted during sexual intercourse with a woman named Wang Qing, by his unnamed father’s sudden entry into his room. After inspecting his eldest son’s apartment, Father confesses the purpose of his visit: he needs the diegetic Zhu Wen to dissuade his younger brother from dropping out from school. The elder son then escorts his father on an instructive tour of the city. He attempts to hook up Father with young girls in order to have him experience the new urban erotic pleasures, accompanies him first to a hairdresser to have his hair cut according to the latest fashion, and then to the movies where they are exhibiting a cinematographic adap-

tation of the diegetic Zhu Wen's own literary work. These are all strategies to teach his old mannered and low-*suzhi* father the principles of hedonism that, as Paterson reminds us, are "a new consumption ethic in the late-capitalist consumer culture" (2005, 24).

Alternatively put, Zhu Wen deploys an ironic discourse on "the formative power of *suzhi* as an ideological formation that enables the transfer of economic value from one body to another" (Anagnost 2004, 191). The protagonist's first and apparently only concern is to invest all his money in order to transform his coarse father into a sophisticated urbanite and into a modern consumer.

From the beginning of this story, there is a manifest disinterest on the part of the protagonist in his father's past:

额上有一块伤疤,这是我们近几年对父亲的一大发现。几十年来我们都没有注意到。父亲说,他小时候在老家那阵子就是厉害的角色,可以攀着树枝从一棵树蹿到另一棵树上,就像猴子一样敏捷。但是这块伤疤是怎么落下的,他始终没有讲清楚。(Zhu 1995, 375)

He had a scar on his forehead, a great discovery we'd made about him in recent years. For decades, we'd never even noticed it. Father said he'd been a real daredevil in the town he'd grown up in, that he could climb trees, scrambling from one branch to another, quick as a monkey. But he'd never explained how he'd ended up with the scar. (Zhu 2007a, 5)

This passage is a prelude to Father's initiation into the pleasures of urban life. The description of the narrator's enlightenment about Father's scar reminds readers, in a very subtle and ironic way, of the awakening of Lu Xun's 鲁迅 (1881-1936) madman in his *Kuangren riji* 狂人日记 (A Madman's Diary) (1918). Just as in the case of the madman, in fact, reality is abruptly disclosed to the narrator's eyes. However, writers of the Rupture movement such as Zhu Wen, unlike in the narratives produced up until then, keep away from epistemological questions.<sup>2</sup> The scar described here is not a mere metaphor of the important literary movement called 'scar literature'.<sup>3</sup> It is above all a bodily trace as well as a signifier of a socialist revolutionary past that is forever gone and that no longer raises any curiosity or interest.

The scar is introduced in this novella as a reminder of a past in which the notion of *suzhi* bore a radically different meaning. As Ann

<sup>2</sup> An important epistemological analysis of Lu Xun's story is offered by David Der-Wei Wang in his introduction to *Fictional Realism in Twentieth Century China*. Mao Dun, Lao She and Shen Congwen (2010, 5-10).

<sup>3</sup> "Scar Literature" is discussed by Sabina Knight in her "Scar Literature and the Memory of Trauma" (2016, 293-7).

Anagnost reminds us, in fact, it came into being as a term by the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties “in state documents investigating rural poverty that attributed China’s failure to modernize to the ‘low quality’ (*suzhi di*) of its population, especially in rural areas” (2004, 190). In other terms, the scar is an expedient to represent the incommensurability between a socialist past – when neither commodities nor urban pleasures were available – and the present urban reality characterised by a wholesale commodification of values.

In the Maoist era, as Zhu Wen comments, even libidinal economy was experienced in radically different terms:

现在想起来, 父亲是个性欲旺盛的人, 只是有一点生不逢时。它们那会儿的性欲不叫性欲, 而叫理想或者追求。父亲每天早晨起来, 都要到操场或者公路跑上一万米, 这个习惯现在他老人家大概已经灭掉, 因为不再需要。所以他也知道那几毫升凝固汽油要省着点用, 不能时刻都开足马力。和这个世界一样, 能源问题是你今天以及明天的主要问题。(Zhu 1995, 379)

Thinking about it, I realized Father was a man with quite a libido, just that he was born a bit before his time. In his days, libido wasn’t called libido. It was called idealism. Early every morning, Father used to go to the sports field or run six miles along the road, but he has since dropped the habit, I suspect because there is no need for it. So, I knew his few remaining ounces of congealed gasoline had to be used sparingly; that he couldn’t go full throttle all the time. Energy: it’s a problem for the planet, it’s a problem for us, both in the present and in the future. (Zhu 2007a, 9)

The body plays a pivotal role in all the fiction produced by writers of the Rupture Movement. Father’s sexual and libidinal repression serves as an important foil to the present consumer culture because, as Paterson argues, consumption practices do not necessarily consist in the purchase of desired objects, but by the emerging setting out of desires, because “with bodily pleasures comes release and, rather than guarded subjectivity and temperance encouraged by prevailing social order, a loss of self is incurred, a release from socially constructed subjectivities” (2005, 107).

Father and son, just like Baudelaire’s *flâneurs*, roam around the city in search for pleasures and release. Father, however, still immersed in his old-fashioned world, is unwilling to give up his equally old-fashioned ideals. As a consequence, he constantly objects to his son’s attempts to have him appreciate the values of ‘carnavalesque bodily pleasures’. The author’s representation of the hiatus between the Father’s and the Son’s relationships with their own bodies and with the reality that surrounds them is a successful expedient to depict not only the radical changes occurred in China in the last decade of the twentieth century, but also the different *suzhi* in urban and rural China. Fa-



ther's coarse manners, his ineptitude at relating both with the modern urban environment and with his libido as well as his stubborn refusal to comply with his son's world view inevitably undermines their relationship. Not only does Father refuse to seduce the young girls whom his son is setting him up with, he also implores him to give up his licentious conduct and to stop being a writer of what he conceives to be vulgar and shallow novels. The protagonist tries to defend himself and his fictional production:

“生活中除了性就没有其他东西了吗？我真搞不懂！”父亲把那叠稿纸扔到了一边，频频摇头。他被我的性恼怒了。

“我倒是问你，你怎么从我的小说中看到性呢？”

“一个作家应该给人带来一些积极向上的东西，理想、追求、民主、自由等等、等等。”

“我说爸爸，你说的这些玩艺，我的性里都有。”

我觉得心里空洞极了，我讨厌自己嘴里的那股胃酸的气味。房间里的一切都有一股令人作呕的胃酸味。在台灯的光线下，父亲的脸庞，那高高的鼻子以及一侧鼻子的阴影，椅子，床，烟缸上正在消散的烟，在这一刻都深陷于一种难以摆脱的无意义之中。每当有人用父亲一样的立场评价我的作品，我就有一种与这个世界通奸的感觉，知道吗？你们让我觉得自己是一个充满疑虑、焦灼、不安的通奸者。但是我现在准备继续充当这个角色。(Zhu 1995, 404)

“Is sex the only thing that matters? Is there nothing else?” Father threw one pile of manuscripts to one side, shaking his head furiously.

“Let me ask you a question: how come you only pick up on the sex in what I write, and nothing else?”

“A writer ought to offer something positive, something to look up, ideals, aspirations, democracy, freedom, stuff like that.”

“Dad, I am telling you, all that stuff, it's all there in sex.”

My mind still an aching void, I was nauseated by the taste of stomach acid washing around my mouth. Around the whole room. Beneath the circle of light cast by the table lamp, Father's face, his high angled nose and the shadow it cast, the chair, bed, ashtray and cigarette burning down on it suddenly all seemed sunk into meaninglessness. Whenever someone criticizes my writing as Father had just done, I get this feeling that I am an adulterer, that everything I do in the world is false and empty, like adultery. Do you know what I mean? I get an adulterer's misgivings, anxieties, guilt, unease. But then I carry on as before. (Zhu 2007a, 34)

Sexual freedom, one of the most important conquests of post-socialist China, is one of the Rupture movement writers' most important themes to address the principle of possessive individualism. The diegetic Zhu Wen's obsessive concern to invest all his money for both finding a wom-

an willing to offer his father a sexually gratifying experience and transforming him into a modern middle-class consumer stems from his urgency to represent the radical transformation of values occurred in urban China.

As Peter Brooks (1993, 180) once observed, the birth of the middle class, and its fictional representation, are in fact intimately connected to an interest in the private life of the individual subject as well as its relation to the domain of leisure. Eroticism, as he argues, becomes essential to the production of a new urban space dominated by middle-class urban desire. This is also what Henri Lefebvre highlights in his acclaimed works: in the trilogy *Critique of Everyday Life* (1958, 1961, 1981) in which he conflates the existentialist and, more specifically, the Sartrean notion of alienation with Heidegger's concept of "everydayness" (*Alltaglichkeit*); and in *The Production of Space* that claims that there is an anatomy of space generated by "a practical fleshy body conceived as a totality complete with spatial qualities (symmetries, asymmetries) and energetic properties (discharge, economic, waste)" (1991, 61).

In this light, it can be inferred that eroticism in the literary production of the Rupture movement is the manifestation of the newly born subject who, moving into a new kind of social space where consolidated social practices that rely on social and kinship bonds (commonly known in China as *guanxi* 关系) have been replaced by forms of anonymous and impersonal relationships, experiences his subjectivity less through his emotions and affections than his bodily perceptions and relationships. As is clear, sexual and erotic relationships in "I Love Dollars" constitute neither emotional bonds nor spaces of intimacy. They are here - and even more in Han Dong's "Dollars Are Harder than Renminbi", discussed in the next section - a way to manage the "energetic properties of the body (discharge, economics, waste)".

Seen from this perspective, the overwhelming sense of alienation and the pervasive sense of nausea on the part of the protagonist described in the passage above are crucial aspects of the process of the subject's self-reflexivity in the reified and commodified society produced by the capitalist economy, an aspect already widely explored in the philosophical writings and fiction produced by French existentialist writers such as Albert Camus (1913-1960) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980).

More specifically, 'Nausea' appears prominently in Sartre's *Being and Nothing* (1943) and in his novel *The Nausea* (1938) to define the complex relationship between self and the Other. As Richard Kamber explains:

The expression 'Nausea', '*la Nausée*' with a capital N, is used consistently throughout this novel to designate a way of apprehending external object (or one's own body used as an external object) and

the world in which they are situated. Essentially, it is a mode of apprehension which nullifies the categories, concepts, and instrumental associations in terms of which we ordinarily perceive the world, and through this nullification reveals worldly entities as mere existents. This mode of apprehension is accompanied by a feeling of disgust, distaste or repulsion and is capable of transforming the world *in* which one is a practical agent to an agglomeration of undifferentiated existents *within* which one is a captive observer. (1983, 1280)

Zhu Wen's representation of Nausea overlaps to a great extent with Sartre's. Exposed to the wide array of stimuli that the external environment provides, he can only perform as a captive observer of external objects, people, including his own body and his own father. He never acquires full agency. In the passage mentioned above, just like in the passage where the diegetic Zhu Wen observes Father's scar, there is a "mode of apprehension which nullifies the categories, concepts and instrumental associations", which entails, from the aesthetic point of view, a mimetic mode of representation. The thorough and meticulous descriptions of the environment and of the people with whom he interacts are in fact simple descriptions of "worldly entities as mere existents".

The writer's refusal to provide a moral and ideological reading of the world, on the one hand, and his constant focus on the impossibility to decode, to internalise or make sense of the world surrounding him, on the other, are exactly what distinguishes the Rupture movement from all previous literary movements.

Indeed, as Patrick McGrath has observed, this mode of writing calls to mind that of the *Xin ganjuepai* 新感觉派 (New Sensationists) of the thirties (2008, 76).<sup>4</sup> However, what is radically new in the Rupture movement of the nineties is the way in which anti-ideological discourses are deployed. As the diegetic Zhu Wen explains to his father, this new urban milieu in which everything, including the body, is configured in terms of capital and libidinal economy inevitably replaces residual Maoist or pre-Maoist ideals and values with values of possessive individualism via the body. This new approach to the newly born middle-class subject, to the world and to the real is indeed the most important contribution and revolution of the Rupture movement.

The ending to "I Love Dollars" represents the author's desire to break radically with the past. In fact, not only does the protagonist Zhu Wen fail to convince his younger brother to meet his father, he also forgets about his father's existence immediately after the latter's departure:

<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth analysis of this literary movement cf. Lee 1999.

半个小时以后,我躺在那张柔软的席梦思上昏昏欲眠,难以克服的厌恶在一个单身女人卧室里蔓延开来。恍惚之中,我忽然觉得自己在这一已经过去的一天里什么也没做,哪儿也没去,只是和一个三十四岁的女人在虚无的中心终于干完了一件可以干的事情。(Zhu 1995, 414)

Half an hour later, as I lay on Wang Qing's soft mat, drifting towards sleep in her single-woman's bedroom, I was attacked by self-disgust. I suddenly felt that I hadn't done anything the entire day just past. All I'd done, inside the vacuum that had been the last twenty-four hours, was taken to its logical conclusion, the most logical thing you can do with a thirty-four-year-old woman. (Zhu 2007a, 44)

Zhu Wen's representation of the ways in which former symbolic values and ideals have been replaced with material corporeal and economic values is also articulated in other works. The short story *Bang, ang-si he rou* 磅、盎司和肉 (Pounds, Ounces, Meat) (2008) is exemplary in this regard. Just like in "I Love Dollars", it also narrates the feats of a diegetic Zhu Wen who, after coping with the payment of the electricity and telephone bills, "a contradiction of everyday life" (215),<sup>5</sup> ventures to the market with his girlfriend to buy 400 grams pork fillet. Upset by the fact that the pork fillet comes with a bone, which they refuse to pay for, they are both determined to verify the exact weight of the meat in order to pay a fair price:

但是问题是,到哪去找一台值得信赖的秤呢?不远处的一家炒货店里就有一根老式的杆秤,但是我们从小就知道这种秤里可能灌有水银,你怎么能相信呢?再多走几步就是国营桂花鸭的下关区指定销售点,那里也有一台油腻腻的电子秤,但是多年来我们相信桂花鸭,却还是对它身下的秤没有十分的把握。我的女友开始后悔没有带上她那只袖珍的弹簧秤。不过带来了也没用,弹簧老化了,一斤栗子能称出两斤来,让你每次都觉得自己捡了个大钱包。我想了想以后说,我看就是手感最可信了,行家一搭手就知有没。 (Zhu 2000, 3)

The problem was, where could we find a dependable set of scales? There was a set of old-fashioned suspension scales at a fast-food stall not far off, but they were no good: everyone knows scales like

<sup>5</sup> Zhu Wen's irony on the bombastic rhetoric of Maoist propaganda is evident in his sentence 什么是日常生活中的矛盾?电费和电话费就是一对矛盾 (Zhu 2000, 1) (What are the contradictions of everyday life? The electric bill and the phone bill are a pair of contradictions - Zhu 2007, 2015). It evokes ironically the opening sentence of Mao Zedong's ground-breaking philosophical essay *Maodun lun* 矛盾论 (On Contradiction) (1937): 事物的矛盾法则,即对立统一的法则,是唯物辩证法的最根本的法则 (Throughout the history of human knowledge, there have been two conceptions concerning the law of development of the universe, the metaphysical conception and the dialectical conception, which form two opposing world outlooks - Mao Zedong (1952). *On Contradiction*. Beijing: Foreign language Press, 1).

those can be tampered with. A little farther down, there was a set of greasy electronic scales at a state-owned osmanthus duck stall. We had no problems with osmanthus duck, naturally, but were the scales beneath it to be trusted? My girlfriend was beginning to regret not having brought her pocket-sized spring balance out with her. But even if she had, it wouldn't have been much use: the springs were so old they sometimes turned 500 grams of chestnuts into a kilo. You didn't know when you had been lucky or when you'd been had. I think we should go by feel, I said, after thinking it over. All we need is an expert to do it for us. (Zhu 2007, 217)

Passages like this one are not only the demonstration of the Rupture movement's astounding capability to reproduce, aestheticize and magnify in a mimetic way the most minute aesthetic details of everyday life. They also evidence the important project that lurks behind the only apparent shallowness and pettiness of this movement's literary output: these stories address the important issue of the inevitable conversion of values occurred in the radical passage from Maoist ideology and economy to a new market economy informed by new ideas and values.

Scales and balances are important protagonists of this interesting passage. The difficulties of the diegetic Zhu Wen and his girlfriend of finding a modern and proper scale to ascertain the commensurability between the weight of the meat and its price suggests the intrinsic contradictions between a past dominated by incommensurable and unquantifiable symbolic and political values and the present values dictated by the newly born market economy in which everything can and must be quantified in terms of economic values.

While the unreliability of the old scales is a powerful metaphor of a residual cumbersome and useless past, the unreliability of the scale of the protagonist's girlfriend seems to allude to the arbitrariness of individual judgments on unfathomable values. The writer's last and almost desperate appeal to an external impartial expert suggests the young generation's helplessness in coping with the unsteady and unclear values of the present reality.

It might also be inferred from passages like this one that the sense of alienation present in the fiction of the Rupture movement, also discussed above, can be interpreted as the result of a world in which values are no longer other-directed, homogeneous and uniform. It is impossible in fact to overlook that, while during the Maoist era shared social and ideological values were uniquely imposed by the political establishment, in the ambivalent Chinese post-socialist era, values dominated by the impersonal and arbitrary forces of the market still coalesce with old values of the Maoist era.

Forced to confront two systems of coexisting values at odds with each other, the self-constituting subject in the post-socialist era cannot but be vacillating and ambivalent. In other terms, the social space

of the present, a hybrid space where old and new values coexist, compels the subject to rely uniquely upon his own personal self and body as well as his bodily experience in order to self-construct.

Interestingly enough, the story goes on narrating the protagonist's encounter with an old woman who decides to help the protagonists to solve the riddle of the bone's weight. She even converts, upon their request, the weight from pounds to grams. Realising that, even after the conversion, the diegetic Zhu Wen cannot still make out whether they have paid a fair amount of money, the old woman flies off the handle:

“瞧瞧,你们这些年轻人,连这种简单的换算都不会,做饭也不会!就像古人说的,四体不勤,五谷不分,六亲不认。一个个两条膀子两条腿,还要让我一个老太婆整天起早摸黑地给你们做三顿饭,你说你们心里说得过去吗?” (Zhu 2000, 5)

“You youth of today! She pointed her liberated right hand up at my nose. You can't cook, you can't convert pounds into metric, you can't do anything! You don't study, you can't tell rice from beans, you treat your family like dirt. You're all useless. Look at you! You've hands and feet of your own, why d'you need an old woman to cook your meals?” (Zhu 2007b, 219)

Through the woman's tirade, the Chinese writer once again highlights the hiatus between the older and the younger generation. Their mutual desipement stems from their opposite approach to society. Spoiled by a market which easily satisfies all their material, economic and libidinal desires, the younger generation is portrayed as irresponsible, indecisive and irresolute.

As the story moves on, the old woman, in a fit of rage due to the impertinence of the young man, throws the potatoes and tomatoes bought at the market onto the floor. Soon after, she and her merchandise are run over by a middle-aged man riding a trailer-bicycle. The old woman demands a compensation for her losses. When she finds out that the man does not want to take charge of the damage he has caused, she asks the diegetic Zhu Wen to speak on her behalf. He refuses to support her and leaves in search of his impatient girlfriend who has already departed. The story ends with the consumption of the meat:

完事以后,我们并排躺在床上,谁也不想去做饭。通常在这种情况下,我会主动担当起这一责任。因为我自己人高马大,比别人更迫切地需要吃,因为我从来不会委屈自己,因为我比我的任何一个女友都更爱我一些。我几乎是带着仇恨把那八两一钱精肉统统做了。由于仓促,肉没能炖烂,味道也没有烧进去。我的女友只吃了半块就不吃了。而我却一块一块坚决地咀嚼着。这肉虽然嚼起来像是木头,而且塞牙,但是它是肉!肉!里面有我需要的营养。我饿坏了,没有一点力气。(Zhu 2000, 14-5)

After [I and my girlfriend had made love], we lay side by side on the bed, neither of us wanting to get up to cook. Normally, when this happened, I'd take on the job. Because I'm tall and well built, I need food more urgently than others; because I'm never hard on myself, I love myself more than any girlfriend. So, I got up and cooked the entire 405 grams of fillet like I bore it a grudge. Because I refused to take any time or trouble, the meat didn't tenderize or take any flavor in the cooking. My girlfriend laid down her chopsticks after half a mouthful. But I chewed indomitably on. Though it was like eating wood, though it got stuck in your teeth, it was still meat. Meat! It contained the nourishment I needed. I was starving – weak with it. (Zhu 2007b, 228)

Consumption, which as Paterson suggests is “what people do” in a society dominated by consumer late capitalism (2005, 2), is here represented in a very straightforward manner. What is also at stake in this passage is an almost grotesque portrayal of the selfish and voracious nature of the newly born narcissist consumer. Disrespectful of the needs of anyone else, including his girlfriend, the protagonist Zhu Wen chews and gulps down the chunks of barely cooked meat. Once again, what is highlighted in this passage is the insatiability of bodily desires as well as the tension between social norms and individual values.

### 3 Han Dong's *Meiyuan yingguo renminbi* 美元硬过人民币 (Dollars are Harder than Renminbi)

Han Dong's short story “Dollars are Harder than Renminbi” is, as its title suggests, complementary to Zhu Wen's “I Love Dollars”. However, unlike the former story, it does not focus on a father-son relationship, but rather on men-women relationships. It recounts the story of Hang Xiaohua, who is married to the beautiful Zhou Mei. He forges a long-distance friendship with his old classmate Cheng Yin, a confirmed bachelor who spends all his time bragging about his worldly success at whoring and gambling. During their long phone conversations, Hang Xiaohua becomes more and more enthralled by his friend's lifestyle and decides to visit N city (presumably Nanjing), where his friend lives. Although his friend is not there, he has nevertheless an interesting encounter with a prostitute who thrills his imagination. He eventually goes to N city a second time where he finally meets his friend Cheng Yin. He finds out that his friend is a liar: he lives in a lousy place, he is broke and does not know where brothels or prostitutes are.

Together they venture in the city in search for a prostitute, but their attitude and their attire raise suspicions in the mistresses of the music bars and nightclubs they go to. In one of these, they eventually find one prostitute who is willing to comply with Hang Xiaohua's re-



quest. When Yin and Xiaohua discover that she does not have a condom, they decide to leave the nightclub. They take a cab and learn from the taxi driver that N city does not have a red-light district, only a sex club right next to Cheng Yin's apartment. When they hear, during the night, that a police raid is occurring in the sex club, they decide to call the prostitute they had previously met. After both have sex with her, Chen Yin decides to pay her with an American one hundred-dollar bill that he had earned as a compensation for a publication of one of his essays in a foreign journal. Hang Xiaohua eventually pays him back half of the sum in *renminbi*, although he is aware that "dollars are harder than *renminbi*".

The protagonists of Zhu Wen's "I Love Dollars" and Han Dong's "Dollars Are Harder than *Renminbi*" are both idlers constantly craving for sex. In both stories, they are writers who display their writings as a commodity and who disregard either kinship or conjugal bondages. In Han Dong's novella, Hang Xiaohua relies on his body to build an extramarital social life. At the beginning of the story he is a very good dancer who never misses an opportunity to display his physical skills. It is only after meeting Cheng Yin that phantasies about whoring and extramarital liaisons become an irresistible physical urge. The protagonist's first contact with a prostitute stimulates both his body and his imagination as well:

那女郎就势抓住他的手,似乎为了将时间看得更真切些。她抓着杭小华的手腕,看了足有五秒钟,似乎他那张中年男人的脸上有着秘密的指针一样。短暂或漫长的五秒钟很快过去了,女郎道一声谢谢,摔掉杭小华的手扬长而去了。杭小华注视着她的背景,那背带特长的小包一下一下地拍打着她远去的屁股。她到底从他的脸上看出了什么?杭小华永远不得而知。但他终于反应过来:她是一个妓女。他与妓女终于有了正式的接触,说了话,说肌肤相亲也不为过(她尖锐的指甲在他的手腕上留下了依稀的印痕)。这怎么可能呢?太不可思议了!虽然实际接触只有短短的几秒,过后杭小华在那家商店门前站了足有半小时。他望着女郎消失的方向怅然若失,很长时间里都忘记放下那条如今已不再相同的胳膊。杭小华就像商店门前伫立的时间雕像,极其深入地看着手腕上的手表。回到宾馆后自然一夜未眠,那种激越的情绪一直持续到返回他所在城市。(Han 2000, 298)<sup>6</sup>

That woman grabbed his hand, as if she wanted to check the time more accurately. She grabbed Hang Xiaohua's wrist and looked for at least five seconds as if on the face of that middle-aged man there were a secret clock hand. Those five seconds, no matter whether they were long or short, passed very quickly and the young woman said "Thank you!" and swaggered off letting go of Hang Xiaohua's hand. Hang Xiaohua gazed at her back, that small bag with extremely long

6 All the translations of the following stories are made by the Author.



straps was patting on her buttock which was moving far away. What did she see on his face? Hang Xiaohua would have never known. Yet his final reaction was: she is a prostitute. He finally had a formal contact with a prostitute, they talked, to say that they even touched each other's skins would not be an overstatement (her sharp nails left a light mark on his wrist). How was that possible? Unbelievable! Even if their actual contact lasted only a few very short seconds, it was enough to block him standing in front of the shop's door for a good half an hour. He was gazing in the direction where the woman had disappeared disappointed and frustrated and forgot for a long time to put down that arm which was no longer pressing against hers. For all the time he stood completely still in front of the shop's door he was looking thoroughly at the watch on his wrist. After going back to his hotel, of course he could not fall asleep, his excitement lasted until he went back to the city where he lived.

The description of Hang Xiaohua's meeting with the prostitute is ambivalent. On the one hand, there is a very matter of fact description of the encounter, on the other one, it also reminds readers of George Bataille's interpretation of "erotic ecstasy". As Peter Conner suggests, according to the French philosopher,

[o]neself is not the subject isolating itself from the world, but a place of communication, of fusion of the subject and of the object. Clearly, a vision of the subject not as the subject of knowledge (of the self or of the world) but of its own excess – an ecstatic subject that thereby demands a name other than 'subject' – appears on the surface more threatening to society bound by the values of reason. The subject of the inner experience complicates and seems to compromise moral action as it opposes the reigning social order, [...] the violent re-introduction of the heterogeneous elements this order has had to banish from its realm precisely in order to constitute itself: "violence, excess, delirium, madness". (1993, 31)

His happy marriage notwithstanding, Hang Xiaohua decides to have a liaison with a prostitute not because he has stopped loving his wife. What he is looking for is precisely what Bataille would define as "excess, delirium, madness", a condition that can only be attained by introducing a heterogeneous element (e.g. the prostitute) banished by the reigning social order. This also explains why his first encounter with a prostitute is described as a state of trance, a moment of transcendence. While it cannot be defined as truly erotic, it awakens nevertheless desires of real transgression. This is why Hang Xiaohua goes to N city for a second time to visit Cheng Yin. Although Hang Xiaohua realises that Cheng Yin has blatantly overstated his sexual performances with local prostitutes, he nevertheless accepts his friend's offer to

accompany him to bars and pubs. They eventually run into a prostitute willing to have sex with Hang Xiaohua. Realising that the woman does not have condoms, the two friends discuss about the risks of having unsafe sex:

为买避孕套的事成寅骂不绝口,杭小华却在小心地为小姐辩护。他说:“实际上不戴套子也行的。”成寅说:“你不怕得病?”杭小华说:“她没有病,我检查过的。”原来小姐要打火机就是为了照给杭小华看。他不仅仔仔细细地看了个究竟,还将手指送到鼻前嗅了很久,没觉出有任何异味。成寅道:“你怎么不早说呢!”他的眼前不禁浮现出一幅奇异的画面:黑暗之中那小姐将裤子褪至膝弯,尽力岔开双腿,并亲自在前方点燃了一朵火苗。光影摇曳,杭小华俯下身去细看,一面用手指翻弄着。后来火苗熄灭,他的眼前一片漆黑,但某种奇特的构造和精微的肌理却停留在两眼之间的脑际,熠熠生辉。火苗再次燃起,与脑际中的画面相互映照,对比和修正,努力掌握住变化多端的动态,固定下来,加以储存。成寅欣喜地拍了拍老同学的肩膀,说:“真有自己的,不仅摸了,而且看了,这一百块钱小费花得值得!”杭小华于是深感幸福地笑了。(Han 2000, 311)

Cheng Yin began to scold without an end because of the condom but Hang Xiaohua carefully spoke in the prostitute's defense. He said, "Actually it would have worked even without the condom". Cheng Yin replied: "Aren't you worried about contracting a disease?" Hang Xiaohua replied "She has no diseases, I have checked". Originally the prostitute had lit a lighter just to allow Hang Xiaohua to have a look. He had not only carefully examined every single part, he even said for a long time that, after bringing his fingers before his nose, he did not smell anything weird. Cheng Yin said: "Why haven't you said that before?!" he couldn't help seeing the amazing picture before his eyes: in the darkness she had lowered her trousers to her knees, she had parted her legs wider, and, on her initiative, she had even lit a flame before her. In the flickering light, he had bowed and looked carefully while fiddling with his fingers. Then the flame went down, it was all dark in front of him and all sorts of peculiar creations and profound textures remained engrained in his mind, glistering between his eyes. The flame kindled once more, the flame and the image in his mind reflected each other, mutually comparing and adjusting, trying to grasp the unceasingly changing mutation which eventually came to a halt and then settled down. Pleased and happy, Cheng Yin patted on his old classmate's shoulder and said: "Look at you, not only did you touch, you even looked. It was really worth one hundred *yuan*". Hang Xiaohua laughed wholeheartedly.

The attitude towards sex and the female naked body is different from the previous passage. The stakes here are erotic bodily experience. The happily married Hang Xiaohua finally has an erotic encounter with a radically alien Other that excites his imagination. What the reader

witnesses is an erotic experience that goes beyond mere transgression because it also involves the overcoming of the experiential and epistemological limits of the knowable and the awareness of new modalities of sensual and sexual experience.

The urban environment is, just like in the case of “I Love dollars”, a space providing pleasure and excitement. Money instead is

the tool that has the greatest possible number of unpredictable uses and so possesses the maximum value attainable in this respect. The mere possibility of unlimited uses that money has, or represents, on account of its lack of a content of its own, is manifested in a positive way by the restlessness of money, by its urge to be used, so to speak. (Simmel 1990, 212)

Certainly, the writers of the Rupture Movement demonstrate through their stories that they agree that money’s ‘lack of content’ has an important positive side: it ‘urges to be used’. The protagonists, in fact, are willing to use up all their savings to satisfy their bodily urges and to attain their moment of ecstasy. What is at stake in passages such as these is a wholesale commodification of bodies, feelings, emotions and affections.

At the end of the story, they both consummate their passion with the prostitute. While Hang Xiaohua’s sexual prowess is astounding, Cheng Yin’s sexual performance proves less than adequate. Cheng Yin, who has so far accepted his friend’s presents and offers to pay for all the meals consumed together, eventually decides to pay the prostitute in cash. He uses a one hundred-dollar bill that he had received as a compensation for his script published in a foreign magazine. The prostitute is very excited to be paid in dollars:

鉴别的结果这的确是一张真钞，面值一百美元，可兑换八百五十七点几人民币。至于说到美元相对人民币的好处，那倒不需要杭小华多费口舌，小姐知道得清清爽爽，仅就收入一项而言，她也可多得五十多元（人民币）。还有它是硬通货，可保值增值。它硬得一塌糊涂，至于到底硬到何种程度，小姐心中自然有数，显然是柔软的人民币所无法相比的。因此鉴别活动一完，她一把抓过美元，以意想不到的速度将其藏入了身体的某一部位，并与之结合为一体了，再也难以找到。(Han 2000, 325)

Analysis results proved that it was a genuine banknote worth one hundred dollars which could be converted into 857 *renminbi*. Hang Xiaohua did not need to bother to dwell on the advantages of dollars over the *renminbi*, the girl knew all too well, accepting that note would mean a profit of over 50  *yuan (renminbi)*. Furthermore, it was a hard currency, its value could increase. It was hard to the extent that it could mess everything up, and the woman knew very well the degree and the extent of its hardness; there was obvious-

ly no comparison with the softness of the *renminbi*. Only upon completion of the validation process, did she grab the one hundred-dollar bill and, with an inconceivable speed, hid it in a certain part of the body. She and the bill were so bound together to form one single entity. After that, it would have been very hard to get it back.

The physicality and the sensuality of the foreign banknote, also present in Zhu Wen's "I Love Dollars", is here related to the prostitute's physical body. In this passage there is not a wholesale westernisation at stake. In fact, there are neither foreigners, nor direct evocations of foreign countries in this story. This novella, written in 1999, should be interpreted as Han Dong's powerful response to the dominant nationalistic afflatus of that epoch. The incommensurability between dollars and *renminbi* can be understood as a metaphor of a new society, which, unlike pre-modern society, is no longer exclusively based on traditional autochthonous values. The protagonists' intercourse with an unknown prostitute is mediated by a currency that cannot but be 'Other' than Chinese.

As is clear from this passage and from the expression "dollars are harder than *renminbi*", the foreign currency is an eloquent index of a (monetary) value introduced with foreign neoliberal social practices that foster new desires, new habits and new kinds of human interactions.

In the epilogue, Hang Xiaohua goes back to his daily routine and sends a remittance of four hundred *renminbi* to his friend Cheng Yin with a couplet as an attachment:

千金难买朋友情  
美元硬过人民币(Han 2000, 326)

A thousand pieces of gold will hardly buy the affections of a friend  
Dollars are harder than *renminbi*.

The only residual value, as it seems in this novella, is companionship and comradeship. It is not the case that Cheng Yin uses this amount of money to visit the prostitute a second time, keeping instead the couplet for himself as a reminder of the new yet already indispensable (neo-liberal) pleasures of life.

#### 4 Dong Xi's *Shangpin* 商品 (The Commodity)

爱情这个古老的题目，它像肥沃之土或高原之水，滋养了一代一代的写手，它像我们传统的项目，不断地被写手们翻新、炒卖也不停地走俏。不用担心，某一天爱情会油尽灯灭，不同的种植能手种植出不同的爱情，诡计多端的说法使许多与爱情牵连的作品成为经典，爱情似乎成为写手们的基本或者说是写手们的衣食父母，不能超凡脱俗的写手们会一如既往地爱情作为原料生产小说。

这种时刻，我会和所有的写手一样重视工具——汉字。爱情和汉字现在成为我的原料和工具散落在我面前，如遍地倒伏的草木，等待我去整编收割。我带上草帽拿住农具走出我栖息的家园，开始踏上辛劳的路程。(Dong 2003, 151)

Love, this ancient topic, just like fertile soil or highland water, has nourished writers from generation to generation, like our traditional items constantly renovated by writers, advertised and sold incessantly well. There is no need to worry that love will someday be used up like the oil of a lamp; different skilled gardeners will grow different forms of love; ingenious sayings will produce works related to love which will in turn produce masterpieces. Love apparently becomes the foundation for a writer, in other words, love is the dress, the nourishment, the father and mother of a writer. Writers unable to rise above mediocrity and coarseness will always be able to turn to love as raw material for producing a piece of writing.

In this very moment, just like any other writer, I pay attention to the tools - characters. Now, love and characters become my raw material and my tools, just like grass and trees all over the place waiting for me to organize the harvest. I wear my straw hat, grab my farm tools and walk out of my peaceful garden to venture on my laborious journey.

This is the beginning of Dong Xi's "The Commodity", a surreal metanarrative that describes an unlikely day-long journey. The protagonist sets off the day of the Qingming festival to go to the city of Mayang in the hope of coming across his father's grave. As a matter of fact, Father had disappeared in 1966 in the most mysterious circumstances after leaving their hometown with a relatively conspicuous sum of money. The protagonist's mother had entrusted his cousin with the task of finding where Father was, and in the case of his death, of burying him. His cousin comes back with a scrap of paper on which he had drawn the map of the site where his father's grave was. Not only mother and son do not trust their cousin, they even suspect him of having murdered Father.

It is an unlikely journey, indeed long and fatiguing, which the protagonist experiences. On the one side, it is a mental experience in which the protagonist's stream of consciousness brings him back to

both his lived past experience – as he recalls his own uncle’s tragedy – and the fictional characters of the classical erotic novel *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (Jin Ping Mei) (namely Ximen 西门, Dalang 大郎 and Jinlian 金莲); on the other side, it is an experience of love. In fact, he meets a female travel companion, Weidong, to whom he recounts his stories, and with whom he falls in love and eventually has a baby. Not only does he forget his family of origin and the purpose of his journey, it seems he eventually even abandons Weidong and their newly born baby. The last part of the story, apparently disconnected from the main corpus, is a collection of mock reviews written by unlikely critics and published on equally unlikely literary journals, which discuss, review and, in some cases, advertise the story that the reader has just read.

As the subtitles of the story suggest, this story, which is a surreal reflection about filial and romantic love in an epoch of wholesale commodification, is divided into three sections respectively entitled “Gongju he yuanliao” 工具和原料 (Tools and Raw Materials), “Zuopin huozhe chanpin” 作品或者产品 (Literary Work or Commodity), “Pinglun huo guanggao” 评论或广告 (Literary Criticism or Advertisement).

The first section, translated at the beginning of the present analysis, foregrounds the corpus of the story conflating past and present imaginaries. The Chinese agrarian and rural past and the process of literary production are metonymically juxtaposed. The aesthetic and economic outcome of such a process – the harvest and the writer’s literary output – cannot but remind readers of the traditional Marxist definition of labour. Interestingly, while Dong Xi straightforwardly reflects upon the intrinsic relationship between the value of the commodity and labour, alongside with a Marxist traditional interpretation of value, he does not mention the crucial relationship between the commodity and money.

Money, as well as the fictional stories invented by the protagonist to seduce his female travel companion, become instead important exchange values in the second section of the story. They constitute the fabric of this complex novella and the grounds upon which the bulk of the narrative is built. While the prefatory section introduces an idyllic comparison between the labour of the farmer and the creative and artistic skills of literary compositions, the central part of the narrative consists in fictional stories that are fabricated by the protagonist to seduce his companion and are used to demystify all forms of traditional symbolic values.

The murder of the protagonist’s father, presumably perpetrated by the protagonist’s greedy cousin, is the beginning of a sequence of events that can be read as the author’s expedient to deconstruct consolidated discourses on economic and ethical values, political power and human relationships. The first target of Dong Xi’s irony is the virtue of filial piety whose violation is recounted and represented at several points in the story.

Dong Xi's discourse on values is coherent with Zhu Wen's and Han Dong's. Self-fulfillment and personal claims to self-possession are dominant themes also in this short story. Dong Xi's representation of his cousin's crime foregrounds a broader discourse on the loss of traditional virtuous relationships established among members of one same family or of one same clan. In other words, he ironizes on the overwhelming power of *guanxi* as a Chinese foundational ethical and social value:

母亲坚信死于族人的谋杀。为父亲收尸而远行的是我本村的一位表哥[...]。父亲怀里的银元下落不明... 母亲对我说也许父亲根本没有死, 从麻阳传回的消息或许是讹传。你表哥到麻阳之后, 找到你活着的父亲, 然后杀死了他, 谋了他身上的八十块银元。(Dong 2003, 152-3)

My mother firmly believed that my father's clansmen had plotted to murder him. It was a cousin living in my same village to embark on a long journey to recover my father's psalm. [...] Nobody knew what had happened to the money that my father had. [...]. My mother said: "Presumably, your father wasn't dead, and reports of his death circulating at Mayang were fake. After reaching Mayang, your cousin has presumably found your father who was still alive and has murdered him. Then he has taken with him his eighty *yuan*".

While, strictly speaking, this murder is not a parricide, it is nevertheless an index of the dissolution of a kind of pre-modern organic society grounded on kinship relations that, as Anthony Giddens reminds, is a traditional "organizing device for stabilizing social ties across time-space" (1990, 102). It is not surprising, therefore, that the stories that the protagonist narrates to his female companion all revolve around the dissolution of kinship bonds and the creation of personal relationships of friendship or sexual intimacy, of the very "means of stabilizing [new] social ties" (102).

The first narration recounts the way in which his uncle, an important political cadre, is attacked by a dog that chews off his penis:

为了迎接舅舅, 村口早已挤满参差不齐的人群。舅舅和那一串衣冠楚楚行动缓慢的干部照亮了肃杀的季节和村人的眼睛。有人嘴里衔一杆喷呐, 吹奏出村庄的欢快激动胆怯。舅舅向他的爹妈他的乡亲们挥手致意。突然... 一条疯狗像一把刀子避开人群, 朝舅舅刺过去。我看见舅舅周围的人群如秋天的黄叶, 纷纷从舅舅的身边闪开。沉浸于欢喜中的舅舅独立寒冬等候疯狗。最终疯狗在舅舅的小腿上扯下一块肉。狗嘴挂着舅舅的鲜血跑下山坡。(Dong 2003, 156)

A multiform crowd had swarmed a long time before at the entrance of the village to welcome him [and to congratulate on his new pro-

motion]. Uncle and that queue of cadres were advancing slowly in their immaculate dresses dazzling the stern season and the eyes of the villagers. Some of them, with a trumpet in their mouths, were whistling the happiness, the excitement and the worries of the village. Uncle waved his hands towards his father, mother and his countrymen. Suddenly...

A rabid dog pushed through the crowd like a knife. I saw the crowd surrounding uncle scattering like autumn leaves, dodging uncle. Still in a euphoric state, uncle found himself alone to confront the rabid dog. Eventually, the rabid dog tore apart a shred of flesh from his penis and ran down the hill with uncle's blood dripping from his mouth.

Castration in this passage works as a powerful metaphor to suggest that the brutal downfall of traditional political power can only entail the crowd's disavowal of uncle's leadership. Just like in the former stories, the physical bodies of old fathers and figures of authority in the stories of the Rupture movement always become derogate bodies, sexually unproductive and seemingly barren.

This is also the case of the rich but impotent Third Brother, who assists the protagonist's uncle during his recovery. He is equally unhappy because his riches are to no avail to him:

三哥说不瞒舅舅，我有钱但那个不成，我每当拥抱女人，总在裤裆里塞一沓钱，女人抓到那个硬东西，便十分热情，但高兴之后发现不对就失望，失望了我就把钱摔给她们，她们接着装成激动的模样，激动一阵转而再失望。舅舅你当那么大的官，你能治好我的病吗？(Dong 2003, 159)

Third brother said: "Uncle, I don't deny that I am rich, but I am impotent. Every time I embrace a woman, I fill the crotch of my trousers with a wad of money, when women grab that hard stuff, they get really enthusiastic. After a moment of enthusiasm, however, they find out that it doesn't work, therefore, they become disappointed. At that point, I throw the coins at them and when they reach for the coins they act as if they were excited, yet, after a moment of excitement, they become disappointed once again. Uncle, you are such an important cadre, can you cure my illness?"

Dong Xi's obsession with the body is, as suggested before, an expedient to define a modern society in which, as Giddens says, sexual intimacy is the only "means of stabilizing social ties" (1990, 102) and in which, as Anagnost underscores, individual bodily practices and performances define people's worth as human capital. The power of Uncle and the riches of Third Brother prove to be quite useless in a society in which relationships are built upon different premises from the past. In this sense, Ann Anagnost's definition of *suzhi* as a "kind



of value coding that moves from embodied value to power to desire” (2004, 198) perfectly resonates in the stories of the Rupture movement where desire is not only the main narrative drive, but also the very ground upon which the foundation of the post-socialist self/subject is built. What all these protagonists desire, however, is less the upper social mobility that Anagnost carefully describes in her study, than erotic and aesthetic self-fulfillment.

This becomes clearer in the second story that the protagonist recounts, a radical reworking of the plot of the first chapters of the *Jin Ping Mei*. Unlike the original story, Dalang is not Pan Jinlian’s cuckold husband; instead, he is Ximen’s son. Both Ximen and Dalang fall in love with the widow Jinlian. At first, Dalang considers Jinlian as a stepmother. However, as time goes by, he also falls in love with her. After a violent altercation with his son, Ximen allows his son to have a romantic liaison with her. After a first period of passionate love, Dalang becomes jealous of his father:

秋天来了，大郎和金莲自由恋爱比翼双飞，他们发生了男女关系。一百天金莲和大郎闲着无事，金莲便想干那事，金莲说大郎，我们换一个花样，你从后面来，像牛那样。金莲躬腰等着大郎动作，但大郎没有动。大郎的脸一点一点地青。大郎朝着金莲赤裸的屁股踢了一脚，大郎说你骗我，骗了我的爱情。大郎认为从后面干是他父亲的爱好，金莲一定尝到了父亲的甜头，现在又叫他像父亲那样干她。大郎觉得金莲像一口飘荡污水的池塘，令人恶心。

金莲穿好了衣裤，说大郎你怎么了？大郎说我要去死。金莲说何苦？大郎说为了爱情，我把我的爱情献给了一个肮脏的婊子，我没脸活了。金莲看见大郎朝小河奔去，金莲一边呼救一边追赶。金莲听到大郎最后说，我死了你好叫我爹从后面干。大郎说完投入河里，尸体三天之后才浮起来。(Dong 2003, 163-4)

The autumn came, Dalang and Jinlian were loving each other freely, just like a real couple and it happened that they had sexual intercourse. One day, while Jinlian and Dalang were idling, Jinlian felt like having sex. Jinlian said “Dalang, let’s change position, let’s have doggy-style sex, as bulls do”. Jinlian bowed waiting for him to get a move on; however, Dalang was standing still, his face was turning blue little by little. He kicked Jinlian’s naked ass and said: “You are making fun of me and of my love”. Dalang thought that doggy-style sex was something his father used to like. Jinlian presumably enjoyed having sex with his father and now she wanted him to fuck her the same way. Dalang firmly believed that Jinlian was like a pond filled with fetid water; she was nauseating.

After dressing up Jinlian asked “Dalang, what’s the matter with you?” Dalang said “I want to die”. Jinlian replied “Why on earth?” Dalang answered “For love, I have offered my love to a dirty slut. I don’t have the guts to go on living”. Jinlian saw that Dalang was

rushing towards a rivulet. Jinlian was running after him, crying out for help. Jinlian heard Dalang's last words "After my death you'd better call my father and have sex the doggy way with him". After pronouncing these words, Dalang threw himself into the river only for his corpse to emerge three days later.

This straightforward and matter-of-fact treatment of eroticism bears some similarity with Han Dong's representation of Hang Xiaohua's sexual intercourse with the prostitute. However, while Han Dong is interested in representing the two facets of sexual encounters (as already discussed, erotic encounters with prostitutes are described either an ecstatic moment or discharge of libidinal energy), Dong Xi is more interested in deconstructing, manipulating and 'recycling' the *Jin Ping Mei*, the most celebrated Chinese classical erotic novel whose protagonist is, not accidentally, a merchant. In line with the other works of the Rupture movement, he focuses instead on different forms of human relationships: dysfunctional kinship bonds, abnormal sexual intercourses and personal relationships mediated by monetary transactions.

By introducing himself to Weidong as Erlang - Dalang's younger brother - the protagonist of this story transforms himself into a sign, an integral part of the narrative that he himself has fabricated. Unlike in Han Dong's and Zhu Wen's narratives, Dong Xi's story is not represented as autobiographical. On the contrary, it is grounded in a glorious literary past that the market era has transformed into an artefact; or, as the title of the second section of the story suggests, into a 'product' created for commercial entertainment and amusement.

As a site of value among a wide variety of values and as a commodity in an integrally commodified world, literature enjoys a privileged status. As the protagonist observes after his long and eloquent storytelling:

我想我所有的故事，都是为了勾引这个叫薇冬的女孩。为了搜集这些乱七八糟的故事，我专门请教了一个寡妇。寡妇用她委婉动听的讲述引诱了我，今天我又用这些故事勾引薇冬。(Dong 2003, 165)

I think that all my stories were aimed at seducing this woman called Weidong. I specifically ask for a widow's help to put this messy story together. The widow has used her captivating story to seduce me and today I have used these stories once more to seduce Weidong.

From this passage, it can be inferred that the writer's role is to mimic old stories that have a strong aesthetic and sensual appeal. The evocation of scenes of sexual intimacy, comradeship and defiance of traditional kinship values provide the foundation of a new aesthet-

ic imaginary whose grounds can be found in the new market economy. In this sense, the term ‘product’ (*chanpin*) as a subtitle of the story is an expedient to evoke both the process of labour and production (introduced in the prefatory part of the story), of consumption (evoked in the sentence “today I have used this story once more to seduce Weidong”), and finally of exchange (the dialogue between the protagonist Erlang and the woman Weidong).

The last section that contains mock reviews of the story represents the last part of the economic process: advertisement and commercialization. Dong Xi, via a mock reviewer called Qian Hou, advertises and questions the modernity of his own text:

写手:

你好!细读你的作品,觉得有后现代主义的某些成分。比如艺术的商品化,印象代替故事。你所说的故事不管真不真实,但目的只有一个:为我所用。每当你说一个故事时,你都表白这是绝对真实的,最终却只能是靠近真实而不会有绝对。内行人会看去过去文学作品对你的影响,比如一些荒诞情节运用会使人想起卡夫卡的“变形记”、陈村的“一天”(写一个工人早上上班下午退休)。民间笑话的大量抄袭,使整个作品犹如拼盘杂烩。这些都具备后现代小说的特点,可惜的是你写得太后现代了,拟不用。(Dong 3003, 168)

Writer:

Hi! I have read carefully your story and I believe there are some post-modern features. For instance, the commodification of art, impressions that replace the story itself. Your so-called stories, not matter whether they are true or false, have only one goal: you use them for your own sake. Every time you narrate a story you explain that is perfectly true; however, eventually it can only get close to the real, there is no such thing as an absolute real. Experts can easily recognize which literary works had an impact on you. Some absurd plots which you rely on remind of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* or Chen Cun's *One Day* (which describes a worker who goes to work in the morning and retires in the afternoon). Furthermore, the plagiarism of some popular jokes transforms your work into a mixture of many elements. All these characteristics are typical of post-modern fiction. It is a pity that what you wrote is too postmodern, there was no need to even conceive such a thing.

Dong Xi here evokes postmodernism, without nevertheless embracing postmodernism as a definite interpretative key to understand his short story. The other reviews, which approach Dong Xi's narrative from different perspectives, are all strategies to underscore the hybrid condition of literature in China's post-Maoist era. Clas-

sical stories, Maoist and post-Maoist narratives metonymically co-exist without nevertheless merging. This polyphony of voices, plots and narrative registers all convey an image of China open to a totally new global dimension in which past and present values, local and global dimensions can only stand side-by-side. Such values are not defined; on the contrary, they are “liquid”, as Zygmunt Bauman puts it:

Forms of modern life may differ in quite a few respects – but what unites them all is precisely their fragility, their temporariness, vulnerability and inclination to constant change. To be ‘modern’ means to modernize – compulsively obsessively; not so much just ‘to be’ let alone to keep its identity intact, but forever ‘becoming’ avoiding completion, staying underdefined. Each new structure which replaces the previous one as soon as it is declared old-fashioned and past its use – by date is only a temporary settlement – acknowledged as temporary until further notice. (2000, 82)

Erlang’s sequel of classical and modern stories, his final abandonment of Weidong and their baby and his forgetfulness of his filial duties suggest, by all means, an open ending to the story. His decision to leave everything behind and to walk to the centre of Mayang city suggests that Dong Xi wanted to create an ‘underdefined character’ in an equally ‘underdefined story’. This is coherent with Bauman’s definition of “liquid modernity”, a modernity characterised by the “conviction that change is the only permanence, and uncertainty the only certainty” (2000, 82).

In such a state of indeterminacy, the materiality of the commodity and bodily knowledge entailed by embodied experience become the foundation upon which the representation of the relationship between the self and the outer world is made possible. The commodification and reification of sexual intimacy and eroticism, hence, become necessary premises for the creation of new kinds of interactions which can displace and replace traditional kinship bonds.

## 5 Conclusion

The Rupture movement is so far a widely unexplored phenomenon. However, it is important because it sheds a light on the Chinese society of the nineties. China was then undergoing radical social changes. The political discourse on *suzhi*, as shown here, has had major effects on the literary field. The degree and the extent of the changes entailed by the transition from the Maoist society to a hybrid society controlled by both the State (which was engineering and promoting a discourse on *suzhi*) and by the market (which was fostering individual claims to possessive individualism) are well represented by the

works of the Rupture movement that depicted the vacillations of the newly born middle-class citizens, all too aware that their autonomy and individuality had to be confined to the economic sphere (the political sphere being still directly controlled by the State). Works such as “I Love Dollars”, “Pounds, Ounces, Meat”, “Dollars Are Harder than *Renminbi*” and “The Commodity” unsurprisingly focus on economic and material values and the status of the new intellectuals who, after the downfall of the Maoist ideology, could not but reflect upon the relationship between themselves and such values. Their happiness to produce, to consume and to exchange material (and symbolic) goods also led, to a certain extent, to their awareness of new possibilities of autonomy and self-determination. In fact, as Pater-son suggests, consumption practices involve necessarily “a claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of external culture and techniques of life” (2005, 23).

Seen in this light, the fiction produced by these writers is the outcome of their claim to possess and have control over their body and their emotions. Unsurprisingly, eroticism, which in these stories is always directly connected to consumption practices, is represented as a form of desecration of collective socialist norms and as an expression of the subject’s will to both self-construct outside the direct control of the State and to disentangle from both moral and ideological obligations as well as traditional kinship bonds. In this sense, the confrontation between Father and Zhu Wen about symbolic/spiritual values and eroticism in “I Love Dollars” (“A writer ought to offer something positive, something to look up, ideals, aspirations, democracy, freedom, stuff like that”; “Dad, I am telling you, all that stuff, it’s all there in sex”) is revelatory of these writers’ attempt to construct a new representation of self. In these stories, in fact, sex becomes a privileged tool to test the boundaries and the limits of their own self.

The Rupture movement, if and when approached from the perspective of the body and bodily practices and values, has indeed entailed a radical rupture in literary history. Their representation of the reification and commodification of the human body, the discourse about desire and self-fulfillment deployed in their narrative, their speculation about the end of kinship bonds contribute to the reader’s understanding of an epoch that laid the foundation of the Chinese contemporary society. Their contribution to the construction of a new aesthetical approach to urban China is equally important. It paved the way for a new style that asserts the autonomy of the aesthetic from the ideological and political.

The fictional production of this movement did not last very long. Shortly after the beginning of the second millennium, these writers’ interest in representing the troublesome relationship between the symbolic and material values had waned. This is far from being sur-

prising. Since the official debate about the interconnectedness between material and spiritual values was no longer of interest, there was no point on these writers' side in continuing pursuing these topics and this kind of narrative. Han Dong's later novels, *Wo he ni* 我和你 (You and I) (2005) and *Zhongguo qingren* 中国情人 (The Chinese Lover) (2013) continued to focus on eroticism. However, these novels no longer address the problematic issue of the reification and commodification of social relations. Dong Xi's later successful novel, *Houhuilu* 后悔录 (Record of Regret) (2005) recounts the complex relationships between a father and his son. Unlike his previous production, the novel recounts all the regrets of a son for having ruined his father's life. Zhu Wen, after a second important novel, *Shenme shi laji, shenme shi ai* 什么是垃圾, 什么是爱 (What Is Love, What is Garbage) (2004), became an important movie director.

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# The Kwanyin Clan: Modern Literati Graffiti Writers

## An Aesthetic and Text Analysis of their Main Artworks

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**Abstract** After illustrating the varied artistic production of the Kwanyin Clan, one of the most important Chinese graffiti crews, this paper analyses six of their main artworks in detail (styles, techniques, aesthetic conceptions and artworks texts). In these artworks, the Kwanyin Clan tried for the first time to merge Euro-American graffiti practice with the ancient traditional arts practiced and appreciated by the Chinese literati (calligraphy, poetry, painting, seals and ceramics). Comparing the Kwanyin Clan members to 'modern literati writers', the present article shows how this crew succeeded in reinventing ancient Chinese art forms using Euro-American graffiti vocabulary, paving the way for a new development of graffiti art in China.

**Keywords** Kwanyin Clan. Graffiti. Contemporary Chinese art. Chinese literati. 'Three perfections'.

**Summary** 1 Introduction: the Kwanyin Clan in Beijing. – 2 'Modern Literati Graffiti Paintings' by the Kwanyin Clan: *Shanshui PIC* (2007) and *New Style* (2008). – 3 'Modern Literati Calligraphy Graffiti' by the Kwanyin Clan: *Shirupozhu* (2008) and *Shengongyijiang* (2010). – 4 'Modern Literati Graffiti Ceramics' by the Kwanyin Clan: *Blue and White Porcelain* (2009-2010) and the *Artwork Made for the Exhibition 'Street Art, a Global View'* (2016). – 5 Conclusion: the Kwanyin Clan as 'Modern Literati Graffiti Writers'.



#### Peer review

Submitted	2019-03-18
Accepted	2019-06-24
Published	2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Iezzi, Adriana (2019). "The Kwanyin Clan: Modern Literati Graffiti Writers. An Aesthetic and Text Analysis of their Main Artworks". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 395-448.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/013

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## 1 Introduction: the Kwanyin Clan in Beijing

'Graffiti art' (*tuya yishu* 涂鸦艺术)<sup>1</sup> appeared in China in the nineties, when Zhang Dali (Harbin, 1963) embarked on an artistic project entitled *Dialogue and Demolition* (*Duihua yu chai* 对话与拆, 1995-2005), which consists of more than 2,000 images of bald big heads sprayed on the walls of the ancient city doomed to be demolished, accompanied by the tags<sup>2</sup> AK-47 or 18K<sup>3</sup> (Wu 2000, 749-68; Marinelli 2004, 429-62). In those years (and even before), other writers were active in Hong Kong, such as MC REN<sup>4</sup> and the King of Kowloon.<sup>5</sup> According to Lu Pan, their work was fundamental "in introducing Western-style graffiti into mainland China in the late 1990s" (Lu 2015, 31). Starting from Hong Kong, and then from Shenzhen,<sup>6</sup> and Guangzhou, graffiti began to spread all over China, especially in minor cities, such as Wuhan, Shenzhen, and Chengdu (Sanada, Hassan 2010, 11). Then, in the mid-2000s, also thanks to the wide spread of the underground

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1 In Chinese the word 'graffiti' has been translated in different ways. As Minna Valjakka points out: "Graffiti is usually referred to using the colloquial word *tuya* (涂鸦), [...] in the local press, contemporary graffiti is quite often referred to as 'graffiti art' (*tuya yishu* 涂鸦艺术), or occasionally, 'graffiti painting/drawing' (*tuya huihua* 涂鸦绘画) or as a form of 'street art' (*jietou yishu* 街头艺术) [...] and it is even referred to as 'psoriasis' (*niupixuan* 牛皮癣)" (Valjakka 2011, 77). Other possible translations of the word 'graffiti' are *tuya shuxie* 涂鸦书写 (graffiti writing) and *jietou tuya wenhua* 街头涂鸦文化 (street graffiti culture). The wording usually used in Chinese legalisation is *tuxie* 涂写 and *kehua* 刻画 (Valjakka 2014, 98). The most common expression used by the artists is *tuya yishu* (graffiti art). This is because in China there is a close interaction between contemporary art and graffiti culture, and graffiti "has come to be regarded primary as a form of art" (Valjakka 2011, 78).

2 'Tag' is a stylised signature of the 'nickname' of the writer, normally done in one colour ("Writer's Vocabulary", URL <http://www.at149st.com/glossary.html>).

3 AK-47 is the name of the assault rifle developed in the Soviet Union in World War II and represents the "violence of a community being ripped apart"; 18K is the abbreviation of the term '18-karat gold' and represents a symbol for the "economic life of the city" (Marinelli 2004, 434).

4 According to Minna Valjakka: "Zhang might not be the first [writer in China] because before him there was a writer called MCRen active in Hong Kong [...] and according to the documentary, *Great Walls of China* (Pearl Channel 2007), there might have been some writers active in Hong Kong even before the mid-1990s" (Valjakka 2011, 73-4).

5 King of Kowloon (*Jiulong huangdi* 九龍皇帝) is the nickname of Tsang Tsou-choi/Ceng Zaocai 曾灶財 (1912-2007). He worked in the city of Hong Kong since 1954, when he started to cover the streets with injurious writing using brush and black ink (Clarke 2001). Since he did not use spray painting, his works are not real graffiti writing and they are usually called 'calligraphy graffiti' (*shufa tuya* 书法涂鸦) (Zhao 2012). Even if his work influenced the artistic atmosphere on the streets of Hong Kong, in fact, some scholars do not regard him as a real writer and do not consider his graffiti as contemporary graffiti "because they lack both the aesthetic intention and renaming oneself" (Valjakka 2011, 74).

6 In the documentary *Graffiti Asia* a writer from Shenzhen says: "Many Hong Kong writers come to Shenzhen because after '97 the border is open, so they come to Shenzhen and find some nice walls" (Hassan 2009).

culture,<sup>7</sup> it extended its field of action in all major Chinese cities, and became quite popular especially in Beijing and Shanghai (Valjakka 2016, 357-71). Even if from the beginning “Chinese graffiti has been based on Euro-American graffiti” (Valjakka 2011, 84) and even if “today the majority of the styles echo the tradition of Euro-American scenes” (Valjakka 2016, 368), a searching for Chineseness and an attempt to develop a specific ‘Chinese style’ is evident in some local creators, especially in the city of Beijing.

In Beijing, the first graffiti crews have not been established until 2004-2007. Among them, the most important are: the Kwanyin Clan, the Beijing Penzi 北京喷子 crew (BJPZ),<sup>8</sup> the ABS crew (Around Bohai Sea),<sup>9</sup> the KTS (Kill The Street),<sup>10</sup> the TMM (The Management),<sup>11</sup> the DNA, and the most recent TUNS crew and YDS.<sup>12</sup>

The Kwanyin Clan was one of the first crews to be found, in June 2006. It was set up by TIN (a.k.a. EricTin), YUMI, QUAN, and JEV in

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**7** For a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of the underground culture in China, see: De Kloet 2010, and Baranovitch 2003.

**8** The BJPZ crew was founded in 2006 by 0528, MORE, SOOS, and ALS. “It was one of the first known crews in Beijing, focused on both pictures and writings and developed a style that reflected their Chinese origins. The name of the crew literally means ‘sprayers’ (*penzi* 喷子) of Beijing” (Valjakka 2016, 361). *Penzi* is equivalent to ‘writer’ in English. Other translations of the word ‘writer’ in Chinese are: i) *tuyazhe* 涂鸦者 (a person involved in graffiti or graffitist), ii) *tuya yishujia* 涂鸦艺术家 (graffiti artist) (Valjakka 2011, 77), and iii) the more recent and most common *xieziren* 写字人 (a person who writes characters) (Valjakka 2016, 369).

**9** The ABS crew was founded in 2007 by SCAR, SEVEN, ANDC, and NOISE. In 2010, they moved to Beijing where they established their first studio. They are one of the best-known current crews in mainland China and focus on artistically skillful, large works, favouring wildstyle but also employing comic and funky style (Valjakka 2016, 361-2). As ANDC explained in an interview, the acronym ‘ABS’ refers to the fact that the members of the crew come from different cities around the Bohai Sea (Qin 2010). Other meanings of their name are ‘Active, Brilliant, Significant’ (Fitch 2012) and ‘A Brand new Star’ (ANDC, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda, 2015-11-12).

**10** KTS was founded in October 2009 by MES and BOERS, and then joined by WRECK and EXAS. They are mainly active in ‘bombing’ (*beng* 崩) in the Haidian district (Valjakka 2016, 362). ‘Bombing’ is the act of covering an area with your tag, throw-ups, etc. ‘Throw-up’ is a name painted quickly with one layer of spray paint and an outline. For these two meanings, see: “The Words: A Graffiti Glossary”, URL <http://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>.

**11** TMM was founded in 2011 by CLOCK and DIOS; GAN, CAMEL and 525 soon joined. Another meaning of their acronym is ‘The Marginal Man’ (Valjakka 2016, 362-3).

**12** The first five crews of this list are named in the most important documentary on graffiti art in Beijing, entitled *Spray Painting Beijing. Graffiti in the Capital of China* (Crayon 2012). For more details on this documentary, see its official website: *Spray Painting Beijing*, URL <http://www.spraypaintbeijing.com/> (2017-01-24). The last two crews of the list (together with the ABS, KTS, and TMM) are named in: Bonniger 2018, 23. The DNA was founded in 2010 and it is composed of 3 members (the leader is DA-BOO); the TUNS crew (*tunshi tuya tuandui* 吞噬涂鸦团队), an all-girl crew, was founded in 2013 and it is composed of 3 members (ZHAO, FATSO, and MAGE); and the YDS (*Yi dun shun* 一顿顺 ‘Always stealing’) was founded in 2016 and it is composed of 6 members.

the 798 Art District in the northeast of Beijing. In 2007, NAT (a.k.a. Natuo), AP, KENO, VICA, JAK, and SCAV joined the crew (Valjakka 2016, 361).<sup>13</sup> The main aim of the crew “is committed to the dissemination and development of graffiti art in China” in order to “explore the fusion of graffiti art with Chinese culture” (“Kwan-yin Clan (觀音) – Beijing” 2008). For that reason, their art is usually defined ‘Chinese Style Graffiti’ (*Zhongguo tese de tuya yishu* 中国特色的涂鸦艺术)<sup>14</sup> because it blends together the style of Western graffiti and the traditional Chinese aesthetics.

The name of the crew is significant because it clearly reveals the deep meaning of their art: ‘Kwan-yin’ explicitly refers to the ‘Bodhisattva Guanyin’ (*Guanyin Pusa* 观音菩萨), one of the most popular and well known deity in China. The crew itself points out that the story of the Bodhisattva was fundamental for the choice of their name (cf. “Kwan-yin Clan (觀音) – Beijing” 2008): Guanyin, in fact, was introduced into China via the Silk Road and was initially presented in a male form, but when Buddhism rooted in China, the Bodhisattva was sinicized and subsequently transformed into a Chinese female form, which later became extremely popular all over the country. Kwanyin Clan’s artistic aim is to present graffiti art in China as an *alter ego* of the Bodhisattva Guanyin: as it had happened for Guanyin, graffiti art came from abroad, but if it wants to become popular in China it has to sinicize its forms, undergoing deity own metamorphosis.<sup>15</sup>

This Buddhist echo reverberates also in the logo of the group [fig. 1], where they reiterate the Buddhist symbol of the lotus flower twice: on the right, it is designed meticulously, evoking its traditional form, while on the left it is stylised in a geometric shape. In the centre of the two loti, there is not the figure of a meditation Buddha, as we would expect, but the name of the crew: on the right, it is written in the Chinese traditional character *Guan* 觀 as an abbreviation of *Guanyin*, while on the left it is completely written in Latin letters, ‘Kwan Yin’, as a graffiti ‘tag’. This dual ‘signature’ is extremely com-

**13** Actually, the number of the crew components has been extremely changeable. In 2008, they were 12 writers: Daiyan 戴燕 (Quanr 圈儿), Liu Zheng 刘峥 (Guantou 罐头, Eric TIN), Song Tongshu 宋童述 (YUMI), Zheng Xuezhì 郑学志 (APART), Jianshu 简杰 (Jer), Lu Daning 陆大宁 (Natuo 那七), Xu Yan 许岩 (SCAR), Lu Jiayin 路佳银 (Joey), Tang Mi 汤米 (Keno), Xu’ou 徐欧 (Pluto), Xue Wenhao 雷文浩 (VIGA), and Jitou 纪续 (CTN) (cf. “Guanyin 观音(KWAN-YIN) crew -- Chinese Style Graffiti” 2008). In 2009, instead, the crew was composed of 8 members: AP, KENO, SCAR, JER, TIN, YUMI, VIGA, and NAT (cf. EricTin 2009b).

**14** The definition ‘Chinese Style Graffiti’ is used, for example, in the most important video about the crew entitled “Guanyin 观音(KWAN-YIN) crew -- Chinese Style Graffiti” (2008).

**15** This idea is confirmed in the Flickr page of the crew (“Kwan-yin Clan (觀音) – Beijing” 2008) and in the video “Guanyin 观音(KWAN-YIN) crew -- Chinese Style Graffiti” (2008).

mon in the Kwanyin Clan's works and always epitomises their creative mission: the creation of a bridge (their graffiti) to bring China (the right lotus) and the West (the left lotus) closer in order to "push forward with an overwhelming momentum".<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 1** Kwanyin Clan, *The Logo of the Kwanyin Clan*. Digital design work. Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/137172601.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

The most active period of the crew lasted until 2010 when most of the crew members, who were art academies students,<sup>17</sup> graduated from university and "the competitive everyday life in Beijing has forced the members to focus on their daily jobs in order to support their families" (Valiakka 2016, 361). From 2006 to 2009, the Kwanyin Clan mainly worked in Beijing, even if the crew also created some 'pieces'<sup>18</sup> in Langfang (Hubei), Chongqing, Tianjin, Guilin, Wuhan, and Shenzhen. Then, from 2009, each member of the crew started to work more individually: Jer, for example, has been mainly active in Wuhan, KenoTang has focused on the embellishment of the hutong in Beijing (especially from 2011), and EricTin has concentrated his

**16** This is the motto of the crew and it is also written in the right bottom corner of its logo (see fig. 1).

**17** As Valjakka (2011, 80) affirms: "A majority of [the Chinese] writers are art students, designers or otherwise connected with the creative industries".

**18** A 'piece' is "a graffiti painting, short for masterpiece. It's generally agreed that a painting must have at least three colors to be considered a piece" ("The Words: A Graffiti Glossary", URL <http://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>).

attention on design works.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, they occasionally continue to work together, as it happened in 2016, when they took part in the most important exhibition on street art held in China in the last decade, entitled *Street Art, a Global View*. This exhibition was held at the CAFA Art Museum in Beijing from July 1st to August 24th. Street artists from Brazil, China, France, Italy, Portugal, Senegal, the US, and the UK showcased their works. The Kwanyin Clan was one of the few Chinese crews that took part in the exhibition<sup>20</sup> as an indication of the importance of the crew in the Chinese panorama. In addition to this fundamental exhibition, from 2007 to 2009 the crew took part in the most important Chinese graffiti exhibitions and competitions: e.g. *China's First Graffiti Exhibition* (Beijing, 2007), *'Re-dressed Vehicles Exposition'* (Beijing, 2007), *'Motor Trend' Magazine Graffiti Exhibition'* (Beijing, 2007), *798 Art District Graffiti Festival* (Beijing, 2007), *'The Clash Show' New Design Exhibition* (Beijing, 2007), *The Great Way of Graffiti Cultural Festival* (Beijing, 2008), *Beijing Happy Valley Hip-Hop Festival* (Beijing, 2008), *China International Cartoon & Game Expo (CCG EXPO) - Shijingshan Cultural Festival Graffiti Show* (Beijing, 2008), *The 3rd China Beijing International Cultural & Creative Industry Expo - The 2nd Graffiti Art Exhibition* (Beijing, 2008), the *Wall Lord Graffiti Battle*<sup>21</sup> (Wuhan, 2009), the *Action for Seed Graffiti Jam* (Shenzhen, 2009), etc.<sup>22</sup> In these exhibitions, the Kwanyin Clan usually created outdoor large pieces on walls or panels (once also on a plastic sheet, [fig. 2])<sup>23</sup> with the names of the crew and/or the crew members written in big capital letters or Chinese characters, embellished with bright colours, decorative elements (clouds and flowers) and/or comic figures (big pandas, Chinese faces, FEE puppets, etc.).

<sup>19</sup> EricTin, e-mail to the author and M. Merenda (2015-12-20).

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the group exhibition entitled *Street Art, a Global View*, see: Wang S. 2016 and Danysz 2016.

<sup>21</sup> The 'Wall Lord Graffiti Battles' are the largest graffiti battles in Asia organised during 2008-2012 by XEME and SINIC, two Hongkongese writers. The 'graffiti battles' are annual contemporary graffiti competitions on national and international levels.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on their participation in all these exhibitions/competitions, see the most important blog of the crew: *Kwanyin Clan (EricTin)* 2006.

<sup>23</sup> For more information about this work, see: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/101605412.html> (2019-01-16). This piece was made for the *China International Cartoon & Game Expo (CCG EXPO) - Shijingshan Cultural Festival Graffiti Show*, held at the Shijingshan Sculpture Park in Beijing from 1st to 5th November 2008.



**Figure 2** Kwanyin Clan (Nat, Yumi, Ap, Tin), *Graffito for the 'Shijingshan Cultural Festival Graffiti Show'*. 1-5 October 2008. Spray-painting on a plastic sheet, Shijingshan Sculpture Park, Beijing. Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/101605412.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

Their first documented 'mural'<sup>24</sup> and their first recorded piece<sup>25</sup> were made in December 2006. From that moment onward they created more than one hundred graffiti works and lots of graphic/digital design works (advertising posters, logos, books and CDs covers, prints on T-shirts, etc.).<sup>26</sup> As usual for Chinese graffiti writers, the Kwanyin Clan engaged frequent collaborations with Chinese and foreign brands, especially with sports brands (e.g. Kappa, Lotto, Nike), electronic brands (e.g. Nokia, DELL, HP), and private clubs (e.g. VICS, Master Club, KTV, Gaga club, Club underground, Golf club, etc.).<sup>27</sup> In these cases, their graffiti works were usually made on removable panels (once even on paper boxes, for the iMART in 2008)<sup>28</sup> or indoor walls (of clubs or shops) using Latin letters<sup>29</sup> and 'Old school' Euro-Americans styles.

The Kwanyin Clan also collaborated with the Chinese government for the beautification of the metropolitan environment<sup>30</sup> or to promote the image of a prosperous country in international competitions, as it happened in 2008 for the Beijing Olympics Games. On that occasion,

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**24** A 'mural' is "a large-scale type of piecing, done top to bottom on a wall" ("The Words: A Graffiti Glossary", URL <http://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>). To see the first mural by the Kwanyin Clan: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/28476317.html> (2018-09-07).

**25** To see the first piece by the Kwanyin Clan: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/28477622.html> (2018-09-07).

**26** The creation of graphic/digital design works is a very common practice among Chinese writers. In fact, most of Chinese writers are not only 'writers' but also 'digital/graphic designers' and they use their design expertise to earn money.

**27** As Valjakka (2011, 82) affirms: "The attitude towards commissioned and paid graffiti is usually more positive among Chinese writers, as opposed to claims of some Euro-American writers that only illegally created graffiti is true graffiti".

**28** To see the work made for iMART: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/102388327.html> (2018-10-30).

**29** There are only two exceptions: 1) *Shirupozhu* 势如破竹 (With Irresistible Force, 2008), which was the first attempt to use 'charactering' in this type of work (EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda, 2016-12-20), 2) and the numerous graffiti created in November 2008 for the 'New Silk Bay Media' (*Xin si wan chuamei* 新丝湾传媒) on the inner walls of the company headquarters in Beijing.

**30** The primary aims of the graffiti art in China are in fact beautification of urban space (not rebellion) and self-expression because it has always been primarily regarded as a form of art (cf. Valjakka 2011, 75, 78).



in fact, the Kwanyin Clan realised a graffiti work entitled *Olympic Beijing* [fig. 3]<sup>31</sup> near the Beijing Institute of Technology for the ‘Beijing Olympic Cultural Wall Creative Design Campaign’. Co-sponsored by the Beijing Olympic Committee and Beijing People’s Broadcasting Station, that campaign was carried out with the hope that “[t]he Olympics evokes the creativity of the artists. Art lends further splendor to the Olympic culture” (Lu 2015, 49). In that particular event, “we can see a return of the narrative of mass participation in art production in the communist vein” (Lu 2015, 49) and the graffiti works “serve as a new tools of visual propaganda in urban public spaces” (Valjakka 2015, 259), becoming an instrument of China’s soft power.<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 3** Kwanyin Clan, *Olympic Beijing*. April 2008. Graffiti: spray-painting on wall. West wall of the Institute of Technology, Weigongcun, Beijing. Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/86027853.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

Adhering to the spirit of the campaign, in this long graffiti work made by the Kwanyin Clan we can recognise many typical Chinese elements (calligraphic inscriptions, bamboo, pagodas, ping-pong players, traditional decorative patterns, etc.) that evoke the past and present greatness of China, as well as explicit references to the Beijing Olympics (the central writing in Latin letters ‘Beijing Olympics’, the Olympic torch, the Olympics logo, the Fuwa mascot, etc.). Moreover, the extensive use of the red colour, that is China’s colour, gives the impression of being in front a nationalist propaganda poster of modern times.

**31** To see the photo frames of this graffiti work: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/86027853.html> (2018-11-08).

**32** Several academic researches demonstrated that the soft power mechanisms affect the development of Chinese contemporary art (Barr 2011; Gladstone 2014; Yao 2015, 2017). These researches demonstrated how i) the role of contemporary art as a focus for social intervention in the People’s Republic of China is increasingly subject of government recuperation (Gladstone 2014); ii) Chinese contemporary art has been regarded as a key factor of China’s soft power in exercising China’s cultural influence in the face of Western cultural imperialism in the post-Mao era, in asserting China’s position on the global stage and in holding its own world view (Yao Y. 2015); iii) the fluid construct of Chineseness is successfully promoted through the government’s support of contemporary Chinese art (Yao Y. 2017). These three aspects perfectly fit the aim of the collaboration between the Chinese government and the Kwanyin Clan in the beautification of Beijing streets with graffiti works.



Another important example of the collaboration between the Kwanyin Clan and the Chinese local government was the embellishment of a tower in the 'Guanyintang Art Avenue', a new art street opened in Beijing in 2008. The tower was 20 meters high and the Kwanyin Clan shaped old-school graffiti pieces along the outer surface of the tower (from top to bottom) using free style: this tower is the highest graffiti work in mainland China.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to these legal activities for private companies and public institutions, the Kwanyin Clan was also involved in illegal bombing on the streets, especially in the 798 Art District and in Sanlitun in the city of Beijing. Their first documented bombing activity took place in April 2007 in the 798 Art District.<sup>34</sup> This kind of activity usually consists of 'tagging up'<sup>35</sup> and/or 'throw-ups' made in 'bubble letters'<sup>36</sup> filled with one or maximum two colours.

Because of their relevance in the Beijing graffiti panorama, the Kwanyin Clan is also the author of numerous murals and pieces in spray painting made on the most important 'halls of fame' in Beijing: i) in the 798 Art District, ii) in the neighborhood of the Today Art Museum, and iii) near the China-Japan Friendship Hospital and the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, along a street that they named 'The Kwanyin Street' (*Guanyin Jie* 观音街) because of the high number of pieces they made there. Rather than 'halls of fame', these walls can be more appropriately considered 'semi-legal sites' where "no official authorization is granted but no consequences result from painting, even in the daytime" (Valjiakka 2015, 246).<sup>37</sup> The presence of these 'semi-legal sites' is a peculiarity of Chinese graffiti and in these areas "even large and complex pieces, requiring hours to finish, can be created without fear of being caught" (Valjiakka 2015, 246). In those areas, in fact, the Kwanyin Clan usually created large and complex pieces composed of 'wildstyle'<sup>38</sup> writings in Latin letters and/or Chinese characters, figurative and decorative elements, and calligraphic

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**33** To see the graffiti work on tower along the 'Guanyintang Art Avenue': <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/90376211.html> (2018-07-09).

**34** To see the photos of their first bombing in 798 Art District: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/41918956.html> (2018-12-07).

**35** 'Tagging up' is "the act of writing a signature with marker or spray-paint" ("The Words: A Graffiti Glossary", URL <http://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>).

**36** 'Bubble letters' are "a graffiti type of letters [...] often used for throw-up letters because of their rounded shape, which allows for quick formation" ("The Words: A Graffiti Glossary", URL <http://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>).

**37** In China graffiti is usually defined as "half legal, half illegal" (Bidisha 2014) and officials are usually tolerant toward graffiti writers.

**38** 'Wildstyle' is "a complicated construction of interlocking letters. It is a hard style that consists of lots of arrows and connections. It is considered one of the hardest styles to master and pieces done in wildstyle are often completely undecipherable to

inscriptions, using lots of colours and different styles. In these pieces, ‘Chineseness’ is extremely more evident than in commissioned and illegal works [fig. 4].



**Figure 4** Kwanyin Clan (and MAX), *Shijulongpan* 狮踞龙盘 (Where Tigers Crouch and Dragons Coil). 1 March 2008. Graffito: spray-painting on wall. Cherry Blossom Street (between the China-Japan Friendship Hospital and the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology), Beijing. Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/81097067.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

Like most of the Chinese crews, the primary aim of their art is the beautification of urban space (not rebellion), and self-expression.<sup>39</sup> The majority of their unauthorized graffiti are apolitical or they are created to support the establishment and not to criticise it.<sup>40</sup> Their attitude towards commissioned and paid graffiti is extremely positive and, in fact, they usually engage collaborations with foreign and domestic brands to promote their commercial campaigns. In their art (as in most of Chinese local creators), the paradox of turning an artistic language (graffiti art) that is expression of subcultures into mainstream, or even a commercial product, is evident.

Examining the crew artistic production, it is possible to distinguish a good number of oeuvres characterised by the use of both Chinese and Western elements and/or techniques, exploring the fusion of graffiti art with China traditional aesthetics. With the exception of bombing activity and most of their commercial works, the use of Chinese characters together with Latin letters is a *leitmotiv* in their artistic production from their first mural onwards. From the beginning of their activity, Chinese characters are usually used for writing Chinese tags (especially in the forms of *Guan* or *Guanyin* characters), and from 2008 they have experimented with the use of Chinese

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non-writers” (“The Words: A Graffiti Glossary”, URL <http://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>).

**39** According to Minna Valjakka: “The new generation of [Chinese] writers mainly uses the walls as canvas for artistic self-expression, creating graffiti images that often depict imaginary characters, such as ghosts, friendly dragons, animated mushrooms and cartoon characters. The majority of graffiti images, especially in Beijing, are primarily pictures” (Valjakka 2011, 75).

**40** As Minna Valjakka points out: “In mainland China, the majority of unauthorized urban art images are apolitical, because directly targeting sensitive issues or the establishment would bring about a swift official response and could cause severe problems; however, political graffiti art can also be created to support the establishment” (Valjakka 2015, 265).

characters instead of Latin letters in the creation of very elaborate ‘charactering’ pieces.<sup>41</sup> Another characteristic of their works is the presence of other visual elements that are easily recognisable as Chinese (such as pandas, dragons, bamboo and rocks, lotus flowers, pagodas, red fishes, Taoist deities, etc.),<sup>42</sup> usually painted in form of comic puppet.<sup>43</sup>

But, in addition to the use of Chinese writing and Chinese elements (common to other Chinese crews too),<sup>44</sup> the peculiarity of the Kwanyin Clan is that in some particular works they also try to merge Euro-American graffiti practice with the ancient traditional arts of the Chinese literati (calligraphy, poetry, painting, and seal carving) or with uncommon media, for example ceramics, that are traditionally Chinese and highly appreciated by the Chinese literati. A selection of the most representative artworks where graffiti art and the arts of Chinese literati are perfectly combined will be analysed in detail in the next paragraphs (§§ 2-4). The works entitled *Shanshui PIC* 山水PIC (Landscape painting PIC, 2007, [figs. 5-11]) and *New style* (2008, [figs. 12-14]) respectively combine the aesthetics of traditional landscape and bamboo painting and the artistic taste of world-wide contemporary graffiti writing, creating what we can define as ‘modern literati graffiti paintings’. In *Shirupozhu* 势如破竹 (With Irresistible Force, 2008, [figs. 15-18]) and *Shengongyijiang* 神工意匠 (2010, [figs. 19-20]), the Kwanyin Clan creates graffiti pieces using Chinese characters, treating public walls as they were horizontal calligraphic scrolls and writing semi-cursive poetic calligraphies in spray-painting, shaping what we can define as ‘modern literati calligraphy graffiti’. The series *Blue and White Porcelain* (2009-2010, figg. 21-24) represents the best example of the adaptation of graffiti to a surprising support, such as ceramic, that is really ‘Chinese’ and tradition-

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**41** *Shirupozhu* (With Irresistible Force, 2008) is the first ‘charactering’ piece made by the Kwanyin Clan: EricTin, e-mail to the author and M. Merenda (2015-12-20).

**42** The insertion of visual elements that are easily recognisable as Chinese is a constant in the Kwanyin Clan’s work; for example, they employed a big panda in *Guanyin jie* PIC 观音街PIC (Kwanyin Street PIC, 2007) and in the graffiti made for the ‘*The Clash Show*’ *New Design Exhibition*’ (2007) and for the *Shijingshan Cultural Festival Graffiti Show* (2008, fig. 2), a dragon and an imperial guardian lion in *Shijulongpan* (2008, fig. 4), an auspicious red fish in *Passage of Time* (2010), bamboos and rocks in *Bamboo* (2011), etc. To see these works, look up the *Kwanyin Clan Blog* (EricTin).

**43** The presence of Chinese writing and other visual elements that are easily recognisable as Chinese is extremely common also in their graphic/digital works.

**44** The use of Chinese language and other visual references to Chinese culture is the distinguishable feature of the artworks made by some local and even foreign actors. According to Minna Valjakka, the most representative examples of this kind of experimentation are by the Kwanyin Clan and the Beijing Penzi crew in Beijing, and French Dezio in Shanghai (Valiakka 2015, 271). Other examples, in particular of the use of Chinese language, are: ZATO, MES, EXAS, Camel, ZEIT, and MAGE in Beijing, the OOPS crew in Shanghai, Touchy in Shenzhen, Xeme and Sinic in Hong Kong, the Kong2 crew in Changsha, Moon in Quanzhou, Mora in Canton, and Gas in Chengdu.

al, but extremely innovative for graffiti: a perfect example of what we can define as ‘modern literati graffiti ceramics’.<sup>45</sup>

## 2 ‘Modern Literati Graffiti Paintings’ by the Kwanyin Clan: *Shanshui PIC* (2007) and *New Style* (2008)

EricTin, the leader of the crew, says: “We draw nourishment from Chinese painting. [...] Our big works are essentially based on Chinese elements” (“*Guanyin* 观音 (KWAN-YIN) crew -- Chinese Style Graffiti” 2008, author’s transl.). An example of this assumption is one of their first ‘masterpieces’ entitled *Shanshui PIC* [fig. 5].<sup>46</sup> This opera represents a programmatic manifesto of the Kwanyin Clan and its analysis requires special attention.



**Figure 5** Kwanyin Clan (Quan, EricTin, Yumi, Jer, Apart, Nato, Scar, Joey, Keno, Pluto, Viga, Ctn). *Shanshui PIC* 山水PIC (Landscape Painting PIC). 8-11 November 2007. Graffiti: spray-painting on panels. L 42 m, ht ca. 2 m. International Exhibition Hall Square, Beijing. Source: [https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin\\_clan200710beijing2md.jpg](https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin_clan200710beijing2md.jpg) (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

This huge graffiti work is 42 meters long and it was created in 2007 during the ‘China’s First Graffiti Exhibition’ (*Zhongguo shoujie tuyu meili yishuzhan* 中国首届涂鸦魅力艺术展) held at the Beijing International Exhibition Hall Square from 8th to 11th November.<sup>47</sup> As Eric-

<sup>45</sup> The artworks named in this paragraph and analysed below were selected after a detailed analysis of more than one hundred works of the crew (stored in their blogs, Flickr and Facebook pages) and using information gathered during a period of fieldwork in Beijing, interviews with EricTin (the leader of the group), and social media consultation.

<sup>46</sup> “In mainland China ‘pic’ is a common abbreviation of piece, but is easily confused with picture. This ambiguous abbreviation might have facilitated the understanding of ‘graffiti piece’ as a large picture than writing” (Valjakka 2015, 263). This definition perfectly describes the analysed work.

<sup>47</sup> This first graffiti exhibition aimed to introduce graffiti to the general public. The exhibition was part of the China International Cultural and Creative Industry Expo. There was a 300-metre-long wall outside the exhibition hall, and a special Olympic-themed graffiti wall was put up on the square. Professional graffiti artists have been invited to give an on-spot demonstration for visitors, who will even be able to paint by themselves. Cf. “China’s First Graffiti Exhibition opens in Beijing” 2007.

Tin explains,<sup>48</sup> *Shanshui PIC* was a collective work: all members of the crew were involved in this work, and it took five days to finish it.<sup>49</sup> The landscape scenery in the background was painted by VIGA, NATO, YUMI, JOEY, and CTN; the long calligraphy on the upper left by EricTin; and the lettering 'pieces' nested in the mountains (from left to right) by YUMI, EricTin, APART (a.k.a. ZXZ), QUAN, SCAR, JER, and VIGA (EricTin 2007).

At a first glance, this work seems to be a traditional ink painting landscape [fig. 6], characterised by mountains in the background and a long river in the foreground (*you shan you shui* 有水有山), a thick mist where mountain contours disappear, a lush vegetation (trees and bushes) on the river banks, and fishermen on small boats and huts at the foot of the mountains, indicating the presence of humans. The colours are typical of Chinese 'ink wash painting' (*shuimo hua* 水墨画): the black of the ink in various concentrations (up to grey) and the white of the paper (up to light ochre as age-yellowed paper). The format is similar to a 'horizontal scroll' (*hengfu* 横幅).



**Figure 6** Kwanyin Clan. *Shanshui PIC*. 8-11 November 2007. Graffiti: spray-painting on panels. L 42 m, ht ca. 2 m. International Exhibition Hall Square, Beijing (central section). Source: [https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin\\_clan200710beijing2md.jpg](https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin_clan200710beijing2md.jpg) (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

As EricTin points out:

Many features of Chinese classical culture can be transposed into contemporary graffiti [...]. Just think about the arrangement of a composition: because of the horizontal support, the arrangement of a graffiti piece on a wall is very similar to traditional Chinese painting. So we can use Chinese traditional painting composition

<sup>48</sup> EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2015-12-20).

<sup>49</sup> See the two videos of the realisation of the work from the *Kwanyin Clan Blog* (EricTin): 1) "Guanyin tuya 2007 观音涂鸦 2007" 2008; and 2) "Guanyin tuya gongzuoshi Tuya shipin 观音涂鸦工作室涂鸦视频" 2008.

to arrange a graffiti piece, and it will look like a classical landscape painting. [Then,] we can also add some elements of traditional landscape painting into our works, like for example mountains and rivers. [Moreover,] we can use the typical colors of traditional Chinese painting (black, white, and grey), [not only for painting landscape but] also for writing characters and letters (in our tags and lettering pieces). [As a consequence,] the bottom color tends to reproduce the texture of 'rice paper' (*xuanzhi* 宣纸). ("Guanyin观音 (KWAN-YIN) crew -- Chinese Style Graffiti" 2008;<sup>50</sup> Author's transl.)

Using these words, EricTin explains why the main elements, the compositional arrangement, the colours, and the format of *Shanshui PIC* are so similar to tradition landscape painting.

In another interview, he also underlines how the reference to this kind of painting is even deeper and more specific, because the source of inspiration for this work is landscape painting from the Song Dynasty (960-1279). He argues that:

When we were shaping *Shanshui PIC*, we wanted to reproduce the arrangement of Song Dynasty landscape paintings, like for example *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams* (*Xi shan xing lü tu* 溪山行旅图),<sup>51</sup> *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains* (*Qianli Jiangshan tu* 千里江山图),<sup>52</sup> and *Dwelling in the Mountains* (*Shanju tu* 山居图).<sup>53</sup> Chinese landscape painting reached its peak in the Song Dynasty. Personally, I do like landscape paintings of that period, so in *Shanshui PIC* we tried to use a similar ink technique, leaving empty spaces to shape water, fog and clouds.<sup>54</sup> (Author's transl.)

The 'spray-painting' technique used by the Kwanyin Clan in this work is in fact very similar to the ink technique of *cunfa* 皴法 that is the

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**50** Youtube video, from 1'06" to 1'49".

**51** The Author of *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams* is Fan Kuan 范宽 (ca. 950-1032), one of the most important Chinese landscape painters during the Song Dynasty. This painting is considered one of the finest monumental Chinese landscape paintings. It also became a model for later Chinese painters. Fan Kuan based his painting on the Daoist principle of becoming one with nature.

**52** *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains* was painted by Wang Ximeng 王希孟 (1096-1119), one of the most renowned court painters of the Northern Song period (960-1126). This painting is one of the largest in Chinese history, and the only Wang's surviving work. The painter used blue and green mineral colours for decoration, so this genre of painting is known as 'blue and green landscape' (*qinglü shanshui* 青绿山水). This technique was a recognised form of painting as early as the seventh century.

**53** The Author of *Dwelling in the Mountains* is Qian Xuan 钱选 (1235-1305), a Song loyalist painter during the last period of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) and of the first period of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

**54** EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2016-10-01).



traditional method of painting stone textures in Chinese art. This method is clearly illustrated in the most well-known Chinese traditional landscape painting pattern book entitled *Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden* (*Jieziyuan Huazhuan* 芥子园画传), a step-by-step guide to brush stroke types and techniques highly popular in the early eighteenth century and influential ever since. There the *cunfa* technique, based on particular brush strokes, is broken down in order to have five steps: ‘outline’ (*gou* 勾), ‘texture’ (*cun* 皴), ‘rub’ (*ca* 擦), ‘render’ (*ran* 染), and ‘dot’ (*dian* 点) (Illouz 1989, 104-13). Even if in *Shanshui PIC* graffiti writers did not use the brush, but spray cans, they adopted an analogous methodology: in the first step they transferred the ‘outlines’<sup>55</sup> of the sketch to the wall (*gou*); then, they filled the shapes with the appropriate colours (*cun*), using different caps to vary the width of spray (*ca*); finally, they wrote the ‘final outlines’<sup>56</sup> around shapes (*ran*), adding dripping and dot effects (*dian*).

In addition to a revised version of the traditional *cunfa* technique, the Kwanyin Clan also reproduces the classical brush method of framing space through the so-called ‘three distances’ (*san yuan* 三元).<sup>57</sup> This is a methodology theorised during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) by the famous painter Guo Xi 郭熙 (1020-1090) in order to create the illusion of space and distance in landscape painting. In *Shanshui PIC*, as well as for *cunfa* technique, this effect has been recreated through the skillful use of spray cans and caps and by particular painting techniques, like for example ‘cutting lines’<sup>58</sup> and ‘fade’ (blended) colours.

The final result is very similar to a traditional landscape painting thanks to the introduction of traditional landscape elements (mountains, river, greenery, fishermen, etc.) and the ‘graffiti adaptation’ of Chinese ink painting techniques (ink colours, empty spaces, *cunfa*, ‘three distances’, etc.).

Then, if we look at it more carefully, we will notice that *Shanshui PIC* is also punctuated by two calligraphies. The presence of callig-

<sup>55</sup> ‘Outline’ is “the skeleton or frame work of a piece” (“Writer’s Vocabulary”, URL <http://www.at149st.com/glossary.html>).

<sup>56</sup> ‘Final outline’ is the outline re-executed to define the letters, after fill-in and designs have been applied (“Writer’s Vocabulary”, URL <http://www.at149st.com/glossary.html>).

<sup>57</sup> The ‘three distances’ are ‘high distance’ (*gao yuan* 高远), ‘deep distance’ (*shen yu-an* 深远), and ‘horizontal distance’ (*ping yuan* 平远). The ‘high distance’ is used to create the height of a peak and to view from the bottom of a mountain looking up toward to the top; the ‘deep distance’ is used to create layers and to view from the front into the back; and the ‘horizontal distance’ is used to view the mountain which is far away from the nearby mountain.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Cutting lines’ is “a painting technique used on inside fills of letters and characters to get thin lines, thinner than thin tips” (“The Words: A Graffiti Glossary”, URL <http://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>).

raphies is another reference to traditional landscape paintings that are always embellished by calligraphic inscriptions. The first inscription is in the centre of the scroll, written in ‘big characters’ (*dazi* 大字) and in ‘regular script’ (*kaishu* 楷书), while the second one, much longer, is in the last section of the scroll written in ‘cursive script’ (*caoshu* 草书).<sup>59</sup> The first calligraphy [fig. 7] is composed of only two traditional Chinese characters, *Guan Yin* 观音, the Chinese name of the crew. As it is usual in Chinese calligraphic work, they are written vertically (from top to bottom).



**Figure 7** Kwanyin Clan. *Shanshui PIC*. 8-11 November 2007. Graffiti: spray-painting on panels. L 42 m, ht ca. 2 m. International Exhibition Hall Square, Beijing (detail of the big calligraphy in the centre of the work). Source: [https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin\\_clan200710beijing2md.jpg](https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin_clan200710beijing2md.jpg) (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

At the bottom of the two characters, we can see the tags of all the components of the crew (*Quan, EricTin, Yumi, Apart, Jer, Nato, Scar* on the left; *Joey, Keno, Pluto, Viga, Ctn, Kwanyin* on the right). Differently from the two characters *Guan Yin*, they are written horizontally from left to right in Latin alphabet, recalling Euro-American graffiti tradition. This hybridisation of ‘lettering’ and ‘charactering’ is a *leitmotiv* in Kwanyin Clan’s works and it is an example of the captive use of intermixed elements that are both Chinese (vertical Chinese characters) and Western (horizontal Latin writings), both traditional (calligraphy) and modern (graffiti tags). In the two big characters, also the variation of the width of the strokes produced by a skillful use of the spray-painting is a contemporary expedient to create the illusion of being in front of a classical calligraphy written with the ink brush. In calligraphy writings, in fact, it is fundamental to vary the width of the brushstrokes, and “even when writing a straight line,

**59** ‘Regular script’ (*kaishu*) and ‘cursive script’ (*caoshu*) are two of the five styles of traditional Chinese calligraphy; the other three are ‘seal script’ (*zhuanshu* 篆书), ‘clerical script’ (*lishu* 隶书), and ‘running script’ (*xingshu* 行书). For more details, see: Li 2009, 100-56. Using these two styles, the Kwanyin Clan members show their acquaintance with the art of Chinese calligraphy. According to the calligraphy master Silvio Ferragina: the first calligraphy seems to reproduce “the classical standard calligraphic form of the Northern Wei Dynasty [386-534/535]” while the second one “gives the feeling of the cursive form (amplified by the dripping effect), even if it presents an overall regularity in the verticality of its execution” (e-mail to the Author, 2019-01-20).



one needs to vary the thickness of the strokes” (Li 2009, 38).<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, if we look at the arrangement of this written section, we will notice that it also reproduces a traditional calligraphic pattern: the main text (the two big characters) is in the centre of the work, occupying a commanding position, while the inscriptions with the name of the artists are written on the sides in smaller size (even if horizontally and in alphabetic letters).<sup>61</sup>

Also in the second long calligraphy [fig. 8], the calligraphic style (*caoshu*), the variation of the width of the strokes, the arrangement of the text in vertical columns, and the reading direction (from right to left) follow the traditional calligraphic manner, but here a wide-spread ‘dripping’ effect underlines the graffiti taste.



**Figure 8** Kwanyin Clan. *Shanshui PIC*. 8-11 November 2007. Graffiti: spray-painting on panels. L 42 m, ht ca. 2 m. International Exhibition Hall Square, Beijing (detail of the long calligraphy in the last section of the work). Source: [https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin\\_clan200710beijing2md.jpg](https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin_clan200710beijing2md.jpg) (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

The content of the calligraphy is inspired by a Song poem entitled *Immortal at the River* (*Lin jiang xian* 临江仙) composed by Teng Zijing 滕子京 (990-1047), as EricTin declared.<sup>62</sup> This poem is the most representative example of the use of literary tradition in the Kwanyin Clan’s works. For this reason, it will be analysed in detail (Author, context of composition, inspiration, meaning, English translation, text quotations, etc.). Text analysis will reveal important connections of this work with the world of ancient Chinese literati. The choice of

<sup>60</sup> The variation of the width of the strokes depends on the pressure that the calligrapher applies to the brush or lifts it up. “In fact, calligraphy writing can be seen as a process of alternately lifting up and pressing down of the brush” (Li 2009, 38).

<sup>61</sup> A calligraphy piece usually has three main components: 1) the main text, 2) inscriptions/colophons, and 3) seal/s. The main text is the main point of interest and the inscriptions and seals play a balancing and secondary role. Inscriptions usually consist of the date when the work was done, the name of the artist, and the location. The seal with the name of the artist is like an official signature (Li 2009, 157-67). Even if there is not seal in this work, the tags of inscription have the same function.

<sup>62</sup> EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2016-01-07).

this poem and this poet is extremely significant. Teng Zijing, commonly known by his courtesy name as Teng Zongliang 滕宗谅, was an official and a fellow of the great reformer Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052), who was the Chancellor of the Song Dynasty during the reign of Emperor Renzong (1010-1063). Teng Zijing was famous because in 1045, when he served as local prefect of Yuezhou 岳州 (present Yueyang 岳阳 - Hunan province), he restored the famed ancient Yueyang Tower,<sup>63</sup> a city gate by the side of the Dongting Lake, enlarging its scale and engraving on it the complete anthology of the Tang (618-907) and Song Dynasty poems written in that place. To commemorate this event, Teng Zijing invited Fan Zhongyan to write a descriptive prose entitled *Yueyang Lou Ji* 岳阳楼记 (On Yueyang Tower), his most famous literature work (Murck 2000, 107). In this text, Fan Zhongyan depicted the breathtaking landscape surrounding the Yueyang Tower.<sup>64</sup> Deeply affected by this beautiful scenery, also Teng Zijing decided to compose a poem entitled *Lin jiang xian*. In this poem, he firstly focused on the most charming part of the delightful landscape, the vast Dongting Lake (l. 1), which dazzled in the morning sun of an autumn day (l. 2). The well-known Junshan Hill with its 72 peaks stood in the middle of the lake, and it is compared to the legendary island of Penglai 蓬莱, a mountain where the Taoist Immortals were said to live (l. 3). In the distance, a grey evening mist was emerging from the Yun and Meng Marshes (l. 4), and slowly faded the city of Yueyang (l. 5). The view of Junshan Hill recalls to poet's mind the famous legend of the Xiang River Goddess (l. 6). Legend has it that 4,000 years ago when Emperor Shun toured in South China, his two concubines E Huang 娥皇 and Nü Ying 女英 (also called Xiang Fei 湘妃 and Xiang Jun 湘君) went to search for their husband. When they got to the Junshan Hill, they knew he was dead. They wept so long that the bamboos on which their tears dropped changed into mottled bamboos. Later they passed away and were buried on the hill, and to memorialise these two soulful lovers, the mountain was renamed Junshan 君山. In the second stanza of the poem, Teng Zijing commemorated this event evoking a melancholy tune played by the spirits of the Xiang River Goddesses (ll. 6-7). The song permeated

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**63** Yueyang Tower (*Yueyang Lou* 岳阳楼) was known as one of the three great towers in Southern China, due to their association with famous literary works. The other two are: Huanghe Tower (*Huanghe Lou* 黄鹤楼) and Tengwang Ge 滕王阁.

**64** When Fan Zhongyan wrote this essay both of them were in exile following their failure to persuade the Emperor to implement the Qingli reforms (Murck 2000, 107). The Qingli reforms took place from 1043 to 1045 and they were an attempt to innovate the traditional way of conducting Chinese government, discouraging corruption and ensuring that officials were drafted more on the basis of their capabilities. However, many of these reforms met with the opposition of conservative ministers so that the Emperor rescinded them in 1045. Nevertheless, they inspired the revolutionary reforms promoted later by Chancellor Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086).

the hearts of the listeners while a breeze was spreading the scent of the orchids (l. 8). But when the tune came to an end, people went away (l. 9), disappearing among the green mountains (l. 10). In his poem, Teng Zijing wrote:

Lake water embraces the sky,  
Glow brightly in crystal autumn.  
Jun mount is a piece of paradise  
And a mist from the Yun and Meng Marshes  
Has beleaguered the city of Yueyang.

Xiang River Goddesses play the lute  
Ancient memories sad hearts lacerate  
Orchid's whispering delicately scented  
No one can be found whence the melodies ended  
On upper river verdant peaks silently stand.<sup>65</sup>  
(Author's transl.)

In this poem Teng Zijing quoted two other poems of the Tang period: i) the fourth and the fifth lines of his poem coincides with the third and the fourth lines of a poem by Meng Haoran's 孟浩然 (689-740) entitled *Gazing at Dongting Lake, Presented to Prime Minister Zhang* (*Wang Dongting hu zeng Zhang chengxiang* 望洞庭湖赠张丞相);<sup>66</sup> while ii) his last two lines correspond to the last two lines of a poem by Qian Qi's 钱起 (ca. 722-785) entitled *Musical soul of the Xiang River* (*Xiang ling guse* 湘灵鼓瑟).<sup>67</sup>

In *Shanshui PIC*, the choice of writing the Teng Zijing's poem *Lin jiang xian* is also a way to reactivate a chain of literary quotations, as it had already happened for the choice of depicting landscape scener-

<sup>65</sup> For the Chinese version of the poem: <https://bit.ly/2JEFTy1> (2018-11-16). The text of the poem was confirmed by EricTin in an e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda, (2016-01-09/10).

<sup>66</sup> The text of the whole poem is: "In the eighth month, the lake is calm | Submerging an empty blue sky | Vapors rise from the Yun and Meng Marshes | and waves lap at the Yueyang's wall. | I want to cross but have neither boat nor oar | Afraid to face the Emperor, I lead my peaceful life | So I sit and watch the fisherman, vainly longing for his catch" (Murck 2000, 107).

<sup>67</sup> The text of the whole poem is: "The booms of her drum harmonize with the zither to please the clouds | From yonder the Saintly Emperor's soul is aroused | Dances the Water Goddess so gay | Southerners listen in daze | Her performance induces metal and stone to sing drearily | The clear tones fuse with echoes in space merrily | The old plane tree is moved to express its admiration | Scented white reeds release perfume for saturation | The music flows with the Xiang River to its extent | Then veers across Dong Ting Lake raising a whirl of desolation | No one can be found whence the melodies ended | On upper river verdant peaks silently stand" (Jiang 2009, transl. by Jiang Shaolun). The English translation of the last two lines by Jiang Shaolun is quoted by the Author in the above translation.

ies inspired by Fan Kuan, Wang Ximeng and Qian Xuan's paintings. The use of quotations is very common in Chinese classical poetry. In this specific case, the transcription of Teng Zijing's poem activates the quotations' mechanism in six different ways. In fact, i) in *Lin jiang xian*, other poems have been quoted (Meng Haoran's and Qian Qi's poems); ii) Teng Zijing mentions a famous scenic spot, the Junshan Hill, that since ancient times has been filled with legends, including the most popular of the Xiang River Goddesses recalled in the second stanza; iii) the poem takes inspiration from a place (the Yueyang Tower) that since Tang Dynasty had become a popular place for literati to compose their poems; iv) most of these ancient poems were engraved by Teng Zijing himself on the Yueyang Tower in 1045; v) the Yueyang Tower named in the poem also inspired the descriptive prose entitled *Youyang lou ji* written by Fan Zhongyan and commissioned by Teng Zejing; iv) the title of the poem is the same as other famous Song poems;<sup>68</sup> all these poems express similar emotions and recall Teng Zijing's poem, even if with different words. Among them, the most significant were composed by Su Shi 苏轼 (1037-1101), Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 (1007-1072), Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-1115), Yan Jidao 晏几道 (1038-1110), and Chen Yuyi 陈与义 (1090-1138).<sup>69</sup> The poem by Su Shi, which is the most famous one, is a cry of despair and loneliness:

Drank tonight at Easter Slope, sobered up, drank again;  
got home somewhere around third watch.  
The houseboy by now is snoring like thunder:  
I bang the gate but nobody answers.  
Leaning of my stick, I listen to river sounds.

Always it irks me - this body not my own.  
When can I forget the world's business?  
Night far gone, wind calm, the river's crepe of ripples stilled:  
I'll leave here in a little boat,  
on far waters spend the years.  
(Transl. by Burton Watson: Watson 1984, 368)<sup>70</sup>

**68** This is due to the fact that Teng Zijing wrote a *ci* 词 poem and *Lin jiang xian* is only the name of its *cipai* 词牌, one of the around 800 poetry patterns that define the prosody of a *ci* poem. *Ci* was the most popular poetic form during the Song Dynasty, so it is very common that many poems have the same *cipai* ('title/tune'). This means that all the poems entitled *Lin jiang xian* have the same prosody: they are composed of two stanzas, and each stanza has five lines of 7-6-7-5-5 syllables, for a total of 60 characters. For more details on this *cipai*, see: Stirpe 2015, 140-1.

**69** For the Chinese version of all the most important Song poems entitled *Lin jiang xian*, see: <https://bit.ly/2LOUM9R> (2019-01-12).

**70** To compare this translation to other English translations, see among others: Barnstone, Chou 2005, 252 (translator Tony Barnstone); Liu, Irving 1990, 351 (translator

The poem by Ouyang Xiu is a description of a rainy landscape and of the loneliness of his viewer (Tseng 2011, 40); the poem by Li Qingzhao, which begins with the same words as a line from a poem written by Ouyang Xiu, is a description of the returning of the spring in her courtyard and a moment for the poetess to recall happy days in the past when her husband was still alive (Wang 1989, 67); the poem by Yan Jidao is a sensual reminiscence of a love encounter, where the author expresses the sense of sadness for the absence of his beloved woman (Tseng 2011, 58); and Chen Yuyi's poem is a remembrance of a joyful party with old friends in Luoyang, permeated with a deep sense of nostalgia (Liu, Irving 1990, 372).

Among all these poems, the choice of Teng Zijing's poem was determined by a specific purpose. The Kwanyin Clan want to write a poem able to communicate the feelings of loneliness and sadness following a joyful reunion and at the same time able to evoke the landscape scenery painted in the background of their artwork.<sup>71</sup> Teng Zijing's poem best achieves both these goals, even if the themes of loneliness, melancholy, and nature description are in common with all the listed poems. Because of this similarity, here the quotations' mechanism is particularly suitable for the crew's intentions because it refers to hypertexts that share the basic themes of the source text, but amplifying their possible meanings. According to EricTin, in fact, the main function of Teng Zijing's poem is to describe the content of their artwork and at the same time to express not only the sense of happiness experienced in the encounter with a graffiti work, but also the feelings of loneliness and sadness following this encounter. EricTin explains that this encounter usually 'lasts very briefly' (*tan hua yi xian* 昙花一现) because of the ephemeral and localised status of any graffiti piece. Very few people can see their originals and, at the end, only some photos stored in a computer remain as their records.<sup>72</sup> So the joy of the meeting is replaced with the pain of the parting and the melancholy of the oblivion, as all the 'quoted' poems have already testified.

According to Chinese classical aesthetics principles, in *Shanshui PIC*, the use of Teng Zijing's poetry (*shi* 诗) written in calligraphic style (*shu* 书) to enhance the depiction of a landscape painting (*hua* 画) also suggests the reference to the Chinese indissoluble artistic triad of 'poetry, calligraphy and painting' (*shi shu hua* 诗书画). From the eighth century onward, in China these three art forms have been known as the 'three perfections' (*san jue* 三绝), and they have been

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Michael E. Workman); Yip 1997, 431 (translator Yip Wai-lim); Mair 1994, 325 (translator James Robert Hightower).

<sup>71</sup> EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2016-01-10).

<sup>72</sup> EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2016-01-10).

intimately connected in the minds of the ‘Chinese literati’ (*wen ren* 文人), representing the basis of traditional Chinese culture (Sullivan 1974, 7). The strict link among these three art forms is composed of three different aspects: the relationship between poetry and painting, calligraphy and poetry, and calligraphy and painting. To properly evaluate any Chinese ‘literati’ artwork, including *Shanshui PIC*, all these perspectives have to be explored.

The traditional relationship between poetry and painting is skillfully described by Su Shi, when he praised the Tang poet/painter Wang Wei 王维 (701-761) using these words: “There is poetry in his painting and painting in his poetry” (*shi zhong you hua, hua zhong you shi* 诗中有画, 画中有诗) (Qi 1991, 11). In *Shanshui PIC*, this binomial was realised by two elements: the first one is Teng Zijing’s poem, which is a vivid representation of scenery and fuses scene and mood; the second one is the landscape painting that can be described as being ‘poem-like’ (*shi yi ban de* 诗一般的). In addition, according to ancient aesthetics principles, in this work:

Poetry and painting are siblings from the same womb [the artistic production of the Song Dynasty]; both emerge from the emotions and the environment of daily life [the emotions of happiness, loneliness and sadness for an encounter with a graffiti work on the street], and both have beauty and power to move people. (Qi 1991, 14)

The strict relationship between calligraphic technique and literally content has been restated by the use of ‘cursive script’ (*caoshu*). Cursive script is faster to write than other styles, so in *Shanshui PIC* (and in particular in the long calligraphy written by EricTin) it embodies the fleeting nature of the joy of the encounter described in Teng Zijing’s poem and it is an echo of the brief meeting between the graffiti work and the people walking down the street experimented by the writers themselves while shaping their piece.

In *Shanshui PIC*, the relationship between calligraphy and painting reproduces classical patterns too. In Chinese traditional art, in fact, “the brush, the instrument of the calligrapher, is also used by the painter, and the results produced by the use of dots and strokes are similar” (Qi 1991, 13). Similarly, in this work, the spray can, the instrument of the graffiti writer, is used for shaping both calligraphy and painting and the result produced by dripping and outlines techniques is equal. So, we can affirm that, in this graffiti piece as well as in any traditional painting, ‘calligraphy and painting have the same source’ (*shu hua tong yuan* 书画同源).

In *Shanshui PIC* there are also innovative elements that transformed this work into a beautiful ‘street scenery’ of contemporary times. These elements are the enormous figure of a graffiti writer in



live motion portrayed in three different poses between the two calligraphies [fig. 9], and the six lettering works nestled in the mountains [figs. 10-11].

The first element (the graffiti writer in the left section) is the most important figurative element of this graffiti work. This figure represents an *alter ego* of all the members of the crew (fig. 9).



**Figure 9** Kwanyin Clan. *Shanshui PIC*. 8-11 November 2007. Graffiti: spray-painting on panels. L 42 m, ht ca. 2 m. International Exhibition Hall Square, Beijing (detail of the graffiti writer in live motion in the left section of the work).

Source: [https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin\\_clan200710beijing2md.jpg](https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin_clan200710beijing2md.jpg) (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

The young man can be considered as the prototype of any graffiti writer; in fact: i) he is wearing hip hop urban clothing (a pair of large pants, a big hoodie, a snapback hat, and a pair of sneakers); ii) in his right hand, he holds a spray can, which represents his 'artistic weapon'; and iii) he looks like a 'b-boy' (breakdancer or breaker) dancing in the street while writing on a wall a piece of graffiti. The depiction of this character has a multiple function: i) it underlines the strict relationship between graffiti and hip-hop culture<sup>73</sup> in China, and consequently interconnects the Chinese graffiti movement

**73** The Hip-Hop culture in the late seventies and early eighties "spawned the graffiti culture as we know it now, breakdancing and hip-hop music, which has since turned into modern rap music" ("The Words: A Graffiti Glossary", URL <http://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>).

with all the other graffiti movements that are characterised by the same strict relationship (first of all the American one) all over the world. ii) Thanks to the live motion and the b-boy features, the figure of the graffiti writer can be compared to a ‘calligrapher’ of contemporary times. As we know, “the [Chinese] calligrapher is like a dancer, dancing with the brush while the traces of the ink record his movement” (“Qiu Zhijie at work”, 2008).<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the b-boy painted in this work is ‘dancing’ with a spray can while the traces of its spray painting record his movements on a graffiti wall. iii) Opposite to traditional canons, however, the dynamics of his movements is also used to contrast the static nature of the classical landscape painting in the background in order to capture (and reproduce) the contrastive speed of life in modern times. iv) The size of the character, extremely big if compared to the rest of the work, is also an expedient to mark the difference between graffiti and classical landscape paintings. According to Chinese classical standards, and in particular to Northern Song style, in fact, the presence of human actors (such as scholars admiring the beauty of nature, travellers in the middle of a journey, and farmers and fishermen engaging in everyday labour), even if is an integral component of the whole composition (because nature was conceived to be a place of wonder in its own right and a space where human beings live, work, and seek spiritual learning and regeneration), it is diminutive in its scale, because Chinese philosophy stresses how the human presence is minor in the vastness of the cosmos (Wang 2015, 124). v) The big size of the human actor contrasts not only with the classical standards but also with the canons of contemporary Chinese landscape paintings. In contemporary Chinese landscape paintings, in fact, there is usually no place of human presence because of the anti-humanistic nature of Chinese recent urban development (Wang 2015, 125, 223, 231). In this graffiti work, the choice of depicting an overstated human figure dressed as a graffiti writer is a way to highlight the main aim of the crew (and of graffiti culture in general), that is a re-appropriation of the urban spaces by the writers themselves, presenting themselves as ‘modern graffiti painters’.

The second innovative element is composed of six graffiti works nestled in the mountains: each of them represents the transcription of the names of six members of the crew (Yumi, EricTin, Quan, Scar, Jer, and Viga, respectively) shaped in an elaborate lettering style [figs. 10-11].

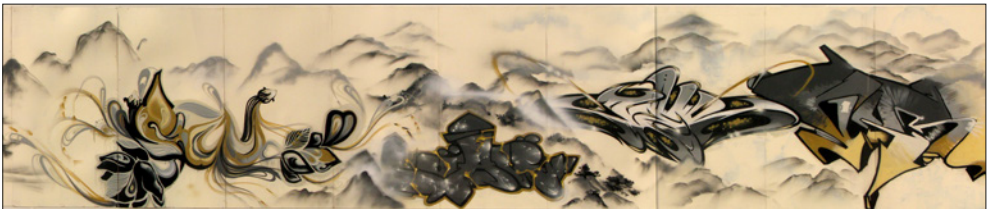
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<sup>74</sup> For further information about the relationship between calligraphy and dance, see: Kao 1991, 74-83.





**Figure 10** Kwanyin Clan. *Shanshui PIC*. 8-11 November 2007. Graffito: spray-painting on panels. L 42 m, ht ca. 2 m. International Exhibition Hall Square, Beijing (detail of the two lettering piece by Yumi and EricTin in the left section of the work). Source: [https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin\\_clan200710beijing2md.jpg](https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin_clan200710beijing2md.jpg) (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists



**Figure 11** Kwanyin Clan. *Shanshui PIC*. 8-11 November 2007. Graffito: spray-painting on panels. L 42 m, ht ca. 2 m. International Exhibition Hall Square, Beijing (detail of the four lettering pieces by Quan, Scar, Jer, and Viga in the right section of the work). Source: [https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin\\_clan200710beijing2md.jpg](https://www.graffiti.org/kwanyin/kwanyin_clan200710beijing2md.jpg) (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

In all these works, there is a marked tendency toward wildstyle, especially in the first three of them that are completely undecipherable. The use of '3D'<sup>75</sup> is also visible and it is emphasised by the black thickness of the 'outlines'<sup>76</sup> and by the chiaroscuro effects. Even if their colours are the same as in the landscape painting (black, grey, ochre,

**75** '3D' is "a three-dimensional style of letters, used for added effect on basic letters, sometimes applied to wildstyle for an extra level of complexity" ("The Words: A Graffiti Glossary", URL <https://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti.glossary.html>).

**76** 'Outline' is "the skeleton or frame work of a piece" ("Writer's Vocabulary", URL <http://www.at149st.com/glossary.html>).

and white), they clearly emerge from the background as distinguishable elements and distinctive features of a modern urban landscape.

In conclusion, in *Shanshui PIC* the Kwanyin Clan succeeded in combining the aesthetics of traditional landscape painting and the artistic taste of contemporary graffiti in a perfect fusion of literati tradition and modern graffiti mood.

In the work entitled *New Style* [fig. 12] the reference is to bamboo painting.



**Figure 12** Kwanyin Clan (EricTin, NaTuo). *New Style*. July 2008. Graffito: spray-painting on wall. Beijing. Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/90485372.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

The work was made by EricTin and NaTuo, and it took three days to complete it (EricTin 2008). The choice of bamboo as a fundamental element of the composition is determined by the importance of ‘bamboo painting’ (*zhuhua* 竹画) in traditional Chinese art. The bamboo was in fact the favourite natural subject for the proud and independent Chinese literati.

To them, indeed, the bamboo was itself a symbol of the true gentleman (*junzi* 君子), pliant yet strong, who maintains his integrity unsullied no matter how low the adverse winds of circumstance may

bend him. The light grace of its stalk and the dashing swordpoint of its leaves offered the perfect subject to his brush (Sullivan 1967, 215).

Even if in drawing bamboo EricTin and NaTuo have been strongly influenced by traditional canons, by emphasising “the light grace of bamboo stalk and the dashing swordpoint of its leaves” (Sullivan 1967, 215), they do not follow traditional standards in the compositional arrangement. In *New Style*, in fact, the core of the whole composition is not the bamboo, but it is the lettering piece placed at the centre of the work; bamboos are only the scenic backdrop that frames the main subject. However, there is a very important correspondence between the lettering piece and the bamboos in the background: the lettering piece is written in a very complex wildstyle, with lots of 3D effects, that seems to reproduce the knottiness of the bamboos. The interlocking letters involved in the piece are KYGS (‘KwanYin Graffiti Studio’) and also their colours (from light green to very dark green) are very similar to bamboos. Furthermore, at the centre of the piece, EricTin inserted a yellow sphere with the traditional character *Guan* (the first character of *Guanyin*), a recurring element in his pieces. The sphere has the same colours as the ones of thin pinnacles sprouting from the green letters: they seem to replicate the stylised ‘foliage’ of the bamboos. So even if the lettering piece in the foreground is much more important than the bamboos in the background, similarities between these two elements tend to merge them into a single entity.

The use of green colour helps to create this unity but it is very unusual in this kind of painting. In traditional bamboo paintings, in fact, the artists always used monochrome ink in order to shape an ‘ink bamboo painting’ (*mozuhua* 墨竹画). The use of monochrome ink in this kind of painting is crucial because it “brought the painter closest to that most difficult of arts, calligraphy” (Sullivan 1967, 215).<sup>77</sup> In *New Style*, the use of green recalls another artistic tradition, not Chinese but Western, the tradition of Western realism, based on a steadfast devotion to colour truth. At the same time, the various shades of green also remind the greenish patina of ancient ‘Chinese bronze vessels’ (*qingtongqi* 青铜器). According to EricTin, in fact, “the source of inspiration of *New Style* is ancient Chinese bronze ware” (EricTin 2008, Author’s transl.). This is evident not only in the choice of colours, but also in the ‘angularity’ of the lettering piece ‘patterned with ridges’ that replaces the typical ribbed surface of bronze vessels.

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<sup>77</sup> As Sullivan explains: “In bamboo painting, the form and place of every leaf and stalk must be clearly adumbrated; [...] the gradations from black ink in the near leaves to pale in the distance must be precisely judged, the balance of stalks to leaves, of plants to empty space, exactly struck. Having achieved this the painter must still know how the bamboo grows, and give to his own the springing movement of living plant. A great bamboo painting is a virtuoso performance of high order” (Sullivan 1967, 215-6).

The presence of the mist is another element that simultaneously recalls Chinese traditions as well as diverts from it. The mist usually never fails in Chinese paintings, but here: i) it is painted in white colour and without leaving empty spaces as usually happens in traditional artworks; and ii) it hides the awkward junctures of bamboo, the opposite of what used to happen in painting bamboo where “the awkward junctures of bamboo cannot be hid in mist as in landscape painting” (Sullivan 1967, 215).

The format of the work and the concurrent use of letters and characters for writing names or inscriptions are other two important elements that represent common points of meeting between East and West. The format of this work, in fact, can be simultaneously compared to a large album leaf, one of the main format of Chinese painting,<sup>78</sup> as well as to a big canvas, the typical support of Western art (especially if you see the work from a long distance **[fig. 13]**).



**Figure 13** Kwanyin Clan (EricTin, NaTuo). *New Style*. July 2008. Graffito: spray-painting on wall. Beijing (view of the artwork from a long distance). Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/90485372.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

**78** The main formats of Chinese paintings are hanging scroll, handscroll, fan, and album leaf.

At the same time, the concurrent use of letters and characters creates a counterbalance between East and West. In fact, on the lower left, the name of the two authors of the work ('EricTin' and 'NaTuo') and of the crew ('Kwanyin') are written horizontally in Latin letters and the year of the execution ('2008') is reported in Arabic numbers, while on the upper left, the Chinese name of the crew (*Guanyin*) is written vertically in Chinese characters.

The use of Chinese characters is also reiterated in the calligraphic inscription on the right edge [fig. 14].

The inscription is written in *xingcao* 行草 style, a style of handwriting between the 'running' (*xing* 行) hand and the 'cursive' (*cao* 草) hand.<sup>79</sup> The content of the calligraphy is a couplet:<sup>80</sup>

Buried in the earth it already has a culm,  
reaching into the sky it is still open-minded.  
(Shinewind 2012)<sup>81</sup>

The two lines quoted by EricTin are from a poem entitled *On Bamboo* (*Zhu* 竹).<sup>82</sup> The author of this poem is Zheng Xie 郑燮 (1693-1765), commonly known by his pseudonym as Zheng Banqiao 郑板桥, a famous poet, painter and calligrapher of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).<sup>83</sup> He was particularly able to draw bamboos and his unique technique

<sup>79</sup> According to the calligraphy master Silvio Ferragina, this inscription seems to reproduce "running script tending to cursive forms because of the presence of long traits linking successive characters" (e-mail to the Author, 2019-01-21).

<sup>80</sup> The two verses of the couplet are: *Wei chutu qian xian you jie | lingyun shen chu zong xuxin* 未出土前早有节, 凌云深处总虚心. EricTin quotes these two verses in: EricTin 2008.

<sup>81</sup> The translation of these two lines is from the third and fourth verses of the poem by Xu Tingyun quoted by EricTin.

<sup>82</sup> There are slight differences between the original poem by Zheng Xie and the Kwanyin Clan version. The original couplet is: *Wei chutu shi xian you jie | ji lingyun chu shang xuxin* 未出土时早有节, 及凌云处尚虚心. So, in the Kwanyin Clan version, i) the fourth character *shi* 时 (when) has been replaced by the character *qian* 前 (before); ii) the character *ji* 及 (and), that is the first character of the second verse, has been deleted; iii) before the character *chu* 处 (place), the character *shen* 深 (deep) has been added; and iv) the character *shang* 尚 (esteem) has been replaced by the character *zong* 总 (always). Despite these differences, the content of the two poems is very similar. Kwanyin Clan probably changed these few characters because they wanted to underline its intention to create a personal style deeply rooted in the past tradition.

<sup>83</sup> Zheng Banqiao was one of the 'Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou', a group of eight painters known in the Qing period for rejecting the orthodox ideas about painting in favour of a style deemed expressive and individualist. He is famous for his traditional paintings of bamboo, rock, and orchid. The composition of his painting is usually very simple, with a few bamboos, a rock, and a couple of orchids, but at the same time delicate: with intricate ink shading, the single lined bamboos and orchids seem vivid and vigorous. As calligrapher, he created a new calligraphic style influenced by his orchid drawings. He was also very interested in literature and poetry. For more details about his life, see: Matthyssen 2013, 219-44. For more details about his calligraphy, see: Hammer 2016.



usually combines painting and calligraphy. According to the content of this poem, in his paintings, the bamboo trunks, stems and leaves are usually lean but strong, so embodying the playfulness and spontaneity of a 'man of letters'.

The couplet by Zheng Xie is paraphrased from the third and fourth lines of another poem composed by the Song poet Xu Tingyun 徐庭筠 (1095-1179) entitled *Ode to Bamboo* (*Yong zhu* 咏竹).<sup>84</sup> As it is in *Shan-shui PIC*, also in *New Style* the quotations' mechanism has been re-activated by a 'calligraphic poetry'.

Even if there are also some little differences among the three versions of the couplet,<sup>85</sup> all of them focus on the qualities of the perfect literati (*junzi*) symbolised by the bamboo.<sup>86</sup> The bamboo, in fact, grows straightly and keeps green in winter (*wei chutu qian xian you jie* 未出土时先有节), which is an indication of its firm and tenacious character; it is hollow inside (*wu xin* 无心 'without a core'), so it is regarded as 'honest and upright' (*xu xin* 虚心); and even in winter, its leaves rustle in the wind, 'reaching the clouds' (*lingyun* 凌云), while it still stands straight on its deep roots (*shen chu zong* 深处总), symbolising great modesty (*xu xin*) (Illouz 1989, 57).

The depiction of the bamboos and the transcription of the couplet are two expedients to create a connection between the ancient Chinese literati-painters, who were used to painting bamboo and composing poems on his gentleman qualities, and the contemporary Chinese graffiti writers (such as EricTin and Natuo), who can do exactly the same things (as demonstrated in *New Style*), but using different modern tools (spray painting on wall). Viewed in this light, also the chain of citations triggered by the couplet is another erudite device to link the past to the present.

In this work, the link to the past tradition is also underlined by the simultaneous use of painting, calligraphy, and poetry, the so-called 'three perfections'. In the past, bamboo painters were accustomed to i) inscribing a poem that accompanied the painting and further elucidated its motif; ii) shaping calligraphy and painting with the

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**84** The third and fourth verses of the poem by Xu Tingyun are: *Wei chutu shi xian you jie | bian lingyun qu ye wuxin* 未出土时先有节, 便凌云去也无心. For the Chinese original text of the whole poem by Xu Tingyun, see: <http://sou-yun.com/Query.aspx?type=poem&id=194299&lang=t> (2019-01-15).

**85** For example, some differences among the three versions of the couplet may be seen comparing the characters of the fourth verse of the poem by Xu Tingyun and the corresponding verses by Zheng Xie and EricTin: the only two characters equally shared by these three verses are *lingyun* ('reach the clouds'), while the others are different in shapes but similar in their meanings.

**86** In fact, as Shinewind points out: "By writing that the poet wants to highlight the virtue of acting low and humble. Think about how bamboo sprouts out of the earth (acting low) and remain hollow (open-minded) whatever it grows into, and you may get the point" (Shinewind 2012).



**Figure 14** Kwanyin Clan (EricTin, NaTuo). *New Style*. July 2008. Graffito: spray-painting on wall. Beijing (detail of the calligraphic inscription on the right edge of the work). Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/90485372.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

same brushstrokes; and iii) reflecting in calligraphy similar moods and states of awareness expressed in poetry. According to this past tradition, in *New Style*: i) the content of the poem referred to the symbolic meaning of the painted bamboo; ii) both calligraphic inscription and lettering piece are shaped with entangled lines, and because of their complex styles (cursive style and wildstyle, respectively), they are equally incomprehensible; iii) the vertical columns of the calligraphy and its cursive 'brushstrokes' respectively reproduce the straight stalk of the bamboo and the dashing swordpoint of its leaves described in the poem. So, here the traditional triad of poetry, calligraphy and painting was perfectly recomposed in a contemporary framework, using a 'new style', as it has been declared in the work's title.

### 3 'Modern Literati Calligraphy Graffiti' by the Kwanyin Clan: *Shirupozhu* (2008) and *Shengongyijiang* (2010)

The use of Chinese characters and the reference to the art of calligraphy are two distinctive features of the Kwanyin Clan's works.<sup>87</sup> In some of their artworks these two aspects represent the focus of the whole composition and directly connect their art with the art of the Chinese literati. In Imperial China, in fact, "brush writing was a skill every educated man had to master" (Li 2009, 10) and calligraphy was the emblem of the cultural and political power of this important élite (cf. Ledderose 1986).

The work entitled *Shirupozhu* (With Irresistible Force, fig. 15) is a perfect example of the use of calligraphy and Chinese writing in a Kwanyin Clan's work: the crew shaped a graffiti piece in Chinese characters embellished with calligraphic inscriptions and painted with the typical colours of traditional calligraphy (white, grey, black, and red - the colour of seal/s). The central part of the work is composed of the four characters of the title (*shi ru po zhu*) written in a very hard wildstyle. They form a Chinese 'four-character idiom' (*chengyu* 成语) and are surrounded by other two wildstyle pieces:<sup>88</sup> the first one, on the upper left, is probably by EricTin, because of the *leitmotiv* of the sphere with the traditional character *Guan* in the centre, and of the thin pinnacles sprouting from the intricate characters; the second one, on the lower right, is by Yumi (the small tag written in red confirms his authorship) and its undecipherable forms suggest a big fire whose flames burn and generate the whole artwork. The central piece is by Nat, because the letters of his name ('NaTuo') are intermingled and blended into the strokes of the Chinese characters. In addition to the diagonal stripe composed of these three pieces, there are two other important elements in this work: the long black calligraphy in the top right corner [fig. 17], and the red colophon in the bottom left corner [fig. 18].

<sup>87</sup> The forerunner in the use of calligraphy in graffiti practise in China is Tsang Tsou-choi (Clarke 2001). Even if he was not so influential in mainland China, he still represents an important figure when dealing with the connection between calligraphy and graffiti art.

<sup>88</sup> These statements were confirmed by EricTin in an interview: "The piece has a tripartite structure. The core of the piece is composed of four characters *Shi ru po zhu*, which form a Chinese *chengyu*. Around these characters, we freely developed other wildstyle pieces" (Author's transl.): e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2015-12-20).





**Figure 15** Kwanyin Clan (EricTin, Nat, Yumi, Quan). *Shirupozhu* 势如破竹 (With Irresistible Force). 4-6 February 2008. Graffiti: spray-painting on panel. L 6 m, ht 6 m. Nike 706 Gallery, 798 Art District, Beijing. Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/110281893.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

The insertion of the *chengyu* 'shirupozhu' in the central piece of the work has a specific purpose. As EricTin explains:

I like using four-characters *chengyu* as the basis of my works, because there is always a story behind them that exceeds the literal meaning of the four characters.<sup>89</sup> (Author's transl.)

The literal meaning of *shirupozhu* is 'having a power (*shi*) to (*ru*) cut down (*po*) a bamboo (*zhu*)'. It originally refers to the act of smashing into enemy territory "like splitting a bamboo" (*Han-Ying cidian* 2004, 1125).<sup>90</sup> This expression comes from the *Book of Jin* (*Jinshu* 晋书): it is quoted in the fourth chapter of the third section about

<sup>89</sup> EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2015-11-04).

<sup>90</sup> "This idiom refers to the traditional way of splitting bamboo by cutting a slit on the top of it in such a way that it splits in two halves. The idiom describes incisive and overwhelming power" (Detweiler 2009, 230). This reference to an 'overwhelming power' is probably an indirect quote of the motto of the crew 'push forward with an overwhelming momentum' recorded in their logo.

'Biographies' (*lie zhuan* 列传) of the Book, that is the 34th 'volume' (*juan* 卷) of the whole text. The second half of this chapter focuses on Du Yu 杜预 (222-285), a military general of the Wei state (220-265) in the late Three Kingdoms period (220-280) and early Jin Dynasty (265-420). In 265, the ruler of the Wei state abdicated in favour of the Prince Sima Yan 司马炎 (236-290), who ended the Wei state and became the first emperor of the Jin Dynasty. Du Yu became one of his most powerful general and he led an army in the conquest of the Wu state (222-280), their bitter rival. In 280, before the last and crucial attack against the Wu army, Du Yu pronounced the four characters of the *chengyu* ('*shi ru po zhu*') to incite the troops, reminding them that until that moment they had smashed into enemy territory without difficulty 'like splitting bamboo', so they must not be afraid to join the battle. His speech produced the desired effect: his army won the battle, the Wu state was conquered and the Chinese territory was reunified (Heng 2015).

Using this *chengyu*, the Kwanyin Clan wants to connect Du Yu's story with the main theme of the artistic project that inspired its graffiti work.<sup>91</sup> According to EricTin, in fact, *Shirupozhu* was shaped from 4th to 6th February 2008 at the Nike 706 Art Space in the 789 Art District (EricTin 2009a).<sup>92</sup> This art space was established in January 2007 in the subfactory 706 by Nike China, so it was called 'Nike 706'. The main aim of this cultural experience centre is to promote Nike brand and to ignite Chinese athletes, leveraging the power of creativity, sport, and self-expression.<sup>93</sup> In 2008, the Kwanyin Clan joined a project entitled *Lebron Experience Center*, one of the two projects sponsored by Nike China to explain and promote the game of basketball to the Chinese public through a series of pieces showing the history and the future of the game, which is personified by Michael Jordan and Lebron James. The first event connected to the *Lebron Experience Centre* was entitled *Lebron Six Experiences*. For its launch, "the art space was transformed into an adaptable space that combined a digitally augmented Lebron coaching exhibit and professional basketball game court in one" (Yehenala 2010).<sup>94</sup> Lebron teaches about the six aspects of this game that help him become a very good player: DUNK, STEAL, POST UP, PASS, FADE AWAY, and DRIVE. Spaceships like mechanical cylinders were hung from the ceiling according to the zones and could be elevated or relegat-

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**91** EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2015-12-20).

**92** In this blog page, EricTin uploaded lots of photos about their work and its creative process.

**93** For more information about this space, see: <https://coolhunting.com/design/best-of-the-bro/> (2019-01-18).

**94** In this web article, lots of photos about the project have been uploaded.

ed to transform the space into a basketball court or training exhibit. Lowering the cylinders would activate Lebron's 3D hologram giving a face to face coaching experience to each basketball fan.<sup>95</sup> For the opening ceremony of that event (the night of 6th February), on the external wall of the art space, a huge hall-of-fame was mounted to host six graffiti pieces [fig. 16].



**Figure 16** View of the hall-of-fame mounted on the external wall of the Nike 706 Art Space in the 789 Art District painted with graffiti pieces by famous Chinese crews. The graffiti piece in the centre is *Shirupozhu* by the Kwanyin Clan. Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/110281893.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

Each piece was shaped by a famous Chinese crew. The invited crews were: the Xianggang Fengwei 湘港风味, the FLB CREW, the Kwanyin Clan, the ABS CREW, the BJPZ CREW, and the NGC CREW (cf. Li H. 2009). The six Lebron's signature moves (DUNK, STEAL, POST UP, PASS, FADE AWAY, and DRIVE) respectively became the main subjects of their graffiti pieces. The subject of the Kwanyin Clan piece was the 'post-up' (*tupo* 突破).<sup>96</sup> In Chinese, *tupo* literally means "make a breakthrough, break through a defence" (*Han-Ying cidian* 2004, 1250) so the Kwanyin Clan chose the expression *Shiripozhu* (With Irresistible Force) as the *fil rouge* of its work, linking Lebron's and Du

<sup>95</sup> To see the trailer of the project entitled *Nike Lebron Six Experience at 706 Beijing* and uploaded on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/31898113> (2019-01-07).

<sup>96</sup> 'Post-up' is "to establish your position at an area near the basket, usually just outside of the key. To post up, the player has his back to the basket, shielding his defender behind him with his body so that he can receive the pass with ease" ("Post up", *Sporting Charts*. URL <https://www.sportingcharts.com/dictionary/nba/post-up.aspx>, 2018-11-01).

Yu's stories. However, the connection activated by the Kwanyin Clan concerns not only the meaning of the basket position and the story of this *chengyu* but also the meaning of the *chengyu* and the title of the inaugural party of the 'Lebron Six Experiences' event. This inaugural party was called *Quanliyifu*. *Quanliyifu* is another *chengyu* which means "go all out, spare no effort" (*Han-Ying cidian* 2004, 1009). For the Lebron's party it was translated into English with the phrase 'Bring Everything' that can be easily linked to the concept of 'with irresistible force' conveyed in the title of the Kwanyin Clan's work.

In *Shirupozhu*, another reference to the concept of arduous and tenacious struggle is in the long calligraphy on the upper right [fig. 17].



**Figure 17** Kwanyin Clan (EricTin, Nat, Yumi, Quan). *Shirupozhu* (With Irresistible Force). 4-6 February 2008. Graffiti: spray-painting on panel. L 6 m, ht 6 m. Nike 706 Gallery, 798 Art District, Beijing (detail of the long calligraphy in the right corner of the work). Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/110281893.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

The calligraphy was written in vertical columns from right to left, following the traditional manner. According to EricTin, the content of this calligraphy is a poem entitled 'Full River Red' (*Man jiang hong* 满江红) composed by Yue Fei 岳飞 (1103-1142),<sup>97</sup> an officer of the Northern Song army. In 1127, when the Northern Song Dynasty came to

<sup>97</sup> EricTin, e-mail to the author and M. Merenda (2016-01-07).

an end as the Jurchen-Jin conquered northern China and the Song retreated south in the face of their attacks, he opposed the retreat. He continued, however, to serve the emperor of the Southern Song (1127-1279), engaging continuous battles with the Jurchen. He experienced success in his campaign against the Jin in 1140, but the Southern Song Gaozong Emperor (1107-1187) sought to make peace with the Jin, and ordered Yue Fei to withdraw, dashing in one moment all his achievements of ten years (Buckley 1993, 169-70). Yue Fei composed a poem entitled *Ma jiang hong* during one of his victorious campaigns against the Jin. In this poem, he describes his strong efforts to recover the lost territory, to fight against the barbarians and to persuade the emperor to support his army. He wrote:

My hair bristles in my helmet.  
 Standing by the balcony as the rain shower stops,  
 I look up to the sky and loudly let Heaven know  
 The strength of my passions.  
 My accomplishments over thirty years are mere dust.  
 I traveled eight thousand *li* with the clouds and the moon  
 Never taking time to rest,  
 For a young man's hair grows white from despair.  
 The humiliation of the Jingkan period<sup>98</sup>  
 Has not yet been wiped away.  
 The indignation I feel as subject  
 Has not yet been allayed.  
 Let me drive off in a chariot  
 To destroy these base at Helan Mountain.  
 My ambition as a warrior  
 Is to satisfy my hunger with the flesh of the barbarians,  
 Then, while enjoying a rest,  
 Slake my thirst with the blood of the tribesmen.  
 Give me the chance to try again  
 To recover our mountains and rivers  
 Then report to the emperor.  
 (Buckley 1993, 169-70)

The junction between Yue Fei's brave behaviour described in the poem and the 'post-up' movement recorded in the graffiti work depends on the four-characters of the *chengyu* depicted in the centre. In fact, the attitude of a basketball player in a post-up position and of a general while contrasting his enemies is equally characterised

<sup>98</sup> The 'Jiangkan period' is the last reign-period of the Northern Song, the period in which the Northern Song Dynasty was defeated by the Jurchen and retreated to the south (Buckley 1993, 169).



by 'irresistible force'. To post-up the player has to shield his defender behind him with his body so that he can receive the pass with ease; similarly, Yue Fei wants to shield the territories he had reconquered with his army and continue his advance so that he can give them back to the emperor.

As it is in *Shanshui PIC* and *New Style*, also in *Shirupozhu* the mechanism used for quotations has been re-activated. And as in the two works above mentioned, also here the relationship among the 'three perfections' is clearly evident and extremely strict. In fact, i) in the long calligraphy, the 'running script' (*xingshu*), that is characterised by a very 'tangled' and tense style,<sup>99</sup> reproduces the tumultuous battles evoked in the poem and the burning passion expressed in its lines. ii) In the 'charactering painting', that is both a calligraphy in 'big characters' (*dazi*) and a graffiti painting, the burning passion is symbolised by the flames and the red colour, and the tumultuous battles are represented by the inextricable tangle of characters and unintelligible signs. iii) The content of the poem is also recalled by the meaning of the four-character *chengyu* that is the core of the whole work and of the 'painted' piece.

The presence of a red inscription on the lower left also suggests the use of red seals in traditional art [fig. 18].



**Figure 18** Kwanyin Clan (EricTin, Nat, Yumi, Quan). *Shirupozhu* (With Irresistible Force). 4-6 February 2008. Graffiti: spray-painting on panel. L 6 m, ht 6 m. Nike 706 Gallery, 798 Art District, Beijing (detail of the red inscription in the left corner of the work). Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/110281893.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists

<sup>99</sup> This is a suggestion confirmed by the calligraphy master Silvio Ferragina (e-mail to the Author, 2019-01-21).

In this inscription, Chinese characters and Latin letters are juxtaposed, like in other Kwanyin Clan's works: the two characters *GuanYin* are written vertically in *xingcao* style, in the form of a traditional colophon with the signature of the artist (Kwanyin) near the main calligraphy (the four characters *shirupozhu*); while the four tags of the members of the crew, who were the authors of the artwork (ERICTIN, NAT YUMI, QUANER), are written horizontally from left to right, as it is in every graffiti piece. Even if in these two lines (vertical and horizontal) the writing systems are different (Chinese characters vs Latin letters), the writing style (of both characters and letters) is identical, so that the two inscriptions seem to be the same thing, merging Chinese and Western traditions into one.

Another representative example of the use of Chinese characters and calligraphy in a graffiti piece by the Kwanyin Clan is the mural entitled *Shengongyijiang* (*Ars divina*<sup>100</sup> 2010, [fig. 19]).



**Figure 19** Kwanyin Clan (EricTin). *Shengongyijiang* 神功意匠. June 2010. Graffiti: spray-painting on wall. Beijing. Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/154679171.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artist

As to the compositional structure, in fact, *Shengongyijiang* seems to reproduce the typical arrangement of a 'big character calligraphy' (*dazi shufa* 大字书法) written on a traditional Chinese 'horizontal scroll' (*hengfu*). This kind of arrangement is usually composed of three main elements: i) the large calligraphy made up of few characters and well-positioned in the centre of the scroll; ii) other inscriptions and a colophon respectively on the right and left sides written in small characters; iii) the artist's red seal(s) that balances the composition (for its colour and position) (Li 2009, 158-71). The graffiti work *Shengongyijiang* reproduces this arrangement: i) the most im-

<sup>100</sup> The Latin translation of the title is by the Author.

portant element is the graffiti piece composed of four big characters and well-positioned in the centre of the horizontal wall; ii) the secondary role is played by a poetic inscription on the top-right corner and by a colophon on the top-left corner both written in small characters; and iii) the balancing role is played by many tags shaped in different colours and positions.

The four characters in the centre of the wall (*'shen gong yi jiang'*) are the main point of interest of the whole composition. They are a *chengyu* and give the title to the work.<sup>101</sup> This *chengyu* is an idiomatic expression used to “describe the sublime beauty (exquisite conception and compositional structure) of a work of art (e.g. architectural buildings, paintings, etc.) shaped not only as a result of human capacities and labour, but also thanks to divine intervention” (*Hanyu da cidian* 2004, Author’s transl.). This *chengyu* has taken inspiration from the last verse of a poem composed by Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907-2000) entitled *Byōdō-in Temple* (*Pingdeng Yuan* 平等院). Zhao Puchu was a well-known social activist and a Chinese Buddhist leader, accomplished in classical poetry and calligraphy (a modern literatus)<sup>102</sup> and he wrote this poem when he visited the Byōdō-in Temple, a famous Buddhist temple in the city of Uji in Kyoto Prefecture (Japan).<sup>103</sup> In this poem, Zhao Puchu describes the ecstatic sensation (l. 1) while contemplating the sublime beauty of the most beautiful building in the temple, the ‘Phoenix Hall’ (*Fenghuang Tang* 凤凰堂) (l. 2), built about a thousand years before (l. 3).<sup>104</sup> He compares its solemn beauty to the literary peaks reached during the period of full literary grandeur in the Tang Dynasty (l. 4). In the poet’s vision, Buddhism overloaded those peaks, because the ‘divine breath added something that goes beyond what human nature requires’ (*shengongyijiang*, l. 5).<sup>105</sup>

In this work, the strict relationship between calligraphy and poetry is highlighted also in the calligraphic inscription on the top-right corner [fig. 20].

<sup>101</sup> EricTin confirms the content of the *chengyu* in: Kwanyin\_Tin 2010.

<sup>102</sup> For more information about Zhao Puchu, see: Fu H. 2011.

<sup>103</sup> Byōdō-in Temple was originally built in 998 as a rural villa and then transformed into a Buddhist temple in 1052.

<sup>104</sup> The Phoenix Hall was constructed in 1053. It is the only remaining original building of the Byōdō-in Temple.

<sup>105</sup> For the original poem in Chinese, see: *Hanyu da cidian* 2004.





**Figure 20.** Kwanyin Clan (EricTin). *Shengongyijiang*. June 2010. Graffito: spray-painting on wall. Beijing (detail of the calligraphy on the top-right corner). Source: <http://erictin.blog.sohu.com/154679171.html> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artist

According to the calligraphic aesthetics principles, the text was written in a style between ‘regular script’ (*kaishu*) and ‘running script’ (*xingshu*),<sup>106</sup> in five vertical columns, from right to left; it was shaped using black colour on a white support, and its content is a poem. The text quoted in the calligraphy is:

*Tianji zheng hong | yao ren xing ru zhui. | Ping sheng shi | cishi ning di | shui hui ping lan yi.*

天际征鸿，遥认行如缀。平生事，此时凝睇，谁会凭栏意。

This is the second stanza of an ancient poem entitled *Rouged Lips* (*Di-an jiangchun* 点绛唇).<sup>107</sup> The poem was composed by Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001), a famous poet/scholar of the Song Dynasty, during one of his exiles in the South of the Empire.<sup>108</sup> In the poem, he expresses his inner emotions through a rich imaginary that allows him to skillfully establish similarities with nature: empathy with nature, pain for an unjust exile, pervasive loneliness, and idyllic scenes

**106** This suggestion about the calligraphic style is confirmed by the calligraphy master Silvio Ferragina (e-mail to the Author, 2019-01-20).

**107** EricTin quoted the whole text of the poem in: Kwanyin\_Tin 2010.

**108** “He was three times banished to the provinces because of his outspoken criticism of court policy” (Liu, Irving 1990, 593).

which are the central themes of the poem.<sup>109</sup> These themes are recurrent in Chinese literati poetry of all times and through this work they are reactivated in a fragment of contemporary urban art. Wang Yucheng wrote:

Laden with frowning cloud and steeped in tearful rain,  
The southern shores still beautiful remain.  
In riverside village flanked with fishermen's fair,  
A lonely wreath of slender smoke wafts in the air.

Afar a row of wild geese fly,

Weaving a letter in the sky.  
What have I done in days gone by?  
Gazing from the balustrade,  
Could I weave my way as far as they?  
(Transl. by Xu Yuanchong: Xu 2005, 4)

Even if this graffiti work perfectly adheres to Chinese classical aesthetics principles, the style of the graffiti piece in the centre belongs to a completely different world: it clearly follows the European graffiti style, especially in the use of colours. It seems to be influenced by the 'German school',<sup>110</sup> a fundamental 'graffiti school' for the Chinese writers.<sup>111</sup> In *Shengongyijiang* piece, there is a slight tendency towards wildstyle, even if the characters are still readable. The use of 3D is definitely visible. The inner colours in the text are very simple but embellished with geometric decorative inlays. The first outline and the thickness of each character are black, the second double outline is red with glow effects, and the final interrupted outline is yellow. The yellow line shape suggests the spiral movement of the clouds in the background, which reproduces the Chinese traditional decorative pattern called *yunwen* 云纹 (clouds pattern). Stylised drips are drawn into the clouds to add a graffiti effect to the whole composition. A dark grey shadow is finally drawn at the back of each character in order to underline the illusion of three dimensional shape

**109** For more details on this poem, see: Li J. et al. 2009, 210, and Chen H. et al. 1988, 290-1. In general, "his own poetry shows the influence of both Tu Fu [Du Fu] and Po Chū-yi [Bai Juyi], the former in the matter of diction and syntax and the latter in the choice of theme and general attitude toward poetry" (Liu 1990, 593).

**110** This is a suggestion of the Italian writer Nevla Alven: Nevla Alven, Facebook message to the author (2015-07-31).

**111** The influence of the 'German School' on Chinese graffiti is underlined by Valjakka when she wrote: "Because of the numerous interactions and visiting German creators, the German styles have also had a fairly heavy impact on the Chinese scene, visible even today" (Valjakka 2016, 368).

and space.<sup>112</sup> So, from a stylistic point of view, this work perfectly imitates the Euro-American graffiti manner.

However, the decorative motif in red on the lower corner also imitates Chinese traditional patterns. Its profile recalls the turbulent waves that usually decorated the hem of imperial court robes of the Qing Dynasty, while the web of redlined within its profile evokes the motif of *li shui* 立水, which is composed of diagonal strips in five colours rising from the hemline of the robe and representing deep, standing water.<sup>113</sup>

In the continuous struggle between Chinese traditional aesthetics and Western graffiti culture, the obsessive repetition of tags has the main function to realise a perfect counterbalance. Writing six different individual/crew tags,<sup>114</sup> EricTin links his work to the Euro-American graffiti writing tradition, where obsessive repetition of tags is a hallmark of the whole movement (Mininno 2008, 10). But in writing tags, he pondered the use of Latin letters and Chinese characters in order to balance the two hemispheres. EricTin uses Chinese characters for the tag of the crew, *Guanyin*, written in simplified characters and in running script on a vertical column in the top-left corner, and also for the shorten tag of the crew, *Guan*, written in traditional characters and in regular script on the bottom right of the central graffiti piece. Instead, he uses the Latin letters for the extensive tags of the crew 'Kwanyin' and of the writer 'EricTin' written symmetrically in yellow capital letters below the graffiti piece, one on its bottom right and one on its bottom left; and also for the shorten tag of the writer 'Tin' written in thick white capital letters on the top-right corner of the central graffiti piece. The 'TIN' tag written in Latin capital letters is also intermingled with the big characters of the central piece, thus creating a visual content that shows a real fusion between Chinese and Western cultures and between traditional and modern patterns.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>112</sup> To see the photos of all stages of the creative process: EricTin 2010.

<sup>113</sup> For more details on these decorative patterns, see: Garrett 2012, 15-6.

<sup>114</sup> There are two different types of tags: i) the 'individual tag', which is the signature of the writer, and ii) the 'crew tag', which is the rapid transcription of the name of the crew.

<sup>115</sup> For more details on this work, see Iezzi 2018, 76-80.

#### 4 **‘Modern Literati Graffiti Ceramics’ by the Kwanyin Clan: *Blue and White Porcelain (2009-2010) and the Artwork Made for the Exhibition ‘Street Art, a Global View’ (2016)***

In the series entitled *Blue and White Porcelain* (2009-2010, figg. 21-24), “using traditional blue and white porcelain as a medium, Kwanyin Clan adds their own distinctive graffiti touch [to an ancient process, resulting in] modern, street art flair” (“Kwanyin Clan” 2011). In this series, in fact, the crew chose very typical pottery types, such as plates [figs. 21, 24], vases [fig. 22], and brush pots [fig. 23], and used very typical colours: the white of porcelain and the cobalt blue for decorations. This type of ceramics was common objects of the Chinese imperial upper class daily use in Imperial China,<sup>116</sup> especially for literati. To revitalise this ancient form of art, the crew decided to decorate these porcelains using graffiti techniques and styles: they wrote lettering pieces [figs. 21-22], tags [fig. 23] or charactering pieces [fig. 24] in wildstyle, bubble style et sim., with lots of 3D effects and sometimes added figurative elements shaping in comic and funky styles [fig. 21].

The most important work of the series is entitled *Heqi* 和气 (‘Peace’, [fig. 25]). In this work, Nato used a blue marker to write in wildstyle the two characters of the title on a white porcelain plate. The choice of the characters *heqi* depends on the traditional use of auspicious phrases in Chinese art, and especially on ceramics. *Heqi* is in fact the first part of a famous *chengyu* that says *heqi shengcai* 和气生财 (‘amiability begets riches’) (“Kwanyin Clan” 2011). According to EricTin and adhering to the main concept of the whole series, the aim of this work is to renovate the decorative motives of the ‘blue and white pottery’ (*qinghua* 青花) using graffiti styles.<sup>117</sup> In this work, Chinese elements are in fact numerous: the blue and white porcelain (material, technique, colours, and shape), the Chinese characters, the derivation of the title from a *chengyu*, its auspicious meaning, the decorative ‘clouds pattern’ (*yunwen*) and the motif of the ‘turbulent ocean waves’ (*ping shui* 平水) within the characters lines. But, all these traditional elements have been reinterpreted in a modern way using graffiti language: i) the two characters *heqi* became a complicated construction of interlocking and zigzag lines that consists of lots of connections and ends with an arrow; the result is a completely undecipherable piece that reflects all features of wildstyle; ii) the ‘clouds pattern’ is also used to create some ‘loops’, that are decorative elements used to combine letters in wildstyle, giving more dynamism to the piece; and iii) the use of 3D is emphasised by the dark blue thick-

<sup>116</sup> In particular, blue and white decoration of *qinghua* pottery became widely used in Chinese porcelain in the 14th century and was widely exported also in Europe.

<sup>117</sup> EricTin, e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2016-01-04).



**Figure 21** Kwanyin Clan (KenoTang). *Blue and White Porcelain*. 2009. Porcelain plate with graffiti decoration in cobalt blue. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/28329067@N06/6988321823/in/photostream/> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artist



**Figure 22** Kwanyin Clan. *Blue and White Porcelain*. 2009-10. Porcelain vase with graffiti decoration in cobalt blue. Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/371969250444347907/> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists



**Figure 23** Kwanyin Clan. *Blue and White Porcelain*. 2009-10. Porcelain brush pot with graffiti decoration in cobalt blue. Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/206602701626744667/> (2019-01-16). Courtesy of the artists



**Figure 24** Kwanyin Clan (NatO). *Blue and White Porcelain - Heqi 和气* ('Peace'). 2010. Porcelain plate with graffiti decoration in cobalt blue. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/28329067@N06/4116596848/> (2019-01-16) Courtesy of the artist

ness of the outlines and by the parallel short bars where characters strokes end. Because of all these features, this work is a perfect combination of ancient and modern elements and Chinese and Western traditions. In this round shape embellished with a geometric graffiti pattern the Kwanyin Clan has found its 'quadrature of the circle'.

Chinese pottery is also the source of inspiration of another artwork made by the Kwanyin Clan for the exhibition *Street Art, a Global View* held in 2016 at the Art Museum of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing [fig. 25].



**Figure 25** Kwanyin Clan. Artwork Made for the Exhibition 'Street Art, a Global View'. 2016. Spray-painting on panels. CAFA Art Museum, Beijing. Photo by M. Meccarelli. Courtesy of the artists and the photographer

In the centre of the composition there is a ceramic vase glazed in jade green celadon colour. This vase recalls the celadons made in China during the Song Dynasty that are one of the most beautiful ceramic ware of all time and were particularly appreciated among the Chinese literati. An elaborated lettering in wildstyle with its explosive force pushes on the thin walls of the vase and breaks it up into little pieces: it probably represents the forces of modernity that burst into tradition and exceed their limits. In the lower right corner, two calligraphic inscriptions are written in vertical columns in a style between 'regular script' and 'running script'. As usual in traditional colophon, next to the calligraphic inscription there is a real seal



with the name of the crew, but opposite to the traditional canons, the seal is in Latin letters and not in archaic characters. Both the calligraphic inscriptions on the bottom right are *chengyu*: the first one means ‘after observing a person’s faults and failings, one will understand what he really is’ (*guanguozhiren* 观过知仁), while the second one means ‘if we receive positive influences, we can change our old habits’ (*panlingeyin* 泮林革音). These two *chengyu* seem to be personal and artistic admonishments made by the crew. i) With regard to the personal sphere, the smashed vase represents the person’s faults and failing: when the person’s thin ‘glaze’ is smashed, one can show his real nature and change his old habits. ii) With regard to the artistic sphere, the content of the vase represents the real nature of the Kwanyin Clan’s art (graffiti), while the traditional art is only its cover (the glaze of the vase): when the power of graffiti smashes that cover, the traditional influences will be transformed into modern art.

## 5 Conclusion: the Kwanyin Clan as ‘Modern Literati Graffiti Writers’

The detailed analysis of the six Kwanyin Clan’s graffiti works illustrated above clearly shows the distinguishing *modus operandi* of the Kwanyin Clan and their wish to develop a specific ‘Chinese style’ starting from the reinvention of the Chinese past tradition.<sup>118</sup> In their oeuvres, traditional Chinese elements, arrangements, techniques, supports, formats, colours, aesthetics conceptions, and especially language and texts have been borrowed from the classical context and translated in the language of worldwide graffiti. In fact, starting from the idea that ‘tradition makes modernity’, the Kwanyin Clan conforms and adapts not only the Chinese language (like other local creators) but also the Chinese overall traditional aesthetics to the artistic principles and tools of contemporary graffiti, taking inspiration from the ancient world of the Chinese literati.<sup>119</sup> In their main pieces, this is particularly evident in their extensive reference to the so-called ‘three perfections’ (painting, calligraphy, and poetry), a *fil rouge* through the whole history of Chinese imperial art and a constant in the analysed works. As we have seen, in fact, in these

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**118** This intention was confirmed by EricTin in an e-mail to the Author and M. Merenda (2015-12-20).

**119** As Valjakka affirms: “The question of ‘Chineseness’ is particularly important among the local creators. [...] Cultural references are expressed mainly through content, style, composition, imagery from Chinese visual culture, color and especially, language” (Valjakka 2015, 271). However, except for the Kwanyin Clan, none of the local creators mentioned by Valjakka have been able to reinvent Chinese traditional aesthetics using its literary heritage and being inspired by the figures of the Chinese literati.

oeuvres: i) Chinese painting was reshaped in the ancient forms of landscape and bamboo paintings<sup>120</sup> – the two genres that most identify the literati painting,<sup>121</sup> and even in ceramic vases, plates and brush pots – arts and crafts decorative objects that were always present in the studios of the Chinese literati; ii) calligraphy, that is the chief of the arts in the literati pantheon, is everywhere reshaped as elaborate ‘charactering’ pieces (e.g. *Shirupozhu*, *Shengongyijiang*, and *Heqi*), copious calligraphic inscriptions,<sup>122</sup> and Chinese tags (especially in the forms of *Guan* or *Guanyin* characters); iii) poetry was repeatedly quoted in a chain mechanism ranging from Tang echoes (see *Lin jiang xian*) to contemporary lines (see Zhao Puchu’s poem), the authors of these poems are always ‘Chinese literati’ and their contents are based on their cultural values. Furthermore, in the analysed artworks, a special attention was given to the Song Dynasty (even if in the Kwanyin Clan’s artworks we can retrace the whole history of Chinese art), because it represented a milestone in the development of Chinese literati art.

Another connection with the figures of the Chinese ‘literati’ is their relationship with the political power. As we have seen, the artistic production of the Kwanyin Clan is extremely heterogeneous and various both in style and ‘commission’. In fact, they occasionally produced graffiti for major public initiatives and advertising campaigns of big brands, and, at the same time, they did not forget the fact that graffiti artists tend to operate in the dark and against the established power. Their illegal bombing on the streets is a proof of this way of thinking and working. This problematic relationship with political power linked the figures of these contemporary writers with the traditional figures of the Chinese literati, who have always had a controversial relationship with political power. Influenced by the Weber’s doctrine of ‘moderate desire’, Chinese literati were inherently lacking in rebelling spirit; the maintenance of the original order and the established power could be regarded as their prime contribution (Murvar 1985, 149). However, according to Goldman, for China’s intellectuals, “to criticize government is not the literati’ right, as in the West, but their responsibility” (Goldman 1981, 3). This double function of the Chinese literati is a constant in Chinese history

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**120** Examples of bamboo (and rocks) paintings are frequent in Kwanyin Clan’s production, e.g. in *Bamboo* (2011), *Olympic Beijing* (2008, fig. 3), and *Four screens* (2012).

**121** The Kwanyin Clan never experimented with bird-and-flower painting, portraiture, colour painting, etc., probably because these genres are usually associated with court painting.

**122** Besides the six works analysed above, other Kwanyin Clan’s works where they wrote long calligraphic inscriptions are: *Olympic Beijing* (2008, fig. 3), *Shijulongpan* (2008, fig. 4), *Lanfang University PIC* (2008), *THE BJC KWAN-YIN CREW* (2007), etc. To see these works: “KwanYin Clan” 2009.



and reverberates also in the *modus operandi* of the Kwanyin Clan.

In all these references to the art of the Chinese literati (and their modernisation)<sup>123</sup> the desire of all members of the Kwanyin Clan to present themselves as ‘modern literati painters’, or even better as ‘modern literati graffiti writers’, seems to be evident. A similar case in the recent history of Chinese art is that one of the ‘New Literati Painting’ (*xin wenren hua* 新文人画).<sup>124</sup> This movement began in China in the mid-to-late eighties and reconnects the ideas of the crew to a modern artistic movement and to classical art.

[The ‘New Literati Painting’] saw a large number of painters rediscovering the artistic interests of the ancients as a cultural phenomenon within contemporary art [...], [so becoming] one of the most sober and outstanding mainstreams in the development of Chinese painting. (Lü 2010, 490-1)

Even if there are several differences between this movement and the Kwanyin Clan, both of them aim at a “reform that entailed a return to the ancients” (491). This means that even if both of them “did not deny their connection to the times in which they lived, they attempted to describe artistic issues using methodology and phraseology of the ancients” (494). As to the New Literati Painters, in fact, the Kwanyin Clan is “able to create an endless and individual language in their grasp of the various vocabulary system of Chinese painting, that could be found in ‘poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal carving’” (492). In the analysed works, the Kwanyin Clan demonstrated to know very well ‘the vocabulary system of Chinese painting’: poetry, calligraphy, painting and seals were never missed in these oeuvres. Just like the New literati painters, they “refer to the aesthetic formulations of the traditional culture such as ‘technique modes’, ‘the perfect harmony of breath quality’, ‘concept of shape and color’, and ‘mood real’, [...] under the influence of Western art and to rely on the experience drawn from their own self-cultivation” (493). The main differences between the New Literati Painters and the Kwanyin Clan are in the materials they use, which are “traditional and comparatively conservative” (495) for the New Literati Painters and extremely innovative (spray-painting and markers on walls, panels et sim.) for the Kwanyin Clan. Another important difference is the form of art they used: the New Literati Painters are obviously painters, while the

**123** As to format, for example, they also prefer to be inspired by the horizontal scroll, not only because it is the most suitable for graffiti on wall, but also because it is the most ancient used by the Chinese literati. Also the recurrent use of ‘seal/s’ is a reference to the literati art of seal carving.

**124** For more details, see: Lü 2010, 488-95.

Kwanyin Clan members are graffiti writers. However, in both of their artworks there is an “attempt [...] to fan the dying embers of the tradition and of the spirit of literati-artist painting back to life” (495).

In doing this, the Kwanyin Clan can be also included in the wide range of contemporary Chinese artists that focus their artistic research on the confrontation and reinterpretation of the past (Hearn 2013), and in particular to scholarly traditions (Chen 2011). Chen Anying identifies the discontinuous nature of contemporary Chinese society as the chief rationale for this tendency to ‘revert to tradition’. As to art, this means a special attention to literati painting. After the art boom, and in response to the overwhelming pace of social change and urbanisation, a re-examination of Chinese tradition effortlessly fuses a global contemporary practice with literati traditions.<sup>125</sup> In this perspective, the use of traditional forms, and in particular of the ‘three perfections’, is extremely significant and increasingly common among contemporary artists; their aim is to “marry past significances with a drive to subvert public expectations and communicate multiple meanings in works which appropriate, reinvent, recontextualize and reconsider the past” (Guest 2017). This idea perfectly fits the Kwanyin Clan’s spirit, the spirit of those we can define as ‘modern literati graffiti writers’.

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<sup>125</sup> The confrontation with rapid societal changes and urbanisation is a *leitmotif* in Chinese experimental art, and the use of urban spaces as working spaces is also a common practice for lots of Chinese performance artists and art collectives, like for example Li Yilin, Wang Jin, Zhang Wang, the Big Tail Elephant group, Liang Juhui, Song Dong, Xu Zhen, etc. (Costantino 2006, 152-9). The Kwanyin Clan is influenced by this kind of performative urban art and is part of this artistic experimentation.

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# A Journey into the City Migrant Workers' Relation with the Urban Space and Struggle for Existence in Xu Zechen's Early *jingpiao* Fiction

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**Abstract** In contemporary China, rural-urban migrants constitute a new urban subject with entirely new identity-related issues. This study aims at demonstrating how literature can be a valid field in investigating such evolving subjectivities, through an analysis of Xu Zechen's early novellas depicting migrants' vicissitudes in Beijing. Combining a close reading of the texts and a review of the main social problems characterising rural-urban migration in China, this paper focuses on the representation of the identity crisis within the migrant self in Xu's stories, taking into account the network of meanings employed by the writer to signify the objective and subjective tension between the city and the countryside.

**Keywords** Xu Zechen. Contemporary Chinese literature. Urban literature. Chinese rural-urban migrants. Identity.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Xu Zechen. – 3 Identity Crisis and Marginalized Recognition. – 3.1 Vulnerability and Exploitation of the Migrant Body. – 3.2 Language, Muteness, Incommunicability. – 4 Countryside, Home, and Return. – 5 Concluding Remarks.



## Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-13
Accepted	2019-03-20
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Picerni, Federico (2019). "A Journey into the City. Migrant Workers' Relation with the Urban Space and Struggle for Existence in Xu Zechen's Early *jingpiao* Fiction". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 449-472.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/014

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## 1 Introduction

Urbanisation and labour migration are two central, distinctive and mutually influencing features of contemporary China. The post-socialist socio-economic order is marked by global metropolises and by an increased labour-related mobility from rural areas to newly developed cities. A thriving urban literature has resulted, and new social problems, including those pertaining to migrant workers, have been the object of its constantly growing interest, offering an original literary view on the complex inter- and intra-spatial relations in a changing China. This paper will try to address a specific case of social problems intersecting with an author's artistic sensibility, expressed through works of literary fiction that deal directly with migrant-worker lives.

The re-sharpening of the rural-urban divide, according to Wang Hui 汪晖, has been instrumental in providing a large and cheap migrant labour-force that was much needed to China's accession to the global neoliberal order (Wang 2006; Pozzana, Russo 2006). Migrants are variously termed 农民工 *nóngmíngōng* (peasant-workers), given their double-faceted and unresolved identity, or 打工 *dāgōng*, a Chinese verb meaning 'working [for someone]' ('the boss', according to Pun 2005; for a discussion on the cultural translation of *dagong*, see van Crevel 2017). They are also called the "floating population" (流动人口 *liúdòng rénkǒu*), given their constant existential and working drift. Recently a new derogatory term, "low-end population" (低端人口 *dīduān rénkǒu*), has appeared, mainly referring to the massive evictions of migrant workers in Beijing in the winter of 2017 (e.g. Li, Song, Zhang 2018). The main problem migrants face is the 户口 *hùkǒu* (household registration) system: as they are often unwilling or unable to give up their rural registration in order to register as urban citizens, they do not have access to the city's social and public services, are subject to social stigma as bearers of low 素质 *sùzhì* (moral quality; see Kipnis 2006), and develop feelings of non-belonging.<sup>1</sup> Yet, migrant workers account for 70% of the population increase in urban population (Zhang, Song 2003), although they are usually forced to live in the outskirts, under a sort of "residential segregation" (Wang 2013), and at the margins of urban society (Wang, Ning 2016). Compared with the older generation, younger migrants are pushed not

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The Author wishes to thank Prof. Paolo Magagnin, Prof. Nicoletta Pesaro, as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of the manuscript. My gratitude also goes to Prof. Claudia Pozzana: without her guidance during my M.A. studies, this project would have never seen the light.

<sup>1</sup> Dutton 1998; Franceschini 2014; Huang 2016; Jagusick 2011; Pai 2012; regarding the *hukou*, see Kam, Buckingham 2008.



only by the prospect of a better income, but also by a subjective desire to settle in the city and share its advantages with the city-born (Franceschini 2014; Huang 2016; Xu Fayin 2015).

There are many ways to read social reality, and literature is one of them. Contemporary urban fiction has produced fine examples of literary representation of city reconfigurations since the late seventies, as well as urban subjects' individualisation as a result of the transition to 'market socialism' (e.g. Song 2015; Visser, Lu 2016). In addition to this, against the aforementioned background, the scope of artistic creation in China has also included the subjectivities and social life of the *nongmingong*: human and social issues *vis-à-vis* migrants' impact with the *hukou* system feature prominently in 'subaltern' (底层 *dīcéng*) fiction (Li Yunlei 2014; Rampolla 2017), and an extremely fecund literature has been produced by migrants themselves, mostly in the form of poetry, uniquely exceptional in its representation of its authors' existences, problems, anxieties and dreams (see Liu 2012 for one of the most comprehensive studies on the topic).

This article attempts an analysis of works of urban fiction by Xu Zechen 徐则臣, dedicated to the lives of migrant workers in Beijing; these works are taken as a case in which some of the social issues outlined above fall at the centre of literary creation. Of course, it would be wrong and far too reductive to consider writers who deal with social life as if they were mere reflections of such reality, as if each concrete social problem automatically had its literary rendition. The strength of this 'intersection' between literature and society, which is what interests me, lies precisely in its creating a new and original interpretation, stemming from the fecund encounter between social life and the author's subjective sensibility. Literature can be investigated from multiple perspectives, of course, and my analysis of Xu's fiction concentrates mainly on its interaction with the social reality of its migrant and urban characters, on how it influences their own growth in the stories, and on how it appears to be perceived and read by them.

## 2 Xu Zechen

Xu Zechen is a relatively new star in China's contemporary literary scene. Born in 1978, he belongs to the 七零后 *qīlíng hòu* generation of writers born in the seventies, who grew up in the reform era and came of age during the wave of liberalisations of the nineties. He is a migrant himself, having left his native Jiangsu province to attend university in Beijing, where he currently lives and works as an editor at the literary journal *Renmin wenxue* 人民文学. An extremely versatile and cultivated writer, whose works range from urban fiction and social life to memory, psychology and coming of age, he has been

awarded China's most prestigious literary prizes, including the Lao She and Mao Dun Prizes, for his 2014 novel *Yelusaleng* 耶路撒冷 (Jerusalem). Well-versed in foreign literature, he has attended writing programmes in the US and has been invited to book fairs and festivals in Europe. Despite this, he still attracts relatively little interest from English-speaking academia, as basically no dedicated study on his writing has yet been produced, with the notable exception of Pamela Hunt's article on masculinity (Hunt 2016).

In the 2000s, Xu Zechen published a number of short stories and novellas on the lives of migrants residing in Beijing, known as 京漂 *jīngpiāo* (floating to the capital) or 北漂 *běipiāo* (floating in the north), and their complex relationship with the city. Although they do not fit into the category of the socially critical 'subaltern' fiction (Xu, interview with the author in Beijing, 11 November 2017), his stories provide a valid literary representation of and voice for the existences of those who are at the margins of urban society – the 边缘人 *biānyuánrén* (Li Dan 2013; Meng 2013; Zhang Na 2013). Li Yunlei 李云雷 (2014, 224) remarks that, as opposed to the main trend of *diceng* fiction, which is mainly focused on "hardships and inequality", Xu's writing explores his characters' "general condition of existence, or their 'whole' life". In his own style of literary creation, he mirrors the complex relationship between subjects and the city, the reconfiguration of migrants' identities, the construction of new social and affective ties among them, as well as their attitude towards mobility. His characters are usually migrants working at or beyond the fringes of law, but rather than presenting them as criminals, he observes how this shapes their self, informs their relationship with the city, and influences their agency. According to Julia Lovell (2012, 22), he is then successful in giving his migrant subjects "a convincingly human literary voice". They also generally undergo personal and subjective growth, to the point that these stories have also been read as *Bildungsroman* (Song 2015, 333). This is reinforced by a plain and simple language, in an effort to reproduce the characters' own voices.

Story lines show many similarities, often setting off with the main character's arrival or return to Beijing, with rare properly happy endings. Illicit love stories, strong friendship bonds often broken by mutual resentments, abrupt and often tragic epiphanies on the main characters' relationship with the city are often parts of the plots. Furthermore, the fact that Xu often, but not always, employs a first-person narrative (where the narrator is sometimes a witness who takes little or marginal part in the events), the many similarities between the stories, the constant presence of culture in migrants' lives (for example, their loving good literature and cinema, or being university students), and the use of the same environments as the theatres of action (Haidian, Zhongguancun, the university district) suggest that his works may be at least partly autobiographical, and that the mate-

rial from which he drew inspiration to reproduce the *jingpiao*'s lives was directly collected first-hand, though just in part, in real close contacts with migrants living in Beijing.

One of the original elements in Xu's *jingpiao* fiction is his use of metaphors, literary devices and strongly symbolic experiences to build a network of figurative meanings associated with the social conditions it represents and suggesting further layers of analysis. Reading his fiction and exploring this network of meanings can be useful for delving into vital questions concerning China's contemporaneity and the key, albeit subaltern, actors of its economic development.

### 3 Identity Crisis and Marginalized Recognition

Xu Zechen's characters try to become part of the urban society in a never-ending hand-to-hand combat with the city, which, however, rejects them. Urban space relegates migrants to its periphery, preventing them from achieving the full integration they aspire to; nevertheless, they never surrender, bringing about an inextricable impasse. In dealing with 'space', the Author is indebted to its Foucauldian interpretation as the *locus* where spatial configurations and social relations intertwine: space calls into question simultaneity and juxtaposition, near and far, the side-by-side and the dispersed (Foucault 1986).

In Xu, as in other authors of post-socialist Chinese literature (Cai 2004), travel, (labour) mobility, self-ownership and resilience are means of effecting a negotiation between subjects on the one hand and space and norms on the other, as they are perceived as ways to break free of social constraints and pursue the self's subjective fulfilment in post-reform China, where previous social networks and ideological codes are in crisis (Hunt 2016; Knight 2006; Visser 2008; Zhang Na 2013). However, throughout these stories, migrants lack a sense of belonging either to the city or to the countryside (Zhang Qi 2009). The city exerts a mysterious, irresistible appeal, as wonderfully depicted in this passage, when Bian Hongqi, the protagonist of the first novella "Ah, Beijing" 啊, 北京 (Ah, Beijing, 2004), first arrives in the capital:

大客车在傍晚时分进了首都, 边红旗激动得哭了。[...] 尽管笼罩在沙尘暴下的北京没有想象中的雍容和繁华, 边红旗还是十分满足, 借着沙尘暴的借口, 一直把眼泪流到车站。[...] 后半夜的路上车辆和行人少了, 他走得有些清冷, 但是感觉很好, 满肚子都是诗人的情怀, 觉得路灯下的影子也是诗人的影子。然后他来到了天安门前, 见到毛主席的巨幅画像时, 眼泪又下来了。[...] 像做梦一样。

When, at dusk, the coach entered the capital, Bian Hongqi was so thrilled that he cried. [...] Although Beijing, shrouded in the

[sand]storm, was not as composed and prosperous as he had imagined, Bian Hongqi was excited and used the excuse of sand [in his eyes] to keep crying until the coach reached the station. [...] Deep at night, cars and people grew rarer and rarer, and Bian Hongqi started feeling a bit cold, but he was still enthusiastic – poetic emotions filled his belly and his own shadow under the lamp-posts looked to him like the shadow of a poet. When he arrived in Tian'anmen Square, in front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, seeing the big portrait of Chairman Mao, he couldn't help but shed tears again. [...] It was like a dream. (Xu Zechen 2015a, 15-16)<sup>2</sup>

This appeal is however opposed to the harsh conditions that Hongqi actually has to face when trying to find his own place as a proud member of the urban society. As he does not have an urban *hukou* nor a temporary residence permit, he cannot look for a regular job and is forced to earn a living by driving an old 三轮车 *sānlúnchē* (a sort of pedicab). The difference between this precarious job in the city and his previous job as a teacher in his hometown is striking, as the forced renunciation of intellectual work is Hongqi's first setback in his attempt to enter the city (Wu Zechen 2016, 107). Another defeat comes soon thereafter as his sanlunche is confiscated by the police for lacking proper documents, Hongqi is permanently barred from having a regular or legal job. His only way to stay in the city is to sell fake documents.<sup>3</sup> Only after several vicissitudes, including the city lockdown in the midst of the SARS epidemic and a marital crisis generated when he has an affair with Shen Dan, a Beijinger, does the final fall come, with his wife taking him back home following his arrest for fraud.

Still, mobility is configured as a subjective drive to leave the rural space, considered backward and narrow, to experience the life and possibilities of the global metropolis. 世界一下子离我近了 *shìjiè yīxiàzì lí wǒ jìn le* (All of a sudden, the world has come close), says Hongqi, and he continues saying that youth from his hometown have left to venture in the big world out there (Xu Zechen 2015a, 14). For Hongqi, going out into the world is actually a way out of a bounded life that would be no different from the one of 蒙上眼睛拉磨的驴 *méngshàng yǎnjīng lāmò de lǘ* (a blindfolded donkey pulling the millstone) (26). Financial motivations and hardships are the primary driving reasons in other stories. In “Weizheng zhizaozhe” 伪证制造者 (The

<sup>2</sup> All the translations are made by the Author except where stated otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> Up to this point, the story shares many similarities with Lao She's 老舍 *Luotuo xiangzi* 骆驼祥子 (1936), namely an upright and optimistic outsider as protagonist and the sanlunche/rickshaw as his vehicle for subjective existence in the urban world. As a matter of fact, Li Yunlei cites Lao She, along with Ba Jin 巴金 and Cao Yu 曹禺, as examples of writers very close to the contemporary *diceng* literature (Li Yunlei 2014, 24).

Certificate Counterfeiter, 2006), a man identified only as 'Uncle' has come to Beijing to earn more money – a goal that later, following his wild and imprudent spending on trivialities luxuries, develops into the need to pay off his debts and sustain his family; Song Jiali in "San ren xing" 三人行 (Three People Travelling, 2005) makes it clear that she has no other choice but to come to Beijing if she wishes to achieve any form of upward social mobility; Kuang Shan, a secondary but important character in "Paobu chuanguo Zhongguancun" 跑步穿过中关村 (Running through Zhongguancun, 2007) complains that in the remote, hinterland countryside no gold or silver can be found (Xu Zechen 2015f, 46).

A similar dream also moves Dunhuang in "Paobu chuanguo Zhongguancun". He, however, does not properly 'come' to the city; rather he 'goes back' to it, as the story opens with his release from prison. Curiously, also in this case the 'first' impact with the city happens in the midst of a sandstorm, a natural event not rare in Beijing's spring, but also a literary device used by Xu Zechen to signify the 'floating' condition (Hunt 2016, 15). After he leaves prison, Dunhuang immediately heads back to the metropolis, as once its gates are open, he will usher in a myriad of possibilities to make his dreams of wealth and success come true. These dreams do not materialize, though, as he takes up a precarious and once more illegal job selling pirated DVDs.

This enthusiasm is balanced by the cynicism of other characters. The I-narrator of "Ah, Beijing" is depressing and traumatic in a sense:

北京怎么这么旧呢，跟电视上完全不一样哪[。] 那是的海淀完全可以说是荒凉，和我生活的那个小城的郊区没有任何区别。大学四年我几乎都待在校园里，不想出去。

Beijing was so old! And totally different than what we saw on television. [...] Back then, Haidian was a really desolate place, not so different from the town I was from. I spent my four university years almost entirely inside the campus. I had no wish to go outside. (Xu Zechen 2015a, 16)

Although the narrator admits that he eventually came to like Beijing (6), his approach is much more cynical than Bian Hongqi's and similar to Uncle's from "Weizheng zhizaozhe"; Uncle is aware he cannot make as much money as he would like, but also knows that Beijing is the only place where he can earn something for his son's studies by selling fake documents (Xu Zechen 2015c, 121).

As the (migrant) self is able to exercise its autonomy and affirm its existence through travel, it is by no means represented as a mere victim of a certain socio-economic determinism, but rather is equipped with a certain degree of agency. This is essentially what Sabina Knight terms "self-ownership" and describes as the possibility for

subjects to carry out their moral action and exert subjectivity (Knight 2006). Self-ownership as a concept centring on individual action and moral responsibility is a distinctive feature of the post-socialist cultural self, which has left the previously dominant collective dimension behind it. This is particularly true for Bian Hongqi; but Dunhuang and Kuang Shan, for example, are also particularly aware of their self-ownership as they see themselves as some sort of self-made 创业 *chuàngyè* (entrepreneurs) (Xu Zechen 2015f, 27) and consider travel, living for today and small illegal activities as exciting thrills in their lives. In their case, the break from social norms and family networks results in a life characterised as 无牵无挂 *wú qiān wú guà* (no ties or worries) (85). This glorification of self-ownership reaches its peak when Uncle in “Weizheng zhizaozhe” becomes the leader of a small team of counterfeiters, who call him by the pretentious title of 老板 *lǎobǎn* (boss), something that leads him to say that he could finally have 点领导的味儿 *diǎn lǐngdǎo de wèi’r* (a small taste of leadership) in his life (Xu Zechen 2015c, 142). Self-ownership is thus realised, but it is extremely limited, marginalized at the periphery of urban society, hindered by the *jingpiao* characters’ condition as migrants and by their lack of an urban *hukou*, i.e. the lack of recognition from the city.

Here we need to go back to space and its web of social relations. As their interspatial mobility falls within a predetermined set of socio-cultural conditions, subordinating their full integration into the urban space to social determinants, migrants have to negotiate their possibility to exercise an agency in the city. In other words, they struggle to obtain what Henri Lefebvre (1996) notably termed “the right to the city”. Such a right, however, is only attainable through recognition from the urban space. Recognition here is what allows the subject to properly have a space of existence in a certain system, without which the subject is, borrowing Jacques Rancière’s concept (2010), a “part of those who have no part”, someone who can find no place in the constitutive framework of a given social order. Moreover, according to Alain Badiou (2011, 58), “existence is a transcendental degree indicating the intensity of a multiplicity’s appearing in a given world”, but if the intensity is minimal, “this multiple does not exist in this world”, to the point that “[i]ts existence is a non-existence”. A “right to centrality” as an “existential and political right” (Merrifield 2017) is central also in Lefebvre’s discourse.

In my reading of Xu’s stories, it is under these conditions that self-ownership soon reveals its limits, mainly through the fact that the subjects exercising it remain outsiders with respect to the city’s social architecture. The heroic ‘floating’ rootlessness thus eventually leads to an *impasse* in Xu’s migrant characters *vis-à-vis* the definition of their identity. These limits are mainly due to failure to attain recognition from the space where agency is effected.

The obsession with documents in *Ah, Beijing* is particularly evocative of this, and may be read through the lens of Badiou's discourse on existence. As Perocco remarks (2017, 28), migrants' social rights are subject to their holding a document (either working or residential); and the document here can be seen through Badiou's analysis as the crystallisation of recognition, the permit to exist. In the story, Bian Hongqi seeks a number of 'documents' that may certify his belonging to the urban society. The first of such documents is the 暂住证 *zànzhùzhèng* (temporary residence permit), which he does not have (he actually does not know that such a thing even exists), and he cannot look for a job through official channels as a result. Lacking this document is the first negation of his right to the city, and this is actually made explicit by another 外来者 *wàiláizhě* (outsider) who tells him, speaking half Anhui dialect and half *Putonghua*, that he had better not get caught by the police without that paper (Xu Zechen 2015a, 17-18),

The second document, this time metaphorical, is his relative's *sanlunche*, which he can use to work and earn a living in a legal way: through it, Bian Hongqi can finally taste a sip of his right to the city. The pedicab eventually gets confiscated because it lacks the proper documents to travel, producing a kind of epiphany in him:

唯一能和北京发生关系的凭证丢了，他第一次发现北京实际上一直都不认识自己，他是北京的陌生人，局外人。[...] 一辆破三轮一下子就把他送回了苏北的一个小镇上。

The only certificate that could allow him access to Beijing was lost, and he realised, for the first time, that Beijing had actually never known him, that to it he was a stranger, an outsider. [...] An old *sanlunche* had been enough to send him back to a small village in northern Jiangsu. (19)

The third document is the marriage certificate. Hongqi is married to a woman that he leaves behind in their hometown, starting an extra-marital relation with Shen Dan in Beijing. Her parents are opposed to their relation unless Hongqi divorces his wife, thus ending his floating life and bringing him finally to settle down (38). A marriage certificate would give Shen Dan's family the surety that the *hukou*-less Hongqi would not leave Beijing, but it would also be beneficial to Hongqi himself as it would allow him to finally become an urban citizen, obtaining the recognition he is longing for. His unwillingness to permanently leave his wife (for reasons that will be elaborated further on) results in the collapse of his relation with Shen Dan, i.e. in the failure of his attempt to access urban society.

### 3.1 Vulnerability and Exploitation of the Migrant Body

The contradiction between the smallness and vulnerability of the *jingpiao* characters on the one hand and the dizzying, bulky might of the impersonal metropolis on the other is a central feature in this representation. Recurrent in Xu's fiction is the *jingpiao* feeling like 'ants', tiny and weak. The metaphor is first used by the narrator in the first pages of "Ah, Beijing", where he says:

觉得自己像只蚂蚁, 和一千多万只的其他的蚂蚁一样。蚂蚁太多了, 拥挤得找不到路了, 找不到也得找, 不然干什么呢。

I feel like an ant, identical to millions of other ants. We are too many, so many that we cannot even find our way, but we must keep on seeking it, otherwise what would there be left for us? (6)

This rather gloomy perception of vulnerability and subjective drowning in an indistinct mass of people with no other choice but to keep trying to access urban society is at odds with the optimism of other categories of migrants towards their urban dream of success and wealth (Huang 2016; Kan 2013). This is also shown in Bian Hongqi's final rendition of his poem to Beijing, originally intended as an ode to the city, but, after several unsuccessful attempts, eventually completed in a drunken night as a song of disillusionment:

啊, 北京  
我刚爬到你的腰上  
就成了蚂蚁

Ah, Beijing  
After climbing up to your belly  
I have become an ant. (53)

Ants carrying big loads of food can be compared to *jingpiao* migrants' hardships in struggling for survival (Ding 2012), while their multitude speaks to the migrant work-force's essence as a "reserve of the reserve army", an expression used by Perocco (2017, 27) drawing on Marx. In other words, everyone appears unessential and disposable, an easily replaceable part of one single 'assembly line'. This is what Bian Hongqi apparently thinks after his sanlunche gets confiscated by the police, when he realises in dismay that if he died that day no one would know it (Xu Zechen 2015a, 19).

An extreme metaphor for non-belonging, peripheral labour and exploitation is prostitution. For various reasons, often but not always coerced, prostitution is constantly present in migrations, and this is true also for international migration in South-east Asia (Graeme 2017) as



well as for rural-to-urban migration in China (Sapio 2011). Symbolic or actual episodes of street labourers and fake-document sellers selling their body are recurrent metaphors in Xu's stories. Characters resort to this metaphor consciously: for Bian Hongqi, this is a degrading and humiliating activity, but in the end acceptable as a means to the end of urban integration:

人一旦降低了自己, 就无所谓了, 就像妓女, 卖一次就想着卖第二次, 然后第三次, 这东西搞不清楚, 它一定是有快感的。

[A] man should not torment himself if he is forced to go down for a period. He's like a prostitute - after selling her body for the first time, she wishes to do it a second time, and then a third one, and eventually she finds pleasure in it, although even she doesn't know why. (Xu Zechen 2015a, 18)

In another passage, the eventual transition from illegal to legal work, although it never comes true, is symbolised as 从良 *cóngliáng* (prostitutes who get married and leave the street) (65). This metaphor becomes literal when Song Jiali from "San ren xing" engages in prostitution to pay for her younger brother's wedding expenses (Xu Zechen 2015e, 274), as her ordinary job does not allow her to earn enough money for it (271).

Similarly, another sexual metaphor is employed as the I-narrator of *Ah, Beijing* sees his first novel altered by the publishing agent to make it more exotic and attractive to the urban public (on the exoticization of migrants in mainstream media, see e.g. Jaguscik 2011; Dooling 2017). As he protests against the alteration, he is told by the agent:

你看现在的作家, 为了成名不时地让别人骂他糟蹋他, 不然怎么过上好日子呢, 稿费这两天就兑现了, 你看钱都拿到手了, 还有什么好说的呢, 我再次无话可说。那感觉, 就像被强奸了一回。

"Can't you see that today all writers have to be ready to be insulted and trampled on if they want to be famous? You can't possibly hope to become successful otherwise. We gave you all we owed you in the last few days, you've got the money, what else do you want?" I was speechless. I felt as if I had been raped. (Xu Zechen 2015a, 67)

This feeling of being raped derives from an urban entity (the publishing agent) exploiting and forcibly altering the author's own creative product, which is tied to his non-urban identity both because he is a migrant and because it talks of migration. In this sense, it may be read more generally in terms of the alienation felt by migrant workers towards the jobs they do in the city, especially by those who have to sell their own manpower at a very cheap price, obtaining in return only a minimal part of the resources for their social reproduction and earn-

ing no way out of their peripheral existence. Urban society, Lovell remarks, is seen as a force taking sexual advantage of migrant labourers, eventually dumping them (Lovell 2012, 22).

The body is the ultimate means for expressing subjective agency in “Women zai Beijing xiangyu” 我们在北京相遇 (In Beijing We Met, 2006), too. Sha Xiu’s negative experience in the story is full of symbolic meanings associated with rural migrants’ frustration with and alienation from urban life, epitomised by her never fully getting used to the busy city life and the noise of its streets. 沙袖又迷路了 *Shā Xiù yòu mílù le* (Sha Xiu had got lost again) (Xu Zechen 2015d, 159) is the very first sentence of the story, introducing the condition of the woman, who always loses her way while getting on and off different subway and bus lines in an unsuccessful search for the bus to go back home. Such disorientation is also readable as a disorientation in life and agency, originating from the sense of rootlessness lingering in Xu’s stories. The plot evolves in parallel with her destructive frustration towards a city she feels no attachment to and cannot orient herself within, let alone find any sense of belonging. Sha Xiu’s desire to recover her lost agency finally explodes in an individual act of vengeful rebellion against her fiancée, Meng Yiming, for bringing her to the city by cheating with Bian Hongqi (characters from “Ah, Beijing” reappear in this story), getting pregnant and seeing in her unborn child her only vehicle for existence in the (urban) world:

我什么都没有了，一想到还有个孩子在我身体里，我才觉得我还有点东西是自己的。你知道吗，我在这里总觉得飘着，脚不着地，它让我实在一点。

I have nothing left, but then, thinking of the baby I’m carrying, I realised that there is still something that belongs to me. You know, I always feel like I’m floating and unable to touch the ground, but he makes me feel a bit more real.<sup>4</sup> (215)

Her ‘revenge’ eventually dries up as she gets an abortion and finds in Meng Yiming’s sincere commitment to marry her a new way to negotiate her existence, but now 除了你，现在她什么都没有了 *chú le nǐ, xiànzài shénme dōu méiyǒu le* (she has got nothing now, except you) (218). This puts an end to her individual rebellion and shows that her agency and self-ownership is *de facto* limited by her concrete conditions, as she resigns herself to living in the city with him.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> From a comparative perspective, the relation with Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* is apparent.

<sup>5</sup> One more comparison may be seen here with the character Nora from Henrik Ibsen’s *Doll House*, well-known by cultured Chinese readers, and the object of a severe and brilliant critique by Lu Xun.

### 3.2 Language, Muteness, Incommunicability

Multiple episodes and passages throughout Xu's *jingpiao* stories (Xu Zechen 2015c, 120; 2015e, 257) see migrants struggling with what appears to be a language barrier between their own local dialects or accent and the strictly *Putonghua*-speaking city. This is not surprising, and it also comes from social reality. Data show that the poor level of *Putonghua* spoken by migrants from both the old and new generations, despite the latter's generally better education, often leads to discrimination, misunderstanding and even incidents in the workplace, not to mention that it limits the possibility for autonomous negotiation on the part of the migrants themselves (Xia, Xie 2013). According to Pun Ngai (2005), the linguistic barrier can also become one of the major obstacles to the building of a network of solidarity among migrants. As a result, this linguistic trait that accentuates their outsider origin is widely perceived as a stigma by urban citizens – and this is particularly true for Beijing, from which *Putonghua* originates (Dong, Blommaert 2009).

In “Women zai Beijing xiangyu” this is functional to the progress of the plot. When Sha Xiu grows tired of staying home doing only housework, she finds a job in a bookshop. She only endures a few days, however, because of the constant fights with the shop's owner, who complains that her strong Dongbei accent makes communication with customers more difficult. Following her refusal to adapt her language to *Putonghua*, eventually the situation becomes unbearable and she quits the job. This only adds to her sense of disorientation and non-belonging, leading to a quite explicit reflection on language-based discrimination:

北京越来越像上海了，口音不对就欺负你。上海我没去过，听说开口不“阿拉”一下，坐车都受歧视，是乡下人。北京公交车的售票员，耳朵也越来越挑剔了，听到外地口音的就把你归入民工行列，问路都爱理不理的，儿化音重得都有点阴阳怪气了。

Beijing looked more and more like Shanghai, having the wrong accent was enough to be discriminated against. I had never been to Shanghai, but I had heard that, if you did not put some ‘*ala*’<sup>6</sup> in your speech, you would be looked at as country folk even on the bus. Bus ticket-sellers' ears were getting more and more nitpicking, hearing an outsider's accent was enough for them to throw you in the category of *mingong*. They were cold and peevish also when you asked for directions, and they would speak with such a

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6 Shanghaiese for ‘I’.

strong *erhua*<sup>7</sup> that it would even sound a bit eccentric. (Xu Zechen 2015d, 179)

While this passage may sound like a sort of denunciation of the serious social problem of language barriers and differences, Xu Zechen adds his own creative touch to the reason why Sha Xiu refuses to learn a more correct *Putonghua*. Her refusal is motivated by her impression that Yiming, speaking *Putonghua* without his strong accent, 一下子就远了 *yīxiàzi jiù yuǎn le* (suddenly sounded far away) (178). She misses the 地瓜干味 *dìguāgānwèi* (dry sweet potato flavour) of his native accent, using a food typical of their home province, Shandong, as the signifier of this disharmony, unveiling her obstinate unwillingness to separate further from her rural identity.

Language occupies a likewise important place, though with far larger symbolic implications, in “Xi Xia” 西夏 (Xi Xia, 2006). The story tells of a mysterious mute girl who suddenly enters the life of Wang Yiding and quickly places herself in his house, behaving as if she was his wife. They are both migrants, although while Wang Yiding works in a bookshop and is renting an apartment, Xi Xia has nothing – no house, no job, apparently no provenance, and even no voice. She is completely denied access to discourse.

There are, of course, many ways to read “Xi Xia” and the muteness in it that do not directly involve language and migrants’ relationship with it. The story has been discussed along its themes of life possibilities and unpredictability, migrants’ existential solitude, and psychology, as well as in its distance from Xu Zechen’s previous realist writing (Shao, Shi, Zhao 2007). From a different point of view, Pamela Hunt has analysed the story starting from its portrayal of gender roles performed in Wang Yiding and Xi Xia’s house, and within this frame the girl’s muteness signifies her need for a man to express herself and to give him the role as her “voice” (Hunt 2016, 22).

In my opinion, trying to locate this story’s place in my attempt to examine literary renditions of migrants’ social problems, Xi Xia’s muteness is interpretable also as the most extreme form of the *jingpiao*’s inability to speak *Putonghua* properly, and therefore to negotiate their existence within the urban space. Xi Xia is, after all, described as being 无根 *wúgēn* (rootless) and merely 悬浮 *xuánfú* (floating) (Xu Zechen 2015b, 105), terms that Xu usually associates with migrants. Because of her muteness, Xi Xia cannot adequately respond to the landlady’s harassment and accusations, nor can she find a job on her own. On a broader scale, this may also mirror the marginalization of migrants’ voices in the official discourse (Jagus-

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<sup>7</sup> *Erhua* is a phonological process typical of the Beijing dialect. It refers to the presence of a retroflex *er* sound at the end of a syllable.

cik 2011). Social muteness is present also in the powerful verses of the *dagong* poetess Zheng Xiaoqiong 郑小琼: “a voiceless life, | This nameless, sexless life, this life of contract” (Zheng 2017, 102). Voiceless subjects are condemned to political silence, subalternity, and therefore to inexistence, a grim condition reminiscent of the 无声的中国 *wúshēng de Zhōngguó* (voiceless China) in Lu Xun’s 鲁迅 words. At the end of the story, it is revealed that Xi Xia’s muteness might be cured, and so she might eventually be able to autonomously negotiate her own place in society.

Language contributes to re-articulating the border between city and countryside not only as a geographical border, but also as a deep cultural and identity gulf directly affecting the self of migrants who attempt to overcome it. Sha Xiu’s refusal to learn *Putonghua* is a desperate effort to resist the disorientation produced in her by the city, and her obstinacy to keep her native dialect and accent, despite the cost in terms of job-finding and stigma, is clearly a consequence of her attachment to her rural origins. Whereas for Bian Hongqi living in the city means getting closer to the world, from the point of view of language, city and countryside actually appear as two different worlds on their own, and serious situations of incommunicability may occur.

#### 4 Countryside, Home, and Return

The identity of Xu Zechen’s characters is thus caught in a seemingly never-ending process of redefinition and re-articulation through their negotiation with the urban space, following the departure from (and the impossibility or unwillingness to return to) the hometown in the countryside, and the desire to fully become part of the city. The progress from the existential ‘before’ to the ‘now’ of his *jingpiao* characters’ lives following their migration, according to Wu Xueli’s 吴雪丽 scheme (2016), is hardly a fixed or linear movement. The ‘before’ is always present and lurking in their ‘now’, as the native countryside constantly lures them with its promise of plain life away from the anxieties of the city, toward family solidarity and warmth, and sense of belonging. There are cases when the ‘before’ – the countryside – becomes also the ‘after’ for the characters, as in Bian Hongqi’s forced expulsion from the city in “Ah, Beijing” and the narrator and Song Jiali’s voluntary return home in “Women zai Beijing xiangyu” and “San ren xing” respectively. Alternatively, the ‘now’ can become a prison (both imaginative and actual), as both Uncle and Dunhuang’s stories begin with their release from jail, and end with their new arrest, sending them back to the starting point. As they attempt to obtain the city’s recognition or to find their own place in the urban space, the *jingpiao* engage in a bidirectional relation with

the countryside they come from, characterised by constant, and often increasing, tension.

The symbolic rendition of the separation between city and countryside is a common trait of both post-May-Fourth literature (Hunter 1984) and post-eighties fiction (Pesaro 2009). Countryside has also been represented in contemporary literature as the place where the traditional values and forms of family and solidarity still survive, as opposed to the marketization and atomisation of life in the city, where everyone is on their own (Gao 2002).

That Bian Hongqi's reason for leaving his hometown is the promise for adventure and the desire to break free of social norms, in addition to better economic prospects, has already been mentioned. The city is close to the world, whereas in the country 生活在世界之外 *shēnghuó zài shìjiè zhīwài* (the life seemed out of the world) (Xu Zechen 2015a, 26). Rural life for Bian Hongqi is monotonous and narrow, but also stable and warm at the same time, compared to the perilous life in Beijing. This is made evident in the very different descriptions of Shen Dan, his urban lover who represents the city, and his wife, who represents the countryside also in her unwillingness to leave it. Shen Dan is

长相还行, 头发有点干枯, 后来细看一下, 不是干枯, 而是焯油焯的欠火候, 成了干涩的土黄。

not particularly beautiful, and her hair was dry, but on looking more closely, I realised that it was not dry, rather it had been made arid and given a yellow colour by a low-quality hair product. (10)

By contrast, the wife

给人的感觉却很好, 眉眼清爽闲静, 尤其身上的某些气质, 是都市里的时装饰不出来的, 朴素, 大方, 很有女人味。看到你你就不自主地会想到温暖的家庭和幸福的生活。

would give anyone a very good impression - her clean and peaceful look and, even more, her posture were marks of a simplicity and a generosity that no urban fashion make-up would have been able to reproduce, and that gave her a strong feminine tone. Looking at her, it was impossible not to instinctively feel the warmth of family and the joy of life. (57)

Considering Xu's use of his different female characters as metaphors for the opposition between urban and rural life (Li 2013; Zhang 2012), a tension is produced between the adventurous escape to the stimulating and thriving, but fake and frequently hostile city on the one hand, and the plain and warm, but monotonous, genuineness of the

countryside, where one would live, like a blindfolded donkey pulling the millstone, on the other. According to Zhang Na 张娜 (2012, 39), the 朴素低调 *pǔsù dīdiào* (silent pureness) of the countryside, embodied by the wife's plain and clear look, prevails over the 心高气傲 *xīngāo qiàos'ào* (arrogant pomposity) of the city, showing to what extent the countryside remains the spiritual destination of this group of city outcasts. The following passage clearly affirms this subjective state of mind:

我在听到边嫂的声音时, 有一个强烈的感觉就是, 边红旗其实还是属于苏北的那个小镇的, 那里有他的美丽贤惠的妻子, 有他的家, 有永远也不会放弃他的生活, 那些东西, 应该才是最终能让他心安的东西。

Every time I heard Mrs. Bian's voice, I had the strong feeling that Bian Hongqi, after all, still belonged to that village of northern Jiangsu. His lovely wife with her good principles, his home, the life he would never renounce, were all waiting for him. These were the things that would have been really able to comfort and encourage him. (Xu Zechen 2015a, 73)

Despite its negative meaning in terms of prospects for personal affirmation, economic success and subjective realisation, the countryside also maintains a positive meaning when it comes to the values of family and solidarity it represents. The exact opposite goes for the city, but this negativity is expressed through its misrecognition of migrants as urban subjects. It is precisely in this negativity that the lure to return to the hometown fits in. Renouncing Beijing and returning to the countryside actually becomes a possibility in their darker moments of discouragement, as shown by the gloomy thoughts of the narrator in "Women zai Beijing xiangyu":

几年了, 我在北京到底干了些什么? 北京对我的意义到底在哪里? 过去不是没想过这个问题, 但都是一闪念, 过一下脑子就忘了。是啊, 为什么偏要留在北京? 为什么那么多人削尖了脑袋要在北京占下一块地方? 大家就那么爱北京么? 我想肯定不是这么回事, 但是, 为什么很多人混得已经完全不像样了, 还放不下这个地方?

After all, what had I done in Beijing during all those years? What did Beijing mean to me in the end? It was not that I had never given it a thought, but it had always been like a rapid flash, and I had forgotten about it right after. Really, why does everyone want to stay in Beijing? Why do so many people torment themselves to stay here? Do they love it so much? I'm sure that is not the point, but then why do so many people wear themselves out trying to get by, and still cannot leave this place? (Xu Zechen 2015d, 219)

This notwithstanding, Xu's characters cannot easily make the decision to give up their urban dreams and go back, as frankly put by Kuang Shan:

我们都出来五年了, 回得去吗, 拿什么回去?

We have been away for five years, do you think we can just go back now? With what? (Xu Zechen 2015f, 46)

This is a clear reflection of migrants' unwillingness to leave the city despite their hardships because doing so would be an admission of defeat and make them lose face (Kan 2013). Nevertheless, Xu Zechen seems to suggest that such an impossibility is not only due to the objective misrecognition by the city, but also to a subjective, subconscious attachment to the countryside. This is a possible reading, for example, of Bian Hongqi's unwillingness to divorce his wife, because it would be a divorce from his origins as well. The Chinese helps us to build an effective parallel: Shen Dan's persistent urge for him to 'really leave' his wife, 真离(婚) *zhēn lí (hūn)*, sounds extremely similar to 'really leave' his place of origin and hometown, 真离(开) *zhēn lí (kāi)*.

Misrecognized in the city, some of Xu's characters enjoy some sort of recognition in their hometowns. When Bian Hongqi goes back to get a divorce, a local newspaper seeks him for an interview and calls him "a model for the youth" who belongs to "the first generation of the youth of our town who have gone to work in Beijing and achieved their early successes" (Xu Zechen 2015a, 46) – quite ironic, as his only success consists in landing an illegal job and having an affair, but this irony adds to that of a fake document-seller looking for documents that may attest his existence in Beijing. This is made explicit in the following lines from "Women zai Beijing xiangyu":

母亲说: "北京有什么好? 呆在家里我都能抱上孙子了。再说, 就这么漂着也不是个事, 没个根。眼看着三十的人了, 你不急我和你爸还急。"

[...] "大家都说挺好的," 她说。"我们这边很多人都知道你哪。"

她的意思是说, 在北京我不怎么样, 但在我们这个小地方, 也大小算是个作家了。真让我哭笑不得。

[...] 我无话可说。有时候我也在怀疑, 现在留在北京对我的意义到底是什么? 是一种朝圣还是一个仪式? 或者仅仅是一个蒙骗自己的形式和借口? 我说: "我再想想。"

"What's so good about Beijing?" asked my mother. "If you were home I would have grandchildren to hug. And also, floating like this is meaningless, you have no roots. You're over thirty, Dad and I are worried about you, even if you don't care."

[...] "Everyone thinks highly of you," she added. "Many people here know about you, you know?"



She wanted to say that, even if I didn't have a great time in Beijing, here, in our small strip of land, I would still be considered a writer. Tears came to my eyes, and I didn't know if they were tears of sadness or joy.

[...] I was speechless. I'd also had my doubts - after all, what reason was there for me to stay in Beijing? Was it a pilgrimage, or a rite? Or was it maybe just a way to deceive myself, an excuse?

"I'll think about it," I said. (Xu Zechen 2015d, 204-5)

The rural home is speaking to the narrator here. Towards the end of the story, the returned narrator looks at his image in the mirror, and sees himself as 还像模像样 *hái xiàngmóxìàngyàng* (all in all presentable) (220), opposed to those who 混得已经完全不像样了 *hùn de yǐjīng wánquán bù xiàngyàng le* (wear themselves out trying to get by) in the city (219). The mirror reappears in "Paobu chuanguo Zhongguancun", as Dunhuang stares at his reflected image after a sandstorm and a night spent homeless, when he is covered in dust and sand. Recalling that sand (and sandstorm) is one of Xu's preferred images for floating, we can attempt a metaphorical, and vaguely Lacanian, interpretation of the two mirror scenes: on the one hand, Dunhuang sees himself literally devoured by the sand, i.e. defined by his own condition as a floating migrant and a marginalized person trying to achieve his right to existence in the city, although he apparently does not find this condition fully acceptable, as he seems not to recognise himself (37); the narrator, on the other hand, can finally identify with a self ("all in all presentable") that has embraced his rural origins, given up Beijing and floating, and settled down in his hometown.

In "San ren xing", a refined element of intertextuality enforces the concept. Song Jiali's constant, looming sense of non-belonging to Beijing, as opposed to Kang Bosi's brighter prospects in the city in his capacity as an educated migrant rather than a poorer *dagong* like her, eventually results in her decision to permanently return to the countryside to care for her family (again, traditional values at play). The story ends with a quote from Shen Congwen's 沈从文 *Biancheng* 边城:

"这个人也许永远不回来了, 也许'明天'回来!"

"Perhaps this person shall never come back, or perhaps 'tomorrow' he shall". (Xu Zechen 2015e, 288)

What is interesting here is Xu's reference to a writer who notably upheld country life as an element of 'Chineseness' itself, against the decadence, corruption and 'foreignness' of the modern city (Zhang Yingjing 1995). It might just be a cultivated literary reference, or perhaps a subtle nod to affirm Xu's conscious affinity with a literary tradition emphasising the good of the countryside, or even both. It

is however possible to trace an evolution in Xu's treatment of rural return: tragic in, *Ah, Beijing* spiritual/performative in Xi Xia (as the mute woman recreates a 'rural' life in Wang Yiding's house), explicit and joyful in "Women zai Beijing xiangyu".

Finally, despite recurring admissions of vulnerability through the use of several symbols, Xu Zechen's *jingpiao* characters are drawn as morally positive and marked by integrity, compassion and friendship (Zhang 2013). According to Gao Xiuqin 高秀芹 (2002, 122-3), within contemporary literature, the city, with its market practice and atomised individuals, has also signified an erasure of family and inter-family solidarity, which is proper to the countryside as well as to traditional forms of collective life that carry the marks of their rural cultural origin. In Xu's fiction, against a social background where the traditional family structure is undoubtedly in crisis, migrants nevertheless activate new forms of solidarity that amount to what Knight (2006, 224) considers moral actions to overcome the individual and individualistic pragmatism typical of free market societies. In *Ah, Beijing*, after his arrest, Bian Hongqi is rescued by the selfless efforts of the narrator; in "Xi Xia", Wang Yiding eventually welcomes the young mute despite his friends' opposition and his knowing virtually nothing about her; morality is featured prominently in "Weizheng zhizaozhe", as Uncle feels morally compelled to help his fellow forger in jail, with references to 道上的规定 *dàoshàng de guīdìng* (moral rules) shared by counterfeiters (Xu Zechen 2015c, 124); the whole plot of "Paobu chuanguo Zhongguancun" revolves around Dunhuang's promise to find and take care of his jailed friend's wife. Evident cases of a selfish profit-oriented attitude are also present, especially as Bian Hongqi and Uncle are betrayed respectively by their friend and lover to escape arrest, but they are never left entirely alone. As Hunt (2016, 10) observes, Xu's characters are alone before their arrival to the city, after which they build a new network of affections and friendships.

## 5 Concluding Remarks

Xu Zechen's own creative touch in writing the relationship between the urban space and its non-urban subjects offers valuable inspiration to reflect on the influence of globalisation on contemporary Chinese (and not only Chinese) lives, rural-urban migration in China, and the urban marginalized. Migrants' subjectivity in their journey to and through the city in Xu's *jingpiao* fiction are vividly represented through a number of situations, including illegal labour, and articulated in an original network of symbolic meanings, where an artistic use is made of factors such as identity, travel, gender relations, body and language to delve deeper into the migrants' self in crisis, caught between desires and socio-economic determination. Migrants' daily

lives, interpersonal relations and urban anxieties stand at the centre of the scene, revealing multiple layers of marginality in the city. Xu's characters live in an era of unprecedented economic progress for China, usually walking among the very symbols of its technological achievements in a global metropolis *par excellence*, and yet can enjoy only small bites of its wealth. Their stories often end with their existence either remaining invariably peripheral and frequently illegal, or experiencing failure (arrest, expulsion, retreat). Both this paralysis at the margins of the urban space and the negative changes are configured as a result of urban misrecognition. The *jingpiao* subject's self-ownership and autonomous agency in Xu's fiction thus appear as simultaneously upheld and strongly conditioned by the tension between recognition and misrecognition, a tension generally present also in *dagong* literature (Liu 2012, 6). If their right to the city is denied by the *hukou* system, they have no part in urban society, to use Rancière's words, and they are inexistent in that space, to use Badiou's.

Furthermore, Xu's work emphasises another aspect of the *jingpiao*'s complex subjectivity, i.e. the influence of the rural code of values. He stresses his characters' subjective inability or unwillingness to get rid of their rural origins, as the latter are shown in a good light and associated with positive values, above all solidarity (and family), in opposition to economic backwardness or adversity. Whereas mainstream media representations reduce migrants' journey into the city as an individual effort at conforming to a more modern and socially superior *suzhi* (Jaguscik 2011), Xu Zechen clearly questions this view, and the rural *suzhi* of his characters is anything but backward. In other words, this constant presence of their rural origin, both as a set of positive values and a shared condition, informs his *jingpiao* characters' moral agency, which is able to carve out limited, marginal spaces for existence in the city, notably with new social bonds, but remains peripheral and limited by the very social architecture of the metropolis.

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# Pratiche di sottotitolazione non professionale in Cina

## Il gruppo Shenying e la traduzione del turpiloquio nella prima stagione di *Gomorra-La serie*

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**Abstract** The online growth of non-professional subtitling, a phenomenon today internationally known as fansubbing, has allowed Chinese audience to watch *Gomorra-La serie*. This Italian TV series is linguistically characterised by a great use of jargon, coarseness and swearing that Chinese fansubbers have tried to accurately reproduce using equivalents in their mother tongue, or tabooing them by subjecting some of the most vulgar and irreverent expressions to linguistic interdiction. After a detailed presentation of major translation strategies used by Chinese fansubbers, this works aims to present a preliminary linguistic analysis of the Chinese subtitles of the first season of *Gomorra-La Serie*.

**Keywords** Non-professional translation. Chinese fansubbing. *Gomorra-La serie*. Euphemism. Linguistic taboo.

**Sommario** 1 Introduzione. – 2 Pratiche di sottotitolazione non professionale in Cina. – 3 La sottotitolazione non professionale in cinese della prima stagione di *Gomorra-La serie*. – 4 Analisi del turpiloquio della prima stagione di *Gomorra-La serie* nella traduzione in cinese del gruppo Shenying.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

#### Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-04
Accepted	2019-04-29
Published	2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Zuccheri, Serena (2019). "Pratiche di sottotitolazione non professionale in Cina. Il gruppo Shenying e la traduzione del turpiloquio nella prima stagione di *Gomorra-La serie*". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 473-508.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/015

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## 1 Introduzione

Paragonata entusiasticamente dalla critica internazionale alle migliori serie tv *crime* contemporanee e al cinema d'autore, la prima stagione di *Gomorra-La serie* (d'ora in poi *Gomorra*), ideata da Roberto Saviano, autore dell'omonimo romanzo *Gomorra* (2006),<sup>1</sup> è il prodotto televisivo italiano più venduto all'estero (Napoli, Tirino 2016). Prima ancora del successo di pubblico e critica internazionali, *Gomorra*, co-prodotta da Sky Italia, Cattleya, Fandango, La 7 e Beta Film, ha conquistato, fin dalla sua prima messa in onda sull'emittente satellitare Sky Atlantic nel 2014, l'audience italiana: un vero e proprio trionfo di pubblico, confermato l'anno seguente anche dalla messa in onda in chiaro su Rai Tre.

Da un punto di vista imprenditoriale, le ragioni che hanno permesso a *Gomorra* di segnare il record di ascolti per una serie premium in onda sul satellitare e di conquistare critica e pubblico internazionali sono diverse. Riconoscendo il genere della fiction come «uno degli assi di investimento essenziali» (Napoli, Tirino 2015, 195), ma soprattutto contando su una soglia di abbonati che negli anni 2003-8 è stata di 4,5 milioni, Sky Italia ha potuto investire direttamente nella produzione di serie televisive. Nel farlo ha puntato a standard qualitativi di alto livello, promuovendo cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi della fiction aderenti, oggi, ai canoni della cosiddetta *quality television*: una serialità multistagionale caratterizzata da narrazioni complesse su temi controversi o scomodi che si dipanano tra diverse linee narrative affidate sempre più spesso a produttori, sceneggiatori, registi e montatori cinematografici.<sup>2</sup> Il successo di una serie come *Gomorra* quindi è garantito non solo dai cambiamenti occorsi nel modello produttivo Sky, ma anche dal suo essere un'esperienza televisiva dal sapore internazionale, interamente italiana e di successo che, per realismo e messa in scena, non ha precedenti nel panorama nazionale (Napoli, Tirino 2015, 2016).

Le vicende narrate nei dodici episodi che compongono la prima stagione di *Gomorra* ruotano intorno a due clan camorristi, quello di don Pietro Savastano e suo figlio Genny, e quello di Salvatore Conte, in lotta per la conquista dell'hinterland napoletano. A inasprire la guerra tra i due gruppi contribuisce il personaggio di Ciro di Mar-

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**1** Il romanzo di Saviano conosce un precedente adattamento cinematografico diretto dal regista Matteo Garrone, che con oltre 10 milioni di euro ha ottenuto il miglior incasso nella stagione cinematografica 2007-8.

**2** La regia delle tre stagioni di *Gomorra-La serie* (2014-in corso) è stata affidata principalmente a Stefano Sollima - già regista della serie televisiva *Romanzo Criminale* (2008-10) e recentemente del lungometraggio hollywoodiano *Soldado* - che, ricoprendo il ruolo di *showrunner*, si è avvalso della collaborazione dei registi Francesca Comencini, Claudio Cupellini e Claudio Giovannesi.



zio, detto 'l'immortale' e affiliato al clan dei Savastano, il quale, accettato dall'ambizione, tenta con ogni possibile mezzo di approfittare dell'assenza di don Pietro, finito momentaneamente in carcere, per diventare l'erede del clan, esautorando Genny. I conflitti interni al clan dei Savastano si riflettono anche negli scontri con il rivale Conte con un previsto aumento dei conflitti a fuoco tra le strade di Scampia e Secondigliano, e omicidi a sangue freddo per eliminare non solo nemici, ma anche madri e mogli che ostacolano la conquista del comando. I tradimenti e i crimini efferati orchestrati e commessi da entrambi i clan non rimangono confinati alla periferia di Napoli, ma si estendono ai già corrotti ambienti finanziari, amministrativi e politici di città quali Roma e Milano, e trovano una propria linfa vitale anche all'estero: in Spagna, luogo di investimenti illeciti, e in Honduras, dove la filiera dello spaccio di cocaina ha inizio. I fatti, che con spietato realismo raccontano «uno spaccato di vita terribile nella sua realtà che trasuda rabbia e inquietudine in ogni sequenza»,<sup>3</sup> seguono dunque una linea narrativa in cui la tradizionale lotta tra bene e male, tra buoni e cattivi, non ha più senso di essere perché soppiantata da una strategia narrativa complessa in cui il nuovo sviluppo dicotomico è rappresentato da comando/sottomissione (Napoli, Tirino 2015, 2016).

Come precedentemente accennato, l'unione tra l'innovazione aziendale di Sky Italia e la realizzazione di un prodotto televisivo seriale che spicca per qualità narrative, scenografiche e recitative si è rivelata un successo non solo italiano, ma anche internazionale, sancito dall'acquisto di *Gomorra* in paesi quali Stati Uniti (The Weinstein Company), Inghilterra (Sky), Germania (Sky Deutschland), Scandinavia (HBO Nordic), Francia (Canal+) e America Latina (HBO Latin America), e dalle recensioni della critica internazionale, in cui la guerra tra Savastano e Conte è stata paragonata alle migliori serie TV contemporanee, come *The Wire* (2002-8) e *The Sopranos* (1997-2007), e al cinema d'autore di Tarantino e Scorsese. Se una rivista come *Variety* non ha dubbi nel definire *Gomorra* «an authentic, non-sensationalist narrative» (Vimercati 2014), confermandone dunque il successo di pubblico, di critica e soprattutto produttivo, potrebbe destare stupore, invece, l'assenza di questa serie nel mercato televisivo cinese.

L'organo che nella Repubblica Popolare Cinese ha il compito di coordinare e amministrare le attività di scambio tra le aziende televisive cinesi e straniere controllandone i contenuti è la SAPPRFT (*State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television*).<sup>4</sup> A

<sup>3</sup> Parente, Nico; Aprile, Marcello, *Gomorra*: <http://www.osservatorioserietv.it/g/gomorra/> (2019-06-10).

<sup>4</sup> *Guojia xinwen chubun guang dian zongju* 国家新闻出版广电总局.

partire dalla sua fondazione, avvenuta nel 1986, come *Film and Television Bureau*, fino alla fusione nel 2013 con la *General Administration of Press and Publication*, la SAPPRT ha sempre reso noti i suoi obiettivi attraverso continui comunicati stampa. Tra questi, i più incisivi, per quanto concerne l'industria televisiva, sono quelli pubblicati nel 2001, all'indomani dell'ingresso della Repubblica Popolare Cinese nell'OMC (Organizzazione Mondiale del Commercio), riguardanti l'importazione di programmi stranieri e la nascita di collaborazioni sino-estere con particolare riferimento a format televisivi quali serie e film. Se consideriamo le regolamentazioni più recenti, in realtà l'assenza di *Gomorra* non dovrebbe affatto stupire. In un comunicato del 2014, anno di debutto di *Gomorra*, la SAPPRT ha sancito il divieto di mandare in onda, online o attraverso canali mediatici più tradizionali, quei programmi televisivi stranieri in cui vengono trattati temi o argomenti che il governo cinese di norma condanna e vieta.<sup>5</sup> Tra i dieci punti presentati nella regolamentazione, quelli che interessano *Gomorra*, pregiudicandone quindi la messa in onda ufficiale, sono il 7, 'esporre materiale pornografico, mostrare scene di gioco d'azzardo, di violenza o che istigano a commettere crimini e reati' (*xuanyang yinhui, dubo, baoli huozhe jiaosuo fazhui de* 宣扬淫秽, 赌博, 暴力或者教唆犯罪的); l'8, 'umiliare o diffamare gli altri o danneggiare i legittimi interessi altrui' (*wuru huozhe feibang taren, qinhai taren hefa quanyi de* 侮辱或者诽谤他人, 侵害他人合法权益的); e il 9, 'compromettere la morale sociale o le culture tradizionali cinesi' (*weihai Zhongguo shehui gongde huozhe Zhongguo minzu youxiu wenhua chuantong de* 危害中国社会公德或者中国民族优秀传统文化传统的).<sup>6</sup>

Se osserviamo con attenzione le direttive lanciate dalla SAPPRT nel 2014, è lecito supporre che *Gomorra*, per contenuti e trama, non è oggi, né probabilmente sarà nei prossimi anni, la prima scelta d'acquisto dei *broadcaster* cinesi. Il controllo esercitato dagli apparati governativi in questi ultimi decenni ha tuttavia dovuto tener conto dell'evoluzione della politica di apertura all'estero, in particolare all'Occidente, e dei suoi effetti sulla popolazione cinese. A partire dagli anni Novanta, un numero sempre più consistente di prodotti televisivi e di intrattenimento è diventato accessibile al pubblico cinese, anche se sottoposto a un rigido controllo governativo. Al costante aumento delle richieste di maggiore accesso ai prodotti televisivi stra-

<sup>5</sup> URL <http://dy.chinasarft.gov.cn/html/www/article/2014/01493bffd6528a0402881a7470edaf0.html> (2019-06-10).

<sup>6</sup> L'emanazione di tali regolamenti ha comportato, in alcuni casi, il divieto di diffusione e visualizzazione di note serie americane, come *The Big Bang Theory* (2007-in corso) e *The Practice* (1997-2004), in altre incisive operazioni di censura, realizzate attraverso la cancellazione di intere scene o manipolazione dei dialoghi originali (con radicali interventi in fase di doppiaggio o sottotitolazione), di cui la serie *House of Cards* (2013-18) ne è l'esempio più recente (Wang, Zhang 2016).

nieri da parte dell'audience cinese, il governo ha tuttavia risposto in modo ambivalente: infatti, se da un lato ha permesso la diffusione di alcuni programmi privando il pubblico della possibilità di vederli in lingua originale e di cogliere così i numerosi riferimenti culturali che li pervadono, dall'altro ha concesso la produzione di un notevole quantitativo di serie televisive locali caratterizzate da trame che comunque rimangono prevedibili, limitate nei temi che propongono, e ancorate a un'ideologia che la fascia più giovane dell'audience cinese reputa 'sorpasata', rispetto a film e programmi televisivi stranieri considerati invece «more open-minded and socially tolerant, offering a sense of the unpredictable» (Wang, Zhang 2016, 4).

A rendere ancora più improbabile la messa in onda di *Gomorra* sui network televisivi ufficiali è anche la decisione della SAPPRFT, limitata tuttavia ai soli programmi cinesi, di togliere dalla programmazione in fascia prime-time i *jingfei ju/pian* 警匪剧/片, i film o serie *crime* e polizieschi, scaturita da una propensione dei produttori televisivi a realizzare scene eccessivamente cruente e sanguinose; un divieto che nel 2004, all'epoca del suo lancio, ha destato molte critiche e resistenze, costringendo la SAPPRFT ad adottare un approccio più conciliatorio, e a restringere il permesso di messa in onda 'solo' a quelle serie dai contenuti violenti, sanguinosi e con espliciti riferimenti al sesso (Zhu et al. 2008, 8), a cui *Gomorra*, a voler ben vedere, corrisponde, anche se non è un prodotto cinese. Nell'era del digitale tuttavia la morsa censoria si è scontrata con le più recenti innovazioni tecnologiche e comunicative, facilitando in molti casi la pirateria e consentendo al pubblico cinese, ma anche a quello straniero residente in Cina, di guardare film o serie televisive internazionali in lingua originale grazie a Internet e allo sviluppo online della sottotitolazione non professionale, fenomeno globale noto come *fansubbing* che, come vedremo, ha inevitabilmente cambiato le sorti in Cina di *Gomorra*.

Data questa premessa, scopo di questo contributo è presentare le modalità linguistiche e traduttive che il gruppo *fansub Shenying* (*Shenying zimuzu* 深影字幕组) ha adottato affinché l'audience cinese potesse godere della visione di *Gomorra*. Nel lavoro che qui si presenta, la scelta è ricaduta su *Gomorra* per tre ragioni: 1) la serie ideata da Saviano risulta essere, insieme a *Il tredicesimo apostolo* (2012-14), l'unico prodotto televisivo a essere tradotto direttamente dall'italiano; 2) la traduzione in cinese è stata prodotta senza ricorrere all'uso di traduzioni in altre lingue europee; 3) è una serie televisiva in cui il turpiloquio, gli epiteti offensivi e ingiuriosi sono parte integrante e distintiva della lingua in essa parlata. Il contributo si articola dunque come segue: il paragrafo 2 presenta brevemente le principali strategie traduttive del *fansubbing* in Cina come parte di un ambito di ricerca che in letteratura è stato definito *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation*; il paragrafo 3 offre, invece, una breve introduzione alle peculiarità linguistiche di *Gomorra* e alle modalità traduttive uti-

lizzate dal gruppo *Shenyng*; il paragrafo 4, infine, si concentra sul turpiloquio e sui fenomeni di tabuizzazione riscontrati nella traduzione in cinese della prima stagione della serie. Sulla base di alcuni studi condotti sull'interdizione linguistica e sui fenomeni di tabuizzazione (Galli de' Paratesi 1969; Cardona [1976] (2006); Lin Lunlun 1994; Chen Yuan 1998; Li Junhua 2010) e delle metodologie di analisi da loro proposte per distinguere gli ambiti concettuali in cui l'interdizione linguistica viene prodotta e le strategie adottate per superarla, è nostra intenzione, quindi, presentare l'analisi dei sottotitoli cinesi prodotti dal gruppo *Shenyng*, mostrando la frequenza e i casi in cui l'interdizione linguistica è presente nei dialoghi tradotti. Limitandoci in questa sede all'analisi del termine 'cazzo' e suoi derivati, si tenterà di definire da un lato le strategie di intervento sul significato o sul significante adottate dal gruppo *Shenyng* e le funzioni che l'interdizione linguistica può svolgere nella lingua di arrivo; dall'altro, avviare una prima riflessione sulle potenziali motivazioni sottostanti le scelte dei *fansubber* cinesi di mantenere o meno il turpiloquio.

## 2 Pratiche di sottotitolazione non professionale in Cina

La *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation* è, come sottolineato da Antonini e Bucaria (2015, 7-8), un settore difficile da definire, data l'ampiezza degli ambiti entro i quali opera. Negli ultimi anni, questa espressione è stata utilizzata in riferimento alle attività di mediazione linguistica e culturale svolte perlopiù da parlanti bilingue, i quali, pur non avendo ricevuto alcuna formazione professionale nell'ambito dell'interpretazione e della traduzione, sono chiamati, sempre più spesso, a svolgere il lavoro (non remunerato) di interpreti e traduttori in settori altamente specializzati, quali quello medico-sanitario, legale e audiovisivo. I professionisti del settore non apprezzano che tali attività siano svolte da questa particolare tipologia di traduttori, e le loro critiche hanno contribuito all'avvio di un'analisi del fenomeno all'interno del mondo accademico, e i diversi convegni internazionali organizzati per discutere le peculiarità di questa particolare forma di traduzione ne sono un segno evidente.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Si pensi, ad esempio, alla *First International Conference on Non-professional Interpreting and Translation*, tenutasi nel 2012 presso la ex Scuola di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori di Forlì (oggi Dipartimento di Interpretazione e Traduzione) dell'Università di Bologna, e alle tre edizioni che ne sono seguite (Mainz/Germensheim nel 2014; Zurigo nel 2016; e Stellenbosch nel 2018); o ai diversi convegni, anche in corso di preparazione (come l'ottava edizione di Media 4 all che si terrà a Stoccolma il prossimo giugno), sul mondo della traduzione audiovisiva, in cui alcune sezioni sono state dedicate alla analisi della traduzione non professionale e ai suoi possibili usi; o, ancora, ai volumi dedicati all'argomento, quali Antonini, Bucaria 2015 e Antonini et al. 2017.

Negli ultimi decenni, soprattutto grazie allo sviluppo della tecnologia digitale e di Internet, un ambito in cui la traduzione non professionale sembra aver attecchito più saldamente e in modo persistente è quello dell'industria audiovisiva, in particolare in quelle che oggi sono le forme produttive più apprezzate dall'audience globale: il cinema e le serie televisive. È proprio il consumo massiccio di tali prodotti ad aver contribuito in questi ultimi anni a rendere il fansubbing una delle forme di traduzione non professionale più note e più osservate.<sup>8</sup>

La sottotitolazione non professionale, più comunemente nota come *fansubbing*, *fansubs* o semplicemente *subbing* (Chaume 2013, 114),<sup>9</sup> è un fenomeno che trova le sue origini negli anni Ottanta nei campus universitari americani, grazie a un nutrito gruppo di studenti con la passione comune per i prodotti d'animazione giapponese (gli *anime*). Se in Italia gli *anime* venivano al tempo trasmessi dalle reti televisive private in forma censurata (Díaz Cintas, Muñoz Sanchez 2006), i giovani universitari americani non potevano dirsi altrettanto fortunati, dato il divieto di trasmettere in televisione contenuti ritenuti nocivi e inappropriati da alcune associazioni di telespettatori statunitensi. Le restrizioni imposte tuttavia non hanno disarmato i fan americani: in un'epoca in cui la tecnologia digitale doveva ancora avere la meglio su quella analogica, la distribuzione dei prodotti di animazione giapponesi in VHS è venuta in aiuto dei giovani fan americani e ha permesso loro di creare sottotitoli artigianali da sincronizzare con le immagini video. Certamente una pratica che oggi saremo tentati di definire 'rudimentale', ma che in seguito, negli anni del boom del digitale (Internet, banda larga, p2p, streaming e torrent), ha indubbiamente contribuito allo sviluppo dei fansubber e delle loro comunità.

In linee generali, l'interpretazione e la traduzione non professionali sono «often considered as a threat for the translation profession and NPIT [Non-Professional Interpreting and Translation] in the media is no exception, with the obvious concession that the media itself seems to amplify the resonance of the controversy» (Antonini, Bucaria 2015, 11). Sebbene le critiche rivolte ai fansubber si concentrino maggiormente sulla loro mancanza di formazione e di professionalità, sull'importanza degli standard qualitativi e sul rischio di banalizzare la professione del traduttore, va tuttavia sottolineato come certi giudizi non siano sempre condivisibili su vasta scala. Se fac-

<sup>8</sup> Altra forma di traduzione audiovisiva non professionale è il *fandubbing* (doppiaggio non professionale) che in Cina sembra godere di un discreto seguito. Tuttavia, ai fini di questo contributo, il *fandubbing* non verrà approfondito, per cui si rimanda a Wang e Zhang in Antonini e Bucaria (2015, 173-92).

<sup>9</sup> Ai fini del presente lavoro verranno presentate brevemente le principali caratteristiche del fansubbing in Cina. Per ulteriori approfondimenti circa la nascita e lo sviluppo del fenomeno in Italia si veda Massidda 2015.

ciamo riferimento a un paese come la Cina, nazione che, come abbiamo visto, nei confronti dei prodotti culturali stranieri si è dimostrata negli ultimi decenni piuttosto reticente e in cui la traduzione audiovisiva ancora oggi stenta a consolidarsi come professione o materia di studio per questioni ideologiche (Chang 1998),<sup>10</sup> il fansubbing diventa non solo forma di intrattenimento, ma anche risorsa in grado di sovvertire norme legate non solo alla traduzione audiovisiva, ma anche a regolamentazioni politiche e sociali. Un fenomeno sociale, dunque, che trasgredendo le restrizioni nazionali permette ai suoi fruitori e creatori di abbracciare *in toto* una cultura popolare globale (Hu 2013) promuovendo, come affermato da O'Hagan, una vera e propria traduzione collettiva (quoted in Wang 2017).<sup>11</sup>

**10** Punto di vista interessante, per quanto riguarda il doppiaggio in Cina, è quello espresso da Zhang Chunbai (2004). Nel saggio intitolato «The Translating of Screenplays in the Mainland of China», lo studioso, che vanta anche una lunga attività come doppiatore, afferma la necessità di correggere il pregiudizio prevalso in Occidente circa i controlli e divieti politici riguardanti il doppiaggio cinematografico in Cina. Non accettando l'opinione della Bassnett (1998) secondo cui in paesi come la Cina i film stranieri sono di norma doppiati invece di essere sottotitolati perché il governo non vuole che il pubblico ascolti le voci originali, Zhang dissente affermando che «it is mainly for the sake of audience that foreign films are dubbed rather than subtitled in China» (Zhang 2004, 189). A sostegno di tale affermazione concorrono diversi fattori: lo scarso livello di conoscenza della lingua originale del prodotto audiovisivo, l'ampia percentuale di 'analfabetismo' o 'semi-analfabetismo' della popolazione cinese e la creazione di trasmissioni locali in lingua straniera e di canali televisivi che trasmettono programmi direttamente in inglese. Se delle effettive limitazioni e controlli governativi esistono, questi riguardano principalmente la selezione dei film destinati al doppiaggio e che Zhang definisce *pre-dubbing censorship*: «In China, such constraints are not so much on *how* the films are to be presented as on *what* to present to the public. There are, so to speak, two kinds of censorship, i.e. pre-dubbing censorship and post-dubbing censorship, the former being the selection of films to be dubbed and the latter being the examination of dubbed films» (190). A partire dal 1949, anno di fondazione della Repubblica Popolare Cinese, i film doppiati sono, in Cina più che in altri paesi, il riflesso dello stato d'animo politico delle varie epoche storiche che si sono susseguite. È normale quindi che nella prima fase dell'era maoista i film stranieri importati provenissero unicamente dall'Unione Sovietica, che durante la Rivoluzione Culturale fossero solo albanesi, iugoslavi o nord-coreani, mentre a partire dal lancio delle Riforme e della Politica di Apertura iniziassero a comparire sul mercato televisivo cinese prodotti audiovisivi perlopiù americani. Oltre alle limitazioni geografiche vi sono tuttavia numerose restrizioni di altra natura che, come già precedentemente illustrato, combaciano in generale con le regolamentazioni emanate dalla SAPPRT, e potrebbero appunto danneggiare l'audience cinese: non sono importati, e di conseguenza doppiati o sottotitolati, prodotti audiovisivi non favorevoli alla Cina e anti-comunisti, o che contengano propaganda religiosa, pornografia o scene di violenza.

**11** Il controllo governativo sulla creazione e diffusione dei sottotitoli amatoriali segue in realtà le linee guida generali stabilite per la vigilanza e regolamentazione di Internet. Ciononostante, per quanto riguarda la verifica del materiale audiovisivo e dei sottotitoli creati dalle comunità fansubbing, il governo cinese, non riconoscendo in un'attività di consumo collettiva come questa una reale messa in discussione delle linee politiche perseguite, si dimostra tollerante e sembra riconoscerne il valore, complimentandosi apertamente con i gruppi e definendo i fansubber «disseminatori di conoscenza nell'era di Internet» (*wangluo shidai de zhishi budao zhe* 网络时代的知识布道者)

Per quanto riguarda l'industria televisiva e cinematografica, sulla base degli accordi bilaterali tra USA e Cina siglati all'indomani dell'entrata ufficiale della Repubblica Popolare Cinese nell'OMC, la Cina si è impegnata a importare ogni anno 40 prodotti stranieri, che vengono attentamente selezionati, doppiati e passati al vaglio della censura (Zhang 2013; Zhang, Miao 2013; Grimm 2015). In tempi più recenti le regolamentazioni emanate nel 2004 dalla SAPPRFT hanno chiarito che gli unici canali televisivi autorizzati alla messa in onda di film, serie, cartoni animati e programmi televisivi stranieri sono la CCTV (*Chinese Central Television*) e pochi altri network.<sup>12</sup> Tuttavia, com'era già accaduto per la diffusione di altri eventi e fenomeni culturali, a cambiare le carte in tavola è l'arrivo di Internet. Esattamente come per l'Europa, è online, infatti, che cominciano a essere disponibili in lingua originale serie televisive straniere (principalmente statunitensi). Sono di fatto le generazioni cinesi più giovani e benestanti, quelle che hanno avuto la possibilità di studiare inglese a scuola o all'università e di ottenere un titolo di studio all'estero, le vere creatrici delle comunità fansubbing (*zimuzu* 字幕组).<sup>13</sup>

L'anno di debutto in Cina del fansubbing di serie televisive anglo-americane è il 2003, quando, in risposta alla popolarità che la serie *Friends* (1994-2004) conosce tra i giovani utenti della rete, viene inaugurato il forum F6, prima piattaforma online per la discussione e lo scambio di opinioni e informazioni sugli show televisivi americani.<sup>14</sup> Nel giro di pochi anni, la rete cinese arriva a ospitare un centinaio di gruppi.<sup>15</sup> Queste comunità condividono con i fansubber di altre nazionalità l'idea che le serie televisive straniere non debbano essere snaturate, ma vadano pertanto viste in lingua originale con l'ausilio dei sottotitoli. La creazione del sottotitolo gratuito e amatoriale prodotta dai membri di queste comunità mostra sì analogie etiche con i corrispettivi gruppi europei, ma soprattutto peculiarità stilistiche e traduttive che, come vedremo, rendono quanto da loro prodotto interessante se analizzato da diverse angolazioni, siano esse culturali, sociali, linguistiche o didattiche.

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(<http://media.163.com/11/0211/11/6SJV1VNR00762H91.html> [2019-06-10]). Tuttavia il complimentarsi per il lavoro svolto non determina automaticamente un indebolimento delle forme di controllo e, in questo senso, l'oscuramento di alcune piattaforme di fansub non solo ne è un esempio, ma chiarisce ulteriormente le motivazioni che sottostanno la scelta da parte dei fansubber di usare dei nickname celando così la loro vera identità. Si veda in particolare Zhang, Miao 2013, 48-9.

**12** Per un approfondimento sulla regolamentazione del 2004 si veda: <https://bit.ly/2KEVJ4c> (2019-06-10).

**13** Sul profilo dei membri delle comunità fansubbing in Cina vedi Zhang, Miao 2013, 50-7.

**14** URL <http://web.archive.org/web/20031103114954/http://www.friends6.com/> (2019-06-10).

**15** URL <http://blog.renren.com/share/174627606/13534318327> (2019-06-10).

In queste comunità il lavoro viene suddiviso tra i membri e segue un iter standard: reperimento in Internet dei singoli file video sprovvisti di sottotitoli; trascrizione dei sottotitoli grazie a software di riconoscimento audio (in alternativa, ricerca dei DVD ufficiali ed estrazione diretta del file di testo – file.srt – dei sottotitoli); traduzione dei sottotitoli; revisione della traduzione; aggiunta del time code e sincronizzazione dei sottotitoli con le immagini video; infine, upload del prodotto finale. Le comunità di fansubber cinesi, esattamente come le analoghe comunità italiane, producono sia *softsubs* (sottotitoli separati dalle immagini video) sia *hardsubs* (sottotitoli incorporati al file video). Sulla base delle regole stabilite nell'ambito della traduzione audiovisiva cinese, per l'aspetto grafico e formale, il numero massimo di caratteri ammessi per un sottotitolo è di 12 caratteri, spazi e punteggiatura inclusi, contenuti di norma in una sola riga.<sup>16</sup> Nel caso, invece, di serie sottotitolate amatorially, il sottotitolo può presentarsi spezzato in massimo due righe di 18-20 caratteri ciascuna (Du et al. 2013, 76).

Ogni comunità stabilisce delle norme interne per la traduzione, tuttavia si osserva in linea generale che, per non appesantire il pubblico e per agevolarlo nella visione del programma e nella lettura del sottotitolo, i fansubber tendono a privilegiare la concisione e l'uso di abbreviazioni, omettendo espressioni o avverbi di tempo, come *now* ad esempio, e i pronomi personali, se il contenuto espresso e i referenti presenti nel video sono chiaramente esplicitati e facilmente individuabili. Analogo atteggiamento è mantenuto per quanto riguarda la punteggiatura: il punto e la virgola alla fine di una riga vengono omessi, mentre la virgola posta a metà di una frase viene sostituita con uno spazio. Vengono mantenuti unicamente i segni di interpunzione con funzione specifica, quali il punto interrogativo, il punto esclamativo e i puntini di sospensione. A non essere omesso è anche il punto mediano, utilizzato in cinese nel caso di nomi stranieri per separare nomi propri dal cognome (Ouyang 2006; Tian 2011).

La sfida più grande per le comunità di fansubber cinesi è rappresentata dalla volontà di cogliere i numerosi riferimenti culturali di matrice angloamericana presenti nelle serie televisive e di tradurli correttamente, adattandoli al contempo ai gusti e alla comprensione generale del pubblico cinese. L'intenzione ambiziosa perseguita dai fansubber è quella di destreggiarsi tra la richiesta di una traduzione che non sia troppo distante dal testo di partenza, riproducendo un linguaggio, quindi, che sia il più possibile fedele a quello della

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**16** In ambito europeo la norma più diffusa è quella di 32 caratteri per riga, spazi compresi (Perego, Taylor 2012). Sebbene la lunghezza possa variare a seconda del mezzo (DVD, cinema, televisione, ecc.), del carattere tipografico scelto o delle norme stabilite dall'azienda committente, un sottotitolo di norma non può superare i 40 caratteri, spazi e punteggiatura inclusi (Díaz Cintas, Remael 2007; Díaz Cintas, 2008; Perego, 2005).



sceneggiatura originale e in grado di mantenerne le sfumature, e il desiderio di adattare quel copione a una cornice culturale propriamente cinese. La strategia traduttiva cui spesso ricorrono i fansubber cinesi è l'adattamento di riferimenti culturali stranieri a elementi culturali cinesi; si tratta di un approccio familiarizzante al testo di partenza che permette al lettore e pubblico di arrivo di non percepire un senso di estraniamento da quanto si sta leggendo o vedendo, operando delle sostituzioni riguardanti elementi culturali diversi da quelli della cultura ricevente. Una dimostrazione dell'uso di tale approccio è data, ad esempio, dalla sostituzione di *eBay*, multinazionale specializzata nell'e-commerce, con *Taobao* (淘宝), l'analoga piattaforma cinese per gli acquisti e le vendite online, o ancora dalla traduzione dell'enunciato *I swear to God* in 'Giuro sul Presidente Mao' (*Wo xiang Mao zhuxi baozheng* 我向毛主席保证) (Lü, Li 2015, 124). In alcuni casi, tuttavia, il processo di adattamento o di 'localizzazione' (Lü, Li 2015) di certi elementi culturali non viene adottato: generalmente quando esiste un equivalente nella lingua di arrivo, o quando la competenza extralinguistica dei fansubber non è così elevata da permettere loro il riconoscimento dell'elemento culturale proprio della lingua di partenza.

**Tabella 1** Esempi di mancata traduzione dell'elemento culturale presente nel testo di partenza

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
He's working overtime on a 'Miller Time' shift. He'll stumble back in sooner or later	他在厂里加班 马上就会来的
And he's probably got Jim, Jack and Jose along with him	他大概会带上 Jim Jack 和 Jose 一起

Dagli esempi riportati nella [tab. 1], tratti dal primo episodio della prima stagione della serie americana *Supernatural* (2005-in corso), è possibile notare come il testo nella lingua di partenza riporti tra virgolette lo slogan pubblicitario di una birra, la *Miller*, che nel tempo si è trasformato in un'espressione utilizzata per indicare un momento della giornata di stacco totale dalle attività quotidiane in cui ci si concede una pausa godendosi la propria *Miller*. Il testo di partenza presenta inoltre un gioco di parole dato da *overtime*, gli straordinari, e *time*, il tempo che invece è possibile dedicare alla *Miller*. Nel sottotitolo non professionale in cinese l'elemento culturale non viene riconosciuto e la resa, 'sta facendo gli straordinari in fabbrica', presenta un errore di comprensione dato proprio dalla parola *miller*, considerata probabilmente nel significato sinonimo di *mill* che in inglese significa appunto 'fabbrica'. Caso analogo è il secondo esempio, dove Jim, Jack e Jose non sono i nomi di tre amici, ma si ri-

feriscono al Jim Bean (al Bourbon), al Jack Daniels (al whiskey) e al José Cuervo (alla Tequila).

Strettamente connesso all'adattamento o meno degli elementi culturali al contesto cinese è anche il concetto di intertestualità. Data la natura multimodale di un testo audiovisivo (Perego, Taylor 2012, 15-43) i rimandi intertestuali riconoscibili in una serie televisiva possono essere non verbali (trama, ambientazione, mimesi recitativa) e verbali (richiami delle fonti nei dialoghi). Entrambi i tipi rinviano a fonti filmiche, televisive, letterarie o musicali della cultura di partenza, ma tra i due sono quelli verbali a caratterizzare e definire meglio i personaggi di una serie.

**Tabella 2** Esempi di rimandi intertestuali

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
I know I had it when I was in the kitchen with... Dinah?	我在厨房戴着做... 面条?
No one has 'breakfast at Tiffany's', and no one has 'affairs to remember'	没人会吃'第凡内早餐' 也没人会遵守'金玉盟'
It was just that bar in Cheers where everybody knows your name	酒吧里的每个人都在干杯 装出一副很熟的样子
Ok, thank you, Unsolved Mysteries	好了 谢谢你揭开未解之谜

Nel primo esempio della [tab. 2], tratto dal secondo episodio della prima stagione della serie *Friends*, il rimando intertestuale nel testo di partenza, è di tipo musicale, nello specifico ad una canzone folk americana intitolata *Old Joe in the House with Dinah*, tradotta e conosciuta in Italia come *Jack è in cucina con Tina*. Il non riconoscimento del rimando da parte dei fansubber cinesi (— Lo indossavo in cucina quando stavo cucinando... — Gli spaghetti?) ha inevitabilmente comportato nel testo di arrivo la perdita della battuta umoristica pronunciata da uno dei personaggi. Il secondo e il terzo esempio, tratti entrambi dalla prima stagione di *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), sono, nel primo caso, rimandi di tipo filmico, e, nel secondo caso, un rimando di tipo televisivo: nel primo caso i fansubber hanno utilizzato l'equivalente cinese per i film citati, *Brekkfast at Tiffany's* e *Affairs to Remember*; il rimando televisivo, presente nel secondo caso (*Cheers*), una nota serie televisiva americana degli anni Settanta trasmessa in Italia con il titolo *Cin Cin*, sembra essere sconosciuto ai sottotitolatori cinesi amatoriali, i quali interpretano erroneamente l'intera battuta, traducendo 'tutti al bar brindano'.

La serie *Supernatural*, da cui è tratto l'ultimo esempio riportato nella [tab. 2], racconta le avventure di una famiglia di cacciatori del soprannaturale. Nata dalla passione del suo ideatore per le leggende metropolitane e folcloristiche americane, *Supernatural* offre nume-

rosi rimandi intratestuali e intertestuali i quali possono esser letti come una sorta di omaggio del creatore della serie ai classici cinematografici e televisivi del genere horror e alla saga di *Star Wars*. Il rimando intertestuale, riportato nell'ultimo esempio della tabella e mantenuto nel testo di arrivo in cinese, è di tipo televisivo: *Unsolved Mysteries* è, infatti, un programma americano, andato in onda nel 1987 e ancora presente nei palinsesti televisivi statunitensi, che si occupa di raccontare e indagare casi di rapimenti e/o sparizioni inspiegabili legati a fenomeni paranormali. Non esistendo un equivalente in cinese per questo programma, la soluzione adottata è stata quella di attenersi il più possibile al senso traducendo 'Grazie, investigatore di misteri insoluti'.

In previsione dell'uso dei sottotitoli per un migliore apprendimento e approfondimento della lingua e della cultura angloamericana, la strategia adottata per la traduzione di giochi di parole, allusioni e riferimenti culturali è di per sé unica nel panorama mondiale della sottotitolazione amatoriale. Per superare ostacoli di natura linguistica e culturale, molto spesso vengono aggiunte delle glosse esplicative, come nell'esempio che segue, dove tra parentesi viene chiarito che Donna Summer è una famosa cantante.

Transcript inglese: Why is our daughter dressing like Donna Summer?

Fansubbing cinese: 为什么咱家女儿穿得 Donna Summer 一样?(著名女歌手)<sup>17</sup>

Di altra natura è, invece, l'aggiunta di veri e propri commenti alla scena o a una battuta di un personaggio della serie o alle difficoltà incontrate nel tradurre alcune frasi o espressioni. Negli esempi che seguono, nel primo caso è possibile notare che tra parentesi è riportato il commento del fansubber, traducibile con 'pare vero'. Nel secondo caso si notano invece non solo il commento tra parentesi, in cui viene indicata la mancata comprensione dell'uso del verbo *to kill* nel dialogo originale, ma anche l'inserimento dell'emoticon che indica dispiacere o tristezza e dello spazio tra il nome e il cognome di uno dei personaggi della serie (Ellis Grey), utilizzato in sostituzione del punto mediano.

**17** La serie da cui sono tratti i sottotitoli è *Modern Family* (2009-in corso) (prima stagione, episodio 6). L'esempio è tratto da Tian 2011.

**18** La serie è *Bones* (2005-17) (sesta stagione, episodio cinque) e l'esempio è tratto da Tian 2011.

**19** La serie è *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-in corso) (prima stagione, episodio uno). L'esempio è tratto dal corpus che chi scrive sta costruendo in prospettiva didattica. Il corpus conterrà orientativamente i sottotitoli delle prime stagioni delle serie *Friends*, *Sex & the City*, *Supernatural*, *Grey's Anatomy* e *Gomorra*.

Transcript inglese: Hah! I'm not a betting man, but if I was...

Fansubbing cinese: 哈我可不是个赌徒(太假了吧) 如果是的话<sup>18</sup>

Transcript inglese: I'd kill to be Ellis Grey

Fansubbing cinese: 我真想成为埃丽斯 戈瑞. (kill...不太明白,:( )<sup>19</sup>

Molto frequenti sono poi i fenomeni di tabuizzazione, creati sulla base di un presunto codice di autoregolamentazione interno ad alcune comunità per omettere frasi, espressioni o parole che potrebbero offendere il codice etico-morale e l'orientamento politico dei destinatari del testo di arrivo di cui si parlerà più approfonditamente nel paragrafo successivo in riferimento alla serie *Gomorra*. L'interdizione linguistica viene superata ricorrendo a processi eufemistici di varia natura, sostituendo direttamente i termini incriminati (la maggior parte di essi riguarda la sfera sessuale) con simboli tipici delle scienze dure (% , \* , ^ , # , ecc.), con espressioni più complesse, quali 'sport da letto' (*chuang shang de yundong* 床上的运动), 'vita da camera' (*woshi shenghuo* 卧室生活), o con metafore eufemistiche e riferimenti indiretti, come negli esempi che seguono:

Transcript inglese: They're a bunch of wieners and gonads

Fansubbing cinese: 他们就是小JJ和小蛋蛋的最佳结合体<sup>20</sup>

Transcript inglese: — the first thing they see is... you know.

— Pussy?

Fansubbing cinese: — 第一个看到的東西是... 你知道的

— 小妹妹嗎?

Transcript inglese: — Have you ever been in love?

— Abso-fucking-lutely

Fansubbing cinese: — 你愛過嗎?

— 我當然愛過

Nei primi due esempi, tratti rispettivamente da *How I Met Your Mother* (2005-14) (sesta stagione, episodio 7) e da *Sex & the City* (prima stagione, episodio 1), è possibile notare l'uso di sostituti eufemistici, tipici anche dello slang cinese in uso nella rete, in luogo di quei nomi che nel testo di partenza sono espliciti riferimenti agli organi riproduttivi<sup>21</sup> utilizzati come epiteti offensivi. Nel terzo esempio, trat-

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<sup>20</sup> Esempio tratto da Tian (2011).

<sup>21</sup> In Cina è sempre stato considerato irrispettoso fare riferimento agli organi riproduttivi e agli atti sessuali in modo diretto, per cui si ricorre all'utilizzo di sostituti eufemistici (Liu, Hao 1995, 332). *Xiao JJ* 小JJ è un'abbreviazione di *xiao jiji* 小鸡鸡 (letteralmente 'piccolo pollo'), eufemismo utilizzato per tradurre il termine inglese *wiener* (uccello), così come *xiao dandan* 小蛋蛋 (letteralmente 'piccole uova') è la forma edul-

to sempre dal primo episodio della prima stagione di *Sex & the City*, si osserva invece che la traduzione in cinese del rafforzativo *fucking*, che spezzando l'avverbio *absolutely* intensifica ulteriormente l'affermazione del personaggio, è stata resa con un semplice avverbio come *dangran* 当然 ('certamente').

Come sarà possibile osservare nei paragrafi seguenti, la produzione dei sottotitoli amatoriali creati dalle comunità fansubbing in Cina si rispecchia sostanzialmente in una traduzione equilibrata di un particolare genere testuale (i sottotitoli) che, a seconda del contesto, può dare maggiore o minor enfasi al contenuto, alla forma o all'effetto.

### 3 La sottotitolazione non professionale in cinese della prima stagione di *Gomorra-La serie*

La lingua della fiction audiovisiva<sup>22</sup> è, nelle varie definizioni che ne sono state date, un parlato simulato o 'prefabbricato' (Baños-Piñero, Chaume 2009), modellato su quello spontaneo «ma 'ripulito' dalle ridondanze, [...] trascritto nel copione, per poi essere riparlato nella recitazione» (Alfieri, Bonomi [2012] 2014, 102); un parlato 'oralizzato', caratterizzato da veri e propri tormentoni linguistici invasivi, riconoscibili e ampiamente accettati dal pubblico che, coinvolto emotivamente nella narrazione, li riproduce dinamicamente trasformandoli in fraseggio comune. Questa varietà 'trasmessa',<sup>23</sup> scritta per essere detta come se non fosse scritta (Lavinio 1986, 19; Rossi 2006, 12), «in bilico tra parlato-scritto della sceneggiatura e la necessità di mimesi del parlato» (De Fazio 2010, 55), dovrebbe quindi essere un tratto condiviso anche da *Gomorra*. Eppure, come vedremo, sono anche altre le specificità che nel tempo hanno contribuito alla produzione di ciò che mediaticamente è stato denominato 'gomorrese'.

Al realismo spietato narrato in *Gomorra* corrisponde un realismo linguistico che sarebbe fin troppo riduttivo ricondurre al solo dialetto napoletano. La serie ideata da Saviano è in parte un testo stilisticamente 'ipercaratterizzato' (Alfieri et al. 2010, 121), ovvero riproduce un repertorio sociolinguistico italiano che privilegia la caratterizzazione regionale. La lingua di *Gomorra* «è un'architettura complessa

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corata usata per tradurre la parola *gonads* (palle). Analogamente nel secondo esempio il termine inglese *pussy* (passera) è stato tradotto con *xiao meimei* 小妹妹, che letteralmente significa 'sorellina'.

<sup>22</sup> Il termine *fiction*, dal latino  *fingere* (modellare, simulare), è un anglicismo entrato in uso nell'italiano nel 1963 come accezione mediatica e non letteraria per designare un macrogenere che include varie sottocategorie di narrazione audiovisiva, quali telefilm, serial, soap-opera e sit-com (Grignaffini 2004; Alfieri, Bonomi [2012] 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Per la definizione di 'italiano trasmesso' vedi Sabatini 1982.

e stratificata»,<sup>24</sup> contrassegnata da una marcatezza diatopica e diastatica elevate, funzionali alla verosimiglianza degli ambienti (l'hinterland napoletano) e dei personaggi (i membri dei due clan camorristici), individuabili nelle notevoli variazioni di registro orientate all'italiano informale e trascurato (arricchito da un grande uso di parole oscure e turpiloqui), al substandard, e al dialetto in cui il gergo malavitoso e il linguaggio giovanile predominano. Scopo di questa serie non è presentare correttamente il napoletano così come viene parlato a Scampia e Secondigliano: «la serie gioca sulla costruzione di un linguaggio proprio partendo da una base conosciuta e percepibile a tutti» (Di Risio 2016).<sup>25</sup> L'intersecazione continua di questi tratti linguistici coincide dunque con il proposito, concepito dal regista e dagli sceneggiatori della serie *Gomorra*, di conciliare il realismo con la chiarezza evitando il doppiaggio per permettere al telespettatore di immergersi in una narrazione dove, anche sonorica-mente, la drammaticità vuole essere mantenuta:

La scelta della lingua è stato un passaggio molto delicato, perché non puoi andare a girare a Scampia e Secondigliano, mettere in scena come funziona realmente una piazza di spaccio e non sentir parlare i personaggi nella loro lingua. Abbiamo cercato di fare un lavoro sui copioni con delle persone di Scampia e Secondigliano che hanno adattato insieme a noi il linguaggio: laddove alcune frasi sono effettivamente incomprensibili abbiamo cercato di sciogliere alcune parole, di ancorare la frase ad alcune parole riconoscibili che possano dare perfettamente il senso di quello che si dice. (Di Risio 2016)<sup>26</sup>

La chiarezza linguistica, raggiunta attraverso tale processo di adattamento, fa di *Gomorra* un prodotto di finzione audiovisiva comprensibile anche ad un pubblico non partenopeo rendendo l'uso dei sottotitoli non necessario. È proprio il raggiungimento di tale scopo ad aver dato vita al 'gomorrese', lingua a sé caratterizzata da espressioni, fraseologismi e modi di dire, noti a Napoli ma anche inventati, che sono oggi parte del repertorio linguistico dei fan della serie. Ne sono un esempio in tal senso i tormentoni "Sta' senza pensier'", "Ué fratè tutt'appo'?", "Vie'cca, vien't a piglia' 'o perdon'" e "Com' 'a 'nu strunz' assumigl' 'a 'nu babbà". Chiaramente i sottotitoli originali su

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<sup>24</sup> Parente, Nico; Aprile, Marcello, *Gomorra*: <http://www.osservatorioserietv.it/g/gomorra/> (2019-06-10).

<sup>25</sup> URL <http://www.close-up.it/saviano-il-sacro-e-il-dialetto-nel-non-luogo-di-gomorra> (2019-06-10).

<sup>26</sup> *Gomorra-La serie - Speciale Backstage* pubblicato sul canale Youtube di Roberto Saviano il 7 maggio 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS3suOoovRs> (2019-06-10).

cui lavora il gruppo *Shenyng* non sono in ‘gomorrese’, ma in italiano. Nella traduzione in cinese questo ha comportato un’inevitabile perdita di quei ‘tormentoni’ con cui la serie *Gomorra* si è saputa distinguere nel panorama delle fiction italiane. Pertanto la celebre frase “Sta’ senza pensier’”, equivalente in italiano alla più banale espressione ‘non ti preoccupare’, è stata resa in cinese con *Ni bie danxin* 你别担心 (‘Non ti preoccupare’). Escluso il ‘gomorrese’, c’è da chiedersi, dunque, come si sia comportato il gruppo *Shenyng*, la comunità fansub, attiva dal 1 ottobre 2009,<sup>27</sup> che si è assunta l’incarico, volontario e non remunerato, di tradurre *Gomorra*.

Nelle parole della stessa community, il gruppo *Shenyng* va inteso come base per la condivisione di sottotitoli originali bilingue. L’obiettivo è tradurre le migliori opere cinematografiche e televisive in circolazione e condividere con gli utenti registrati i classici del cinema e della televisione mondiale.<sup>28</sup> In un post del 2014, intitolato *Domanda di adesione alla community (Shenqing jiaru zimuzu 申请加入字幕组)*,<sup>29</sup> si legge: «La community recluta un certo numero di traduttori per queste quattro lingue: inglese, francese, spagnolo e italiano. Chiunque ami e adori il cinema e la televisione può iscriversi. È sufficiente superare il nostro test per unirsi al gruppo (è un’attività gratuita, se volete essere pagati, lasciate perdere)». È chiaro, dunque, come da un lato il gruppo aderisca alle modalità di adesione di altre community fansub mondiali e, dall’altro, alla definizione di *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation* data in precedenza. I requisiti richiesti agli aspiranti fansubber sono: 1) una capacità di ascolto tale da riuscire a comprendere il film su cui dovranno lavorare; 2) un livello di conoscenza del cinese adeguato al lavoro richiesto; 3) una passata esperienza in altre comunità di fansubber; 4) la pazienza di guardare film o programmi televisivi dall’inizio alla fine e di lavorare alla traduzione con serietà; 5) il tempo sufficiente per connettersi e condizioni di accesso ad Internet vantaggiose. Da vari post di adesione pubblicati sul sito è possibile ricavare dati che permettono di inquadrare meglio età e posizione dei fansubber: preferiscono usare un nickname; sono laureati o stanno ultimando un percorso universitario; possiedono una o più certificazioni della lingua o delle lingue per cui si propongono come traduttori, revisori, addetti al time-code o alla sincronizzazione dei sottotitoli con le immagini video. Sebbene l’inglese sia la lingua con maggiori richieste di adesione, il gruppo *Shenyng* vanta tra i suoi collaboratori anche traduttori dall’ita-

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<sup>27</sup> Per ulteriori approfondimenti si rimanda alla pagina di Baidu Baike: URL <https://bit.ly/2WxeSVx> (2019-01-17) e alla homepage del gruppo <http://www.shinybbs.info/forum.php> (2019-06-10).

<sup>28</sup> URL <http://www.shinybbs.info/forum.php> (2019-06-10).

<sup>29</sup> URL <http://www.shinybbs.info/forum.php> (2019-06-10).

liano. Per quanto riguarda la sottotitolazione non professionale della prima stagione di *Gomorra*, i membri di *Shenyng* che si sono occupati della traduzione, fatta eccezione per Xiao Guang 小光 che ne è il solo revisore, rispondono ai nomi di Nainiu 奶牛, Chameleon, Fei Luo 非洛, Tiaochong 跳虫, An'an 安安, Feng 风 e Stefania. È questo il gruppo di fansubber impegnato nella traduzione dei sottotitoli di *Gomorra*, serie che, come sottolineato precedentemente, è uno dei pochi programmi televisivi italiani a suscitare un qualche interesse tra il pubblico cinese e a essere tradotta direttamente dall'italiano.<sup>30</sup>

Nelle norme traduttive stabilite dal gruppo *Shenyng* è possibile riscontrare numerose analogie con quelle di altre community di fansubber. Rispetto alle convenzioni ortografiche, *Shenyng* limita al minimo l'utilizzo dei segni interpunzione, a meno che non siano strettamente necessari alla comprensione del sottotitolo, come il punto interrogativo o il trattino di introduzione alle battute di due diversi personaggi riportate nello stesso sottotitolo. Sempre in quest'ottica, la virgola viene sostituita da un semplice spazio [fig. 1].

Nelle norme pubblicate nel 2011,<sup>31</sup> relativamente alla traduzione dall'inglese viene espressamente richiesto di optare per una traduzione libera e non letterale delle espressioni gergali, evitando l'uso di espressioni prive di senso (*wulitou* 无厘头) o non del tutto comprensibili, quali 'Mio padre è Li Gang' (*Wo ba shi Li Gang* 我爸是李刚),<sup>32</sup> e di rispettare il più possibile i tre criteri cui una traduzione dovrebbe rispondere per essere ritenuta di valore e che Yan Fu 严复 (1853-1921) formulò nel 1883: fedeltà (*xin* 信), espressività (*da* 达) ed ele-

**30** Oltre a *Gomorra* (in cinese *Gemola* 格莫拉), le serie italiane che sembrano aver de-stato un certo interesse nel pubblico cinese sono *La dama velata* (*Dai miansha de meiren* 戴面纱的美人) (2015), *Il tredicesimo apostolo* (*Di shisan wei shitu* 第十三位使徒), *Suburra-La serie* (*Zui cheng Subula* 罪城苏布拉) (2017-in corso) e la web serie *LSB-Le ragazze non dormono* (*Ji you dangdao* 姬友当道) (2015). Da una attenta comparazione tra i sottotitoli non professionali e professionali disponibili in inglese per la serie *Gomorra*, serie che dal 2016 è oggetto della ricerca di chi scrive, è emerso che la serie ideata da Saviano è stata tradotta in cinese direttamente dall'italiano, così come *Il tredicesimo apostolo*. La serie *Suburra* è stata invece tradotta dall'inglese. Al momento non è ancora stata condotta un'analisi comparativa dei sottotitoli de *La dama velata* e della web serie *LSB-Le ragazze non dormono*. Inoltre non risultano in corso ricerche analoghe relative alle altre serie qui menzionate.

**31** URL <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/17c3e0e9e009581b6bd9eb8d.html?re=view> (2019-06-10).

**32** L'affermazione 'Mio padre è Li Gang', nota in Cina a partire dall'ottobre del 2010, è in realtà la risposta che il figlio del vice direttore dell'ufficio di pubblica sicurezza del distretto di Baoding diede al momento del suo arresto, avvenuto in seguito all'investimento di due studentesse universitarie. Dopo lunghe proteste, il giovane fu condannato a sei anni di carcere e al pagamento di un indennizzo ai famigliari delle vittime. A partire da quell'episodio l'espressione viene usata metaforicamente in riferimento a casi di abuso di potere e personaggi corrotti.



5. 原则上中文字幕中不准出现任何符号（指全角符号，如，。 “”），需要用符号的地方（如句中逗号 句号）用半角符号代替，但可以保留有表达情感作用的问号，感叹号或者省略号等，如要保留符号，请保留英文输入状态下的符号，例如：

636  
00:20:34,760 → 00:20:35,700  
Keisha 我能和你  
keisha, can I speak to you in

637  
00:20:35,770 → 00:20:38,670  
单独聊聊吗？  
Private?

这里的半角标点和空格指的是英文标点和空格，不是中文输入的半角标点和空格，千万注意。

6. 对话类，要求两句话之前都加上 -，- 与话语内容之间须有空格，第二句话的 - 与之前的内容之间空一个空格。 示例如下：

32  
00:03:28,756 → 00:03:31,958  
- 你真觉得这有用吗？- 国王这么觉得  
- You really think these will make a difference? - The king does.

（另，也可能英文对话中，只有一句前面有横杠或没有横杠，请补齐）

另，部分字幕中出现未说完的话，如：“If there is anything- - I mean” 则应该把此时的 - 或其他的符号形式改成 ... 即翻译为如果“有什么事...我是说”，以免与对话中的横杠混淆

Figura 1 Screenshot del documento elaborato dal gruppo Shenying relativo alle convenzioni ortografiche da utilizzare nella sottotitolazione

ganza (ya 雅).<sup>33</sup> Per la traduzione di quei prodotti culturali che nella Repubblica Popolare Cinese potrebbero non essere conosciuti perché vietati o inaccessibili, Facebook ad esempio, *Shenying* opta per una sostituzione con simili realtà locali come *Kaixin wang* 开心网, social network cinese inaugurato nel 2008. Per quanto riguarda i nomi di persona e toponimi, quelli già ampiamente noti in Cina, come Marx o Los Angeles, andranno resi con il loro equivalente cinese, mentre nomi poco conosciuti andranno lasciati in inglese (§ 2).

Sebbene le modalità traduttive indicate dal gruppo *Shenying* risalgano al 2011 e prendano in considerazione come lingua di partenza solo l'inglese, cosa peraltro ampiamente giustificabile se pensiamo che il maggior numero di programmi televisivi tradotti dai fansubber, sia in Cina sia altrove, sono di fatto prodotti angloamericani, è lecito pensare che, anche per la traduzione dei sottotitoli di *Gomorra*, i fansubber della community abbiano operato in maniera analoga. Tuttavia, come vedremo, l'analisi condotta sulla prima stagione di *Gomorra*, rivela anche altro.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Sul finire del XIX secolo, Yan Fu fu tra i primi letterati cinesi dell'epoca a essere inviato all'estero a studiare e a tradurre i classici della letteratura occidentale.

<sup>34</sup> I file '.srt' di sottotitoli non professionale in cinese dei 12 episodi che compongono la prima stagione della serie sono stati scaricati da Sub HD, piattaforma cinese, inaugurata nel 2014, dedicata agli appassionati di film e programmi televisivi stranieri, da cui è possibile scaricare gratuitamente i sottotitoli delle serie preferite (<http://subhd.com>) (2019-06-10). Sub HD vanta tra i suoi collaboratori 117 gruppi fansub. Nel-

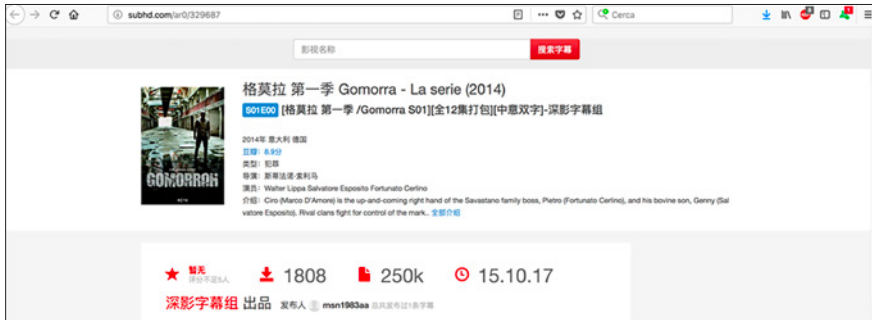


Figura 2 Screenshot della pagina dedicata a *Gomorra-La serie* disponibile sulla piattaforma Sub HD

Il fatto che *Gomorra* sia stata tradotta direttamente dall'italiano e non dall'inglese, è dimostrabile in almeno due modi: innanzitutto dalla data di caricamento sulla piattaforma Sub HD dei sottotitoli prodotti da *Shenyng* [fig. 2], il 15 ottobre del 2017, ovvero tre anni dopo il debutto italiano della serie, aspetto questo che rivelerebbe un'anomalia nel mondo del fansubbing, dove si punta alla traduzione delle serie nell'arco delle 24 ore dalla messa in onda nel paese d'origine; in secondo luogo, rispetto alla versione inglese della prima stagione, i fansubber del gruppo *Shenyng* sembrano ritenere di una certa importanza essere molto più fedeli al contenuto della serie, traducendo dunque anche canzoni, notizie televisive, cartelloni pubblicitari o autostradali, scritte sui muri, che invece nella traduzione inglese sono del tutto assenti, come a volte lo sono anche interi dialoghi.<sup>35</sup> Da una prima osservazione è possibile constatare che uno degli aspetti più tipicamente rappresentativi del fansubbing cinese, facilmente individuabile nei sottotitoli prodotti da *Shenyng*, è l'uso di glosse esplicative nei casi in cui compaiono elementi legati alla storia e alla cultura italiana, o a scene e battute che, nell'ottica del gruppo sarebbero potute risultare di difficile comprensione nella lingua di arrivo (§ 2). Ne sono un esempio in tal senso le immagini che seguono.

la classifica dei gruppi più attivi nel fornire sottotitoli troviamo YYeTS (21.488 '.srt'), YDY (3.543 '.srt') e *Shenyng* (3.460 '.srt').

**35** A tale proposito è utile sottolineare anche un altro aspetto. Nei sottotitoli (professionali o non professionali), scaricabili dalla piattaforma *opensubtitles* (<https://www.opensubtitles.org/it>) (2019-01-17), viene indicato spesso, come per altre lingue, la provenienza e la modalità di reperimento degli stessi, l'autore della traduzione, sia che si tratti di comunità fansub, di singoli individui o anche di agenzie di traduzione professionali. Rientrano in quest'ultimo caso i sottotitoli in inglese della serie *Gomorra*, dove per la traduzione di alcuni episodi è possibile risalire al nome del traduttore e all'agenzia (italiana o inglese) che ha commissionato il lavoro.



**Figura 3** Esempio di glossa esplicativa per facilitare la comprensione dell'audience cinese di aspetti legati alla cultura italiana



**Figura 4** Esempio di glossa per spiegare l'ironia contenuta nella battuta di un personaggio della serie

Le [figg. 3-4] due immagini sono esempi di glosse esplicative. Nella prima [fig. 3], alla traduzione del manifesto *Welcome to Scampia* (*Huanying lai Sikangpiya* 欢迎来到司康匹亚), segue tra parentesi la spiegazione di cosa sia Scampia: 'quartiere povero di Napoli, luogo di ritrovo per cosche malavitose' (*Napuleisi de qiongmin ku, heibang juji di* 那不勒斯的穷民窟 黑帮的聚集地). Nella seconda [fig. 4], invece, la glossa appare sul lato destro dello schermo, in caratteri di dimensione più piccola e in altro tipo di font rispetto a quello usato per il sottotitolo, e spiega la battuta di O' Track, il quale, guardando le scarpe bianche e immacolate dell'amico, domanda ironicamente: 'ma sono

con le mandorle questi confetti?'. Le scarpe non sono presenti né in questa scena né in quella successiva, tuttavia, grazie alla battuta dell'altro attore ('Ragazzi ma che hanno di strano queste scarpe?') capiamo che O' Track si riferisce proprio a quelle, pertanto la spiegazione in glossa recita: 'intende dire che le scarpe sembrano proprio dei confetti' (*zhi de ta de xiezi zhangde xiang xingrentang* 指的是他的鞋子长得像杏仁糖).



Figura 5 Esempio di traduzione di un elemento scritto esterno al dialogo



Figura 6 Esempio di traduzione di un insulto non orale

Le ultime due immagini, riportano, invece, in un caso, oltre al sottotitolo in entrambe le lingue, la traduzione di titolo e sottotitolo che appaiono su sfondo rosso nel sottopancia televisivo [fig. 5]; nell'altro [fig. 6], la traduzione della frase offensiva scritta su un muro, opera di Genny, 'io di Casavatore me ne sbatto le palle', che in cinese diventa 'Chi cazzo se ne frega di Casavatore' (*Kasawatuolei jia de dongxi shei tama zaihu* 卡萨瓦托雷家的东西谁他吗在乎). Se nell'ultima immagine il bianco scelto per la traduzione della scritta sul muro ci sembra effettivamente azzardato, perché non agevola la lettura da parte del telespettatore, va invece apprezzata l'idea di inserire la traduzione del sottopancia utilizzando, per sfondo e caratteri, gli stessi identici colori di quelli visibili sullo schermo televisivo nel secondo piano dell'inquadratura, quasi a voler sottolineare l'intento da parte dei fansubber di mimetizzare, pur traducendola, quella che dal pubblico cinese potrebbe essere considerata un'informazione importante ai fini della storia, anche se secondaria dato che grazie ai sottotitoli ordinari è possibile conoscere i contenuti del servizio che il telegiornale sta mandando in onda [fig. 5].

Relativamente ai nomi o soprannomi dei personaggi della serie, i fansubber sembrano discostarsi dalle indicazioni fornite dalla loro stessa community, optando per la trascrizione di qualunque nome di persona o luogo presente nella storia, quasi come se tale approccio fosse un invito per il pubblico cinese a familiarizzare con nomi quali *Xiluo/Xiluo* 西罗/西罗佐 (Ciro/Ciruzzo), *Jienalu/Jieni* 杰纳罗/杰尼, *tang Bide* 堂彼得 (don Pietro) e *Kongte* 孔特 (Conte).

Da un punto di vista linguistico, nei sottotitoli in italiano vi è poi un altro tratto preponderante e caratterizzante *Gomorra*: il ricorso a volgarità, oscenità e turpiloqui con cui il gruppo *Shenyng* si è dovuto confrontare. I diversi studi che si sono occupati di sottotitoli professionali hanno dimostrato che vi sono due modalità per la traduzione del turpiloquio. La prima tende ad attenuare la traduzione di parole oscene o di epiteti volgari e ingiuriosi per diverse ragioni: innanzitutto potrebbe non esistere nella lingua di arrivo un equivalente adeguato, si esclude pertanto la traduzione letterale dell'espressione o della parola oscena, per timore che il pubblico di arrivo possa percepirla come una forzatura; generalmente poi l'espressione volgare usata come riempitivo di una locuzione viene omessa date le rigide norme di spazio e tempo che governano la sottotitolazione audiovisiva; inoltre termini che in una certa lingua o cultura sono ritenuti volgari o offensivi non è detto che lo siano necessariamente anche nella lingua e nella cultura di arrivo; infine, il passaggio dalla lingua parlata a quella scritta potrebbe dare al termine ingiurioso una valenza ancora più offensiva e aggressiva. Nella seconda modalità, invece, prevale l'idea che il turpiloquio e le parolacce, in quanto parte integrante della cultura e della lingua di partenza, contribuiscano al mantenimento dell'integrità artistica del prodotto audiovisivo che si intende tradurre (Chen 2004; Fernandez 2009; Hjort 2009). Quest'ultima soluzione, pertanto, offrirebbe al

pubblico di arrivo un'esperienza non alterata e autentica. Questa visione sembrerebbe rispecchiarsi nelle volontà che animano la formazione stessa delle comunità di fansubber. Su quale dei diversi approcci ricada la scelta del gruppo *Shenyng* sarà oggetto del prossimo paragrafo.

#### **4 Analisi del turpiloquio della prima stagione di *Gomorra-La serie* nella traduzione in cinese del gruppo *Shenyng***

Ogni lingua è dotata di un variegato corredo di parole oscene o parolacce, insulti e imprecazioni propri di un registro informale che, in certi contesti, sarebbe meglio non pronunciare. Si tratta di termini ed espressioni che trovano il proprio *humus* nella sfera semantica della sessualità e in quella scatologica. All'interno di un discorso, sia esso scritto o parlato, il turpiloquio svolge delle funzioni ben precise, suddivisibili, secondo Ljung (2011), in due principali macrogruppi: 1) occorrenze autonome (*stand-alone functions*), per cui certi termini o espressioni si comportano come degli enunciati indipendenti, come le interiezioni espletive (e.g. 'cazzo!'), che esprimono spontaneamente uno stato d'animo, o atti linguistici di tipo illocutivo, come le parolacce, le bestemmie, le imprecazioni, gli insulti (e.g. 'figlio di puttana'); 2) occorrenze riempitive (*slot-filler functions*) che servono a rendere più lunghe certe espressioni modificando il nome (e.g. 'quel cazzo di libro') o il verbo che precedono o seguono intensificandolo (e.g. 'non me ne frega un cazzo').

Le sfere semantiche della sessualità e della scatologia sono, insieme a quelle magico-religiosa, della persona (difetti fisici e morali), della malattia e della morte, e quella sociale (status, posizione politica, mestiere, ecc.), gli ambiti in cui il turpiloquio è soggetto a interdizione linguistica: certi termini o espressioni vengono cioè tabuizzati o sostituiti con altri che ne suggeriscono il significato perché scriverli o pronunciarli provoca un certo disagio, dovuto alla maggiore o minore interiorizzazione delle norme sociali ricevute (Galli de' Paratesi 1969, 25-35; Li Lunlun 1994, 11-19; Chen Yuan 1998, 80-99; Li Junhua 2010, 35-44).<sup>36</sup> Rispettare l'obbligo di non parlare o scrivere di una data cosa significa quindi osservare quelli che Ullmann (1962) ha definito tabù da paura (magia e religione), tabù da delicatezza (malattia e morte) e tabù da pudore (sessualità e funzioni corporali).

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**36** Per quanto riguarda l'utilizzo di sostituti eufemistici in Cina, Li Junhua afferma che il rapporto tra eufemismo e interdizione linguistica è stabilito in relazione al credo religioso, a simboli o oggetti spirituali, ai privilegi di status e al codice etico confuciano, alla persistenza di superstizioni, alla malattia, alla morte e a calamità naturali; a fenomeni o a oggetti ritenuti osceni e volgari, e all'insoddisfazione personale o a problematiche sociali che si tendono a nascondere.

Per superare l'interdizione linguistica il parlante ricorre all'eufemismo, strategia linguistico-retorica con cui alcune parole vengono sostituite o evitate attraverso una serie di strategie lessicali, che «riassume quell'insieme di manifestazioni linguistiche di cui l'interdizione linguistica è la causa psicologica» (Galli de' Paratesi 1969, 25). Cardona individua due macrostrategie che il parlante adopera per il superamento dell'interdizione: a) si interviene sul significato, sostituendo il termine interdetto con mezzi linguistici, appartenenti alla stessa lingua, tramite strumenti retorici ('meloni' in luogo di 'seno') o perifrasi ('donna di vita' invece di 'prostituta'), o appartenenti ad altra lingua o ad altra varietà di lingua (ad esempio 'pipì' e 'popò' nel linguaggio infantile); b) si interviene sul significante, per cui il termine interdetto viene alterato, conservando gli stessi fonemi o introducendone altri ('cribbio' per 'Cristo' o 'cacchio' per 'cazzo'), o soppresso, ossia il suo posto viene occupato da una pausa o del tutto omesso. I sostituti eufemistici, dunque, sono prodotti tramite mezzi linguistici<sup>37</sup> (Chen Yuan 1998, 83) che operano sul significato e sul significante. Tra i moduli di sostituzione riconducibili a queste due macrostrategie rientrano, secondo Galli de' Paratesi, l'ineffabilità, l'alterazione fonetica, l'alterazione grammaticale (intervento sul significante) e uso di termini stranieri o dotti e uso di circonlocuzioni sostitutive o attenuative (intervento sul significato), di cui gli schemi che seguono ne sono un'esemplificazione:

**Tabella 3** Moduli di intervento sul significante

Intervento sul significante tramite	Ineffabilità	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omissione o ellissi eufemistica</li> <li>• Abbreviazione</li> <li>• Rifiuto di impronunciabilità</li> <li>• Uso di pronomi personali o dimostrativi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puntini di sospensione</li> <li>• Sei proprio un co...</li> <li>• È diventata quel che è diventata</li> <li>• Va a quel paese</li> </ul>
	Alterazione fonetica per	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fonemi subterminali</li> <li>• Metatesi del tema</li> <li>• Cambio di iniziale</li> <li>• Soppressione di iniziale</li> <li>• Reduplicazione del tema</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perdinci</li> <li>• <i>Corpo</i> (Porco)</li> <li>• <i>Zio</i> (Dio)</li> <li>• <i>Orca</i> (Porca)</li> <li>• Perdindirindina</li> </ul>
	Alterazione grammaticale per	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creazione di sintagmi aggettivali</li> <li>• Aggiunta di un suffisso diminutivo</li> <li>• Aggiunta di un suffisso astratto</li> <li>• Cambiamento del modo verbale o della forma della frase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vita sessuale</i> (Sesso)</li> <li>• Femminuccia</li> <li>• Divinità</li> <li>• Mi sia permesso di dire</li> </ul>

**37** Galli de' Paratesi (1969, 38-9) indica anche la produzione di sostituti eufemistici attraverso mezzi extralinguistici, quali l'intonazione della voce e la gestualità.



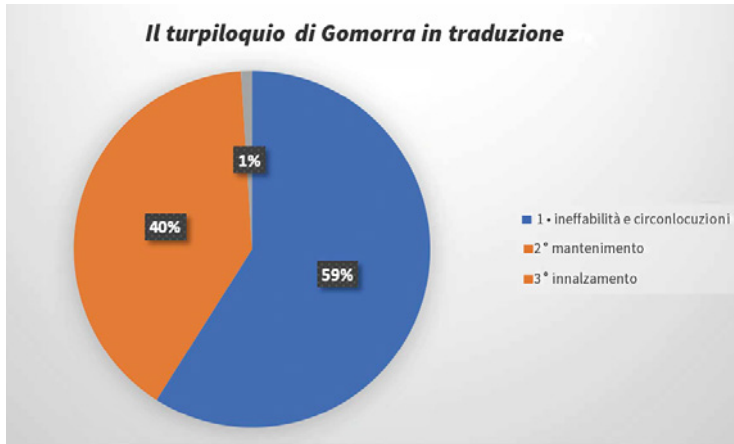
**Tabella 4** Moduli di intervento sul significato

Intervento sul significato tramite	Uso di termini dotti o stranieri	• Toilette
	Circonlocuzioni attenuative o sostitutive per:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antifrasi</li> <li>• Sineddoche</li> <li>• Metonimia</li> <li>• Metafora</li> <li>• Litote</li> <li>• Perifrasi</li> <li>• Antonomasia</li> <li>• Accostamento</li> <li>• Attenuazione per inserto</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Figlio di una brava donna</li> <li>• Amplesso</li> <li>• Sedere</li> <li>• Inzuppare il biscottino</li> <li>• Non stai bene</li> <li>• Donna di facili costumi</li> <li>• Membro</li> <li>• Beata Vergine</li> <li>• Con rispetto parlando</li> </ul>

Analogamente ai contributi di Galli de' Paratesi e Cardona, Lin Lun-lun (1996, 28-38) sottolinea che, per il superamento dell'interdizione linguistica, affinché la comunicazione proceda senza intoppi, il parlante ha a disposizione quattro moduli: 1) l'ineffabilità (*huibifa* 回避法) che mira alla soppressione diretta del termine o dell'espressione interdetta; 2) forme attenuative che ingentiliscono e mitigano l'enunciato (*weiwānfā* 委婉法); 3) moduli sostitutivi (*duidaifa* 对代法) che possono attingere alla retorica, come la sineddoche, la metafora e l'anafora, ad allusioni letterarie, alla natura stessa dei caratteri (scomponimento dei caratteri) o intervenendo sui fonemi; 4) il ricorso a espressioni che rivelano una versione alternativa del termine interdetto e che mistificano un comportamento o un atteggiamento di norma ritenuto non idoneo o poco decoroso (*bianjiefā* 辩解法).

Come dicevamo, il turpiloquio in *Gomorra* è una costante ben definita. Gli epiteti che ricorrono con una certa frequenza sono 'cazzo', 'stronzo' e loro rispettivi derivati. Rispetto ad altri titoli ingiuriosi, infatti, 'cazzo' ricorre 136 volte, mentre 'stronzo' 64. Per entrambe le forme si registrano interventi sia sul significante che sul significato e isolati casi di innalzamento del turpiloquio. Più specificatamente riscontriamo per 'cazzo' e 'stronzo' interventi sul significante tramite ineffabilità (25 casi di omissione) e interventi sul significato tramite circonlocuzioni attenuative o sostitutive (94 casi). Il turpiloquio è invece mantenuto in 80 casi a cui è possibile aggiungere i tre casi isolati di innalzamento non giustificato del turpiloquio stesso.





**Grafico 1** Le percentuali di ineffabilità, circonlocuzioni sostitutive, mantenimento e innalzamento dei termini ‘cazzo’, ‘stronzo’ e loro derivati nella sottotitolazione non professionale della prima stagione di *Gomorra*

Data la frequenza con cui ricorre rispetto a ‘stronzo’, in questa occasione ci occuperemo solo del termine ‘cazzo’.<sup>38</sup> Relativamente all’analisi effettuata, grande attenzione è stata riservata a tre casi specifici:<sup>39</sup>

1. il turpiloquio nel testo di partenza viene utilizzato in contesti di occorrenza riempitiva come espansione nominale che può essere quindi omessa perché non modifica né il senso né la struttura della frase;
2. il turpiloquio è impiegato all’interno del nucleo di frase nella funzione di soggetto, oggetto o verbo e non può quindi essere omesso, ma mitigato tramite circonlocuzioni attenuative o sostitutive;
3. il turpiloquio viene usato in contesti di occorrenza autonoma in cui può essere omesso o sostituito perché non è parte integrante del nucleo di frase.

**38** Per quanto riguarda la frequenza di ‘cazzo’ e dei suoi derivati nella prima stagione di *Gomorra* abbiamo riscontrato 22 casi di omissione, 52 di attenuazione e 62 di mantenimento del termine.

**39** Quando usati all’interno di tabelle per praticità si è scelto di abbreviare i tre casi in C1, C2 e C3.

**Tabella 5** Esempi di ineffabilità

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
1 Ma io che cazzo ne sapevo? (C1)	但我怎么会知道 ‘Ma io come potevo saperlo?’
2 Quante cazzo di guardie ci sono! (C1)	那么多警察在那里 ‘Quanti poliziotti ci sono lì’
3 Pasqualino, apri questa cazzo di porta (C1)	帕斯夸里诺 开门 ‘Pasqualino apri la porta’
4 Che cazzo fai, eh? (C1)	干什么 嗯 ‘Che fai eh?’
5 Ci scrive i cazzi suoi (C2)	写她自己想写的东西 ‘Scrive le cose che vuole scrivere’
6 Neanche un cazzo di prete, un parroco. Nessuno (C1)	神父 教士一个都没来 什么人都没有 ‘Né un prete o un parroco sono venuti. Non c’era nessuno’
7 Bravo. Stasera si deve lavorare, cazzo (C3)	太好了 今晚可以开工了 ‘Ottimo. Stasera si comincia ad essere operativi’

Dagli esempi relativi agli interventi tramite ineffabilità riportati nella [tab. 5], è possibile notare come i casi in cui nel testo di partenza il turpiloquio è usato in contesti di occorrenza riempitiva siano i più frequenti e i più facili da omettere senza che tale intervento incida sulla resa nella lingua di arrivo.

**Tabella 6** Esempi di circonlocuzioni attenuative o sostitutive rispondenti al caso 1

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
1 Che cazzo vuoi?	啥事儿 ‘Che vuoi?’
2 Ma che cazzo ti prende?	你脑子进水了吗 ‘Ti è entrata l’acqua nel cervello?’
3 Quel cazzo di computer	那该死的电脑 ‘Quel maledetto computer’
4 Come cazzo facciamo a entrare là dentro?	该死的 我们到底怎么进去 ‘Maledetti. Alla fine come entriamo’
5 Quindi pigliati ‘sti cazzo di soldi e fai quello che devi fare	所以接受这该死的钱然后赶紧去做事 ‘Quindi accetta questi dannati soldi e spicciati ad andare a lavorare’
6 Io non riesco a capire, che cazzo ti ho fatto?	我不明白 我到底做错了什么 ‘Non capisco. Alla fine cosa ho fatto di sbagliato?’
7 Fammi capire una cosa, Tonino, che cazzo vi siete messi in testa, eh?	告诉我 托尼诺 你脑子里是不是都装浆糊了 ‘Dimmi, Tonino, ti si è riempito il cervello di colla’

Nella [tab. 6] notiamo una certa somiglianza con gli esempi in italiano riportati nella [tab. 5]: si tratta effettivamente di esempi ricon-

ducibili al caso 1, per cui nella resa in cinese ci saremmo aspettati l'adozione del modello di ineffabilità per superare l'interdizione linguistica. Si osserva, invece, come l'utilizzo di circonlocuzioni come 'ti è entrata l'acqua nel cervello' o 'ti si è riempito il cervello di colla', espressioni popolari per indicare stoltezza, siano certo usate per aderire maggiormente al contesto di partenza, ma anche per mantenere nella lingua di arrivo un registro che sia il più colloquiale e gergale possibile; si pensi, ad esempio, all'uso frequente dell'espressione colloquiale *gaisi* 该死 (esempi 3, 4 e 5) e all'uso del pronome interrogativo *sha* 啥 (esempio 1) di origine dialettale.

Il turpiloquio è sempre soggettivo, perché riconducibile a un disagio psicologico avvertito da chi lo pronuncia o lo ascolta, ma anche contestuale, proprio come può esserlo l'atto traduttivo. Nel caso specifico di *Gomorra*, la domanda che dovremmo porci è se nella sua traduzione in cinese sia possibile rinvenire o meno delle costanti.

Gli aspetti del parlato che trasmettono al ricevente informazioni sullo stato emotivo del parlante costituiscono quello che da alcuni studiosi è stato definito 'parlato emotivo' (Caffi, Janney 1994; Caffi 2002). Tra le risorse comunicative di cui disponiamo nel parlato emotivo, e che sono state tenute in considerazione per questa nostra analisi, vi sono le risorse di tipo lessicale.<sup>40</sup> *Gomorra*, serie caratterizzata principalmente da emozioni quali rabbia e inquietudine, è contraddistinta da un parlato emotivo in cui le emozioni sociali,<sup>41</sup> espresse attraverso svariate forme di turpiloquio, ne costituiscono la dominante emotiva. Di questo parlato emotivo la risorsa principale è dunque quella lessicale.

**40** Nel parlato emotivo, di solito, si distinguono quattro tipi di risorse: le risorse di tipo lessicale, come parole emotive (nomi, verbi, aggettivi, avverbi) che esprimono emozioni o un significato emotivo senza specificarne la qualità (interiezioni); risorse di tipo sintattico, come costruzioni enfatiche che utilizzano la dislocazione a sinistra; risorse di tipo morfologico caratterizzate dall'uso di vezzeggiativi, dispregiativi e diminutivi; risorse contestuali (fisiche, linguistiche o cognitive), non esplicite ma recuperabili nella conoscenza enciclopedica dell'ascoltatore e che il parlante assume per condivise.

**41** Le emozioni primarie (rabbia e paura; tristezza e gioia; sorpresa e attesa; disgusto e accettazione), così come presentate da Plutchik (2001), sono reazioni innate, esprimibili con maggiore o minore intensità, che originano dall'ambiente sociale, culturale e intellettuale in cui ci muoviamo. Di norma proviamo emozioni positive quando raggiungiamo uno scopo, emozioni negative se lo scopo è compromesso. È sulla base di tali esiti che distinguiamo quattro principali famiglie di emozioni: 1) emozioni cognitive, quando proviamo interesse, sorpresa, curiosità, suspense, noia verso qualcosa o qualcuno; 2) emozioni dell'immagine o dell'autoimmagine, quando proviamo imbarazzo, vergogna, senso di colpa, umiliazione, soddisfazione e orgoglio verso l'immagine che abbiamo di noi stessi o l'immagine che diamo di noi all'esterno; 3) emozioni sociali, quando interagiamo con un'altra persona in maniera cooperativa o aggressiva e che proviamo, quindi, quando sentiamo amore e simpatia o odio e antipatia verso qualcuno; 4) emozioni dell'immagine dell'altro, quando stigmatizziamo una persona stimandola e ammirandola o, al contrario, disprezzandola.

**Tabella 7** Esempi di circonlocuzioni sostitutive o attenuative per ‘cazzo’ nelle forme derivate ‘incazzare’ e ‘rompere il cazzo’ rispondenti al Caso 2

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
Primo perché ero incazzato	首先因为当时我很窝火 ‘Primo perché in quel momento ero pieno di rabbia’
Io mi incazzo	我会生气 ‘Mi potrei arrabbiare’
No, tu c’entri, perché ora i russi sono davvero incazzati	当然和你有关因为现在老毛子们都气疯了 ‘Certo che ti riguarda perché ora i russi sono fuori di sé dalla rabbia’
Donna Imma, è successo che vostro marito è veramente incazzato	伊玛 您丈夫很生气 ‘Imma, suo marito è arrabbiato’
Ma sei sempre incazzato?	难道你总是这么生气的样子 ‘Possibile che sei sempre così arrabbiato’
Ma ora Gennaro si è incazzato, ha detto basta	现在杰纳罗生气了 他说不能再这样下去了 ‘Ora Gennaro si è arrabbiato, dice che non si può più andare avanti così’
Massimino, non ti incazzare	小马 别生气 ‘Massimino non ti arrabbiare’
Il titolare si incazza, lo sai	你也知道我们老板 他会生气的 ‘Anche tu lo sai che il nostro capo si arrabbierà’
[...] che se qualcuno mi rompe il cazzo	有人给我捣蛋 ‘se qualcuno mi dà fastidio’
Oh! Io mi sono rotto il cazzo, hai capito	嘿 我受够了 听到没 ‘ehi ne ho abbastanza, mi hai sentito o no’
Mi sono rotto il cazzo di aspettare. Chiama!	我受够了等等等 打电话给他 ‘Ne ho abbastanza di aspettare. Chiamalo’
Fai presto, tu, che mi hai già rotto il cazzo!	你快点 我没那么多耐心 ‘Sbrigati, non ho così tanta pazienza’
Qui dentro nessuno mi può rompere il cazzo	这边没人搞破坏 ‘Qui nessuno può fare casino’
Mi state rompendo il cazzo!	你找死吗? ‘Vuoi crepare?’
E invece Gennarino si è rotto il cazzo di te	你别不信 杰纳罗已经受够你的指手画脚了 ‘Credici, Gennarino ne ha abbastanza dei tuoi commenti fuori luogo’
Mi venite a rompere il cazzo qui sotto a quest’ora?	你们这个时间来我家楼下就是来捣蛋的么 ‘A quest’ora venite sotto casa mia a infastidirmi?’

**Tabella 8** Esempi di circonlocuzioni sostitutive o attenuative di ‘cazzo’ in casi di negazione discontinua

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
E allora non dire un cazzo	那就别啰嗦 ‘Allora non scocciare’
Per voi che non contate un cazzo, sì	对于你们这些人没头没脸的人来说 当然是 ‘Per voi che non siete nessuno, certamente sì’
Dice che non pagano più un cazzo	他说他一个子儿都不掏了 ‘Dice che non tira più fuori nemmeno uno spicciolo’

Io sono due anni che non guadagno un cazzo	我两年没赚到一个子儿 ‘Sono due anni che non guadagno un soldo’
Siete voi che non capite un cazzo	是你们脑子不清楚吧 ‘Siete voi a non avere le idee chiare’

Relativamente alle forme derivate ‘incazzare/incazzarsi/incazzato’ e ‘rompere il cazzo/rotto il cazzo’ [tab. 7] queste ricorrono sempre in casi di circonlocuzione sostitutiva o attenuativa; si tratta di lessico sicuramente emotivo, esprime rabbia nella prima forma derivata e fastidio verso gli altri nella seconda. La resa in cinese di entrambe le forme traduce sempre il senso attenuandolo. Analogo atteggiamento si riscontra quando nel testo di partenza abbiano casi di negazione discontinua (‘non contare un cazzo’, ‘non pagare un cazzo’, ‘non capire un cazzo’), dove il turpiloquio compare come argomento del verbo, e nei casi in cui il turpiloquio viene utilizzato come interiezione impropria [tab. 8]. Analoga modalità si riscontra negli esempi di caso 3 [tab. 9].

**Tabella 9** Esempi di circonlocuzioni sostitutive o attenuative per ‘cazzo’ e suoi derivati rispondenti al caso 3

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
Cazzo	哎呀 ‘Oh mamma!’
Cazzo!	啧啧 ‘Caspita!’

Se guardiamo invece i casi di mantenimento del turpiloquio le costanti sembrano altre. Vediamo ad esempio le occorrenze in cui il turpiloquio nel testo di partenza appare come elemento nominale e parte integrante di negazione posposta (‘a posto un cazzo’, ‘scusa un cazzo’, ‘maestro un cazzo’, ‘equamente un cazzo’) [tab. 10]. In questi casi il turpiloquio viene mantenuto anche nella lingua di arrivo in una resa che ricalca la forma sintattica dell’enunciato così come espresso nella lingua di partenza.

**Tabella 10** Esempi di mantenimento turpiloquio in casi di negazione posposta rispondenti al caso 2

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
Tutto a posto un cazzo!	好个屁 ‘Bene un cazzo’
Scusa, Ciro — Scusa un cazzo, Gennaro	对不起西罗 — 对不起有个屁用 ‘Scusa, Ciro — Non me ne faccio un cazzo delle scuse’
Ma dettaglio un cazzo!	细节个鬼 ‘Dettaglio un cazzo’

Maestro un cazzo!	大师个屁 ‘Maestro un cazzo’
Equamente un cazzo!	公正个屁 ‘Giusto un cazzo’

Altri esempi interessanti provengono dalle traduzioni di enunciati o battute dei dialoghi, rispondenti al caso 1, ovvero in quei casi in cui il turpiloquio viene utilizzato in contesti di occorrenza riempitiva. Come precedentemente descritto, in casi di questo tipo la strategia utilizzata è di solito l'ineffabilità. Tuttavia, nel momento in cui il turpiloquio compare nella lingua di partenza come intensificatore dei pronomi o aggettivi interrogativi, il mantenimento sembrerebbe garantito da una struttura sintattica che nella lingua di arrivo è simile [tab. 11].

**Tabella 11** Esempi di mantenimento turpiloquio rispondenti al caso 1

Testo di partenza	Testo di arrivo
Ma che cazzo fate là?	你们他妈的在那做什么 ‘Cosa cazzo fate là?’
Ma che cazzo fai?	你他妈的在做什么 ‘Cosa cazzo stai facendo’
Che cazzo significa che oggi non se ne fa più niente	你他妈什么意思今天怎么就没事了 ‘Che cazzo vuoi dire che oggi non si fa niente’
E io che cazzo devo fare?	那我他妈的要做什么 ‘E io che cazzo devo fare’
E tu dove cazzo eri?	你他妈刚刚在哪儿 ‘Tu dove cazzo stavi’
Ma che cazzo ridi a fare Michele?	你他妈的笑什么 米凯勒 ‘Che cazzo ridi, Michele’
Ehi, stronzo, ma che cazzo stai facendo?	诶 小子 你他妈的在做什么 ‘Ehi, delinquente, che cazzo stai facendo?’
Dimmi che cazzo sta succedendo	说吧 你他妈到底怎么了 ‘Dimmi, cosa cazzo succede’
Che cazzo fai, stronzo?	你他妈的干什么 混蛋 ‘Che cazzo fai, stronzo’
Ma chi cazzo se ne frega con chi voleva fare affari	谁他妈在意他和谁做生意 ‘A chi cazzo importa con chi fa affari’

Le osservazioni a cui si è giunti dopo questa analisi preliminare sono principalmente due. La prima è facilmente intuibile. Il gruppo *Shenyng* sceglie di tabuizzare, maggiormente attraverso uso di circonlocuzioni sostitutive o attenuative, in misura minore omettendo: per le 136 volte in cui ‘cazzo’ ricorre abbiamo infatti riscontrato 22 casi di omissione, 52 di attenuazione e 62 di mantenimento del turpiloquio. Questa scelta potrebbe anche dipendere dalla questione ampiamente discussa all'interno dell'ambito della traduzione audiovisiva ufficiale sulla traduzione o meno del turpiloquio, o da regole

interne al gruppo *Shenyng* legate alla traduzione delle parole oscene. Come già precisato, in riferimento alla traduzione di serie televisive angloamericane, nelle norme pubblicate nel 2011 veniva infatti espressamente richiesto di optare per una traduzione libera, evitando l'uso di espressioni prive di senso, e di rispettare i tre criteri cui una traduzione dovrebbe rispondere per essere ritenuta di valore: fedeltà, espressività ed eleganza.

Per quanto riguarda la seconda osservazione, meno prevedibile invece, è che pur preferendo tabuizzare, laddove nel testo di partenza la struttura sintattica è facilmente trasferibile nella lingua di arrivo, il gruppo *Shenyng* opta per mantenere il turpiloquio. In particolare quello che notiamo è che vi è una struttura sintattica dell'italiano, in cui 'cazzo' viene utilizzato come intensificatore dei pronomi interrogativi, che in cinese viene tradotta con ben tre strategie diverse:

1. Omissione: che cazzo fai, eh? 干什么 嗯 'Che fai eh?' (2 esempi)
2. Attenuazione: che cazzo vuoi? 啥事儿 'Che vuoi?' (5 esempi)<sup>42</sup>
3. Mantenimento: ma che cazzo fai? 你他妈的在做什么 'Cosa cazzo stai facendo?'<sup>43</sup>

Per poter giungere a delle osservazioni conclusive e ottenere dati certi sulla tabuizzazione o meno del turpiloquio nella traduzione non professionale di *Gomorra-La serie* da parte del gruppo *Shenyng*, in futuro sarà necessario avviare un'analisi più approfondita che tenga conto dei sottotitoli di tutte e quattro le stagioni della serie. Con una gamma di casi più ampi, infatti, sarà possibile stabilire se tali scelte vengono mantenute solo per un certo tipo di termine o anche per altra tipologia di turpiloquio e se le percentuali di interdizione linguistica, così come precedentemente indicato, sono confermabili o subiscono invece delle variazioni incisive.

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**42** Come precedentemente illustrato [tab. 6], il gruppo *Shenyng* in alcuni casi sceglie di attenuare il turpiloquio utilizzando espressioni popolari o di origine dialettale per mantenere nel testo di arrivo un registro colloquiale e gergale. *Sha* 啥 è un pronome interrogativo di origine dialettale, equivalente nell'uso e nel significato a *shenme* 什么 (cosa?), e ampiamente diffuso in molte province settentrionali e meridionali della Cina. Le traduzioni in italiano degli esempi riportati in questo contributo sono traduzioni di servizio, pensate principalmente per agevolare la comprensione degli argomenti trattati da parte di quei lettori poco avvezzi alla lingua e alla cultura cinesi. Optando per una scelta di questo tipo, il grado di gergalità dell'espressione utilizzata in cinese purtroppo si perde, nonostante il tentativo di mantenere duro il tono dell'enunciato originale in italiano. Se non avessimo avuto a che fare con una traduzione di servizio, siamo certi che il ricorso al dialetto napoletano, come *ca' bbuo'* o che *vvuo'*, sarebbe stato invece più incisivo.

**43** I casi di mantenimento sono 62 in totale, di cui 35 hanno 'cazzo' che intensifica un pronome interrogativo.

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# Made in Italy in Chinese Market Emerging Issues for Italian Food

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**Abstract** Considering the rapid changes in Chinese food habits, in both quantity and quality, the study aims to outline the market potentiality of the made-in-Italy food and focus on some emerging issues concerning Italian specialities that are characterised by higher competitiveness. Starting from the definition of made-in-Italy food, the paper addresses the topic of food safety, analysing policies and legislation. Following an approach from macro to micro aspects, market trends are highlighted, and a ranking analysis is carried out, emphasising the positioning of the made in Italy. Concerns related to transaction costs, information asymmetry, and adverse selection are discussed and the Italian sounding phenomenon is addressed. Growing practices of unfair competition, such as food piracy, result in several forms of market failure, damaging the segmentation strategies of Italian companies. Findings propose an estimate of unfair business and offer special indexes of evaluation. Finally, policy and business implications are addressed, and attractive and multiple fields for future researches are suggested.

**Keywords** Made-in-Italy food. Agricultural trade. Chinese market. Italian sounding. Halo construct. Information asymmetry. Transaction costs. Adverse selection. Food piracy.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Background and Materials. – 2.1 Made-in-Italy food. – 2.2 Food Safety Policy. – 2.3 Dynamics and Aspects of Chinese market. – 3 Data Analysis and Results. – 3.1 Markets Trends and Ranking of 'Made-in-Italy food'. – 4 Discussion and Conclusion. – 4.1 Concern of Italian Sounding. – 4.2 Implications for Italian Companies. – 4.3 Conclusions and Research Suggestions.



## Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-15
Accepted	2019-06-20
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Antonio De Pin, Antonio(2019). "Made in Italy in Chinese Market. Emerging Issues for Italian food". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 509-538.

## 1 Introduction

Chinese food habits have experienced rapid changes in both quantity and quality of the diet due to the increased buying power of consumers and their new lifestyle (Zhou et al. 2014). The Chinese food sector has become the largest worldwide, with an average annual growth rate near 30% (World Bank 2013). This trend has remarkably evolved. In this context, the import of agro food products explodes and involves an increasingly diversified range of supply. This development affects consumption growth rates, which become very high for meat, dairy products, fish, oil, pasta, confectionery and convenience food.

The rise in household income and the scandals over food safety are key drivers.

New distribution channels are deeply changing the purchasing system with hypermarkets, supermarkets, convenience stores. Corner shops are spreading in urban areas, granting competitive prices and improved sanitary conditions (Jiang, Prater 2002). Firms are stimulated to introduce new products, to invest in innovation, but this does not always grant higher safety. In fact, the frequently occurring food safety scandals undermine consumer confidence and encourage new import flows (Yan 2012). The growth in food demand gives a major boost to imports, an essential opportunity for Italian businesses.

In this light, the present study aims to outline the potentialities of the Chinese food markets, which enjoy higher appeal for made in Italy, but are also suffering from growing concerns about food security, intended as a guarantee of food in both quantity and safety. We also focus on some issues concerning the positioning of foodstuffs in Chinese markets, such as the Italian food specialities, which enjoy higher competitiveness as they represent the excellence of Italy. Their success is likely to result in phenomena of Italian sounding, the unfair competition set out to achieve higher profits by evoking an Italian image, in the absence of its requirements (De Pin 2009). The counterfeiting and falsification growth is comparable to that of the market. Considering that original products require higher production costs, affecting its market positioning, company strategies are heavily influenced by imitation activity.

In this context, in terms of economic legitimacy and market transparency required for development, two very substantial issues affect the Chinese market: on the one hand, the increasingly pressing prerequisite to achieve an adequate food safety standard, and, on the other hand, the opportunity to put a break to the increasing phenomena of product falsification and counterfeiting, which undermine the credibility of the entire Chinese economic system from a global perspective (Cuffaro, Di Giacinto 2015). In the absence of a consolidated

system of competitive and commercial rules guaranteeing fair competition, the real transparency and settlement of the market fail. The result is the inducement of moral hazard behaviours – due to high transaction costs and manifest information asymmetries – translating into specific kinds of market failure.

## 2 Background and Materials

### 2.1 Made-in-Italy food

A highly differentiated product portfolio, with a wide range of typical products characterises the made-in-Italy food heritage. The presence of a multitude of products and countless regional culinary preparations is the most distinctive feature of Italian cuisine (Censis, Federalimentare 2006). High competitiveness both in terms of quality and food safety is the hallmark of Italian production, its culture and its culinary tradition.

Made-in-Italy food is defined as “the set of products recognized for their strong typical character, given their close link with the territory, on which Italy enjoys comparative advantages related to the environment and production systems” (ISMEA 2012, 141).

Homegrown food specialities consist of branded and typical products, whose strict link to their area of origin is what makes the difference in international markets.

European certificates like Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Origin (PGO) (Reg. 510/2006, ex 2081/92) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) (Reg. 509/2006, ex 2082/92) protect typical products. Typical Geographical Indication (IGT), Controlled Denomination of Origin (DOC), Controlled, and Guaranteed Denomination of Origin (DOCG) (Reg. 3016/2004) label wines. Here the level of detail is much higher in terms of regulation, compared to China.

Italy can boast 294 PDO, PGI, TSG certificates and 532 DOC, DOCG, IGT labels (Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, year 2018). Italy is the main beneficiary of these regulations as the 22% of total PDO and PGI certificates issued in the European Union protects Italian foodstuffs, and in particular fruit and vegetables (40%), cheese (18%), extra virgin olive oil (17.6%) and cured meat products (14%). More than 84,000 firms provide certified products, the 90% of which operate in the agricultural sector.

Among Italian specialities, we include the “Traditional products” (Ministerial Decree 350/1999), which possess a traditional character, both in the composition and means of production. The eighteenth edition of the “List of Traditional Food Products” counts 5,056 specialities, mainly pasta and bakery products (30%), vege-

tables (27%), meat (16%) and cheese (10%) (Gazzetta Ufficiale nr. 57, 09.03.2018).

Made-in-Italy food includes branded, traditional and certified-origin products, i.e. categories that are of greater importance because the international markets particularly appreciate their highly typical character.

The commercial role of made in Italy is realised through the analysis of the country's foreign trade, taking into consideration export-oriented products - which show a positive value on their normalised trade balance and constitute an important share of total exports. The cluster is identified considering only exports higher than 300 million Euro and a normalised trade balance higher than 20. To this range, we add cheese and olive oil, although in a trade deficit.

As for commercial terminology, the concept of 'country-of-origin' is ambiguous, as it includes the 'origin country' to which the product is associated; or 'design-in country', where it is planned or designed; 'made in country', where it is produced, or assembled.

Made in Italy is certified in case of DOP and IGP products, specifically defined as directly related to the territorial and geographical origin. However, Italy excels in relevant specialities whose raw-material origin can only be foreign (pasta, coffee, chocolate). INEA proposed an alternative definition that distinguishes three categories, depending on the level of transformation: "agricultural made in Italy", as rice, fruit, vegetable; "transformed", as wine, fruit juice, oil; "industrial", as pasta, coffee, chocolate (Castellotti 2010). In this case, emphasis is placed on the recognition of the more elevated Italian agro-food quality in the world. The process of globalisation and the shortage of national raw materials conform to the European Union notion of 'made in', which is based on the "last substantial transformation of products" (Reg. (CEE) nr. 2454/93; art. 24).

Made-in-Italy products represent the 73% of exports (2017), although in an overall trade deficit condition, they are extremely relevant considering the value and volume **[table 1]**.

**Table 1** China's Agro-food Imports (million USD)

Ranking 2017	2005	2010	2015	2017	100	$\Delta\%$ 15/05	$\Delta\%$ 17/10
1 Brazil	3.472	9.810	26.180	35.548	22	654	262
2 Unites States	6.193	12.344	24.428	25.027	15	294	103
3 Canada	937	2.724	4.492	8.956	6	379	229
4 Argentina	2.965	5.126	5.810	6.318	4	96	23
5 Thailandia	1.697	4.778	4.454	6.067	4	162	27
6 Australia	2.368	3.851	6.406	5.152	3	170	34
7 Indonesia	1.202	4.146	4.466	4.843	3	272	17
8 New Zealand	599	1.972	3.684	3.895	2	515	97
<b>25 Italy</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>0,3</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>114</b>
Total Import	21.358	52.171	113.041	162.832	100	429	212
Total Export	13.858	44.116	63.186	73.649		356	67
Balance	- 7.500	- 8.055	- 49.855	- 89.183		565	1.007
Normal. Bal.	-21%	-8%	-28%	-38%		33	351
<b>Import</b>							
Agricult. prod.	9.757	20.869	70.381	111.570	69	621	435
Food products	11.601	31.302	42.660	51.262	31	268	64
Ey ap	2,2	2,4	6,8	8,3			
Ey fp	2,7	3,3	1,4	0,91			

\*Ey ap/fp: income elasticity for imports of agricultural and food product

Source: World Trade Atlas, ICE, China's Customs Statistics

The bigger share is the prerogative of those of first-stage processing (wine, olive oil, cheese) that concentrate the 42% of sales (16.1 billions of euro). The incidence of made in Italy of second-stage processing (pasta, baked goods, coffee, chocolate) exceeds one fifth of exports, while agricultural made in Italy is worth over 4.3 billion of euros (11% of exports). Primacy goes to wine, with a weight of 13.8% and an increase of 5.6% compared to 2015. The share of fresh fruits is very close at 7% (2.65 billions of euros). Other important sectors are those of pasta (6%), baked goods (4.7%), cheese (4.3%), processed tomatoes (4.1%), cocoa products (4.0%), cold cuts (3.8%). Among the first sectors there is also coffee, which abroad sales in 2017 exceeded 1.3 billion of euros (+10% compared to 2015).

Made-in-Italy foods are high-end products, representation of superior quality, both in composition (organoleptic characteristics, raw materials, processing system) and image (emotional aspects, brand, collective trademark, geographical origin). The capacity to meet all the requirements of consumer demand for quality reduces the relevance of price in driving purchase behaviour. The quality of made in Italy high-end food products is worldwide recognised.

Consumers are becoming increasingly attracted to the intangible aspects linked to a product, the most important being its geographical origin with its background of culture and tradition that is accepted as proof of its quality. Hence, the production certified by designation and indication of origin achieves a great success in terms of export.

The denomination 'country-of-origin' steers consumer's choice by conveying an idea of quality linked to the place of origin, provenience of raw components and intellectual property. Furthermore, the label 'made in country' enhances the transparency of transactions promoting a healthy global competitiveness.

The firms can approach the international market relying on the fame of Italy (Checchinato et al. 2013). Foods incorporate its values of personalization, peculiarity, uniqueness, regional culture and identity.

On the contrary, generalization, depersonalisation of regional aspects, homologation of food styles tends to generalise, unify and de-territorialize the action of food consumption. In such a contest, the localisation cannot be underrated.

The strategy of integration of local supply and globalisation is represented by the 'glocalisation', where territory, peculiarity and local traditions find their right place and are kept into consideration by a specialised demand and niches of market worldwide provided by global companies (Foglio 2004). This concept re-establishes a correct connection between the value of local and socio-cultural elements and the significance of the food consumption experience in the global market.

The European Union meets this issue by conforming the transactions to the principle of 'country-of-origin'. The law of the country in which goods are produced regulates the commercial exchanges. The aim of this approach is to have the final consumer informed on the geographic origin of goods, thus marketing strategies must be directed towards raising awareness.

The relevance of geographical origin on consumers' behaviour is widely accepted in marketing; as the choice process is induced, the place of origin of a product deeply influences the evaluation of its characteristics (Erickson, Johansson, Chao 1984). The collective evaluation of a Country substitutes any other information and suggest intrinsic characteristics of foods, becoming a major decisional factor in consumer choices.

The 'country-of-origin' effect manifests itself in two alternative models: the "halo" and the "summary" construct. When the consumer is not familiar with a products, the country image helps as a halo from which they can infer the product's attributes without directly experiencing them (halo construct) (Han 1989). On the other hand, "summary construct" is fulfilled whenever the consumer is already familiar with a Country's production, and links the attributes experienced to the place of origin (Samiee 2010).



This kind of perception influenced by cognitive and emotional components leads to the formation of internationally rooted stereotypes, facilitating and simplifying the process of consumer choice (Nagashima 1970).

An innovative study path that today links various fields of investigation refers to the research of indicators able to efficiently synthesise sets of information aimed at the determination of rankings and, more in general, at the definition of competitive positioning. Not only the ranking of made in Italy at the international level is significant, also the opportunity to enhance information obtained from rating's variables in perspective of guidance of competitive development of firms. In other terms, benchmarking methods result functional to increase the competitive advantage of firms of made in Italy on international markets, through the strategic implementation of the factors that determine it.

In this context, the index Quality Domestic Product (QDP) measures the level of quality achieved by Italian production by making a ratio between 'Gross Domestic Product' (GDP) and quality production in terms of competitiveness and market, positioning, technological and social innovation, improvement of human and cultural resources, territory and environment (Symbola 2007).<sup>1</sup> This new indicator provides further methods to measure the intangible values, which the traditional GDP does not reflect (Frenda, Piana, Scippacerola 2014). In this light, made-in-Italy food takes high reputation (Campiglio, Barnabò, Sturabotti 2012).

Italy boasts the global quality leadership on 120 foodstuffs among the 704 in which the international trade is disaggregated (cheese, strawberries, vinegar, cold cuts, mushrooms, ham, cherries, pasta, tomatoes, oil) (Symbola 2017). The Quality Domestic Product index can be applied to single sectors, to measure the share of product attributable to improved quality parameters and criteria (Zucaro, Sturabotti 2014).

Other indicators can be used to understand the performance of made-in-Italy food exports, namely "distance index" and "sophistication index" (Carbone, Henke, Subioli 2009).

If the distance among markets is a limiting factor, it highlights how emerging dynamics of Chinese imports imply the sensible increase of distance index for made-in-Italy food, confirming their higher competitiveness (De Filippis 2012).

The complexity of agro-food trade can be studied through the "measure of sophistication" with the use of "Prody and Expy index" (Lall, Weiss, Zhang 2006).<sup>2</sup>

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**1** The computation of QDP identifies and summarises basic indicators that represent the different qualitative aspects.

**2** The concept of sophistication designates a set of characteristics incorporated in goods: technology, design, quality attributions, degree of diversification. The type of

Made-in-Italy foods are placed on an interesting position on Chinese market, especially if compared with closer competitors (France, Spain, Greece) (Carbone, Henke 2012).

## 2.2 Food Safety Policy

Food safety represents the degree of development achieved by a Country. The Chinese Government is carrying out important efforts to conform to international standards. For this reason, at the end of 2007, has approved the document “The Quality and Safety of Food in China”. This is a major benchmark of the economic development and people’s living conditions (Lam et al 2013). By adhering to the people-oriented approach, the Chinese government has given great importance to food quality and safety: building a supervisory system, strengthening the setting of standards, exercising strict quality control and actively promoting international cooperation (Naronte 2008).

On April 24, 2015, the Standing Committee of China’s National People’s Congress, under the last five-year Plan, revised the Food Safety Law, come into effect in October. The revisions are wide-ranging, imposing stricter controls and supervision on food production and management.

Once divided among different agencies, the system is now centralised, with China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA), under the State Council, responsible for the supervision of food production, distribution and restaurant catering.

Food producers must maintain a record system for the supply and examination of food ingredients, additives, and related products.<sup>3</sup>

Food traders, importing agents, producers must be recorded with the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ).

Ordering meal online is now a global trend, so safety of food bought on the internet has raised issues. Food trading platforms must get a trader’s permit.

Ingredients outside the approved list must be registered with CFDA, always required for imported health foods.

A key revision is stricter regulation for baby formula food. Moreover, the rules on genetically modified foods provide specific packages and labels.

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competition and profitability levels depends on them. The hypothesis is that such characteristics are correlated to the income level of exporting countries.

**3** Such record must be kept for six months after the expiration date of food, or two years if the expiration date is not specified.

Compared to previous, the updated law imposes harsher sanctions on violations. The fine is up to twenty times the products' value. While it is ten times the consumer indemnity.

The last law is claimed to be the strictest food safety law in Chinese history.

This shows the will of the Chinese government in cracking down on recent food scandals.<sup>4</sup> CFDA and local FDAs are granting more enforcement power in addressing food safety issues, controlling every step of food (production, distribution, sale and recall). Special provisions are set out for products, which have been a focal point in food-safety incidents in recent years and for innovative trading activities, including internet portals and e-commerce channels.

However, its recent evolution highlights the difficulty of reconciling conflicting needs, like food safety and food security. Therefore, China has postponed for two years the regulation for import food, after a push-back from the United States and European Union. The last law cuts China off from the global food market and its measures are out of step with global practices.<sup>5</sup> The effort of implementing the new legislation can limit the chance to access to international trade.

On the other hand, also the foreign companies, aware of most recent updates on laws in this domain, complain about unfair treatment. The market-entry costs are amplified in fees and resources are required. Product registration, labelling and product expiry dates are particularly hard concerns. Adjusting and accommodating to new regulation are expensive and time-consuming, further increasing transaction costs.

Even though the entry into the World Trade Organization, in 2001, has seen the reduction of charges on a wide range of imported products, barriers tariff and non, health regulations, prohibitions, burdensome customs procedures, a disjointed and stratified system of licensing represent additional obstacles (Francescone 2012).<sup>6</sup>

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**4** As it is known, there are uncountable scandals related to food safety in China, about 50,000 each year (Li et al 2015). The punishments are proverbial too, including the death sentence (Lafraniere, Sharon. "Two Executed in China for Selling Tainted Milk". *The New York Times*, 24 November 2009).

**5** China has notified the World Trade Organization - September 25th, 2017 - a transition period for the rule (China's WTO notification TBT 1209, Addendum to the "Measures for the Administration of Certificates Attached to Foods Exported to China").

**6** All companies importing into China are bound to register to AQSIQ-Chinese Governmental Institute for quality supervision and inspection (Foreign Food Producer Regulations, Provisions on Administration of the Registration of Overseas Production Enterprises for Imported Food, 2012, Foreign Food Producer Regulations).

## 2.3 Dynamics and Aspects of Chinese Market

Understanding the evolutionary dynamics of the Chinese market requires a mix of several kind of information (market, laws, and even culture) and is quite hard.

A key growth driver in the Chinese economy is the rapid rise in average household income, experiencing a Gross Domestic Product growth, until recent years, of approximately 10%.

Urban population is expected to grow to one billion people soon (2025), while 200 towns exceed one million people (World Bank 2013). These evolutionary rates of socio-demographic variables reflect the rising proportion of income spent on food. This plays such an important role characterising the food-centred Chinese culture. Nutritional consumption patterns change significantly with improved living standards (Del Giudice et al. 2012).

With a population of almost 1.5 billion, increasing by 20 million each year, China is the largest consumer market for imported food (Huang et al. 2017).

Imports of agro-food products have reached 163 billion USD in 2017 (+43% on 2015), remarking an exponential dynamic [\[table 2\]](#).

**Table 2** Italian Agro-food Balance

Macroeconomic aggregates	2000	2012	2013	2014	2015	2017	$\Delta_{15/00}$	$\Delta_{17/15}$
Import - I	25.358	38.690	39.756	41.043	41.991	44.335	66%	6%
Export - E	16.867	32.132	33.645	34.629	37.209	40.854	121%	10%
Made in Italy - Mil	9.268	19.279	21.870	24.240	27.452	29.905	196%	9%
Made in Italy/Export - Mil/E	55%	60%	65%	70%	74%	73%	34%	-1%
Trade balance - E-I	-8.491	-6.558	-6.111	-6.414	-4.782	-3.481	-44%	-27%
<b>Normalized trade balance - (E-I)/(E+I)</b>	<b>-20,1%</b>	<b>-9,3%</b>	<b>-8,3%</b>	<b>-8,5%</b>	<b>-6,0%</b>	<b>-4,1%</b>	-70%	-32%
Trade volume - (I+E)	42.225	70.822	73.401	75.672	79.200	85.189	88%	8%
Total agro-food production <sup>1</sup> - P	67.899	79.285	81.683	81.420	81.420	85.977	20%	6%
Apparent consumption - (P+I-E)	76.390	85.843	87.794	87.834	86.202	89.458	13%	4%
Self-sufficiency ratio - (P/C)	89%	92%	93%	93%	93%	94%	96%	
Tendency to import index - (I/C)	33%	45%	45%	47%	49%	50%		
Tendency to export index - (E/P)	25%	41%	41%	43%	46%	48%		
Commercial coverage ratio - (E/I)	67%	83%	85%	84%	89%	92%		

<sup>1</sup> Agricultural production, forestry, fishing, food industry

Source: elaboration on Istat and CREA data

The greater demand for agricultural commodities (+58.5% on 2015), compared to foodstuffs (+21.4%), results in an increasingly negative trade balance (-89 billion USD in 2017), rising the normalised one to -38.<sup>7</sup>

Significant changes in eating behaviour are connected to income level. Demand for original calories spikes; animal calories replace

<sup>7</sup> The normalised trade balance is compounded as  $(\text{Exp}-\text{Imp})/(\text{Exp}+\text{Imp})\times 100$ .

the vegetable ones; and processed food substitutes agricultural products (Malassis, Ghersi 1995).

The evolution towards an advanced society requires, as well, an always-higher import of commodities for animal farming, their natural outlet.

The convergence process of eating patterns mimics those of the satiety society, orienting the agricultural production. Consequently, relevant impacts on import affect the international market.

This process can be synthesised by the divergent evolution of elasticity for commodities import compared to foodstuffs.<sup>8</sup>

The import elasticity of agricultural commodities shows values bigger than one and increasing (6.8 in 2015; 8.3 in 2017), stigmatizing the current substitution process.

On the contrary, the elasticity of processed food is receding to value lower than one (from 1.1 of 2015, to 0.90 of 2017), according to economic theory that lists foodstuffs among necessary goods.

In terms of market development, lower custom duties, consumer commerce liberalization, foreign direct investments, modernization of retail distribution are the driving forces (Jiang, Prater 2002). On the contrary, food safety scandals, remaining prevalent, damage confidence and trust in Chinese food. For this reason, consumers who can afford higher prices are driven to buy foreign stuffs, because of increasing concerns about food safety and health.

Confidence in food safety, ingredient integrity, high-quality products are the key to purchase imported supply (Babcock 2018). New lifestyles require more variety, modern packaging, freshness, convenience and superior nutritional values.

While, in terms of delivery organisation, the import of food for consumer retail is a mostly recent phenomenon, not yet sustained by a well-established chain of importers and distributors (Hingley, Lindgreen, Chen 2009), nevertheless, the dimension of the market speedily attracts new competitors.

From a territorial point of view, strong disparities can be observed between urban agglomerations and rural areas, as well as among dis-similar regions (Zhang, Figliozzi 2010).

Specific marketing studies have led to the division of China in-

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**8** The elasticity of agricultural product imports to the income is compounded as  $(\Delta q/q)/(\Delta Y/Y)$ . The import expenditure is used in place of quantity, as a proxy. The notably high value of elasticity for primary agricultural products, which locates them among the luxury goods, should not surprise, effect of the deep transformation process occurring. On the other hand, the rebalance of Chinese economy stimulates the domestic consumption, shifting towards a mature economy, with lower Gross Domestic Product growth rates. In 2017, the income increase rate was 6% after years of two-digit rise. Scientifically, Chinese current dynamic represents a great opportunity to study the evolution of the socio-economic variables of a fast growing economy, comparable, for characteristics and population, to that one of the whole world at the beginning of the twentieth century.

to several macro areas, defined, by different levels of consumer awareness development: the growing markets (South and East China), emerging markets (North, Central and South West), unexplored markets (North West and East China) (Busato 2011).

The peculiarity of each local market requires specific strategies, proper entry investments, strong operative undertakings, settlement of company's staff in site and a long time before generating income (Vescovi 2011a).

In this developing system, in which the elements of uncertainty are still high, personal relationships with importers, distributors, agents, officials and clients are crucial to create brand loyalty (Puppini 2014).

Enforceability of contracts is generally weak. Business relies heavily on personal contacts and influence.

In such a context, success is closely connected to the network of relationships established. Managing relationships in the Chinese economic culture acquires great strategic relevance, necessary before starting any sort of business.<sup>9</sup>

Failure to identify fundamental success elements and managing business too offhandedly may lead to great disappointment.<sup>10</sup>

Important factors - such as high fixed entry-costs, logistics, development of the local staff - are decisive keys for business success. To all this, we must add the challenge to understand the average Chinese consumer, who is sensitive to price and hesitant to approach products that are too far from its tastes (Yu et al. 2007). Business success requires a mix of several kind of knowledge and information (market, laws, and even culture) and is quite demanding.

All these factors raise transactional costs, suggesting that only careful competition strategies, based on an accurate segmentation of the market, both geographically and by consumer groups, are able to offset the high commercial risks, arising from the effort of understanding of a quite different culture.

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**9** This is the so-called *guanxi*, the circle of relationships and contacts that identifies the never-ending network of interpersonal bonds, which is necessary to reach one's own aims of business development.

**10** The communicative approach has of fundamental importance. The case of the fashion house of Dolce & Gabbana is an emblematic example of how negative commercial effects can lead to mistakes in the marketing field. One of his campaigns pictures a young Chinese eating typical dish of Italian cuisine, using traditional chopsticks. The disappointment of Chinese consumers turned into total rejection of the brand's products. Such mistakes of communication seem to be the combination of different elements: ignorance on Chinese culture, self-referentiality and ethnocentrism. The consequences might be economically heavy. Rebuilding brand loyalty might become difficult, since we are talking about a culture that is very sensitive to the perception that other countries have of China.

### 3 Data Analysis and Results

#### 3.1 Markets Trends and Ranking of 'Made-in-Italy food'

Italy occupies the 25th place among countries exporting in China, with a 446 million USD supply in 2017, but features a substantial annual growth rate (about 25%).

The agro-food commercial balance highlights a negative value, albeit in contraction, for Italy, that is net importer for 130.5 million USD [table 3].

**Table 3** Agro-food Import-Export Italia-China (million USD)

Year	Exports to China						Import from China						Total			Norm. Balance
	Agr. Pr.		Food		Beverage		Agr. Pr.		Food		Beverag		Export	Import	Balance	
2015	39,14	9%	285,21	65%	114,70	26%	297,07	46%	337,71	53%	4,5	1%	439,05	639,28	-200,23	-18,6
2016	45,56	12%	225,66	57%	121,64	31%	276,47	43%	356,11	56%	4,81	1%	392,86	637,39	-244,53	-23,7
2017	41,00	9%	250,66	56%	154,79	35%	253,81	44%	318,2	55%	4,94	1%	446,45	576,95	-130,50	-12,8
Var. %	4,8		-12,1		35,0		-14,6		-5,8		9,8		1,7	-9,8	-34,8	-31,3

Source: World Trade Atlas, ICE, China's Customs Statistics

Beside foodstuffs (55% of imports), there are still different agricultural commodities of Chinese origin (44%), however such commodities are in downward trending (-14.6% between 2015 and 2017).

In contrast, mainly foodstuffs (56%) and beverages (35%) characterise exports. As such, the normalised balance is improving, still negative nowadays (-12.8). In China, the decreasing propensity to export, due to the inducement of development of the internal market, goes along with higher demand of made-in-Italy foodstuffs and beverages.

In this context, despite the relatively limited current dimensions, made-in-Italy food presents one of the most dynamic trends. Many elements highlight the great potential for imports.

China's great interest in made-in-Italy products is largely proved by the analysis of the ranking market of specific segments, whose increasing trend figures positive performances.

Currently, the main exported product from Italy is wine, followed by chocolate, pasta and bakery products; olive oil sees Italy as the second largest exporter after Spain. Many other specialities such as meat, sausages, hams and dairy products are still low on quantity, but chances of seeing a growing market are excellent.

For wine, the most famous Italian product, Chinese imports reach 143 million euro in 2017, with a 20% increase over the previous year. However, Italy's current position - fifth place, with just a 6% of market share after France, Australia, Chile and Spain - is not yet adequate to the role played in the global market, especially if compared with the closest competitors [table 4].

**Table 4** Wine Import in China

Ranking 2017	HI/1000			Million Euro			Price per litre					
	2016	2017	Δ%	2016	2017	Δ%	2016	2017	Δ%			
1 France	1.965	2.366	20,4	31,5	904	973	7,6	39,5	4,60	4,11	-10,6	125
2 Australia	1.050	1.444	37,5	19,2	518	640	23,6	26,0	4,93	4,43	-10,2	135
3 Chile	1.462	1.308	-10,5	17,4	243	290	19,3	11,8	1,66	2,22	33,4	68
4 Spain	938	1.344	43,3	17,9	144	171	18,8	6,9	1,54	1,27	-17,1	39
<b>5 Italy</b>	324	375	15,7	5,0	120	143	19,2	5,8	3,70	3,81	3,0	116
6 Unites States	133	127	-4,5	1,7	54	72	33,3	2,9	4,06	5,67	39,6	173
Total	6.389	7.511	17,6	100	2.143	2.466	15,1	100	3,35	3,28	-2,1	100

Source: Elaboration Comtrade, ISMEA data

Thanks to an uninterrupted growth, China is part of the four major consumers, the first, if we consider the widely most appreciated red wines. Bottled red wines represent the highest import share (91%), whereas sparkling wines are marginal (2.7%) highlighting the high penetration potential of our local ones, like prosecco.<sup>11</sup>

Conversely, the consumption of Italian olive oil in China witnesses a remarkable increase, reaching a 50% annual rate. The change in food habits leads to the appreciation of its nutritional properties. Price still exerts a major hindering influence on purchase, as Chinese consumers are not yet able to evaluate other qualitative characteristics. Extra virgin olive oil retains the best appeal, as its geographical origin conveys to the consumer an image of quality. China's imports of extra virgin oil have rapidly grown, reaching 307.7 million USD in 2017: Italian exports touched 42 million, a 14% share, in second place after the most competitive Spain (246.2 million; 80% share). Olive oil is identified by its origin country and its renowned brands, among which major Spanish producers stand out [table 5].

**Table 5** China's Imports of Extra Virgin Olive Oil - Bakery Products (million USD)

Ranking 2017	Olive oil						Ranking 2017	Pasta							
	2005	2010	2015	2017	Δ% 15/05	Δ% 17/10		2005	2010	2015	2017	Δ% 15/05	Δ% 17/10		
1 Spain	8,2	34,1	140,7	246,2	80	1.616	621	1 Korea S.	10,7	7,3	41,1	116,0	50	284	1496
<b>2 Italy</b>	6,6	15,2	19,3	41,9	14	192	176	<b>2 Italy</b>	1,7	5,0	20,5	25,9	11	1.128	420
3 Greece	1,9	4,5	5,3	9,2	3	184	105	3 Hong K.	1,5	3,9	20,4	22,7	10	1.269	482
4 Australia	0,6	1,8	3,0	3,1	1	376	75	4 Taiwan	1,7	5,6	24,8	21,2	9	1.356	279
5 Turkey	0,1	1,5	0,9	1,5	0,5	528	3	5 Japan		2,5	4,6	10,8	5	-	325
								6 Thailand	0,9	2,1	6,7	6,2	3	619	201
Total	17,7	74,5	175,9	307,7	100	891	136	Total	19,0	53,5	149,0	245,0	100	684	358

Source: World Trade Atlas, ICE, China's Customs Statistics

Source: World Trade Atlas, ICE, China's Customs Statistics

Regarding pasta, it enjoys a long tradition in Chinese cuisine (noodles), thus paving the way for the success of Italian pasta. In 2017

<sup>11</sup> The Consorzio Prosecco Doc, conscious of the enormous market potential, inaugurated the House of the Prosecco in the old Chinese capital Xi'an. The aim is to grant operators and consumers the information in Chinese language.



China imported 245 million USD of pasta, of which 25.9 from Italy, in second place after South Korea (116 million), outdoing the previous year statistics by 26%.

On the contrary, bakery products have been almost absent from the traditional Chinese diet, where baking is a scarcely diffused cooking method, but lately have gained large diffusion causing an increase in imports and the establishment of a thriving local industry. More than 4,000 large companies are active, with production exceeding two million tons per year, although the average per-capita consumption barely reaches 1.5 kg. Despite the great market potentiality, many local companies are forced to cease their activity because of the fierce competition, and Honk Kong, Macao and Taiwan are flooding the market with important investments. The penetration of multinational companies fosters the development of this sector, causing deep changes in the traditional productive system. The highest profits are gained by numerous foreign capital joint ventures [table 6].

**Table 6** China's Imports of Pasta - Coffee (million USD)

Ranking 2017	2005	2010	2015	2017	Δ %	15/05	Δ %	17/10	Ranking 2017	2005	2010	2015	2017	Δ %	15/05	Δ %	17/10
<b>Bakery</b>									<b>Coffee</b>								
1 Indonesia	1,6	26,7	135,7	214,0	70	8.225	701		1 Indonesia	3,4	4,4	27,6	43,5	19	702	895	
2 Hong K.	15,5	42,2	107,0	137,0	45	593	225		2 Malaysia			28,6	34,5	15	-	-	
3 Taiwan	0,4	13,5	64,2	48,5	16	14.830	259		3 Vietnam	7,5	37,3	59,5	23,8	10	690	-36	
4 Denmark	9,3	20,8	80,6	46,4	15	769	123		<b>4 Italy</b>	1,9	5,3	18,1	22,4	10	878	324	
5 Korea S.	2,1	7,2	39,9	37,0	12	1.764	414		5 Unites States	3,5	9,6	11,1	17,9	8	222	86	
<b>6 Italy</b>	1,2	4,9	26,5	26,7	9	2.072	445										
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,5</b>	<b>167,8</b>	<b>713,8</b>	<b>794,0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1.313</b>	<b>373</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>31,2</b>	<b>78,5</b>	<b>209,0</b>	<b>231,0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>194</b>	

Source: World Trade Atlas, ICE, China's Customs Statistics

While China has a strong tradition of tea consumption, coffee - introduced only in the nineties - has so far become a consolidated habit among the upper classes. Now, due to the development of the metropolis, coffee reaches greater parts of the population. Cafeterias have become a symbol of urban lifestyle, places to relax, and coffee has become a ritual. The quality of blends does not hold the right importance, as the consumer lacks the proper parameters of judgment.

Starbucks, with its hundreds of stores spread around the Country, is the most widespread Western coffeehouse chain and provides a major contribution to the development of the sector; meanwhile the spread of instant coffee increases its penetration among people.

The boost received by national production has reached unexpected goals, even if it is only localised in the districts of Yunnan, whose Arabic blend alone provides 95% of the supply, and Hainan. Imports of coffee amounted to 231 million USD in 2017, 10% higher than the previous year.

Italian exports have reached a value of 22.4 million USD, with a 40% annual growth rate. Italy holds the fourth place after Indonesia (43.5 million; 19% share), Malaysia (15%), Vietnam (10%).

With the consumption of coffee becoming a consolidated habit,

soon China will be the world's largest market.

As for the cheese and milk industry, the Chinese potential has gathered momentum and no other country currently shows such great prospects of growth. Present annual pro capite consumption has so far remained low, namely 2.3 kg milk pro capite, a statistic that barely reaches 1.3% of Dutch consumption, 2.7% of the US and 6.4% of the Japanese. The potential market demand for dairy is positively esteemed by China's National Bureau of Statistics in 42 kg in 2020.

Changes in food habits immediately cause a surge in demand, witnessing an exponential growth in the milk industry, placing China among the world's largest producers, and also causing detrimental episodes, like the tainted milk scandal.

Consumption of milk and yoghurt has strongly increased. The same trend characterises the demand for cheese, especially used as an ingredient for hamburgers, pizza and sandwiches, in large part supplied by Australia and New Zealand. Imported cheese from France, the Netherlands and Italy is required in the catering channel, but it is most likely to remain out of supermarkets.

The strong potential encourages companies to set up production lines in the Country. Thus, Danone and Kraft have formed joint ventures with local partners, especially active in baby food and yoghurt market.

China's imports of cheese have amounted to 515.4 million USD in 2017. Italy holds 6% share, after New Zealand (48%), Australia (17%), United States (12%) [table 7].

**Table 7** China's Imports of Cheese - Chocolate (million USD)

Ranking 2017	2005	2010	2015	2017	Δ%	15/05	Δ%	Ranking 2017	2005	2010	2015	2017	Δ%	15/05	Δ%
<b>Cheese</b>								<b>Chocolate</b>							
1 New Zeal.	14,5	52,2	131,9	246,2	48	810	372	<b>1 Italy</b>	5,1	47,9	107,0	69,2	21	2002,2	44
2 Australia	11,4	21,6	87,4	85,5	17	666	296	2 Russia				62,5	19		
3 Unites St.	3,8	13,6	51,6	61,7	12	1.258	354	3 Belgium	3,4	15,5	36,9	49,8	15	978,9	221
<b>4 Italy</b>	1,0	3,1	20,9	32,3	6	1.949	942	4 Unites St.	8,5	11,1	26,5	26,4	8	210,3	138
5 Denmark	0,8	2,9	14,3	25,7	5	1.679	786	5 Germany	2,0	13,0	47,4	24,0	7	2306,1	85
6 France	1,8	4,8	18,2	22,0	4	922	358	6 Switzerland	1,6	3,6	22,6	11,3	3	1348,7	218
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,1</b>	<b>105,8</b>	<b>337,3</b>	<b>515,4</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>62,1</b>	<b>142,0</b>	<b>429,0</b>	<b>337,0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>590,8</b>	<b>137</b>

Source: World Trade Atlas, ICE, China's Customs Statistics

But it is with regard to the chocolate sector that Italy is the main competitor. China is the world's second largest market, only after the United States. Many foreign brands control large parts of the national consumption, as they can provide a quality not yet achieved by Chinese producers. Local production exceeds 100,000 tons, but pro capite consumption reaches only 1% of global average.

Such a huge gap promises good chances for the future of the Chinese chocolate market. Chinese producers are unable to meet the uncontainable demand as they lack long established brands and an

appropriate differentiation of the supply. Hence multinationals and foreign companies have an easy entry into the market and are able to conquer the most profitable segments.

In 2017, China imported more than 337 million USD in chocolate, Italy stands out with 21% share, reaching 69.2 million USD sales. These remarkable prospects have induced the presence of Ferrero for several years; the great success in China has resulted in the recent opening of a factory in Hangzhou.

The ice cream sector is expanding rapidly as well: Chinese production exceeds 3 million tons a year, amounting to 34 billion RMB. The ice cream market is a promising one, also due to the ongoing process of seasonal adjustment of consumption. Average pro capite consumption has so far remained low if compared to 23 kg in the USA, 17 kg in Australia and 11 kg in Japan.

Demand has mostly increased in takeaway ice cream, due to the loyalty of retailers to their brands in terms of widespread promotion. This segment no longer tends to count among luxury goods, thus attracting the most renowned and active multinational companies in the market, which is currently controlled for 90% by Yili Group, Mengniu Group, Bright Group, Nestle, Wall's. Imports have reached 50 million USD, and the growth trend is close to 30%.

The ongoing increase in income in larger parts of metropolitan areas encourages the assimilation of western food habits and the progressive interest for the health properties of the Mediterranean diet, identified as a leading incentive in purchase behaviour (Guthrie 2009). This trend of success experienced by Italian food products is also sustained by the growth of tourism, which allows direct contact with authentic Italian cuisine (Coletta, De Cicco 2011).

The Chinese market increases with the rise of the living standard. Quality food has become popular, portending great business opportunities for made in Italy. Their penetration in the market is somehow hindered by the strong tie the Chinese population has with its deeply rooted local traditions (Cui, Liu 2000). Italian cuisine comes to be regarded as a social status, confined to a market niche. As in other similar markets, the growth of Italian restaurants seems to be a crucial factor in the success of made in Italy.

However, just nowadays, the e-commerce becomes the most promising distribution channel for Italian food in China. The phenomenon called "Haitao" (foreign shopping through Internet) is widespread. Domestic prices too high and the mistrust toward inside quality boost the increase in demand. The Absolute Italy Lifestyle is a leading e-commerce platform. Found on WeChat, it has more than 900 million followers. Since mid-September 2018, it sells a wide range of Italian specialities under the Inalca Food and Beverage brand. Similar projects can develop to a better positioning of our food and wine.

## 4 Discussion and Conclusion

### 4.1 Concern of Italian Sounding

In China, the progressive development of fake goods, imitation of products and piracy phenomena show the same trend as international imports. These identify a set of phenomena: the use of ingredients of lower quality and value than the original, a productive process aimed at cost containment, the circumvention of legal requirements, as well as the counterfeiting of company identity, geographical origin, productive process. The imitation of specific aspects of a product suggests a misleading geographical origin, like the improper use of words, colours, names, places, images: this is the Italian sounding phenomena (De Pin 2009).

Fraudulent acts violate the rights of intellectual and industrial property, resulting in embezzlement and reproduction of peculiar characteristics of the original good with a clear intention of fraud. The imitative practices result in the marketing of products by gender and appearance that are similar - but not identical - to the original, intended to arouse fake expectations, without having the same properties of the original good.

From a theoretical perspective, these phenomena might lead to market failure, an even more emphasised chance in presence of a globalised market, easily explained for the existence of information asymmetries, trade barriers, high transaction costs (Stiglitz 1987).

For China, geographical, cultural, and legislative dissimilarities raise transaction costs, worsening information asymmetries between producers and consumers. The natural attitude towards imitation proved by local firms is encouraged, resulting in moral hazard phenomena, fake goods benefiting from an undeserved reputation (Akerlof 1970).

Price becomes an inadequate factor for the recognition of quality. Conversely, it produces an adverse selection on demand, whose purchase intentions are driven by the expected quality rather than the effective one (Olshavsky 1985).

The development of unfair practices follows the market trend. The different law among countries does not provide an effective protection, limiting the prosecution of unlawful conduct (Milgrom, Roberts 1982). The imitation is profitable because of the positive evaluation attributed to the original specialities. The positioning of counterfeited products in the Chinese market provides a consistent premium price. This is because when it is compared to the real made in Italy, which represents the upper price, and the conventional references, placed at the lower level, the positioning of imitative products is

intermediate.<sup>12</sup> The premium price, gained by the seeming Italian-ness, represents the market profit resulting from illegitimate reputation. The price differential compared to conventional references translates the profit to imitation products.

Thus, the persistent trade barriers hinder the penetration into the Chinese market by made-in-Italy products, and the increasing demand that is not satisfied by original products is provided by imitations (Qualivita 2007).<sup>13</sup>

However, given the high number of wealthy citizens, even if relatively small, the potential for high-end Italian food products is huge and increasing. The replacement of consumption with lower quality products results in information asymmetry, accompanied by very high transaction costs. The mere image evoked by Italian food, because of the halo effect, makes the payment of a premium price credible for the average Chinese consumer, even for a product that conforms to the average quality of the market. The deceptive supply, aware of the average purchasing power of the Chinese consumer, takes advantage of information asymmetries, in the awareness of high transaction costs and huge commercial barriers, conveying a substantial share of demand towards non-original foods, confirming the finding that bad goods drive away good ones.<sup>14</sup>

Not only do the negative effects of these phenomena affect the single product, but the supply system as a whole. Italian firms are unable to reach a position of competitiveness, because their positioning

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**12** Actually, not always the prices of Italian sounding food are lower than the made-in-Italy one. Often it is the opposite situation, with the prices augmented of 20-30%. The difficulties in finding authentic food and the scarce knowledge of the characteristics of the original ones result in a dominant position for imitations (source <http://www.assocamerestero.it>).

**13** In 2018, the Chinese government removed its ban on Italian beef and reduced by half the import tariffs on some of the cardinal products of the Made in Italy: Parmigiano Reggiano, Grana, aged cheeses, Gorgonzola (from 15 to 8%), grated and melted cheese, wine spirits (from 15 to 5%), vermouth (from 65 to 14%), pasta and sausages, salami (from 15 to 8%). The agreement for the removal of non-tariff barriers for Italian citrus fruit is at the end of 2018. Oranges, mandarins, lemons are added to the 2016 list of the opens of Chinese borders relative to Italian pig meat and to the 2018 one for lucerne. Made-in-Italy pears and apples are still blocked and are object of a specific negotiation (source Coldiretti).

**14** The contingent 'trade war' between the USA and China is emblematic of the entity of the imitation market and of the role of commercial barriers. Among the numerous foodstuffs and beverages in the American Black list there is the fake made-in-China Marsala wine, protected by Italy with the Controlled Denomination of Origin (DOC); whereas China hits with duties fake Italian cheeses from the USA (parmesan, *provone*, *mozzarella*, *ricotta*, *Asiago*, *fontina*, *pecorino romano*, etc.), main supplier of fake Italian foodstuffs. If this seems to open interesting opportunities to the real Made in Italy, the current bilateral agreements of the European Union are worrying. From the CETA with Canada, to Japan, Singapore, Mexico and the Mercosur countries, they can actually legitimise the fake Made in Italy.

is undermined by the imitations' activity: as long as their investments do not generate income, they cannot expand their market share.

Furthermore, the predominance of imitations causes the inevitable deterioration of the image of quality so far gained, thus hampering the strategies of demand segmentation. The average Chinese product, which behaves according to the average quality available, disadvantages the original product, sold at higher price. The impossibility of enhancing its own specialities causes the failure of market expansion (Canali 2012).

Among the most counterfeited products, we can find Chinese parmesan, *pecorino* cheese, whose packaging portrays a cow instead of a sheep, *pomodorini di Collina*, *caciotta* cheese, bearing an Italian flag on its brand (Source Coldiretti).

Despite its relevance, the phenomenon is underestimated and neither consumers nor producers seem to perceive its importance. The majority of Chinese consumers are accustomed to buying products with an Italian name, without even questioning their real origin. To them it does not matter if these are real Italian. The goods replaced by imitations, considering the spread price gained, represent the social costs of information asymmetry for Chinese consumers (Kreps, Wilson 1982).

From Italian supply companies, the perception of the phenomenon does not receive the adequate attention. Additionally, this underestimation, not recognising the potential of competitiveness of Italian firms in the Chinese market, results in a failure of the market.

Nevertheless, the issue can be investigated under an alternative light. The competition of high-end food products cannot take place on price as much as on exclusivity, uniqueness, excellence, requiring specific strategies to segment demand and create brand loyalty (Venturini 1995). Making use of the peculiar certifications of origin - of product and process - and of the traceability of supply chain, they must turn to a market that is able to pay off the intrinsic value (Shapiro 1983). On the other hand, the strong growth of demand segments willing to recognise the right quality to the original Italian specialities makes China the most promising market for implementing the best modern marketing strategies for the countless sectors of Italian high-end food.

Theoretically, of special interest is the economic evaluation of the effects of information asymmetry on the market. The evaluation of imitative phenomena focuses on the results obtained with the application of some indicators suggested by literature and can be interpreted with an eye on future studies and working hypotheses (CENSIS, 2018) **[table 8]**.

**Table 8** Italian Agro-food Sounding in China - Estimation 2017

Indicators	million Euro
Italian sounding Value	649
Intensity of Imitation Index Italian sounding Value/Export Made in Italy food	2,59
Damage Index Value of Made in Italy food counterfeiting	74
Information Asymmetry Index Differential Price Made in Italy food* Italian Sounding Value	104

Source: Elaboration on Coldiretti, CENSIS data

Considering the average proportion of Italian sounding on the Asian market related to the value of the original products, the market value of the imitative phenomena is estimated.

The amount of Italian sounding in China is expected to be higher than 600 million euros, showing an 'intensity of imitation index' equal to 2.59. This indicator is obtained by comparing the value of the Italian sounding with the total exports made-in-Italy food. While, the just value of counterfeit goods, the 'damage index', that is, products illegally sold as authentic, exceeds 70 million euros.

The evaluation of the unfair advantage derived from information asymmetry is computed through the 'information asymmetry index', identified as the differential price of made in Italy, that is, the average deviation between the market price of authentic products compared to imitations, multiplied by the value of the Italian sounding. This index is estimated to be more than 100 million euro.

These findings and their implications may constitute promising incentive towards future research guidelines, concerning the measurement of the economic effects of the information asymmetries and of trade distorting processes, typical of the international trade.

## 4.2 Implications for Italian Companies

The development of business strategies aimed at recovering market shares unduly occupied by counterfeit products is a must, given the weak legal protection of made-in-Italy food, pending the conclusion of the World Trade Organization agreement on the international protection of geographical indications.

In addition to law defence through the few protection tools, stands out the requirement of active participation by companies in the proposal of enhancement and promotion activities.

The business strategies can only focus on the strength of made in Italy, and the promising conditions opened by the current market dynamics.

The peculiarities of our food provide opportunities to convey the set of values that identify the 'Italian way of eating', the cornerstone of Italian style, basis of the competitive advantage.<sup>15</sup>

Management of the relationship with the consumer and the ability to meet emerging expectations are preconditions for penetration strategies. It is in the skill of firms specialised in quality food and aimed at a high target to take advantage of changes in Chinese consumption patterns.

The rise of clusters with similar consumption patterns implies the requirement to manage global strategies. Product differentiation must be associated with the know-how to manage penetration strategies in local markets, crucial to compensate the high investment costs.

The increased competition on low price and quality food sees a higher concentration of competitors, making unavoidable the strategic positioning based on segmentation and differentiation. This is encouraged by the increase of informed groups, for which the changed sensitivity to food selection softens the role of price as the main variable.

Penetration strategies must allow Italian companies to exceed their natural limits, intrinsic in their small size. The implementation of collective strategies can make up for the lack of financial and managerial resources.

The underestimation of the specificities of the Chinese market results in unprofitable strategies for firms that mistakenly consider that market as the domestic one.

In this context, the strategic plan must include several actions of marketing mix: the focus on the product and its competitive positioning must be coordinated with the specific communication and promotion activities, and with the precise policy towards distribution channels.

The certification of the product cannot dissociate itself from its enhancement. Its recognition becomes a fundamental key, the goal is to mitigate the information asymmetry with the consumer, making it more difficult to pursue counterfeiting and imitation strategies.

Strategic elements highlighting product differentiation are useful: the refinement of packaging, the information provided on the label, until they assume the connotation of unique references.

The improvement of the peculiar positioning of made-in-Italy specialities is compatible with high price segments, in which competition is more difficult.

However, it is with regard to the structure of the supply that the greater efforts of adaptation are required.

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**15** The 'Italian way of staying at the table' identifies a healthy, balanced and precious food style, the use of typical foods, high quality, unparalleled taste, and convivial atmosphere of meals.



Adequate fitting of the economic size and financial soundness of companies identifying the Chinese as a preferred market is required, to ensure adequate bargaining power in trade relations and real opportunities to defend against agro-piracy. In the impracticality of the single initiative to reach an adequate dimensional structure, the system of business aggregation and network can be usefully used for coordinated strategies, with joint actions for the enhancement, promotion and protection.

The activity of communication and collective promotion is strategic to increase the recognition of Italian food. This is central in the function of choice, with the implicit simplification of the selection process. The easy distinction between original and false involves a persevering information activity on how to determine the authenticity of food, such the search for the words 'Made in Italy', 'Imported from Italy', the certifications DOP and IGP.

Nevertheless, it is difficult for Chinese consumers to learn the structure and meaning of our system of quality certification, where the overlapping of brands makes an aware purchase extremely hard.<sup>16</sup>

Effective communication and promotion activities can only be planned and implemented in networks, in order to reach the critical threshold required for the dissemination and penetration of the message. Being able to own adequate financial resources ensures continuity of the activity, as well as the use of mass media. The focus on the typical target of made-in-Italy food identifies consumers with higher propensity and informative receptivity.

The penetration strategy must involve the distributors, who play a key role in commercial success. In supermarkets, the original products shall be placed separately from counterfeits, to emphasise the differentiation: it is the distributor's confidence in the benefit of investing in the authentic food that increases its visibility. The increased presence of original products comes from the real increase in profitability of the 'shelf space' and its 'rotation index'.

However, real incentives to reward the authentic food are the evidence of the risk of decreasing sales that could result from the deal of counterfeits and the return of the consumer's negative judgment if the perceived quality is not in accordance with expected one.

The agreement with the distribution chains gives the chance to market the original products on a large scale, leveraging the huge share of demand not yet met.

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**16** Thus, the name *mozzarella* can identify the buffalo mozzarella Campana DOP, 'buffalo milk mozzarella', 'cow's milk mozzarella', 'STG mozzarella'. As a result, the false mozzarella produced abroad is a worldwide market of two million tonnes, marketed mainly in the United States, Australia, and China.

The implementation of such strategic actions, however, implies the acquisition of a strong bargaining power that contrasts with current distribution strategies. In fact, the major manufacturers of imitation products, marketed as 'private label', are indeed the operators of large-scale distribution.

Adapting the strategy to the specificities of the Chinese market is essential, as well as to the individual product. The cases of Piazza Italia and of the initiative Tastes of the Italian Regions in Shanghai are emblematic in this regard. Piazza Italia was inaugurated in Beijing in 2008, in the luxury area of Chaoyang, as the largest Italian food centre abroad, with a surface of almost 4,000 m<sup>2</sup> spread over three stores, offered more than 3,000 references of made-in-Italy food. Underestimating important factors, such as high entry costs, weak logistics, lack of development of local staff, were decisive factors for its failure.

A brighter situation is highlighted by Tastes of the Italian Regions, opened up by Auchan Italia in 2012. The use of modern distribution allows a more lasting approach for an adequate education of the Chinese consumer, which is a condition for the penetration on a larger scale.

### 4.3 Conclusions and Research Suggestions

Nowadays, the Chinese food market - represented by nearly one and a half billion people - features the most appealing business chances in the world, still limited by problems such as legal issues, trade barriers, backwardness of commercial distribution, and rural-urban gap in income and lifestyle.

When referring to food and China, some differentiations should be made based on specific categories (when policies, law and trends are involved), especially when talking about made in Italy.

A precise order to address policy implication, business implications, suggestions for Chinese and Italian companies must be followed.

The rapid changes in behaviours and the increasingly urgent nutritional needs of the growing multitude of young people, forecast unprecedented economic impacts in the global market. The quantitative instances are associated with the desires to taste typical Italian food of an emergent group of customers who are aware of the importance of product quality and nutritional elements, extremely receptive of modern marketing strategies.

The accelerated growth of consumptions is driving the success of imported goods, while the distribution system, which is currently unable to satisfy emerging needs, is involved in dynamic transformations.

From the point of view of made-in-Italy food, quality is the strategic advantage of penetration. For high-end foods, non-price competition strategies are suitable and profit-oriented. In light of the attractive market prospects, it is the company's duty to manage consistent

global marketing mix strategies and look further than a short-term perspective.

China rapidly becomes the major actor on the global scene, still grounded on its local traditions and culture, presently discovering the private industry, open to a capitalistic economy. A permanently increasing income brings along a new welfare, which in turn changes the population's lifestyle.

Considering the emerging consumption patterns, the recently strong development of the middle class, which will very soon represent nearly 75% of the population, as expected in 2022, the big migration from rural areas to cities, the exponential growth of the very rich people, Italian companies could easily consider different segments of customs as potential targets. In fact, some of these ranges are interested in high-end made-in-Italy foods, for which the Chinese market becomes the first for magnitude and importance.

This new condition foresees new opportunities for the made in Italy to be cultivated through partnership agreements aimed at protecting it from imitation and also to grant consumers' safety. Therefore, in 2006 already, China signed the Agreement on Mutual Collaboration in Contrasting Import-export of Counterfeited or Adulterated Food with the European Union, whereas in 2010 a formal commitment was signed between Italy and China to guarantee security and contrast food counterfeiting.

Meanwhile, what is to become an historical bilateral agreement between the European Union and China for the recognition of the Geographical Indications is proceeding. A list of one hundred foods for each country has been prepared. The products will be mutually protected and twenty-six of these are Italian.

As for imports, Chinese authorities conform to the principle that prevention and control are to be exerted on the productive cycle. Examples of unfair competition that arise from such a rapid increase in consumption involve the duty to protect Italian products overseas.

Chinese imitative propensity could result in food frauds, up to market failure. The condition of information asymmetry and high transaction costs in the trade with China requires the implementation of public policies shared by governments.

The Chinese Government, aware that food safety represents the degree of development achieved by the Country, is carrying out important efforts to conform with international standards. As mentioned, in the last 'Five-year Plan' the Chinese Congress revised the Food Safety Law. Food quality and safety is now the major benchmark of the economic development, adhering to the people-oriented approach. International relations and cooperation are actively promoted in this field, greatly enhancing public awareness on food safety.

From the point of view of Italian companies, the Chinese agro-food market is an essential opportunity for made in Italy to gain full suc-

cess in the global dimension. Still, it is necessary to push companies to invest in the long run, adjusting marketing strategies, in view of eroding the share of imitative competitors.

A strategic positioning of high-end foods is based on segmentation and diversification. Such a huge market requires the carving out of specific niches for the made in Italy, in which price no longer plays a major role. The supply of certified foods is a required strategy. Competition based on the reputation of goods makes the proposal of low-quality and low-price items unsuitable.

For the characteristics of Italian firms, characterised by small to medium size, the ability to implement network strategies, required to reach the new business opportunities, is a main factor.

In terms of scientific research, the study of the Chinese market and its topics open attractive and multiple strands.

With regard to economic theory, the analysis of the effects of the information asymmetries requires the proposition of innovative interpretation models, which can refer to the game theory, to multi-criteria analysis, or to the behavioural theory of economic actors.

While, the studies in the business field can be directed to export management, to the strategies that can be implemented by firms, to marketing and communication, to the management of the segmentation plans, and to several other issues still missing (size of Italian firms, opportunities from networks, distribution channels).

But, also from the point of view of law studies, a big effort still has to be done, on the one hand for the correct legal identification of the made-in-Italy food, still unclear currently, as the worsening of opportunistic behaviours proves it. On the other hand, because the protection of made-in-Italy food in the global market involves the whole legal framework of international trade, which represents an essential premise for economic success.

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# Vittorio Pica *japoniste*: critica militante e collezionismo fra letteratura e arte

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**Abstract** This contribution reconsiders Vittorio Pica's criticism on Japanese art and its consequences in *fin-de-siècle* artistic taste and cultural debate in Italy. Pica was among the first critics to show a relevant interest in Japanese culture, under the influence of French criticism and especially of the Goncourt brothers. Thanks to primary unpublished sources and a new approach to his writings of literary tradition, this paper intends to recast the trans-medial and inter-medial fortune of *Japonisme* in Italy, too, and its legacy between the on-going artistic production and contemporary collecting taste, with a special concern for modern painting, decoration and industrial arts.

**Keywords** Japonisme. Modern Art Criticism. Art Collecting. Fin-de-siècle Italy.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2019-01-24
Accepted	2019-02-28
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Lacagnina, Davide (2019). "Vittorio Pica *japoniste*: critica militante e collezionismo fra letteratura e arte". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 539-554.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/017

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Fra le molte passioni artistiche coltivate da Vittorio Pica nella sua triplice veste di critico, collezionista e ordinatore di grandi rassegne espositive, l'interesse per la cultura giapponese è certo fra i più antichi e duraturi di tutta la sua carriera. Fra tutti è forse anche l'interesse che, più di altri, ha concorso a rafforzarne il profilo, molto *fin-de-siècle*, d'intellettuale 'sibarita', per dirla con una definizione molto cara al critico italiano, dalle scelte ricercate e raffinatissime, quando non 'eccentriche' e in così evidente distonia con il gusto corrente; e per le quali, non a caso, con riferimento al suo giapponismo, sono stati chiamati in causa i nomi di Théodore Duret, Philippe Burty, Edmond de Goncourt, Louis Gonse e Joris-Karl Huysmans.<sup>1</sup>

Un aspetto, quest'ultimo, messo opportunamente in rilievo negli studi dedicati al *japonisme* di Pica e per i quali la forte dipendenza dai modelli francesi appena richiamati - peraltro sempre onestamente dichiarati, in tempi e in contesti in cui le note a piè di pagina non avevano raggiunto ancora lo *status* odierno di irrinunciabile paratesto<sup>2</sup> - ha finito per ridimensionare portata e ricadute della sua azione, interpretata, nella migliore delle ipotesi, quale concessione al gusto di una ristretta *seclusion* di intellettuali 'd'eccezione' o, peggio, quale capriccio di gioventù, forma divagante di un'avvertita necessità generazionale di evasione; a beneficio pertanto di una mera (e non troppo rigorosa) attività divulgativa, in cui le molte citazioni testuali, dirette o indirette, manipolate o interpolate che fossero, esaurivano le finalità della sua scrittura su un piano eminentemente letterario: un gioco colto e sofisticato, di rimandi, traduzioni e traslitterazioni, in cui «il procedimento, e l'operazione stessa, si concludono sul piano puramente verbale o letterario e la descrizione, o la parola, hanno inevitabilmente il primato sul dato visivo» (Lamberti 1987, 72).<sup>3</sup>

Il lavoro di sistematica ricognizione condotto dall'Università di Siena, sull'intera bibliografia di critica artistica di Vittorio Pica, così come sulla documentazione archivistica da lui prodotta e disseminata

**1** Per un sintetico profilo aggiornato del critico italiano rinvio a Lacagnina 2015 e, più approfonditamente, a Lacagnina 2016a e 2017.

**2** Nei titoli qui presi in esame Pica fa sempre riferimento in maniera discorsiva nel testo o, a volte, nelle note a piè di pagina agli studi di Anderson, Chesneau, Goncourt, Gonse e Duret. Fra i titoli della sua biblioteca documentati al momento della sua dispersione all'asta si trova soltanto il volume di Gonse, *L'Art japonais*, in un unico tomo, senza che ne sia precisata l'edizione o l'anno di pubblicazione. Si tratta probabilmente della seconda edizione in unico tomo, ampliata e corretta, del 1886 (o al massimo della terza edizione del 1891), dopo la prima del 1883 in due tomi: cf. *Beaux ouvrages* 1931, 16 nr. 281.

**3** Si veda anche Ishii 1998 (molto utile soprattutto sul piano della collazione delle fonti francesi e italiane e delle puntuali verifiche intertestuali) e Araguás Biescas 2010 (non senza qualche imprecisione).

ta presso fondi altrui,<sup>4</sup> ha integrato le notizie disponibili e il florilegio di testi a sua firma dedicati al Giappone, arricchendo (e insieme complicando) il giudizio su questo suo specifico filone d'interesse, fin qui limitato ai pochi interventi più noti del lungo decennio 1894-1907.<sup>5</sup> Confrontando dunque i titoli 'ritrovati' con quelli *japonistes* precedenti alla data del 1894 e solo in parte presi in esame dalla storiografia artistica, forse perché considerati di carattere più squisitamente letterario, è possibile chiarire ulteriormente le ragioni dell'antica passione di Pica per l'Impero del Sol Levante, a partire dalla banale constatazione che è proprio la natura letteraria delle fonti consultate e quindi della sua stessa scrittura a nutrire di una specifica qualità la sua cultura visiva e a sostanziarne intendimenti e finalità. La stimolante analisi proposta da Pamela Genova nel suo recentissimo saggio sul *japonisme* in Francia alla fine dell'Ottocento autorizza una lettura degli scritti di Pica in questa direzione, specialmente laddove s'insiste sul carattere intermediale e transmediale delle fortune della cultura giapponese in Europa e sulla fecondità di questo scambio fra arte e letteratura, in una sorta di vera e propria «traduzione estetica», da un registro all'altro, di un universo visivo in una più ampia dimensione poetica ed esistenziale, in cui immagini e parole concorrono a definire un piano unico dell'esperienza e dell'immaginazione, trasversale a generi, ambiti disciplinari e forme della creazione (Genova 2016).

Della versatile permeabilità di tali riferimenti e dinamiche culturali è spia eloquente l'esordio *japoniste* del nemmeno ventenne Pica, ancora incerto a questa data fra un'ancora vaga vocazione letteraria e il giornalismo culturale. *Lo spettro di Fa-goha-ni*, un testo del 1881, è un breve racconto fantastico ambientato fra Italia e Giappone (Pica [1881] 1995, 220-9): il tema del doppio, nella sua sinistra alterità fantasmatica e nella cupa ambientazione notturna dei fatti, ne attraversa interamente la scrittura e la struttura, fino all'epilogo tragico della morte del protagonista Alberto Righi. Schiacciato dal patto faustiano stretto con l'amico Paolo Velini, che gli aveva promesso ricchezza e felicità purché acconsentisse alla morte improvvisa di

<sup>4</sup> Al progetto di durata quadriennale (2013-2017), finanziato dal Miur (codice RBFR12EU9R), hanno partecipato quattro distinte unità di ricerca, attive rispettivamente presso la Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa (coordinatore Giorgio Bacci), l'Università di Udine (coordinatore Denis Viva), l'Università di Genova (coordinatrice Veronica Pesce) e l'Università di Siena (coordinatore Davide Lacagnina). Per i contenuti del progetto rimando alla sezione *Home/Il progetto* sul sito web del database CAPTI (<http://www.capti.it>). Sui criteri di selezione e organizzazione delle fonti, sia archivistiche che bibliografiche, limitatamente alla sezione *Vittorio Pica*, a cura dell'unità senese, si veda Lacagnina 2016a, 7-30. I testi di critica artistica così come i documenti d'archivio citati in questo contributo sono tutti disponibili sul database in modalità open-source.

<sup>5</sup> Mi riferisco soprattutto ai due volumi Pica 1894a e 1907.

un giovane sposo giapponese, in un macabro gioco di magia e spiritismo, Alberto convive angosciosamente con il fantasma del defunto Fa-goha-ni, che in realtà è l'immagine speculare del suo rimorso. In un crescendo di tensione emotiva e psicologica, la sontuosa evocazione di ambienti e costumi nipponici e la supremazia estetica – e morale, di conseguenza (nella prospettiva almeno che informa il racconto) – della loro incontaminata bellezza fanno da contraltare al gretto materialismo occidentale.

Il tema è ripreso qualche anno dopo in altri termini:

Laggiù, laggiù, nell'estremo lembo d'Oriente vi è un paese singolare ed incantevole, un paese di sogno, che direbbesi concepito dalla fervida fantasia di un poeta raffinato e geniale: è verso di esso che, nelle soavi ore delle fantistecherie, migra giocondo il mio pensiero, stanco e disgustato dalle noie e dalle volgarità della grigia esistenza di tutti i giorni. [...] Per me il Giappone è la terra favorita dei miei sogni, è il rifugio ringiovanitore della mia anima malata, che per essa è piagata di una misteriosa, insanabile e pur gradita nostalgia. (Pica [1890] 1995, 229-30)

Non senza una certa affettazione, Pica indugia, in questo scritto d'occasione del 1890, nelle pose dell'intellettuale *déraciné*, inappagato dalla misera banalità del quotidiano e pertanto desideroso di nuove avventure dello spirito, in cui sciogliere *spleen*, inquietudini e languori di gioventù. Se tuttavia le lunghe divagazioni grondanti prestite letterari confermano il limite di questo *voyage autour de ma chambre* (Pica non è mai stato in Giappone), il riferimento all'arte giapponese – «una folla di disegni» – si precisa subito all'insegna di

una semplicità di mezzi, [...] una squisita delicatezza di colori [...], un senso così profondo e schietto del vero, che sorprendono e affascinano tutti coloro, che sono risticchi dei convenzionalismi dei trucchi dell'accademica arte occidentale e sognano un'arte più ampia, più vera, più libera. (Pica [1890] 1995, 231)

La battaglia contro l'accademismo e *l'art d'institut* diventa una vera e propria missione per il giovane critico italiano e interventi di questo tipo, soprattutto negli anni a venire, qualificano la sua posizione nel dibattito dell'epoca, nel sostenere costantemente la necessità di un aggiornamento internazionale per l'arte italiana contro ogni pericolosa deriva nazionalista o, peggio, regionalista: nel caso sia delle arti cosiddette maggiori – pittura, scultura, architettura – sia, specie nel segno dell'arte giapponese, di quelle minori, industriali o applicate, delle quali Pica si dimostra nel tempo un partigiano prezioso e un interlocutore sollecito, anche a livello istituzionale, perché una nuova e più attenta politica della formazione professionale, della re-

alizzazione e quindi della promozione di questo specifico settore di produzione artistica potesse trovare, anche nel nostro Paese, occasioni di sviluppo e di affermazione.

Mi sembra utile, tuttavia, riflettere ancora sul carattere letterario delle fonti e della scrittura di Pica, nel momento in cui il vagheggiamento di un Estremo Oriente quale antidoto al positivismo della sua formazione cede il passo a una sua più consapevole rielaborazione in chiave storico-critica, ormai prossima alla compiuta svolta di un maggiore rigore sul piano delle informazioni e della documentazione visiva, che rimane un *unicum* ineguagliato nella coeva produzione editoriale e nella relativa discussione. Tanto più che, nelle prime posizioni pubbliche assunte nel merito, il binomio letteratura-arte persiste saldamente al timone di ogni argomentazione: «la ricerca del vero, la risurrezione dell'arte del XVIII secolo, la vittoria del *giaponismo* sono i tre grandi movimenti letterari ed artistici della seconda metà del nostro secolo» - asseriva Pica, riprendendo un'affermazione di Jules de Goncourt nella prefazione a *Chérie*, in una recensione del 1884, in cui pure ribadiva la propria incondizionata ammirazione per «quei famosi albi del Giappone, veri capolavori d'arte, che sono in via di rivoluzionare l'ottica dei popoli occidentali e dei quali tanto si sono giovati parecchi illustri pittori contemporanei» (Pica [1884] 2004, 214-22).

Nel breve racconto intitolato *Nozze giapponesi*, inserito in un volume pubblicato nel 1891 in occasione delle nozze tra Onorato Fava, giornalista, amico di Pica e animatore della *bohème* partenopea, e Giulia Masucci, figlia del magistrato Giovanni Masucci, il matrimonio della leggiadra e vezzosa Yokiki con il *daimyō* Yorimitsu, è ancora una volta il pretesto per la rutilante descrizione di interni, arredi e decorazioni, in cui, nella circostanza nuziale di questo dono, l'esotismo della rappresentazione si colora di *nuances* velatamente erotiche (Pica [1891a] 1995, 232-4). Nella preziosa rassegna di pura invenzione, di lampade di carta variopinta, ricchi palanchini, magnifici e bizzarri candelabri di bronzo, else damaschinate d'oro, piccole sciabole, paraventi finemente decorati e giardini acquatici, a emergere è soprattutto la stretta continuità fra letteratura e arte: fra la capacità della prima di affidare atmosfere, sfumature e dettagli di un mondo concepito e vissuto *sub specie artis* a descrizioni sempre più autentiche e accurate, e la stessa ragione d'essere della seconda, pronta a innervare virtuosamente esistenze, discorsi e scritture 'd'artista', in una contaminazione e uno sconfinamento continuo fra i due livelli.

È esattamente questo nodo fra produzione letteraria e produzione artistica al centro di un altro breve contributo pubblicato sulla rivista napoletana *L'occhietto*, e non a caso intitolato *L'arte e la poesia nel Giappone*, originato, come l'altro pubblicato negli stessi giorni sul *Fortunio*, dalla conferenza *L'arte dell'Estremo Oriente* tenuta al Cir-

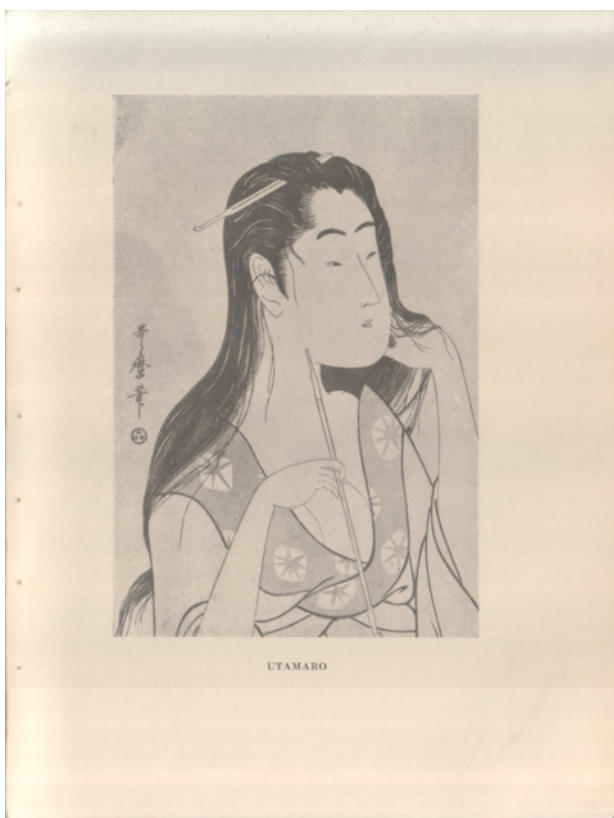
colo filologico di Napoli domenica 3 marzo 1894 e successivamente edita in volume. Pica esordiva con una dichiarazione netta e a suo modo eloquente, che esplicita il rilievo evidente che la produzione artistica dell'Impero del Sol Levante aveva ai suoi occhi:

l'arte giapponese è un'arte essenzialmente moderna - affermava il critico italiano, il quale integrava nel rapporto con la più antica poesia giapponese - lo stesso appassionato interesse per le bellezze naturali, un'istessa tendenza a compenetrarsi della letizia o della tristezza dell'ambiente fisico ed a cercare nella flora, nella fauna, nei fenomeni metereologici le suggestive immagini atte ad esprimere l'intime gioie, gl'intimi dolori della propria anima. (Pica 1894b, 3)<sup>6</sup>

Non solo dunque la modernità si dava sul piano cronologico, «giacché tutti i rami di essa [arte giapponese] hanno avuto la loro più gloriosa fioritura negli ultimi tre secoli» (Pica 1894b, 3), ma anche su specifiche prerogative di poetica - e di linguaggio, come si dirà - in cui l'adesione al vero e alla realtà, che rimangono premesse fondamentali nel gusto e nelle predilezioni di Pica, è rimessa a una condizione spiritualista e psicologista che ne sublima i contenuti in esiti originali. La fonte dichiarata nell'articolo è «l'eccellente antologia poetica giapponese [...] dell'illustre orientalista francese Léon de Rosny» (3), da cui sono tratti, in traduzione italiana, vari esempi di corrispondenze fra versi e dipinti scelti da Pica, che intendono corroborare questo assunto e, nella manipolazione operata dall'autore, servire strumentalmente la causa di una poetica votata a una dimensione esclusiva e totalizzante dell'opera d'arte in tutto.

Dalle lettere di Pica a Edmond de Goncourt il lavoro sulle fonti alla base della scrittura di *L'arte dell'Estremo Oriente* appare meno sciatto, supino o acritico di quanto non risulti dalla mera collazione dei testi. Le richieste inoltrate dal critico italiano al suo illustre interlocutore francese presuppongono, a monte, una selezione dei titoli verso cui indirizzare la propria attenzione, secondo direttrici ben precise e tali da motivare filiazioni, citazioni, prestiti. È quanto accade, per esempio, quando domanda l'invio di una copia dello studio di Hayashi Tadamasu, collezionista e mercante d'arte giapponese - testo ripreso anche da Goncourt nel suo volume *Outamaro* - per andare, a ritroso, alle origini dello stesso saggio goncourtiano: è come se Pica avesse lucidamente individuato già a questa data, nel nodo gusto-collezionismo-critica, l'*humus* naturale di ogni sua impresa sul fronte della promozione dell'arte moderna, nel riscontro diretto

<sup>6</sup> Il testo completo della conferenza in Pica 1894a. L'altro articolo sul *Fortunio* è Pica 1894c. Sui retroscena organizzativi della conferenza, Ruggiero 2016.



**Figura 1** La riproduzione di un'opera di Utamaro nel catalogo della mostra *Stampe giapponesi*. Milano, Galleria Pesaro, 1929

delle opere, nella documentazione delle loro fortune, critiche e materiali, nella costruzione di nuovi contesti di ricezione: l'articolo su quotidiano o rivista di settore, il catalogo d'arte o il volume divulgativo, la grande esposizione istituzionale o la piccola mostra nella galleria privata [fig. 1].<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Recensendo il volume di Edmond de Goncourt (*Utamaro. Le peintre des Maisons Vertes*. Paris: Charpentier, 1891), il critico italiano aveva insistito sull'assenza in Italia di quella «piccola schiera di raffinati ed appassionati collezionisti e buongustai d'arte» che in Francia, Inghilterra e Stati Uniti aveva fatto un'«entusiastica e sapiente propaganda [...] in favore dell'arte dell'Estremo Oriente [...] in questi ultimi venti anni» (Pica [1891b] 1995, 234). La trascrizione della lettera a Goncourt del 12 febbraio 1894 in cui Pica chiede copia del saggio di Hayashi è in Pica 2004, 140, doc. 54.

Se Maria Mimita Lamberti, inevitabilmente, definiva «inconcepibile *monstrum* un volume che tratta di un'arte sconosciuta senza una sola immagine d'appoggio» (1987, 72), con riferimento all'edizione Roux del testo della conferenza, in realtà dalle note pubblicate a margine degli articoli che nell'immediato riferivano la notizia dell'incontro, è possibile ipotizzare che riproduzioni delle opere venissero illustrate e discusse «con prezioso acume e con amorosa penetrazione», con fare «paziente e analitico», tale da conferire al suo lavoro «un rilievo pieno di efficacia e [...] forza persuasiva» (Pica 1894c, 2). Così sembrerebbe anche dal resoconto di un'analoga conferenza tenuta questa volta a Firenze, qualche anno più tardi, la sera di lunedì 15 febbraio 1897, nell'ambito dell'Esposizione di belle arti della Festa dell'arte e dei fiori.<sup>8</sup> Al contrario, sappiamo con certezza che le due conferenze tenute a Torino e a Milano nel 1902 furono accompagnate da cinquanta 'proiezioni' fotografiche di opere di grafica e pittura (Hokusai, Utamaro, Hiroshige, fra gli altri), architettura (templi di Nikko, archi di Nagasaki, tempio di Shiba, Tokyo) e decorazione (vasi, candelabri, astucci, coppe, pettini ecc.) [fig. 2].<sup>9</sup> Nella maggior parte dei casi si tratta, in tutta evidenza, delle medesime riproduzioni già pubblicate su «Emporium» nel 1896 e prelevate per intero, errori di stampa in controparte compresi, dalle pagine e dalle copertine di un decennio prima de *Le Japon artistique* di Siegfried 'Samuel' Bing, di cui in alcuni casi mantengono anche il monogramma (Pica 1896).<sup>10</sup>

In Italia, in questi anni, l'interlocutore privilegiato da Pica su questi temi è Vittore Grubicy de Dragon, «giapponofilo della prima ora», con cui scambia informazioni, opinioni e persino opere – l'artista nel 1899 fece dono al critico di uno o più lavori di Yeisho (o Yeishi o Eizan)<sup>11</sup> – che vanno così a integrare le scarse notizie sulla collezione d'arte giapponese di Pica, di cui ci rimangono solo testimonianze indirette: le dichiarazioni dello stesso critico italiano in apertura e in chiusura del suo articolo su *Emporium*, quando scrive di una «trentina di mirabili albi» e in particolare di «un disegno di Hiroshigé [...] che rappresenta il quartiere di Asa-Kusa, visto dal balcone di una casa da thé», in cui Lamberti ha identificato *Le risaie di Asakusa durante la festa del gallo*, stampa presente anche nella raccolta di Claude Monet a Giverny (Lamberti 1987, 75, fig. 7; Pica 1896, 212,

**8** «L'arte giapponese» (1897). *Il Marzocco*, 2(3), 21 febbraio, 4.

**9** Una copia del programma della conferenza di Torino (Teatro Carignano, 16 marzo 1902) è conservata nel fondo Grubicy dell'Archivio del 900 del Mart di Rovereto (Gru.I.1.1.682.46) [fig. 2]. Cf. Lacagnina 2016a, 50-1.

**10** Si veda invece Ishii 1998, 513-14, tabb. 1a-1b, per le corrispondenze con i *clichés* delle illustrazioni e delle copertine di *Le Japon artistique*.

**11** Lettera di V. Pica a V. Grubicy de Dragon, Napoli, 9 gennaio 1899 (Rovereto, Mart, Archivio del 900, Fondo Grubicy, Gru.I.1.1.682.12). Cf. Lacagnina 2016a, 50.



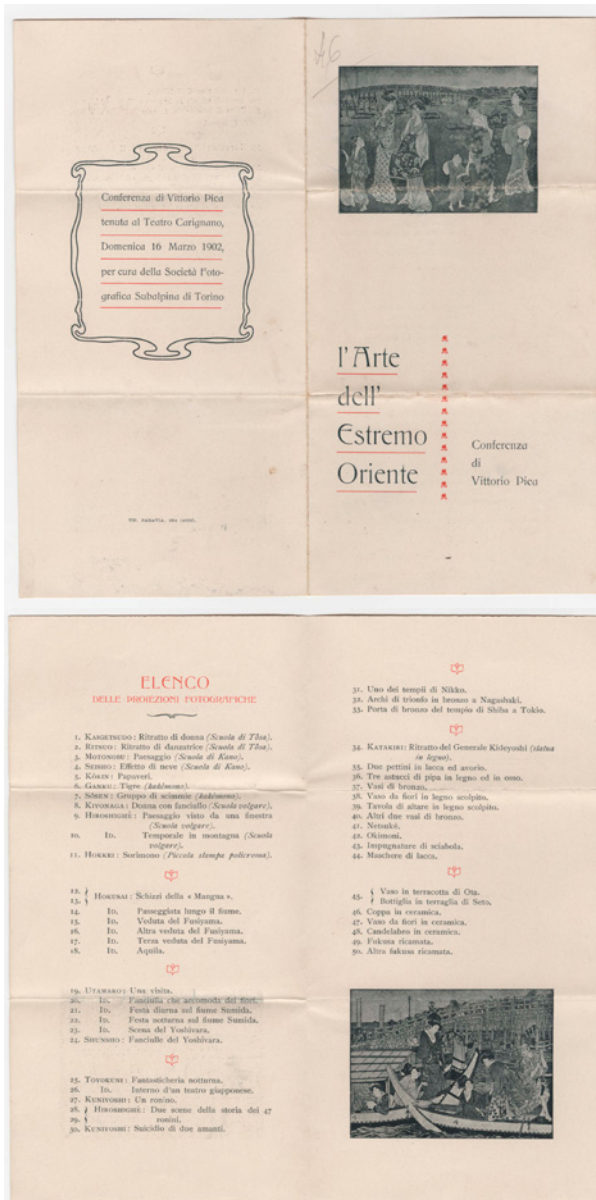


Figura 2 Programma della conferenza di Vittorio Pica, *L'Arte dell'Estremo Oriente*, presso il Teatro Carignano di Torino, 16 marzo 1902, recto e verso

233); e i ricordi di Raffaele Calzini che, nella presentazione del catalogo della collezione del critico italiano richiamava, fra i suoi tanti amati albi, anche una cartella di opere di Hokusai.<sup>12</sup> Tuttavia in nessuno dei due cataloghi di vendita della collezione compaiono opere di artisti giapponesi: probabilmente quelle in possesso del critico italiano furono dismesse prima della sua morte, in occasione della mostra di stampe giapponesi allestita nella Galleria Pesaro di Milano nel 1929 (Pica 1929).<sup>13</sup>

Le atmosfere *japonisantes* evocate nei primi scritti letterari e intese ad affermare una dimensione estetica ed esistenziale in cui definire disposizioni intellettuali e indirizzi di gusto ben precisi (financo con riferimento al mondo del teatro e alla tradizione attoriale nipponica),<sup>14</sup> lasciano spazio progressivamente al primato dell'opera, alla sua lettura, sul piano dei suoi significati e del suo linguaggio, dunque alle sue ricadute, sul piano della sua fortuna visiva e collezionistica, pubblica e privata. Tanto gli articoli su *Emporium* (1896 e 1905-1906) quanto il volume *L'Arte dell'Estremo Oriente nel Museo Chiossone di Genova*, riccamente e sontuosamente illustrati, grondano di notazioni puntuali in tal senso. Nel 1896 Pica poteva così brindare alla «mirabile maestria di sintesi visiva», alla «spiccata ripugnanza che essi hanno sempre avuta per quella sistematica simmetria, sovraneggiante nell'arte occidentale», alla «maggiore libertà» e alla «fantasia capricciosa» della loro ispirazione (Pica 1896, 214-5), attraverso cui rileggere intelligentemente fatti recenti e meno recenti delle più avanzate posizioni di ricerca artistica in Europa, dall'impressionismo all'*Art nouveau*, alle frange più estreme del simbolismo fantastico e visionario. Il critico italiano attestava in questo modo anche una sua precisa linea d'interesse che poggiava sul primato dell'*à-plat*, della pittura sintetica e del linearismo grafico e spaziava dall'*affiche* pubblicitaria alla grafica per l'infanzia, dalla pittura preraffaelita al più geometrico gusto *déco* per arredi e interni.

Non a caso, sul fronte delle arti decorative, risuonano le parole più impegnate di Pica, il quale aveva bocciato senza appello la partecipazione giapponese alla Prima esposizione internazionale d'arte decorativa moderna di Torino del 1902, trovandovi «ogni sorta

<sup>12</sup> *Collezione Vittorio Pica 1931*, p.n.n.

<sup>13</sup> Vi compaiono opere di Hokusai, Hiroshige (ma non *Le risaie di Asakusa*), Yeisho, Yeishi e Eizan (Yeisan, in catalogo) fra le molte altre. Le pochissime riproduzioni, tutte nuove rispetto alle precedenti pubblicazioni, e la genericità dei titoli delle opere non consentono alcun tentativo d'identificazione. Il testo propone invece una sintesi e un rimontaggio dei precedenti scritti dedicati al tema. Sulle connessioni fra critica, mercato e collezionismo si veda Lacagnina 2016b.

<sup>14</sup> Un riferimento al teatro era già in Pica 1897 e poi, più diffusamente, in Pica 1902a. Nel merito si veda Pieri 2016, 101-4.

di giapponeserie d'esportazione» e pertanto «l'utilitaria mediocrità d'una bottega d'oggetti a buon mercato», nondimeno «significativa ed istruttiva» nel rivelare «quanto accorto e paziente sia il lavoro, quanto beneducato l'occhio, quanto insito, sottile ed equilibrato sia il buon gusto dei giapponesi», anche in presenza di «artefici di secondaria valentia, con scarsa o con veruna pretesa artistica» (Pica 1902b, 1-2). La delusione, non priva d'interessanti notazioni sul rapporto fra ricerca artistica e produzione industriale così come sul nodo collezionismo-critica nel riferimento alto alle personalità di Siegfried Bing e Julius Meier-Graefe, nasceva dal confronto con le precedenti esposizioni di Venezia (1897) e Parigi (1900), di cui, polemicamente, erano riproposte, nelle fotografie Alinari, le opere in mostra, negando dunque la dignità di stampa a quelle presenti a Torino. Al contrario, il giudizio era stato estremamente positivo sulle collezioni d'arte giapponese di Ernst Seeger di Berlino e di Alessandro Fè d'Ostiani, Ambasciatore del Regno d'Italia in Cina e in Giappone (1870-1877), e sulla selezione di opere moderne proposta dalla Società degli artisti giapponesi, con la complicità di Moriyoshi Nagamura, allievo giapponese di scultura dell'Accademia di belle arti di Venezia. Già in questa occasione Pica aveva messo l'accento sulle ricadute positive dell'influenza giapponese sull'arte decorativa moderna in Inghilterra, Francia, Germania e negli Stati Uniti, per ribadire ancora nel 1902 che «il loro salutare esempio [...], strappando alfine europei ed americani alla servile imitazione degli antichi modelli, in cui sembrava volesse inaridirsi ogni loro inventiva genialità, ha deciso l'attuale risveglio decorativo» (Pica 1902b, 1-2).

A maggior ragione, dunque, nel volume dedicato al Museo Chiossone di Genova del 1907, le cui collezioni Pica stimava «non [...] inferiori a quelle che ammiransi in Francia, in Inghilterra ed in Belgio», veniva rimarcato l'auspicio che esse potessero «giovare non poco a raffinare il gusto del nostro pubblico ed a fornire utili esempi ai nostri artisti e ai nostri artefici, specie per quanto riguarda quelle arti applicate, di cui fortunatamente anche in Italia osservasi, in quest'ultimo lustro, un salutare risveglio» (Pica 1907, 10-1) [fig. 3].<sup>15</sup>

Secondo Pica dunque questo felice incontro di culture, anche in Italia, stava finalmente dando i suoi frutti, soprattutto nel settore della decorazione che, anche nella prospettiva del critico italiano, era uno dei banchi di prova più impegnativi su cui misurare la tenuta e la qualità della ricerca artistica più avanzata e più in generale la capacità della cultura italiana di stare al passo con le proposte, i ritmi e i meccanismi della produzione artigianale e industriale a livello internazionale. Viceversa, quando si trattò di valutare i benefici dello scambio di esperienze fra Occidente e Oriente al contrario, ovvero

<sup>15</sup> Un aspetto messo correttamente in rilievo anche da Lazzarini 2012.



**Figura 3** Una pagina de *L'arte giapponese* al Museo Chiossone di Genova, IAG, Bergamo 1907, con riproduzioni di alcuni oggetti di arte decorativa

dal punto di vista dell'arte giapponese, una pesante stroncatura non lascia adito a dubbio alcuno sull'effettivo apprezzamento, per esempio, delle più recenti proposte in mostra a Roma nel 1911 all'Esposizione internazionale di belle arti. Nell'immane e poderoso volume, riccamente illustrato, che accompagnava la manifestazione, il giudizio è netto. Non mancano parole di elogio per la sezione d'arte antica, a cura di Uchida Sadazuchi, diplomatico di lungo corso già in servizio in Brasile e negli Stati Uniti e commissario del padiglione giapponese, con la collaborazione, ancora una volta, di Moriyoshi Naganuma, ma, sulla falsariga di analoghe perplessità, già espresse



**Figura 4** Una pagina de *L'arte mondiale* a Roma nel 1911, IIAG, Bergamo 1912, con la riproduzione dell'opera di Rankō Kawasaki, *Intrecciando il nodo d'amore*

in altra sede, anche con riferimento all'azione di Antonio Fontanesi, Vincenzo Ragusa e Giovanni Cappelletti in Giappone, questa volta il critico italiano ha gioco facile nel dimostrare l'influenza «perniciosa» dell'arte occidentale su quella giapponese contemporanea, le cui opere risultano «ibride e poco vitali» e mortificano «la gustosa originalità» della sua gloriosa tradizione millenaria [fig. 4].<sup>16</sup>

**16** Pica 1912, cxxxiv: «di artisti mediocri ne abbiamo fin troppi in Europa per volerci e poterci interessare anche a quelli, che, rinunciando ad ogni attrattiva esotica per

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travestirsi da occidentali, ci vengono dell'Impero del Sol Levante. Ecco perché, per una volta tanto e senza alcuna titubanza, io mi schiero coi tradizionalisti contro i novatori».

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# From Secluded Paradise to Hell on Earth Hino Ashihei's Imaginative Geography of Okinawa

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**Abstract** This paper focuses on the writings of Hino Ashihei (1907-1960) about Okinawa, a corpus of twelve works composed over a period of sixteen years that were inspired by three visits to the Ryūkyū Islands. Hino is best known as a writer of war novels, but these twelve works have received almost no attention, partly because they are not considered Okinawan literature since Hino was a native of Kyūshū. The aim of this article is to show that Okinawa is not merely a setting for these neglected writings but rather a complex representation that incorporates the author's gaze, his stance toward the region, and a topography of power. Moreover, this representation evolved over time to produce an array of at times contrasting images of Okinawa, whether as a tropical paradise, the shield of the nation, or a symbol of its occupation. On the other hand, the narrator's stance, which is characterised at first by the strength and assertiveness of a first-person narrator, underwent a progressive disengagement that was intended, by this article's interpretation, to introduce greater objectivity into Hino's prose.

**Keywords** Hino Ashihei. Japan and Okinawa. US-occupied Okinawa. Colonial gaze. Imaginative geographies. Othering.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Hino and Okinawa. – 3 Okinawa as the 'Other'. – 4 Okinawa as a Gendered Other. – 5 Hino's Imaginative Geography of Okinawa. – 5.1 Okinawa as a Tropical Paradise. – 5.2 The Front Door of Our Fatherland. – 5.3 The 'New' Okinawa. – 5.4 A Hell on Earth. – 5.5 Dynamics of Power and Exploitation. – 6 Hino's stance. – 7 Conclusions.



#### Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-13
Accepted	2019-06-17
Published	2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Romagnoli, Stefano (2019). "From Secluded Paradise to Hell on Earth. Hino Ashihei's Imaginative Geography of Okinawa". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 555-578.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/018

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## 1 Introduction

Hino Ashihei (1907-1960) is best known as a writer of war novels. Thus *Wheat and Soldiers* (*Mugi to heitai*, 1938), the first instalment of a trilogy, became a best-seller in wartime Japan and indeed created a model for contemporary war literature. In the postwar years, Hino also penned several works dealing with the issue of responsibility for the war, not least in response to the purge to which he was subjected from 1948 to 1950. The war novels, as significant as they are, are but one facet of Hino's wide-ranging writings, though his versatility often goes unrecognised. One less-explored facet of his work is travel literature. Hino was an avid traveller who saw in travel opportunities to broaden his horizons and to find new ideas. As he put it, "it is profitable to go twice or three times to places where you have already been. The first impression can prove mistaken on a second visit or can be transformed. My several trips to China and Okinawa are a good example of this" (Hino 1958, 6: 437).

In this paper, I focus in particular on Hino's writings about Okinawa, a corpus of twelve works composed over a period of sixteen years that were inspired by three visits to the Ryūkyū Islands.<sup>1</sup> There have been relatively few critical studies of Hino's oeuvre in general, and this material has received almost no consideration.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these writings are also overlooked because they are not considered Okinawan literature, Hino being a native of Kyūshū. Nevertheless, they show a deep knowledge of Ryukyuan culture and are characterised by a distinctive gaze.

My aim here is to demonstrate that Okinawa is not merely a setting for these writings but rather a more complex kind of representation, one that encompasses otherness, gender, and power. Further, I contend that this representation - which is central to Hino's vision of Okinawa - evolved over time along with the author's relationship to the region. I begin by establishing the background of this relationship and proceed to a discussion of the representation of Okinawa that emerges from it.

**1** In this paper, I use 'Okinawa' and 'Ryūkyū' as equivalent terms to describe Hino's 'imaginative geography' without regard for the obvious geographical difference between them. Thus Hino, despite having visited only the main island of the archipelago, used 'Ryūkyū' and 'Okinawa' synonymously when relating his travels there.

**2** Tanaka Sōtarō (1971) mentions *The Torn Rope* only in passing. Ikeda Hiroshi's substantial monograph on Hino (2000) discusses only some of the works - *The Songstress*, *The Line-crossing Ceremony*, and *The Torn Rope*. While insightful in some respects, his analysis considers Okinawa as a setting rather than as a theme. Matsushita Hirofumi's (1996) thorough reconstruction of Hino's schedule in Okinawa in 1940 relies on evidence from contemporary newspapers. The only critical monograph on Hino written in English, by David Rosenfeld (2002), makes no mention of his Okinawa writings.

## 2 Hino and Okinawa

As just observed, Hino visited Okinawa three times. The first was from May 13-22, 1940, when he was accompanied by Ryū Kankichi and Kawahara Shigemi, writers for *Kyūshū bungaku* magazine, and the poet Nakayama Shōzaburō. These ten days spent in Naha and on the southern part of the main island, with a brief excursion to Kudaka Island, shaped Hino's impression of the region in ways that reverberate throughout his Okinawan writings.

In mid-September 1944, on his way back to Japan from India after the Battle of Imphal, Hino was forced to spend two nights in Naha when the airplane in which he was travelling had a mechanical problem. He was therefore afforded a glimpse of the well-fortified island just before US air raids on it commenced (which occurred on October 10) and less than a year before the Battle of Okinawa (April-June 1945).

Hino's third visit to Okinawa was from February 8-15, 1954, when he was invited to be a passenger on the inaugural Japan Airlines flight connecting Tokyo to Naha. The island - now under US control in accordance with the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco - differed strikingly from the one that he had seen ten years earlier, as is obvious from his subsequent writing. His earlier impression is well represented in the afterword to the collection of short stories published under the title *A Bowl of Snow* (*Ichiwan no yuki*) in 1948:

I miss the Ryūkyū Islands. The memories of that trip are difficult to forget. Now they have become a remote place, but the illusion of the Ryūkyū in my heart is always vivid. Now that I think of it, I have felt at times something akin to homesickness; and I have written some works that take place there. (Hino 1948, 253)

Far from being merely 'some', Hino's works dealing with Okinawa - directly related to his own experiences there - include eight short stories, one novel, two travelogues, and a stage play. The greater part of these writings appeared in magazines and was later republished into two collections, *The Ryukyuan Dancer* (*Ryūkyū maihime*), published in 1954, not long after his third visit to Okinawa, and *The Torn Rope* (*Chigirareta nawa*), published in 1956.<sup>3</sup> Some of them were eventu-

<sup>3</sup> The short stories include *The Island* (*Shima*, which appeared originally in the April 1945 issue of *Bungei*), *The Songstress* (*Utahime*, from the January 1949 issue of *Bungakukai*), *The Sango Theatre* (*Sangoza*, from the February 1949 issue of *Waseda Bungaku*), *The Tiger's Claw Flower* (*Deigo no hana*, published in *Bungei yomimono* in 1949), *The Dancer* (*Maihime*, from the December 1952 issue of *Shōsetsu shinchō*), *The Maiden from Yanbaru* (*Yanbaru otome*, from the June 1954 issue of *Shōsetsu shinchō*), *Unna Nabi* (from the April 1955 issue of *Shōsetsu kōen*) and *The Torn Rope* (*Chigirareta nawa*, from the September 1956 issue of *Ōru yomimono*). The first six of these stories appeared in

ally included in Hino's 1958 selected works' collection, in a section titled "Tales of the Ryūkyū" (*Ryūkyū monogatari*). Given that Hino himself edited this collection, the tales included therein probably represent what he considered to be the best and/or most important of his Ryukyuan writings.<sup>4</sup>

### 3 Okinawa as the 'Other'

At the time of Hino's first trip, Okinawa had long been a Japanese prefecture, having been annexed in 1879. Some recurrent features of Hino's Okinawa seem, however, to emphasise the difference between it and the Japanese mainland and thus to produce a sense of otherness. The first and most substantial of these features is the Okinawan dialect, which appears frequently in Hino's Okinawan writings apart from the first, *The Island*. The insertion of words or short sentences in the dialect – which are written using the *katakana* syllabary so as to stress their otherness – draws attention to the cultural distance between Okinawa and Japan and creates an exotic atmosphere. Emblematic in this respect is the short story *The Songstress*, written in 1948 but set in 1944. The story's narrator finds himself on Naha because of a malfunctioning airplane while travelling to Japan from India – the autobiography here is transparent – where he encounters a woman, a courtesan of the Tsuji pleasure quarter with whom he had had a brief liaison in the course of a ten-day stay four years previously. Glad at but also bewildered by this reunion, and amid memories of their earlier carefree time together, he is compelled to determine whether her apparent devotion to him is sincere. While visiting her at the brothel where she works and also lives, the courtesan speaks a few sentences in dialect that he had learned during his first stay as a kind of inside joke, thereby creating a sense of continuity and closeness between them. When, however, they are interrupted by another waitress who urges the courtesan to go entertain guests in another room, the double nature of the dialect becomes evident:

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*The Ryukyuan Dancer* along with an excerpt from the novel *The Line-crossing Ceremony* (*Sekidōsai*, serialised in the *Ōsaka mainichi shinbun* from February to August 1953 and published as a single volume that same year) and the two travelogues *To the Island of the Three-times "Lilies"* (*Mitabi "himeyuri" no shima e*, from the April 1954 issue of *Bungei shunjū*) and *Report from the New Ryūkyū* (*Shinryūkyūki*), apparently newly-written for the volume. The latter and the above six short tales were featured as well in the collection *The Torn Rope* along with the story of that title.

<sup>4</sup> The "Tales of the Ryūkyū" selection includes *The Island*, *The Songstress*, *The Sango Theatre*, *The Tiger's Claw Flower*, *The Dancer*, *The Maiden from Yanbaru*, *Unna Nabi*, and *The Torn Rope*.

When she was speaking to me, she did so in the excellent standard Japanese that she had been taught at the girls' school, but with the waitress she spoke fast in dialect, and I couldn't understand a single word. At times she seemed to yell at her, and her tone was bitter, but when she came back to me she adjusted her expression into a smile. (Hino [1948] 1958a, 262)

In this passage, the dialect, which was initially presented as harmless and seductive, becomes opaque and harmful as narrator glimpses all of the things that he fears in the unknown other: unintelligibility, hostility, and deceit.

Second, besides the dialect, Hino makes several references to traditional features of Okinawan culture that stress its otherness. Thus, his Okinawan writings frequently mention the *jabisen*, a musical instrument similar to the *shamisen* but made with snake skin, colourful dyed clothes known as *bingata*, and *awamori*, the distilled rice liquor unique to the region. He also draws attention to the traditional turtle-back tombs that can be found everywhere in the islands.

Third, and even more telling, are Hino's references to the traditional performing arts. The main character of *The Songstress*, the courtesan Sato, is famous for her mastery of *ryūka*, a genre of poetry that is chanted to the accompaniment of the *jabisen*. Hino inserts into the story the texts of several of her improvised poems in dialect with a translation into standard Japanese that serve to convey the woman's feelings. Significantly, the narrator explains that the rhythm of the Okinawan *ryūka* differs from that of the Japanese *waka*: whereas the latter conforms to a pattern of 5-7-5 7-7 syllables, the former is based on an 8-8 8-6 rhythm. While the practice of addressing love poems to one's beloved is a feature shared with mainland Japanese poetry, their utterly different rhythms, by contrast, create a sense of alterity.

Further, Hino in the short story *The Sango Theater* – the structure of which resembles a Noh play – describes in detail a passage from a *kumi odori*, the Ryukyuan traditional narrative dance, a play called *Hito nusubito* (*The Kidnapper*) and quotes lines from it. The setting of the story is the theatre of the title, a glorious building where Hino had witnessed unforgettable performances of *kumi odori* in 1940 and that has in the story been transformed into barracks. While visiting a friend billeted there, the narrator (who clearly represents Hino himself) spots a bearded handyman who seems somehow familiar. At length, he speaks to the man and recognises him as a famous actor whom he had seen on stage and befriended during an earlier visit. The war has destroyed not only the actor's career but the entire theatre industry as well. Unable to leave the place that has meant everything to him, however, the actor is now doing odd jobs for the Japanese army. In a flashback, the narrator recalls the actor's striking

performance in the role of a kidnapper of children. The actor comes to a tragic end, however, when he chooses to burn the theatre to the ground along with himself and his wife.

It is by contrasting Okinawan and Japanese culture in such ways that Hino creates his 'other'. Thus he depicts the Ryūkyū Islands as something exotic despite being part of Japan. This sense of otherness is expressed conversely in the expression that inhabitants of the region use to refer to Japan, 'Yamato', a word that invokes a past in which the islands were independent from the mainland.

#### 4 Okinawa as a Gendered Other

Okinawa is not only 'otherized' by Hino but also 'genderized' in that, apart from *The Sango Theater*, all of his Okinawa-related works of fiction feature a prominent native female character. Thus, in *The Island*, a recollection of a trip from Naha through the luxuriant natural beauty of Okinawa to the southern city of Itoman, the narrator is led by a local woman who tells him about her life and some of the island's customs. Similarly in *The Songstress*, which is set in 1948 and includes flashbacks to 1945 and 1940, the titular character helps the narrator to shop for traditional textiles and ceramics. Through her singing, he comes to appreciate *ryūka* poetry, and, more importantly, she teaches him the rudiments of her dialect. Given their embodiment of significant features of the region's culture, the main female characters in effect represent Okinawa itself.

Many other examples could be cited, but two more are sufficient to make the point here. The first is the main character of the short story *The Dancer*, a popular performer of *kumi odori* dance named Tamagusuku Toshiko. At the end of the war, Toshiko moves to Tokyo with her mother and sister, "fearing that, with the American occupation, customs would change dramatically and the genuine tradition of Ryukyuan dance, to which she had dedicated her life, was about to be destroyed" (Hino [1952] 1958, 302). Since she cannot support herself as a dancer in the capital city, she works part time as a waitress. Toshiko also frequents an Okinawan-style *izakaya* that serves as a gathering place for many 'expats', playing an active role in the Association for the Ryukyuan Arts. Nevertheless, she decides to alter her surname, trading the distinctive *gusuku* for the less exotic 'Tamaki' that those from mainland Japan find easier to pronounce. As the story progresses, she eagerly accepts an offer to join a dance company for a tour of Okinawa, convinced that this will be her opportunity once more to earning her living as a performer. However, before reaching the island, Toshiko is informed that she is to be a prima ballerina in an 'unconventional' form of Ryukyuan dance since, under the US occupation, the old is being discarded in favour of a

'new culture'. She is therefore compelled to perform a 'new Ryukyuan dance' that turns out to be nothing but a form of striptease. Moreover, she is trapped by her decision because the promoters have advertised the show as the "triumphant return of Tamagusuku Toshiko, the star of the Ryukyuan dance, pride of her homeland of Okinawa". Not surprisingly, the tour is disastrous. Pressed by the manager but reluctant to take part in a degrading spectacle, she ends up selling out her treasured art only to suffer harsh criticism and the deletion of her name from the list of respected Okinawan artists. In addition, her old master rejects her as his disciple, and her own brother, who still lives in her hometown, threatens to disown her. In the end, Toshiko has no choice but to abandon the tour - which she does with her brother's help -, return to Tokyo in defeat, and quit the stage forever.

As a performer of traditional Ryukyuan dance, Toshiko is a tangible manifestation of Okinawa's cultural heritage. It is therefore especially significant that she chooses (or feels compelled) to export her otherness to Tokyo and that she abandons the aspect of her name - and hence of herself - that is 'other'. Moreover, when she returns to her homeland, she is again forced to become an 'other' vis-à-vis her country people, being rejected by both her culture (in the form of the master) and her social group (in the form of her brother). Her story can thus be seen to epitomise the destiny of Okinawa itself, being marginalised by the mainland but, at the same time, essentially sold to the US.

The second example of Hino's use of female protagonists to epitomise Okinawa that I cite here occurs in the novella *The Torn Rope* (and, with some variations, in Hino's play of the same name), in which he vents his indignation at the situation in US-administered Okinawa. Among the main characters are the women of the Shingaki family, in particular the eldest daughter, Tsuru, who seems to personify the fate of Okinawa. The old mother, Kame, watches helplessly as her husband is taken into custody and transferred to Naha by plane for trial for his part in the forced seizure of farmers' lands on Ie Island. She is also forced to look on as US soldiers set her house on fire without giving her the time to save anything - and level the ruins with a bulldozer, so that she and other farmers must live in a tent camp.

Tsuru has watched her husband, a poet before the war, die in battle. The 'torn rope' of the title is, on the one hand, an allusion to Okinawa, which contains the word *nawa* (rope) and has been severed from mainland Japan after falling under US administration. In the story, the *nawa* is also the literal rope that Tsuru used to rescue her husband, blinded in the fighting, from a trench that is then 'torn' by a bullet from a US rifle and therefore fails to save the man's life. Tsuru keeps with her the remaining piece as the only keepsake of her dead beloved. Pressed by her parents after the war, she marries another man, who dies a few months later leaving her pregnant with his

child. The boy is then killed at the age of three by a US military jeep while playing on the street. As if this were not enough, Tsuru is then raped by two American soldiers, and she eventually hangs herself with the 'torn rope' that had once tethered her to her first husband when she discovers that she is pregnant as a result of the assault.

Elsewhere in the story, Tsuru's younger sister, Asako, has also come to Naha from Ie Island along with their brother Seiji. The three of them become involved with the US occupying force but, while Tsuru and Seiji try to keep their distance, Asako instead has friendly - and physical - relations with US soldiers (the narrative suggests that she becomes a *panpan*, a prostitute servicing US personnel). As the narrator remarks, "she cannot possibly be unaware of the extent of the misfortunes that the US Army has brought to the Shingaki family, beginning with the incidents at Ie Island. She can be called a traitor" (Hino 1958, 6: 370). Asako alone of her siblings, however, is able to find some measure of happiness when she eventually marries a former US soldier whose genuine interest in Okinawa has led him to study the local pottery and to support the farmers' protest against mistreatment by the US military.

These two stories are representative of Hino's deployment of female characters to represent Okinawa symbolically. That is, whether erotic, tragic, or both, the fate of these characters embodies that of Okinawa itself. Hino clearly wrote from the standpoint of a male inhabitant of the Japanese mainland; his gaze is not neutral in terms of power and gender. His gendering of Okinawa in this way inevitably depicts the region in a subordinate position, betraying a frankly patronising perception of it as erotic and exotic. Within this gender-biased framework, femininity is more effective than masculinity in eliciting and justifying the narrator's sympathy with the various characters. *The Sango Theater* is thus very similar structurally to *The Songstress*, in that the narrator encounters an acquaintance toward whom he once felt some affection only to realise how irrevocably things have changed for both of them. While this structure works well with the female character in *The Songstress*, the same cannot be said for the male character in *The Sango Theater*. It is in this respect significant that the actor in the latter story confesses to the narrator that he has had to prostitute himself to a female patron in order to continue his career on the stage. In other words, the actor's story has been made to parallel that of the courtesans.



## 5 Hino's Imaginative Geography of Okinawa

In the afterword to *A Bowl of Snow*, quoted above, Hino states that the 'illusion' of the Ryūkyū Islands was always vivid in his heart. The term that I have translated as 'illusion', *gensō*, describes a mental image of something that does not exist in reality. When he wrote this passage in 1948, Hino was clinging to memories of his past visits to Okinawa, being well aware that his remembrance of it was far different from the actual situation. He was unable to update his mental image of the region until his return there in 1954.

Given their chronology, half of Hino's Okinawan writings are based on this 'illusion' and the other half reflect the 'new Ryūkyū', as he referred to it in one of his travelogues. Such images - which can be seen as products of both experience and, more so, imagination - form part of an 'imaginative geography' of Okinawa, including as they do not only geographical and cultural features of the archipelago but also Hino's emotions about it and the dynamics of power among the various actors.<sup>5</sup> Here I retrace the evolution of Hino's 'imaginative geographies' of Okinawa, drawing particular attention to the transition from a positive image of a secluded paradise to that of an earthly hell.

### 5.1 Okinawa as a Tropical Paradise

The present image of Okinawa as a 'tropical paradise', as recent research has shown, is the product of a complex makeover and branding operations (Figal 2008, 2012) that embody cultural discourses of power and a 'neo-imperial' agenda (Kühne 2012). This image is, however, less an invention of postwar Japan than a continuation of strategies of representation that already existed before the war. As Kanda (2004) has discussed, in the late thirties, tourism to Okinawa increased significantly thanks to the development of maritime transport. The tourism industry thus helped to sell the notion of the islands as exotic rather than impoverished, that is, to transform a 'sago-palm hell' into a tropical paradise.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The concept of 'imaginative geography' was introduced by Edward Said in his seminal work on orientalism (1979, 1993); it can be defined as "Representations of other places - of peoples and landscapes, cultures and 'natures' - that articulate the desires, fantasies and fears of their authors and the grids of power between them and their 'Others'" (Gregory et al. 2009, 369).

<sup>6</sup> In the late Taishō period (1912-1926), following a series of famines and a drop in the price of the sugarcane that was the mainstay of the island's economy, the people were starving, and they eventually resorted to eating the fruit of the sago-palm (*Cycas revoluta*; *sotetsu* in Japanese), which required detoxifying it.

This is precisely the image created in *The Island*, the only piece of Hino's Okinawa writing that was published during the war. As mentioned, the story consists of the narrator's recollection of a trip through the island's natural beauty from Naha to the southern city of Itoman in the company of a female native. The main feature of a 'tropical paradise' is, of course, the environment, and in this case especially the flowers. A good example in this respect is a description of the landscape from the top of Santinmō Hill, which dominates the city of Itoman:

A strong wind that brings the scent of the salty water comes and brushes against my hot cheeks. I go around the hill and the morning glories, the tiger-claws, the thistles, the agave, the Japanese banana, and other flowers that are in full bloom, each with its peculiar color and shape. Just as the hearts of the island's inhabitants are closely connected to the sea, the flowers' hearts as well cannot be separated from it. The agave flourishes, its stem stretching like a spear from the center of its sharp blade-like leaves, but they say that, if it does not reach a point from which the sea can be seen, it never puts forth its yellow flowers. (Hino [1945] 1958, 329)

Another key aspect of the 'tropical paradise' trope is of course feminine beauty, which enhances its otherness and, at the same time, adds an erotic tinge to it. The female characters – the guide in *The Island*, Sato in *The Songstress*, and the fisherwomen Toshi and Omitsuru who appear in *The Tiger's Claw Flower*<sup>7</sup> and *The Line-crossing Ceremony*,<sup>8</sup> respectively – constitute an essential part of Hino's earlier imaginative geography of Okinawa. These characters also seem to maintain the vital connection to the sea that Hino ascribes to the Okinawan flora, as can be seen in the recurrent representation of them as mermaids (*ningyo*). Thus Sato, Toshi, and Omitsuru are all

<sup>7</sup> *The Tiger's Claw Flower* narrates the story of a marriage between a fictional Okinawan poet named Higa Zenpatsu and Toshi, a fisherwoman. When they are separated by the war, Toshi waits faithfully for Zenpatsu's homecoming even several years after the war. While immersed in the water during this period, she feels that she can communicate with Burma, where her husband is stationed, and so she begins to catch sharks. When Zenpatsu eventually returns with a girl whom he claims to be an orphan he has adopted, Toshi feels betrayed, and the pair become increasingly estranged over the course of the narrative.

<sup>8</sup> *The Line-crossing Ceremony* is a novel that revolves around Daishirō, a student of ichthyology at Tokyo Imperial University who goes to Okinawa to study a peculiar tropical eel. He hires Mankichi, a fisherman, to take him to the tropical waters and falls in love with his mistress, Omitsuru. During the journey, Mankichi tries to kill Daishirō but in the event perishes when their boat wrecks. Daishirō and Omitsuru take refuge on a tropical island, but he, having made an important discovery, is eager to go back to Japan and, at the end of the narrative, leaves Omitsuru on the island and sets out on the ocean, likely to perish.

depicted at one point or another bathing in the sea when they catch the eye of the main male characters. And while there is no such bathing scene in *The Island*, the narrator compares the unusually long fingers of the main female character to the legs of an octopus. The mermaid trope thus simultaneously enhances the eroticism of the female characters – and consequently their ability to entice the male characters and to reveal to them a hidden side of Okinawan culture – and expresses the unattainability of this ‘other’ and its strong connection to the natural world.

This trope is particularly evident in the story of Toshi in *The Tiger's Claw Flower*, who has been faithful to her husband over many years of separation while he returns from the war with a daughter by another woman who he claims to be an adopted. Her subsequent estrangement from him is manifested in part by her near transformation into a marine creature.

Showing her great anger and sadness, every day and every night Toshi plunged into the sea. The sea and the fishes were everything for her now. It was as if she were trying to forget by embracing her mermaid destiny. [...] Secretly, she went to embrace the shark. She put her hands, which were warm even in the water, on both sides and she pulled it to her. The skin of the shark was strong and smooth as she embraced it. What was she thinking during those moments? [...] The eyes of the mermaid were no longer directed towards Burma, and her scales were glittering like fire, as if they were inlaid with petals of the tiger's claw flower, reflecting the light of the paper lanterns that shone under the hedge. (Hino [1949] 1958, 300)

The ‘mermaid’ trope, then, can be regarded as a means of embedding the female characters in nature. A similar phenomenon occurs in *The Songstress* when the narrator meets the titular character again after four years apart: “the perfume of some southern flower emanated from the lush and beautiful body of Sato” (Hino [1948] 1958a, 260). This repeated interweaving of women and nature in his early Ryukyuan works, then, reveals Hino's imaginative geography of Okinawa to have been rooted originally in the notion of a tropical paradise in which nature, feminine beauty, and the sea coalesce into the object of his narrators' desires.

## 5.2 The Front Door of Our Fatherland

The tropical paradise was then jeopardised by the war, preparations for which had the effect of spoiling its natural beauty. Thus *The Songstress* opens with the characters' realization that Okinawa is indeed

changing. The extent of its disfiguration is dramatised in a comparison with the advertising depiction of Okinawa by the International Tourism Association as the land of 'Peach Blossom Spring' (*tōgenkyō*) in reference to a utopia that features in a Chinese fable.<sup>9</sup>

"Set at the southern end of the flowery Japanese archipelago, the land of poetry and deep emotions, the island of dreams. The coral reef, the *jabisen*, and the traditional dyed cloths; a paradise on earth [*tōgenkyō*] of lovely young maidens who hide in their hearts the heat of the Southern countries". These were the slogans of the International Tourism Association; but that aspect of the old days is completely gone from Naha. There is only the clatter of violent and dusty war, which is destroying the look of this town of dreams, covering everything with the anxiety that these are the last days. (Hino [1948] 1958a, 256)

Under the screw pines and *gajumaru* trees - the shadows of which used to protect the clandestine rendezvous of the lovers - armed soldiers now stand. The traditional turtle-back tombs are filled with munitions, and cannons are positioned in the precincts of the city. Its progressive militarization has affected as well one of its prominent charms, namely the Tsuji pleasure quarter. This well-known district, mentioned earlier, dates to the 17th century and had continued to thrive into the 1930s, when its exotic eroticism formed part of the Japanese imaginative geographies of Okinawa (Kanda 2004, 17-19). As Hino depicts it, however, with the growing presence of soldiers on the island, most of the parlours have been forced to become *ian-jo*, brothels reserved for the exclusive use of the Japanese military.

The war has affected Okinawa's cultural heritage as well. Thus all of the shops that just a few years before were sold traditional products had closed. Moreover, the Sango Theater - which, as discussed, had hosted the performances of *kumi odori* that Hino had found unforgettable in 1940 - had been transformed into barracks, as mentioned in *The Songstress* and further elaborated on in the story titled after the theatre. Observing the building filled with the stench of the horses' dung and ruined, the narrator experiences an overwhelming sense of hopelessness that prefigures the country's imminent defeat.

The main characters of these stories stand as the last remnants of something that is doomed to disappear. "Amid the armed city of Naha, fallen into ruins and thrown into confusion, only in this single room were the richness and beauty of former times left untouched"

<sup>9</sup> *Tao Hua Yuan Ji*, written by Tao Yuanming in 421 CE. The fable narrates the story of a fisherman who comes to a secluded, idyllic village whose inhabitants have escaped the turmoil of the Qin dynasty.

the narrator comments about Sato's place (Hino [1948] 1958a, 261). The actor Shikiya in *The Sango Theater* tells the narrator that "because of the disruption caused by the war, our art has been thrown into chaos. The Sango Theater is reduced to what you see, and the same holds for Shingaku Theater. The company is disbanded and the artists are scattered" (Hino [1948] 1958b, 285). Even his old master - hailed as the Okinawan Danjūrō - is missing, and it is unclear whether he is still alive.

Interestingly, the narrator of *The Songstress* relates that, when he heard the news of the air raids on Naha, he had listened with his teeth clenched in distress. "Of course it was not due to my concern for that one woman but because I listened with a burning sense of grief that the vast shadow of the war was finally approaching the front door of our fatherland" (Hino [1948] 1958a, 274). Occupied by Japanese Army soldiers - who had seized the sites connected with both tradition and entertainment - Okinawa was no longer a tropical paradise that inspired desire but had come to represent a last defence against impending defeat.

### 5.3 The 'New' Okinawa

Hino's image of Okinawa changed significantly in the first half of the 1950s as a result of his visit to the region in 1954. While the effects of that visit are apparent in the works written from that year onward - especially in the travelogue *Report from the New Ryūkyū* - some description of postwar Naha can be found in *The Dancer*, written in 1952, as well:

Naha, which had been destroyed by the air raids, showed no traces of the old days. Only a part of Tsuboya area was left as it was; otherwise, the appearance of the city had changed completely. Everything that had conveyed a Ryukyuan atmosphere had disappeared, and of course also the Tsuji district, the renowned popular attraction. The buildings, the people who walked the streets, the things that were sold at the market - everything had the air of the new times, and there was no evidence of the Naha of the past. The rows of kajumaru trees were few, and none of the women wore wide-sleeved or *bingata* kimonos. Whether young or old, they all wore Western-style dresses, and at the market were many American soldiers, tall and blue-eyed. (Hino [1952] 1958, 317)

It is noteworthy that this description cannot possibly have been based on any actual experience of the place since it was written two years before Hino's postwar visit to Okinawa. It is therefore a product of Hino's imagination and, presumably, second-hand accounts. Yet it is

possible to find in the *Report from the New Ryūkyū* some similarities with the description in *The Dancer*; for instance, the sense of disappointment at realising that the past atmosphere has disappeared:

I'm puzzled by the face of the new Ryūkyū. [...] There is not the slightest difference from the mainland in the way in which the houses are built, and the women who emerge from them are dressed in the Japanese way, with short hair. (Hino 1954, 274)

Hino's concern that the Okinawa that he had experienced was lost is understandable given the damage that the war had inflicted. In his disappointment, it is possible to detect the features of his prewar image of Okinawa. These were often the same features that, from his perspective, had made Okinawa 'other'. Thus he lamented the disappearance of the traditional aspects of Okinawan culture and the sites with which they were associated, the decreased variety of traditional cooking, the loss of the aged *awamori* during the bombings, the conversion of theatres into cinemas. Even the traditional performance of the *kumi odori* seemed on the verge of extinction.

Nor had the natural beauty escaped the bombing. Surrounded by flowers in a garden near his accommodations, Hino observes that, "[a]fter having seen Naha and Shuri devastated by the war, in this flower garden on the northern part of the island, I felt that my eyes and my heart had been cleansed" (1954, 271). He goes on to note that the pines that used to grow thick throughout the island have completely disappeared from its southern part because of the bombings. Moreover, after referring to Okinawa as the "southern end of the colorful and flowery Japanese archipelago", realises that the characteristic tiger's claw flower is nowhere to be found.

Most of all for him, however, the women have changed; they seem no longer to possess the exotic charm of the female characters of his earlier Okinawan writings. Faced with the loss of the region's otherness, Hino observes with bitter irony:

In these days, there are more than ten Ryukyuan restaurants and bar in Tokyo. When I went there, the women sported the traditional hairstyle, the room was decorated with the *bingata* clothes, and everything had a strong Ryukyuan atmosphere. "Looks like Okinawa has transferred to Tokyo and Tokyo has come to Okinawa" I said with a laugh. (Hino 1954, 274)

Along with this realisation of the massive loss of the 'old' Okinawa, another theme that arises in *Report from the New Ryūkyū* is the presence of the US Army. While this is not a major theme in the *Report*, it nevertheless contains in embryo the dissent that Hino will voice in years to come. Indeed, Hino conveys through most of the travelogue

a positive image of the American presence in Okinawa. Thus, for instance, he notices that the US Army has built Quonset huts over some of the traditional tombs, reportedly to protect them – an important gesture given the great respect that Okinawan people have for their ancestors. They had also presented to the city of Naha Perry Centennial Hall, which housed a detailed scale model of the Shurei gate (*Shureimon*) that was destroyed during the war.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the ruins of the temple Sōgenji now hosted a Ryukyuan-American Cultural Center, and Hino remarks that he felt his “heart warming at seeing that two countries that engaged in a fierce battle and killed each other’s people have overcome their past enmity and look forward to peace between them” (Hino 1954, 268). While Hino had the impression that everything now looked American, he was also puzzled by the fact he actually saw few Americans, and almost no soldiers, a striking difference from such mainland cities as Sasebo, Tachikawa, and Kure. Thus he commented specifically that he felt almost no ‘colonial atmosphere’.

In the very last chapter of the *Report*, however, realising that “in present-day Ryūkyū, there is no freedom”, Hino addresses generally the current US administration of the islands, which caused in their inhabitants

deep sadness for the fact that the Ryūkyū Islands are sundered from [the mainland], the feeling of anxiety that comes from not knowing when they will be returned [to it], the sense of despair from being fearful that the United States will never give them back. The crisis caused by the collapse of the prostitution economy, the requisition of land to expand the military bases, the hideous crimes, including robbery and murder, that increase every day – with all these and other things coming one after another, the sad eyes of the Ryukyuan people are turned to Yamato. And as for me, ‘one from Yamato’, seeing this state of affairs, I can no longer be the carefree traveler I was in the past. (Hino 1954, 297)

This show of sympathy for the Okinawan people makes clear the desperation of the current situation while leaving the agency of the US partially obscured. Hino remarked that Okinawa was looking to the Japanese mainland with a sense of hope, but he did not delve into the troubling issues that he mentioned, the land requisition and incidents of rape and murder. While his image of the ‘new Okinawa’ was positive overall with respect to the American presence, it neverthe-

<sup>10</sup> Contemporary footage of the Shuri Museum and Perry Centennial Hall has recently been made available by the Okinawa Archives Laboratory (*Okinawa ākaibu kenkyū-jo*): <https://vimeo.com/246043626> (2019-06-24).

less contained, as already mentioned, a seed of dissent that would soon grow into a more systematic critique of US policy and behaviour in the region.

#### 5.4 A Hell on Earth

To expand on the earlier description of the historical context of Hino's later Okinawan writings, according to the Peace Treaty of San Francisco, which came into force in April 1952, the US Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) was obligated to pay for land that had been expropriated for military use. In 1953, after an attempt to lease the land from the owners failed because they considered the compensation too little and the proposed lease (of twenty years) too long, the US military was granted the authority to use force to expropriate land in cases in which landowners refused to sign leases. Many farmers were dislocated and forced to live with their families in tents in areas that were unsuitable for agriculture. The subsequent struggle between the Landowners Union and USCAR led to a proposal by the latter for permanent leases secured through lump-sum payments that was perceived by the landowners as an American land grab and therefore rejected.

In an attempt to reach an agreement, a US committee headed by Representative Melvin Price, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, was created in July 1955 to investigate land issues in Okinawa. This investigation lasted four days. While the protesting landowners had had some hope that the outcome of the investigation would be favourable to them, the recommendations of the Price Report - which was issued in June 1956 - for the most part favoured USCAR. The resulting wave of mass protests culminated in a rally of 150,000 people in Naha.<sup>11</sup>

At the time of Hino's visit to Okinawa in 1954, the dispute was already in progress, though, as has been seen, he mentions the issue but briefly at the end of his contemporary travelogue. Moreover, it was some time before he began to discuss the issue in his writings, and he introduced it only gradually. Thus, in June 1954, he published a short story, *The Maiden from Yanbaru*, featuring a heroine named Nabe whose requited love for a young man from another village is hindered by her mother, with tragic results. Set in the forested northern part of Okinawa Island known as Yanbaru - which Hino had visited that same year - and apparently in the pre-Meiji era, this tale, with its abundant references to local folklore and customs, seems to

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed account of the dispute and its aftermath, see Kawato (2015, 42-53) and Sarantakes (2000, 91-111).



elaborate an alternative version of the 'tropical paradise' image in which 'tropical' is replaced with 'bucolic'.

The story *Unna Nabi*, published roughly a year later, in April 1955, appears to be a rewriting of *The Maiden from Yanbaru* in which the issue of the farmers' struggle becomes part of the narrative. The eponymous heroine is a famous eighteenth-century Ryukyuan poet (also known in Japanese as Onna Nabe), a master of the *ryūka* chanted poetic form that appears in *The Songstress*. In the story, the surrounding villages are oppressed by an old local administrator who, in the name of the king, Shōkei, issues various prohibitions, including one on the *mōasobi* that were the only form of entertainment available to young villagers.<sup>12</sup> Nabi's lover, Matsugane, is executed for objecting to the administrator's prohibitions. Moreover, in preparation for an anticipated war, the administrator issues an order to expropriate some farmers' fields to build a fort. When the farmers protest, he explains that they will be given money in compensation. This compensation proves to be insignificant, however, and, when the farmers renew their protest, the administrator orders his soldiers to suppress it, and several farmers are injured or killed. Even the visit of a high emissary from the king, in whom the farmers have placed their hopes, comes to nothing when emissary proves to be interested only in Nabi's performance, and he soon returns to the capital after increasing the problematic administrator's authority. Only the timely intervention of the king himself at last provides a just outcome, after which Nabi is able to marry and live a modest life in peace.

While this story is set in the eighteenth century, the strict regulations imposed by the local administrator, his misapplication of the king's directives in order to deprive the residents of entertainment, the violent expropriation of farmer's land, the inadequacy of compensation, and the failed negotiations with the emissary of the central government - all of these themes reveal this story as a kind of *roman à clef* addressing the contemporary situation in Okinawa, specifically the controversial US administration of the islands. In this respect, *Unna Nabi* can be seen as an experiment in rewriting, in creating a bridge between the 'contemplative' and 'analytical' stances of Hino's previous works, one that foreshadows the open dissent expressed in *The Torn Rope*, in which, as has been seen, Hino raises a litany of issues relating US-administered Okinawa.

As Hino makes clear in the afterword to the sixth volume of the self-edited selected works referred to above, Okinawa to him "seemed to deserve being called a hell" [*jigoku no na ni atai suru to kanjita*] (Hino 1958, 6: 441-2). In this respect, *The Torn Rope* can be regard-

<sup>12</sup> These *mōasobi* were traditional night-time gatherings of young men and women from various villages.

ed generally as a novel of denunciation for its vivid description of the forced expropriation of land in Iejima and of the miserable condition of the dispossessed farmers and repeated mention of the constant risk to local women of sexual assault by US soldiers. Indeed, the narrative mentions an actual incident in September 1955 in which two soldiers kidnapped, raped, and murdered one six-year-old girl and raped another. It also depicts the illegal gathering of scrap metal by impoverished female farmers, who often died in the process. Hino's view is well summarised by the novel's narrator: "Having been an island on which there was no crime, after the war, it has been transformed into an island of brutal crimes" (Hino [1956] 1958, 375). The majority of the fault, he asserted, lay with the US forces.

The novel and the slightly different play of the same name both end with the rally of the Okinawans that took place in June 1956. In the novel, a character named Chinen Yoshio, who works as a journalist for the *Ryūkyū Times*, is asked by his lover to join this rally; she asks him whether, despite his sardonic attitude, he is a patriot, to which he answers that he is perhaps the most patriotic man of all Japan and declares that he will not take part in the rally because

You see, no matter how much we clamor, the Americans won't move a hair. The more we clamor, the more they will have fun and laugh at us. Don't you see that the Japanese government cares more for the Yankees than for the people of Okinawa? It's inevitable, since they're weak-kneed. In the end, we all know that they'll be compelled to concede. To begin with, you should read carefully the text of that Price Report. It clearly shows contempt for the Okinawan people, or rather it makes fools of all Japanese people. They treat us like savages. They know that, whatever they say to the Japanese, no matter how unreasonable, they won't make a big fuss and they'll do what they tell them to do. (Hino [1956] 1958, 399)

Chinen's character and attitude seem to have been inspired by Hino's friends in Okinawa. In an article published in October 1957 in the magazine *Sekai*, Hino states that, when he arrived in the region in 1954, his friends - who used to be lively and eager - appeared to him quite withered. In this article, which deals with the situation in Okinawa, Hino further develops his critique of the treatment of Okinawa, beginning with the assertion that the newspapers downplay controversial incidents, for "[i]n Okinawa, there is no freedom of speech because of the US Army occupation" (Hino 1957, 146). He goes on to assert that he had composed the stage version of *The Torn Rope* in a fit of indignation over the findings of the Price Report but was nevertheless well aware that Japan was too weak to counter America's "monstrous frontier spirit". In the end, however, he claimed that his stance was motivated, not by anti-American sentiment, but by love

of freedom, peace, and equality - values that the Americans themselves claimed to hold in high regard.

## 5.5 Dynamics of Power and Exploitation

As has been seen, Hino's image of Okinawa shifted from a tropical paradise to an earthly hell in response to the occupations of both the Japanese and the US military forces. These representations naturally expressed his feelings and stance toward Okinawa. His Okinawan writings also map the dynamics of power among the various characters and forces at work within the narrative. It is in these respects that Hino's representation of Okinawa can be considered an evolving 'imaginative geography', a notion that, as discussed, includes the topography of power relations.

Thus Hino's imperial gaze informs his writing about prewar Okinawa.<sup>13</sup> While formally part of the Japanese Empire, the Ryūkyū Islands are perceived - and represented - as an 'other' land, with the otherness being manifested in its natural features, local folklore, and feminine beauty, as discussed above. Also as discussed above, the region is described in tourist pamphlets as 'Peach Blossom Spring', a 'tropical' other that is commodified for the pleasure of mainland Japanese. The asymmetry of power is both implicit and explicit in *The Island*, with the female guide from Itoman serving as a counterpart and informant for the narrator; her husband, it turns out, was drafted into the Japanese Army and died in the war for the Empire. In *The Songstress*, this asymmetry is even more apparent. Over the course of a ten-day stay, the narrator is able to access and enjoy every feature of the Okinawan paradise: nature, culture, and, most obviously, sex. Okinawa lies spread before him for his personal pleasure, as epitomised by the courtesan Sato. While their relationship is depicted as a love affair, the attitude of the narrator makes clear that it is anything but. Thus, when it occurs to him that she could have a husband or children, the narrator decides that he is uninterested in the issue and does not want to know. Moreover, he soon starts to feel caged by this 'relationship', to see Sato as a 'witch' who is entrapping

**13** In making this assertion, I am following the lead of Kawamura Minato, who has used the term "imperial gaze" to describe the attitude that Hino adopted toward China and that led him to depict the 'other' in reductive terms (Kawamura et al. 2008, 125-6). Cultural studies scholars have long used similar terms, going back to Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) seminal and significantly titled *Imperial Eyes*. Here I prefer 'imperial gaze' to the more common (e.g. Hunt, Lessard 2002) "colonial gaze" because Okinawa has never been a colony of Japan but rather has represented the remote periphery of the Japanese Empire. Hino's attitude toward China naturally differed significantly from his attitude toward Okinawa (see Romagnoli 2016).

him, and he is more than relieved when he is eventually able to return to the mainland. The transactional nature of their relationship is further revealed when he offers her money, which she refuses, and then some material goods instead, which she accepts.

In addition, during the narrator's second visit with Sato, the asymmetrical power dynamic is further complicated by the presence of the military. The narrator is no longer a mere visitor; he is now also a soldier, a part of the force that has taken control of the island and seized the sites associated with its pleasures. Thus it is revealed that, besides her affair with the narrator, Sato is the favourite of a high officer, who contrives an excuse to visit her. The narrator thus finds himself trapped in a set of power relations that grant him some advantage but that on his final visit compel him to obey his superior and leave the island – and Sato.

Japan's military defeat and the US occupation of Okinawa changed the situation dramatically for Hino. As discussed, postwar Okinawa appeared to him no different from Japan, having been stripped of its otherness. However, while formally part of Japan, Okinawa was at this juncture under US control. The various characters in *The Torn Rope* seem to exemplify possible strategies for dealing with the oppressive nature of the American occupation: fighting it through dissent and protests, as Shingaki Seiji does; adapting to it, as Asako does by fraternizing with US soldiers and eventually marrying one; remaining passive despite the indignities of the situation, as Chinen Yoshio does; or succumbing to despair and committing suicide, as Shingaki Tsuru does.

None of these strategies is presented as particularly successful, and Hino's Okinawa seems destined to be exploited as it was in the past. Indeed, exploitation is a theme that recurs in nearly all of Hino's Okinawan writings, a consistent feature of the relationships between Okinawa and its 'others'. The island has alternately been exploited for its natural resources – such as in the case of the sugarcane industry that collapsed and drove the local population to endure 'sago-palm hell' – and made to serve the mainland tourism industry. So also Sato in *The Songstress* is exploited by the narrator, who, as has been seen, is depicted more concerned for the country than for her when he hears about the air raids in Naha. Because Okinawa is Japan's 'front door', it must sacrifice itself to protect the mainland from invasion. Even after the war, Okinawa and its peculiar culture are exploited by Hino's unscrupulous Japanese characters, who give no heed to the potentially disastrous effects of their behavior provided that they reap their revenues, a theme especially apparent in *The Dancer*. Moreover, the very presence of the US military on the island is a form of exploitation, one symbolised in Hino's writings in part by the requisition of farmland.

As Ikeda (2000) has observed, Hino was probably not fully cognizant of the exploitative attitudes displayed by his protagonists in

the Okinawan writings composed before 1954. While the causal relationship is quite clear in the case of US-controlled Okinawa, the occupiers having transformed it into an “island of brutal crimes”, the same does not hold true for Japanese-controlled Okinawa during wartime. In Hino's writings about this period, he does not elaborate on the complex dynamics of power and exploitation with the same clarity. Thus, for instance, he seems not to recognise that the situation in Naha depicted in *The Songstress* resembles that in Japanese-controlled Hangzhou in the third chapter of his war trilogy, *Flowers and Soldiers* (*Hana to heitai*, 1939); thus, to cite one obvious similarity, both narratives conclude with the narrator deserting a woman.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the themes of the asymmetry of power and of exploitation are central to Hino's imaginative geography of Okinawa.

## 6 Hino's stance

When examined diachronically, then, Hino's Okinawan writings reveal a fundamental shift in perspective. *The Island*, based on Hino's 1940 travel experiences, can be categorised as an *inshōki* or ‘record of impressions’, a popular genre of Japanese travel literature, a key feature of which is the assumption that the narrator is autodiegetic. There is no room for doubt that the narrator's voice is Hino's in *The Island*, *The Songstress*, and *The Sango Theater*. Written with the stylistic features of the *watakushi-shōsetsu*, these narratives include explicit references not only to Hino's past and present circumstances – such as the details of his previous visit of Okinawa in 1940, involvement in the Imphal campaign, and forced stop in Naha in 1944 – but also to his status as a renowned writer. Furthermore, in *The Songstress*, in describing the room in which he meets the courtesan, the narrator observes that “the frame hung in the *tokonoma* featured the image of a *kappa* that I had drawn for fun long time ago” (Hino 1958, 6: 260), an explicit reference to Hino's own fixation on these creatures of folklore. The narration of *The Tiger's Claw Flower*, by contrast, is first-person though not autodiegetic, in that the author-narrator tells the story of the Okinawan poet Zenpatsu and his wife Toshi.

In the works written from 1952 onwards, however – with the obvious exception of the two travelogues – Hino opted for third-person narration. *The Maiden from Yanbaru*, which features an autodiegetic narrator at the beginning, might seem another exception; this narrator, like Hino himself, tells about his travel to the Ryūkyū in February and about a visit to the northern Yanbaru region. However, the narration soon switches to third-person in the form of an inset nar-

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the novel *Flowers and Soldiers*, see Romagnoli 2016.

rative about two other characters. In *Unna Nabi* – which, again, is a rewriting of *The Maiden from Yanbaru* – the narration is third-person throughout.

Hino's shift from an autodiegetic to a homodiegetic and finally a heterodiegetic narrator can be seen as a move toward greater objectivity, an effort to distance his persona from the events being narrated. By making this shift, Hino rendered his criticism more persuasive. This strategy can be traced back to *The Dancer* but is more evident in the later *Unna Nabi* and *The Torn Rope*. The quasi-journalistic style of *The Torn Rope* in particular undergirds a stinging indictment of the US administration of Okinawa that is not explicitly connected to Hino's persona. Hino's decision to recast the novella as a drama represents a further step in the direction of objectivity, in that the narrative is now delivered solely in the voices of the characters.

## 7 Conclusions

My goal here has been to identify trends in Hino Ashihei's Okinawa writings, a considerable corpus of texts written over a period of sixteen years. In particular, I have sought to demonstrate that, in these works, Okinawa is not simply a setting but rather a complex representation that incorporates the author's gaze, his stance toward the region, and a topography of power. In making this argument, I have referred to the concept of 'imaginative geographies'. I have further suggested that Hino's geography of Okinawa evolved while retaining a few constant features.

Hino's complex representation of Okinawa, then, was based on a gaze that evolved over time to produce an array of at times contrasting images. Thus he invokes the region at various moments as a tropical paradise, as the shield of the nation, and as a symbol of its occupation. This Okinawa is effectively 'othered' and gendered as well, with Hino's female characters embodying local characteristics and their fates the fate of Okinawa itself. The dynamics of power play a key role in this representation, which, even as it evolved, consistently placed Okinawa in the weaker position. The narrator's stance, on the other hand, characterised at first by the strength and assertiveness of a first-person narrator, underwent a progressive disengagement that is typified by the third-person narration until the narrative voice disappeared entirely in the stage version of *The Torn Rope*. I read this evolution as an attempt by Hino to introduce greater objectivity into his narration.

It is not clear how Hino's geography of Okinawa would have evolved if given the chance. Elsewhere in the afterword to the sixth volume of his selected works, part of which was quoted above, he speaks of his desire to write a long novel set in Okinawa as proof of his genu-

ine interest in and affection for the region. In the few years between the editing of his selected works and his suicide, though, this project was never attempted.

Two key issues remain to be examined in this regard that are beyond the scope of the present study. The first is the position of Okinawa in Hino's oeuvre. I have mentioned the novel *Flowers and Soldiers*, but many other of Hino's novels and short stories also involve the othering and gendering gaze that marks the Okinawan writings.<sup>15</sup> The second issue is the position of Hino's Okinawa in the discourse on Okinawan literature; as mentioned, his Okinawa writings are not considered part of this literature because he was not native to the region. Nevertheless, these writings evince a deep understanding of the Ryukyuan archipelago and are perhaps valuable for the very fact that they are informed by a gaze that is not Okinawan. This being the case, the works discussed here may well merit comparison with those of native writers as a means to explicate interrelations between centre and periphery. In any case, it is hoped that the present study will prompt further discussion of such issues as otherness and gendering in the work of twentieth-century Japanese authors.

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**15** One example is *The Flower and the Dragon (Hana to ryū, 1952-53)*, which narrates the story of Hino's parents in Kitakyūshū from the mid-Meiji period to the Pacific War.

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# Beyond the Screen Terayama. Spectatorship. Intermediality

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**Abstract** Intermedial practices are a common trademark of the Japanese art world in the sixties and seventies. This article focuses on a case study of such practices, namely the relationship between artwork and audience in Terayama Shūji's cinema. Moving from the author's theatrical theories on spectatorship (*kankyakuron*), the paper applies those theories to Terayama's experimental movies, analysing how they are adapted to the cinematic medium. This study conceives a three-phased system, where the spectator is progressively brought towards the screen and his role changes from passive viewer to active agent. The study adopts an approach based on performance studies and avant-garde film theory to reveal how Terayama moulds the movie-going practice into a performative and collective event, using the movie theatre as a theatrical stage.

**Keywords** Japanese Cinema. Terayama Shūji. Spectatorship. Intermediality. Performance.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Oral Provocation of the Audience. – 3 Cinema as Performance. – 4 Active Cinema. – 5 Conclusions.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2019-02-13
Accepted	2019-04-01
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** De Angelis, Eugenio (2019). "Beyond the Screen. Terayama. Spectatorship. Intermediality". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 579-596.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/019

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## 1 Introduction

Terayama Shūji is a renowned figure in Japan for his versatile approach to media, since his artistic activity ranges from poetry to theatre, cinema, photography, literature, and several other fields. His intermedial approach clearly documents the cultural context in Japan in the sixties and seventies. In the theatrical and cinematographic work of Terayama, the relationships arising with spectators play an essential role in understanding both the playwright's experiments and his intermedial approach to the art.

In 1976 Terayama published his first collection of theatrical essays – *Meiro to shikai. Waga engeki* (The Labyrinth and the Dead Sea. My Theatre, 1976)<sup>1</sup> – and the first section is devoted to *kankyakuron*, or 'theory of the spectator', in which he explains the function that theatre should play, mainly according to how it is watched. However, for Terayama, it is an error to reason in terms of 'who watches' and 'who is watched', because: "[i]n any situation, we can only create half the work. The other half is made by the public" (Terayama 2009, 343-4). Spectators must not 'watch and learn' from the play; they must interact with it and live the theatre as an experience for creating so-called "encounters" (*deai*) that unleash dramaturgy (341).<sup>2</sup>

Terayama believed that, after Artaud's *Le théâtre et son double* (1938), the spectator seat could no longer be considered as a "safe area" (*anzen chitai*, Terayama 2009, 341). He put this concept into practice from the first international tour of his company Tenjō sajiki in 1969, during which the public was constantly challenged. The contact with that public – both verbally and physically – transmitted anxiety, fear and claustrophobia, causing real shocks. From that moment onwards, Terayama wrote works involving direct contact with the audience, sometimes by means of special divisions of the stage that limited spectators' view, requiring them to make substantial imaginative efforts. An even more radical strategy was to use the stalls as scenic space, as the stage is robbed of its authority. The whole theatre building becomes part of the play, challenging the properties of transparency and passivity usually associated with spectators. These forms of provocation – which Terayama later applied to the cinema – aimed at eliminating the 'artificial frontiers' between the theatre and reality:

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**1** In this work, the following version of the text is used: Terayama Shūji (2009). "Meiro to shikai. Waga engeki". *Terayama Shūji chosakushū*, 5: 331-97.

**2** The concept of *deai* was very popular in Japanese art after the Second World War, partly thanks to the work of the philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō in the thirties. cf. Sas 2011, 97-126.

When my actors do something outrageous - as part of the play - or if they get beaten up by the spectators, those frontiers are eliminated. I'm pleased by this. (Terayama in Khaznadar, Déak 1973, 50)

The ultimate development in Terayama's approaching strategies were his *shigaigeki* (street plays), where the author instilled the germ of the theatre into daily life, mixing reality and fiction in almost violent forms. Street plays exceeded the dynamics of traditional theatrical representation to become real-life *jiken* ('incident', but also 'event', cf. Senda 2002, 58),<sup>3</sup> sometimes causing true cases of disturbance of the public order. The most infamous of these experiments is *Nokku* (Knock, 1975), performed on April 19-20, 1975, in the streets of Tokyo. All the participants received a map, showing the places and timetables of various events, allowing everyone to create their own theatrical journey. The spectators thus became the co-creators of the 'play' and, at the same time, actors and explorers. Provoked to search for 'theatre' within the urban space, the public was asked to look at daily life with new eyes. Terayama's intention was to reveal true-life intrinsic theatricality and make the participants question themselves about the theatrical and the fictional elements inside reality.<sup>4</sup> *Nokku* thus defies the definition of 'theatre' in a narrow sense and makes it necessary to speak rather of an *event* capable of involving actors, spectators and unsuspecting passers-by in the creative process.

*Saraba eiga yo* (Farewell to movies!, 1968)<sup>5</sup> represents the perfect link between the concept of *performance* in this type of experiment and that which Terayama was later to develop in cinema. This one-act drama examines - on a theatrical stage - the relationship between spectators and the cinematographic screen. It also explains the author's vision according to which the stage/screen must become one single thing with the public. Of particular interest is the introduction of the concept of *dairinin* ('substitutes', Terayama also uses the English term 'stand-in'. Terayama 1968, 120), i.e. those figures that in everyday life perform an act in place of someone else. Producing clothes, preparing food and building a house are examples of how everything in human life is entrusted to the *dairinin*, to the point of realising that we too, in order to participate in social consent, *interpret* the substitute of someone else.

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<sup>3</sup> The word *jiken* is frequently used in Japanese to refer to some violent or criminal event, such as the infamous *Asama sansō jiken*, *Komatsugawa jiken*, *Yodogō jiken*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Senda, one of the original participants at the street play, recalls that he had confused a watchmaker's shop for one of these performances (2002, 57).

<sup>5</sup> There are two plays sharing the same title, the one analysed here is the first, called *Fan hen* (Fan Version), followed shortly afterwards by *Star hen* (Star version), which shows the mirror-image version and clarifies some points that were obscure in the preceding version.

As the stage has a large white screen on the backdrop that is used to “allow [the public] to perceive the absence of images” (116) and by means of many cinematographic references, the two actors begin to think of their lives as a film, in which each has a part to play. From this perspective, the white screen on the stage may be viewed as the ‘screen of life’, manifested as the stage on which the two people move as in a kind of daydream, until cinema and theatre become one. Not knowing one’s own role in this ‘movie’ is clearly linked to the theme of the loss of identity (“I am not me, I’m somebody’s stand-in”, 122) – both social and, in this case, sexual. Terayama deconstructs the identity of these personages, creating a world no longer containing protagonists, where everyone is the replacement of someone else. The public, asked to interpret a role and to create a ‘personal film’ from the play, can recompose their own identities through imagination. The involvement of the spectators is clarified in the finale, when a rugby ball is kicked into the stalls. It is as if there had been a reversal of roles, in which the actors on the stage watch what is happening beyond the ‘screen’, breaking the fourth wall (cf. 126). Terayama uses here, for the first time, a means – provokingly, a theatrical stage – to make the audience actively participate in a ‘film’, reflecting in a meta-theatrical way his idea of the ‘other half’ of the work created by its spectators.

## 2 Oral Provocation of the Audience

In an interview to Senda shortly before his premature death, Terayama said he had always been more interested in theatre than cinema, because cinema aims at reproducing reality, whereas theatre aims at its negation. The fact that theatrical experience is, perforce, limited in its representation of reality when compared with that of a film, constitutes a further point in its favour, since it becomes a creative challenge for the author. Furthermore, it requires the spectators to fill in these ‘blanks’ with their own imaginations, further enhanced by the feature of “uniqueness” (*ikkaisei*) of the theatre (cf. Senda 1983, 28). When it comes to cinema spectatorship, it should therefore come as no surprise that Terayama tried to re-elaborate those elements which make theatre ‘more interesting’, particularly in his short movies. In this article, I subdivide into three phases the process of attracting spectators to the screen, which starts from simple oral provocation to reach active participation by the public in creating the work itself.

The first phase appears in its most explicit form in the initial monologue of *Sho o suteyo machi e deyō* (Throw away your books, rally in the streets, 1971. From now onwards *Sho o suteyo*), in which the protagonist Eimei speaks directly to the public in a five-minute sequence

filmed without editing cut, in black and white on a neutral background. The scene is preceded by a completely black screen, lasting one minute, which Shimizu describes as “blackout cinema” (*teiden eiga*, Shimizu 2012, 270). The suggestion here is the same as that in *Saraba eiga yo*, i.e., from the darkness of the stalls one’s ‘private movie’ can begin, and it is not by chance that Eimei’s first words are:

What are you doing? If you just sit there waiting in the dark, nothing can begin! The screen is blank. The people who have come here [on this side of the screen] are tired of waiting, just like you. They ask each other: ‘Will it be something interesting?’ (Terayama 1987, 240)

Eimei immediately breaks the fourth wall and asks directly the spectators to avoid passive ideas about cinema, commonly perceived as mere ‘goods for consumption’. The black screen preceding his words serves the precise purpose of supplying that space necessary for the spectators’ fantasies to spur them to action and to imagine the infinite possibilities which might follow.

Eimei’s monologue, with its attack to film fictionality and incitement to action, recalls the last monologue of *Jashūmon* (Heretics, 1971). In this play, similarly, the actors take off their characters’ masks and talk as themselves directly to the audience. Terayama thus tries to unify art and reality, but in this phase the separation between creator and spectator is still clear-cut. Through the monologue, the spectators are fully aware of the spatiotemporal distance between the moment when the film is made and the moment when it is watched. Terayama still works at a purely verbal (and theatrical) level, attached to the world ‘inside the screen’ which continues to preserve its ‘sacredness’ and to exercise its ‘dictatorship’ over the public. However, it is interesting to notice that Eimei tries to interrupt the spectators’ passivity by inciting them to a ‘scandalous’ act linked to sexuality, as in Terayama’s tradition:

If you are thinking of something depraved in the obscurity of the cinema, don’t just sit there! Try stretching out your hand to the woman sitting next to you. Press her hand. Try caressing her knees. If you start with her skirt, if things go well, you will get as far as her panties. If things go badly, nobody knows your name. Nobody knows my name. (Terayama 1987, 240)

In his works, especially in theatre, Terayama questioned himself several times about the fine divide between reality and fiction in rela-

tion to the concept of ‘crime’.<sup>6</sup> Many ‘incidents’ caused by his performances, directly or indirectly, aimed at unveiling the ‘theatrical’ approach to crime in everyday life as a media event. Thus, masking a supposed *jiken* as part of art fictionality makes spectators dubious about the values on which society is based. However, in the case of *Sho o suteyo*, the division between screen and spectator obstructs this view, as incitement to ‘crime’ is indirect. Although the monologue (and, even more, the short movie *Rōra*, Laura, 1974) reveals criticism of the concept that watching experimental and underground movies constitutes a ‘deviant’ or even political act in itself, the separation between creation and presentation, although rejected by Terayama, is still clearly in evidence, making of *Sho o suteyo* the kind of film the monologue criticizes. Spectators are asked to act according to their reality without being able to act *on* the film, from either side of the screen. Even if unusual, the expedient used here by Terayama – verbal provocation by removal of the fourth wall – is a recurrent practice in cinema history, including earlier examples from Japan.<sup>7</sup>

However, Terayama also tried to reduce the distance from spectators with other actions. When the monologue reaches the words: “No-one knows your name. No-one knows my name”, Eimei compares the spectator’s anonymity with his own – to the extent that, after this sentence, he begins to describe some episodes from his own life, such as part-time jobs, simple meals and popular ways of passing the time. Those were common features of art-house films’ typical audience. The protagonist, then, approaches his public on the same level – that of an anonymous individual in the auditorium’s indeterminate mass. With this initial monologue, Terayama fit perfectly into the cultural and political context of the times; his incitement to action – although without explicit political intentions – attempted to bring the fictional world of cinema into contemporary reality, to be one with the spectator. This was how he mirrored a period in which students’ political demonstrations, events and performances involved their participants (cf. Ushida 2007, 181). Terayama found a way of allowing spectators to perceive the ‘participatory’ atmosphere of the times, in a film that represented an example of the closeness between art and reality typical of the early seventies. He achieved this feature identifying their common ground precisely in the cultural life of Shinjuku, where the movie is set and originally screened.

**6** See the chapter: “Hanzai ni okeru ‘kankyaku’ no kenkyū” [Research on the ‘spectator’ in the Crime] (Terayama 2009, 442-53).

**7** See, for example, *Subarashiki nichiyōbi* (One Wonderful Sunday, 1947) by Kurosawa Akira, filmed more than twenty years earlier. At the end of the film, the heroine, in tears, turns deliberately to the audience, breaking the fourth wall and begging them to encourage her desperate lover with applause. That is, she asks them to undertake an *action* that would give them the illusion of being able to influence what happens *on* the screen.

Eimei's sentence "No-one knows my name" also allows us to analyse another point of contact with spectators. It is in fact repeated several times in the monologue, which ends by emphasising this aspect:

on the walls of rest homes, on the blackboards of university classrooms where I have not been, on the walls of public baths, throughout the city I scrawl my alibi. Come on! Remember, I will only say it once: my name is... my name is... my name is... (Terayama 1987, 241-2)

The alibi is clearly Eimei's name, in which his entire life was inscribed, as demonstrated by presenting his family members by quoting the *koseki*, that is, the Japanese family register containing the names of all those who belong to it. Therefore, the name itself often contains - in Terayama's works - 'cursed' links of blood, from which it is impossible to escape and through which one is identified, or 'ticketed', as represented in his theatre play *Inugami* (Terayama 1969). One's name becomes the alibi for hiding one's own failures, but also the causes of the injustices and discriminations to which individuals may be subjected. The *koseki* - and thereby the name - also implies the social construction of the family institution, according to a similarly imposed model. This means that the fictional family unit created on the screen is not very different from the 'real' one. Terayama himself, speaking of the 'realism' of the family portrayed on the screen, says:

Rather than similarity, I would speak of reality. Because reality as such does not exist, right? Only similarity exists, isn't it? (Terayama 1987, 354)

Terayama reveals this mechanism through the film medium, convinced that reality is already itself 'theatralized' and fictitious, constructed according to predetermined conventions. They are exposed by the monologues that open and close *Sho o suteyo*: on one hand, the author declares that the movie is fiction and, on the other, that fictitiousness is also the 'fiction' of reality. The spectators understand that what they are watching is a film but, at the same time, it is also something existing in their own worlds, outside the cinema's doors. Thus, "[Terayama] both affirm and negate the continuity between the screen space and the space of the auditorium" (Furuhata 2013, 189).

Lastly, the fact that the last sentence of the monologue ("my name is...") remains suspended not only emphasises Eimei's anonymity, but it also reveals one of the central themes of the film and a recurrent one in early seventies Japan - marked by the youth movement's failure and the retreat of the *avantgarde* - i.e. the loss of identity. When

Eimei introduces the final monologue using his real name,<sup>8</sup> he affirms his own identity and consolidates the link with the extradiegetic world, although not all the doubts are dissolved:

The film finishes here, now it's my turn to speak. If you think about it, films only live in the darkness of a cinema theatre, because if you turn the lights on the movie vanishes. In the film, I dream about a man-powered aeroplane. When I finished filming and went back to my four and a half *tatami* room to sleep, I ended up dreaming about the same plane. I gradually became unable to distinguish the 'inside' from the 'outside' of the film. (Terayama 1987, 312)

Terayama has made these two realities (or 'fictions', as he would have probably said) indistinguishable from each other, so that the end of Eimei's internal conflict could not take place with a final epiphany, but rather with the addition of further doubts, or other layers of reality. Among these, the dimension of the distance from his spectators is one of the most relevant, and we may say that in this first phase, exemplified by *Sho o suteyo*, a 'nearness' has been achieved, but on a purely theoretical level.<sup>9</sup>

### 3 Cinema as Performance

The second phase is characterised by a more active approach towards the film, intended as the material element forming the movie itself, through experiments both on and outside the screen. In this phase, Terayama discards 'orthodox' cinematic techniques, to focus on all the 'illusions' that can be created with images projected on a screen, or with the projector itself.

The final scene of *Den'en ni shisu* (Pastoral Hide and Seek, 1974), which "encapsulates the spirit of the sixties avant-garde filmmaking" (Furuhata 2013, 190), clarifies the transformation of the act of filming into a performance inserted in the daily lives of its spectators. In the last part, the walls of the house/set collapse, taking the specta-

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<sup>8</sup> The actor Sasaki Eimei plays in the movie a fictionalised version of himself, called Kitamura Eimei, sharing with the real-life actor several biographical traits. In the opening monologue, it is not clear if Eimei is speaking for himself or for his character. The script does not clarify this ambiguity, since it is simply referred as "Me" (*watashi*).

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted, however, that Ridgely seems to reach opposite conclusions (2010, 131): "Rather than the audience suspending their disbelief and allowing the fictional characters on-screen to become real, Eimei emphasized the way that process operates on the production side of a film as well - that is, of actors beginning to lose track of themselves as they transform into the characters they perform".



tor from a fictional Aomori to real-life Shinjuku, where movie characters, Tenjō sajiki's actors and ordinary people appear.

The *performance* of this last scene thus involves its spectators, comparing the co-presence of reality and fiction and the existence of various temporalities. The theatricality of the sequence is also emphasised by the fact that, once the walls of the set have fallen, what remains is a sort of raised theatre stage, higher than ground level, on which two people are eating, ignoring the surrounding environment. Inside the reality of Shinjuku – but outside the ‘stage’ – all the fictional characters of the film congregate, walking backwards and forwards, behind and around the platform, gazing with curiosity, waving or pointing to the camera, and then moving away into the city streets. At the same time, ordinary people are incorporated in the creative process, when they cross the stage they become spectators without knowing it. There are people who stop to watch, making gestures towards the camera; others do not even raise their heads, as if this invasion of daily life were denied, rather like what happened during the street play *Nokku*.

Although the concept of cinema as *performance* is used in *Den'en ni shisu* in a similar way to other films of the same years (cf. De Angelis 2018, 91-5), Terayama takes this aspect to extreme consequences in his short movies. It was in this phase that he composed those works that act directly inside the reality of the public, transforming the film into a proper performance, because:

Terayama's screen experiments positioned their focus onto the essential qualities of the medium, only to render it malleable by displacing its properties within a different medial context, a collision of performance and cinema that dissolves the boundaries between them. (Ross 2015, 262)

Many of his shorts, mainly those filmed between 1974 and 1977, were experiments containing several dimensions inside the projection space. In this regard, they are closer to the ‘expanded cinema’ of contemporary filmmakers such as Iimura Takehiko and Jōnouchi Motoharu, than narrative cinema. In these works, Terayama explored the performative possibilities of projection, constantly examining the properties of the depth of field, often by overlapping several ‘layers of reality’, interacting with the images on the screen and inserting the projector within the creative process. For Terayama, the place in which a film is made (the set) and the place where it is ‘consumed’ (the viewers’ seats) are not to be considered as two separate, non-communicating spaces: on the contrary, they must both become creative places. From this viewpoint, the projectionist is particularly relevant, since he can modify the experience of the projection by shifting the focus, accelerating or slowing the film, changing the volume, etc.

*Chōfukuki* (also known by its international title *16 ± 1*, 1974) was the first short feature made by Terayama's production company, Jinriki hikōkisha, and was to inaugurate experiments with and on the screen which Terayama defined as "obstructed cinema" (*saegirareta eiga*, Terayama 1983, 213). In these works:

Terayama incorporated attributes of performance he transcribed through his experiences in theatre. For his short features, Terayama often investigated the surface of the screen by assimilating projection into his shooting process. Moreover, the act of projection in front of an audience was considered an opportunity for him. (Ross 2015, 259)

*Chōfukuki*, like many of his shorts, shows the lack of a linear narrative structure, and thus facilitates the definition of these works as "traduzione in immagini più diretta delle sue poesie" (Novielli 1994, 165). Furthermore, in the case of *Chōfukuki*, this must be understood literally, as it originated from one of the author's *haiku*, further enriching the intermedial discourse about it.<sup>10</sup> Terayama presents "the psychoanalysis of a memory" (Asai 1981, 5) of a boy who kills a butterfly and hides it inside a bandage over one of his eyes, so that he can then go and spy on his mother. What he sees are a series of perverse little tableaux, usually associated with the combination 'sex and food', in which Terayama's classic 'freaks' appear, such as prostitutes, body-builders, and ventriloquists.

The author understands *Chōfukuki* as "an attempt to 'obstruct' by putting something in the space between the projector and the screen" (Asai 1981, 5). And quite quickly we see a series of human figures in front of the movie images, so that the spectator can only see silhouettes, which literally obstruct the view of the 'original' images and voices that overlap and substitute the audio of the boy's story. The public's attention shifts between the 'stage' and the screen, two worlds linked by the presence of the butterfly, which obstructs the boy's sight and, at the same time, is present as a large shadow in its more 'external' dimension. A parallel is thus created between the boy's visual field and that of the spectator, to favour their identification and to produce at the same time cognitive distancing from the 'primary' images. The fictionality of the latter is shown by the use of kaleidoscopic filters - the same used in the scenes devoted to the circus in *Den'en ni shisu* - extreme camera angles and, above all, by the presence of the butterfly-shaped shadow. This is a deliberate effect that Terayama wanted to create and that is very similar

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<sup>10</sup> "Hidden in the eyepatch | the dead butterfly, | [he] crosses mountains and seas" (Terayama 2008, 72).

to the dynamics between projector and screen, and between eye pupil and bandage. These last two elements form “the smallest film in the world” (Asai 1981, 5), in which the presence of the butterfly creates light and shadows from the images themselves.

In the instructions for projecting the short film – as, for example, its screening at Cannes – Terayama added a third dimension to the work, asking the projector operator to wave something (he ironically proposes a butterfly net) in front of the light from the projector, in order to create another shadow, another ‘layer of reality’ (cf. Nakajima 1993, 128). The possibility of creating new effects with every projection gave rise to a series of different experiences, thus making the screening an *event* that defies medium reproducibility and the fixedness of images. The existence of these three dimensions (the images on the screen, the human silhouettes, and the public), presented so as to create confusion, gave rise to an effect similar to a concentric structure, also typical of the experimental theatre of the times (cf. Goodman 2003, 287-9). The anti-naturalistic style of the images on the screen accentuates the fictionality of the work, while the silhouettes in front of it increasingly acquire ‘materiality’. In this way, the distinction between the diegetic and the extra-diegetic collapses, becoming undefinable, and everything is sent back into the performative space of the cinema theatre, in which the spectators too are called upon to take part. They are taken *inside* the second dimension of the short, if we consider the people moving before the ‘primary’ images as fellow ‘spectators’. The space in front of the ‘screen within the screen’ thus becomes the place where the action takes place, now functioning as a stage. Terayama here adapts to the cinema medium the dynamic already examined in *Saraba eiga yo*, in which both stage and screen become a single entity. In *Chōfukuki*, the performance takes place not only inside the movie, as in *Den'en ni shisu*, but also outside it, in the place and in the time of the audience. Terayama was now very close to creating his cinematographic ‘encounter’ with the spectators.

#### 4 Active Cinema

In the third phase, Terayama succeeded in making spectators interact with what had, until then, been considered as “sacred inviolable space” (*kinjirareta seiiki*, Asai 1981, 6), the screen. In a development that also included the projection space in the creative process, he was able to elevate the audience to the role of active co-author. The film thus is no longer an “object which is reproduced” (*fukuseika sareta bukken*), but it becomes “an event which cannot be repeated” (*hanpuku funōna jiken*, Hirose 2005, 176).

Although a connoisseur of both American and European experimental cinema, Terayama did not limit himself to imitating pre-ex-

isting models, but found expressive modalities to be applied to his theories on theatre, actors and spectatorship, with the aim of dismantling the methods of traditional projection. As we have seen, the projection space and the screen were, for Terayama, sources of infinite possibilities:

The distance existing between the projector and the screen is a creative space [...] there too, one can add various creative gestures. If that space is used, the public can become part of the film. (Terayama 1983, 213)

The projection space thus becomes performative, while the screen is violated, modified, multiplied, until its confines disappear.

The most important example of the so-called “participated movies” (*kankyaku sanko no eiga*, Terayama 1983, 214) is *Shinpan* (The Trial, 1975, also known as *Der Prozess*)<sup>11</sup> which brings actors and public to act together *on the screen*. *Shinpan* was defined as “the nail film” (*kugi no eiga*, Asai 1981, 9) – and could have been nothing else, as nails are present in every scene. They appear in a series of narratively unconnected scenes in which the actors perform repetitive movements with small variations. Shimizu compares this pattern with the production process of anime and manga, where every drawing differs from the next one in an almost indiscernible way (cf. Shimizu 2012, 275). The above actions are always related to the theme of nails, which change shape, function and size scene by scene. However, they are never represented as simple objects, but gradually become metonyms for language, weapons, sexual organs and, in the end, human passions (cf. Terayama 1983, 213). As Hirose duly noted (2005, 180), every time a nail is hammered into something, its tip seems to be directed towards the relative object of desire. The only recurring image throughout *Shinpan* is that of a naked man staggering along carrying a gigantic nail on his back, which strongly recalls the cross of the Passion of Christ. The nails progressively invade and fill the images, obstructing them, until the penultimate diegetic scene, when a man in uniform – i.e. representing Authority – begins to pull them out violently from a big white wall. After the last appearance of the man with the cross/nail, the screen becomes completely blank, while the score by J.A. Seazer continues in the background.

During the following nine minutes, the spectators are asked to knock nails into the screen – an action enabled by the fact that the

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**11** This is a clear-cut reference to Kafka’s novel of the same name, although the link has never been described in details. However, *Shinpan* is also the title of one of Terayama’s *shokan engeki* (epistolary theatre), in which a person receives a letter listing several actions he must perform the following day. The two works are thus similar in that they urge the ‘spectator’ to act himself.

screen itself is made of a white-painted plywood, in front of which a basket of nails and hammers has been left (see the projection notes in Nakajima 1993, 130). After this short period of time, “the screen becomes a wall of nails and [the short film] ends” (Asai 1981, 9), while the ending credits start rolling. The public is then asked to act on the screen *while it is being projected*. Consequently, the ‘active’ part (doing) and the ‘passive’ part (watching) of *Shinpan* are made similar by the same action, understood in both cases as ‘interfering’ with the images, and thus linking the dimension of the screen with that outside. However, if the diegetic personages are characterised by their ever-repetitive movements, the overall work becomes “a unique and unrepeatable ‘event’” (Hirose 2005, 175), because the spectators change with every performance, and the quantities of nails and the patterns in which they are fixed also change, so that the projection “hides the possibility of expanding in a subtly different manner” (Shimizu 2013, 214).

One of the main differences in distinguishing a theatrical experience from a cinematographic one is the distance from the spectators. In the former, contact is more direct and the exchange is almost alive; while cinema inexorably interposes a barrier called ‘screen’ separating these two worlds. Terayama worked on his experiments with feature-length and short films, in an attempt to reduce this barrier by making creator and spectator meet, while those categories become increasingly less well-defined. The author ‘betrays’ or, rather, subverts the spectator’s expectations, and makes interaction with the screen possible. *Shinpan* thus appears as the most direct cinematographic adaptation of the concept of *hanengeki* (“Half/Anti-theatre”; Senda in Terayama 1991, 38).<sup>12</sup> According to it, an artwork must be carried out half by the author and half by the public, stimulating the latter’s imagination and making them take part in the creative process, as it happens in Terayama’s plays. In *Shinpan*, spectators do not only fulfil this function, but their presence becomes necessary in order to “preserve the film” (Terayama 1983, 214), which is disappearing because of the repressive action of Authority, which acts to eliminate the nails from the wall and make the screen totally blank.<sup>13</sup> If nails represent the expression of human passions in the diegetic world, then the action of the spectators must equally be considered

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<sup>12</sup> Senda uses both the *kanji* of ‘half’ and that of ‘anti’ (they have the same reading in this case) and may thus be interpreted either as ‘half theatre’, presuming that the other half is created by the spectator, and as ‘anti-theatre’, in the sense of refusal of the theatre building and traditional play writing.

<sup>13</sup> However Kishida, one of Terayama’s closest collaborator in the later stage of his career, provides a very different interpretation to Authority’s action, seeing it as an analogy of immortality, in which the extracted nails are those of a coffin, to allow the resurrection of the dead (cf. Asai 1981, 9).

as the manifestation of their desire for the screen and, therefore, for cinema (cf. Hirose 2005, 181). In this way, the parallel between the public's action and that of the characters gives rise to a new spectatorship and a new relationship between screen and spectator, so that every nail tangibly represents the imprint left by the viewer's gaze.

This new relationship distinguishes Terayama's experiments from the 'expanded cinema' of the period, because the resulting screening experience is individual for each spectator. In Japan, for instance, works like those of Iimura and Jōnouchi mainly focused on manipulation of film material or on the body of the filmmaker-performer acting as a screen. Although these authors challenged the logics of the filmic apparatus in order to take the medium out of its conventional confines, they did not succeed (or were not interested) in creating a direct 'encounter' with the audience. At the same time, experimental cinema in the rest of the world around the late sixties - particularly in Europe and in the United States - appears to aim mainly at exploring the very process of projection, its relationships with the images and their political value, once 'imposed' on a public regarded as a passive entity. However, these expanded cinema experiments "only demonstrate the structural possibilities of film rather than actually provide new situations themselves" (Müller 1994, 226 fn. 14).

Instead, in *Shinpan*, a new possibility is proposed: each spectator can actively contribute towards making the film. Terayama's short movies combine technical experimentation with artistic expression, transforming themselves from static objects of passive contemplation to *events*, in which the spectators' gaze is incorporated in the creative process. In this way, Terayama's artwork allows human desire to *inter-act* with the images, finding its own expressive modality in the end. This reconfiguration of spectatorship, although shocking at the time, is even more so nowadays. Following the advent of digital consumption - in the cinema theatre and at home - the materiality that distinguished the cinema until the end of the last century has been lost, in favour of the immaterial and the virtual. Thus *Shinpan's* urgency is still greater today, within the idea of recovering one's relationship with the cinematographic apparatus, understood in its more physical and fundamental sense.

In *Shinpan*, the action of hitting nails challenges the boundaries of the original medium and makes them tangible, involving the public in an *individual* creative process. Terayama himself stressed that "the main personage of this work is the spectator's imagination" (Terayama in Hirose 2005, 182). The nailing action thus represents the manifestation of the audience desire for the screen, facilitating the passage from the spectators' seats to the space of the stage/screen. The above mentioned dynamic clarifies the intermedial system of Terayama who, with a common, often repeated action, achieved the 'encounter' with his spectators, investing them with personal power,

able to subvert pre-established roles and to reach an original form of co-authorship. If this could be more easily achieved within theatre, thanks to the co-presence of actors and spectators in the same dimension, his cinematographic experiments would:

contribute to the disintegration of demarcated borderlines between different media and provide further complications for attempts at marking classifications for intermedial phenomena. (Ross 2015, 259)

*Shinpan* is indeed a movie that cannot be shown in the absence of certain conditions, as watching it on a television or on a laptop would result in an incomplete experience. The possibilities of its existence need radical rethinking about both the projection space – which becomes performative – and the function of the screen, destitute of its authority as a sacred and impenetrable apparatus.

## 5 Conclusions

Spectatorship has always been a major field of interest to Terayama since his early theatrical works, in which he progressively created plays stimulating the imagination of the audience in order to achieve an ‘encounter’ and distancing the spectator from his ‘safe area’. In the production notes of *Aru kazoku no chi no kigen* (The Origin of the Blood of a Certain Family, 1973) Terayama states:

The spectators at this play should be thought of as participants at a party. They should move about freely during the performance and should search for the play by themselves (Terayama, Ōshima 1973, 51)

The international subtitle of this work – *A Way to Plan Dreams* – clarifies Terayama’s views about spectators to an even greater extent. They are ‘visitors’ of the theatrical performance and the author’s role is to allow them to create their own theatrical journey, deliberately to dream. Terayama’s *shigaigeki* frees this idea from the boundaries of the theatre building and takes it down to the city streets, where he achieves the theatricalization of reality and spectators lose their intrinsic properties.

Although Terayama is certainly the *angura* author who, more than any other, challenged medium boundaries, it is true that his approach is grounded on the more general context of Japan’s artistic *avant-garde* during the sixties. Even in cinema, the ultimate reproducible medium, figures such as Matsumoto Toshio and the experimental group VAN mixed filming with art, performances and various modes of projection. Thus, they may be considered as forerunners

leading to Terayama's experimentations. These experiences also testify to the 'intermedial atmosphere' that characterised Japanese cinema between the Sixties and the Seventies. Therefore, when Terayama adapted his *kankyakuron* to cinema, the following concept was already clear:

The seemingly material constraints of the filmic medium are not actually capable of restricting expression in the ways they first appear. In fact, the opposite may in fact be true: by establishing an assumption like the screen's impenetrability, the materiality of cinema creates fictional potential using those expectations. (Ridgely 2010, 120)

In the first phase of his approach to the screen, Terayama tries to bring movies into the audience's dimension through proper cinematographic strategies, like breaking the fourth wall. However, the structure of the monologues of *Sho o suteyo* is still properly theatrical, and Terayama's attempt merely results in a verbal confrontation. In the second phase, the cinema theatre is used as a performative space and the spectator - although not physically involved - becomes part of the creative process, which does not end with the shooting, but continues during the projection. Therefore, this phase is marked by experiments on and off the screen, and creative use of projector effects and the space between screen and spectator. In the last phase, audience's participation is active as was the case for his 'theatrical' *shigaigeki*, thus fulfilling within the cinema medium Terayama's theory of works created half by the author and half by the public. Spectators are no longer exclusively 'viewers', but their role overlaps with the creator's and screen boundaries become fluid to include theatre's 'uniqueness' in the cinema space. The movie is transformed from an object of passive contemplation into a non-repeatable event, which requests audience performativity.



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# Politics, Porn and Parody in *Koi suru genpatsu* (2011) by Takahashi Gen'ichirō

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**Abstract** This paper seeks to show how Takahashi Gen'ichirō exploits parody to show the critical function of self-reflexive literature in the novel *Koisuru genpatsu*. Coherently with his experience as a political activist in the sixties, Takahashi interprets literature as a revolutionary act of resistance; it can be argued that he broadly embraces the conception of art – ideally inherited by Marcuse's aesthetic – as a space for thought and action that makes resistance to the social *status quo* possible. Through the analysis of significant elements of the novel's peritexts and epitexts, this article tries to reconstruct the web of signifiers that constructs the novel, in order to show how – in Takahashi's concept of literature – every act of speech needs to be placed in a social structure, where the agency of discursive subjects always modifies the signifying process.

**Keywords** Takahashi Gen'ichirō. 3/11 Literature. Contemporary Japanese Literature. Parody.

**Sommario** 1 Introduction. – 2 Thresholds of Interpretation. – 3 Through the Looking-Glass. – 4 Conclusion.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2019-03-01
Accepted	2019-04-01
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Mazza, Caterina (2019). "Politics, Porn and Parody in *Koi suru genpatsu* (2011) by Takahashi Gen'ichirō". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 597-614.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/020

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The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who established it) to *define* what is *real*

(Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension. Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, 1978).

## 1 Introduction

This paper is focused on the novel *Koi Suru Genpatsu* (A Hot Nuclear Reactor) by Takahashi Gen'ichirō (b. 1951), which was first published in the November issue of the literary review *Gunzō* a few months after the Triple Disaster in Tohoku: the earthquake, tsunami, and melt down of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, which struck the eastern part of Japan on 11 March 2011. The nuclear accident turned a natural disaster into an environmental and political catastrophe. In the aftermath of this tragic sequence of events, both the government and the mass media contributed to the construction of a 'normalising' narrative of recovery based on the idea of 'national bonding' (絆 *kizuna* is a 'rediscovered' term that has been extensively employed in the official discourse often in connection with stereotyped concepts of community, nature, and Japanese identity (see DiNitto 2014; Slater et al. 2012; Tokita 2015). As pointed out by Rachel DiNitto (2014), this narrative relies on traditional stereotypes of the character of the Japanese people. It explains that the Japanese people will endure hardship (*gaman suru*) as they have in the past, and the disaster tells a story of communal suffering on the national level and removes questions of blame from the politically fraught context. This national narrative also avoids the difficulty of talking about or directly confronting the actual destruction itself. It moves away from the site of danger and distress to a distant, yet comfortable and familiar narrative of recovery (DiNitto 2014, 344).

The cultural response to the catastrophe was immediate and heterogeneous, which was consistent with the national narratives of recovery and collective healing, thereby contributing through the discursive reworking of the individual's experience of suffering to the construction of a collective trauma. Nevertheless, in the multifaceted corpus of works that has been variously labelled 'post-3/11', and 'Fukushima/*daishinsai* (Great Disaster)' literature, some authors have created "radical counter-narratives to trauma" (Flores 2017, 141). Takahashi's intention, as displayed in *Koi Suru Genpatsu*, undoubtedly is in that direction because this work can be read as a coherent example of his general approach to literature, which he uses as a powerful instrument to provide "a model of resistance in the discursive condition" (Yamada 2011, 13). Takahashi voices his unconventional perspective on the national aftershock of the disaster, displacing it from the silence imposed by the trauma to an uncomfortable zone of

collective mourning. I will argue that the continuous displacement of meaning aimed at showing the limitations of imposed discourse, is one of the *topoi* of Takahashi's writing.

In the table of contents of *Gunzō*, *Koi Suru Genpatsu* is summarised as follows:

大震災チャリティーAVを作るために奮闘する男たちの愛と冒険と魂の物語

*Daishinsai charity AV o tsukuru tame ni funtō suru otokotachi no ai to bōken to tamashii no monogatari.*

A tale about the love, the adventures, and the spirit of a group of men who struggle to produce **a charity adult movie** for the victims of the Great Disaster.<sup>1</sup> [Emphasis added]

This is not the first time in the literary career of Takahashi that he chose the provocative and destabilizing association of 'porn' with 'charity'. In *Gunzō* (October 2002 to August 2004), he had previously published a series of texts based on the same theme, which was titled, *Meikingu Obu Dōji Tahatsu Ero* (Synchronised Erotic Attacks: The Making Of), a deliberate pun on the term used to describe the September 11 terrorist attacks on the US (*dōji tahatsu tero*). This deliberately outrageous approach and the recourse to explicit material echo the dissident attitude of avant-garde Japanese filmmakers, who in the sixties created a counter cinema in a moment of great political ferment. It is known that Takahashi took part in the student protests in those years and that this activist experience had a tremendous effect on his artistic production, which began after a ten-year period of aphasia following a ten-month prison term for civil disobedience. Even if a temporal *caesura* existed between his political activism in the late sixties and the beginning of his literary activity in the early eighties, it is undeniable that the two periods are connected; to put it in Herbert Marcuse's terms, all Takahashi's literary career can be seen as a meditated consequence of the 'Great Refusal' to the 'one-dimensional thinking' imposed by the violence of political language and more generally by all forms of authorities.<sup>2</sup> Since the publication of his first novels and essays, Takahashi has shown that a clear path

<sup>1</sup> All translations are made by the Author unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> The influence of the Frankfurt School on Japanese counterculture movements in the sixties is historically evidenced by the significant number of translations of its members' works during those years. Beginning in the late fifties, critical theory penetrated Japan through the speculations of Marcuse, Fromm, Benjamin, Habermas, and Horkheimer (For an accurate and meditated reconstruction, see Lucken 2017). Even if I do not claim here a direct and exclusive influence of Marcuse's thought on Takahashi's conceptualization of the role of literature in contemporary society, I think we can deduce from his

runs through all his works. According to Marc Yamada, his literary engagement is “an incessant attempt to renew political and literary sign systems as a means of resisting the limitations imposed by the state, the media, and literary criticism” (Yamada 2011, 2). Resorting to pornography proved to be a very effective way for Takahashi to examine the socially internalised, repressive discourse from the inside out. Since the late nineties, he has used adult videos “to thematize the liberation of meaning from conventional reading patterns” (20) in several fictional and non-fictional works.<sup>3</sup>

Takahashi has consistently shown his intolerance of the coercion of imposed discourse whether it is social convention or literary interpretation. His works are highly metafictional and often openly parodic, as in *Koi Suru Genpatsu*. According to Linda Hutcheon,

postmodern parody is deconstructively critical and constructively creative, paradoxically making us aware of both the limits and the powers of representation. (Hutcheon 1989, 98)

In this paper, I will demonstrate that Takahashi exploits parody to show the critical function of self-reflexive literature, thus raising a politically incorrect voice against the supremacy of the ‘unspoken’ in Japanese society. Takahashi’s novel is a prime example of the author’s wider literary project, which is to go beyond what he perceives as the limitations imposed by politics and the media. His aim is to undermine the overwhelming power of the violent rhetoric in the political discourse, which imposes a univocal interpretation of reality. Consistent with his experience as a political activist, Takahashi views literature as a revolutionary act of resistance, which in Marcuse’s aesthetic is expressed as a space for thought and action to resist the social *status quo* as much as possible.

## 2 Thresholds of Interpretation

Takahashi’s fictional works are explorations of the superimposed meanings of imposed significations. They can be seen as self-referential worlds that openly show their discursive construction by subordinating plot and character development to the supremacy of lan-

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novels and essays that he views art as a revolutionary form of resistance, which is the legacy inherited from critical theory’s approach to aesthetics.

**3** In addition to the already mentioned serialization of *Meikingu Obu Dōji Tahatsu Ero* (*Gunzō*, 2002-04), Takahashi published a novel about the AV world (*Adaruto*, Adult Videos, Shūeisha, 1999) as well as essays (“Ai no gakkō - AV o yomu”, School of Love: Reading Adult Videos, in Takahashi 2001a; “Poruno shōsetsu no tadashii kakikata”, The Correct Way to Write a Porn Novel, in Takahashi 2001b).

guage. *Koi Suru Genpatsu* is not an exception. From the thresholds of the text, the reader is projected into a dialectical world that has no connection with factual reality even if the context appears to be self-evident. His words relate to the hidden truth not of a pre-existing reality but of the way words are used to construct the conventions of signification that shape everyday life. I will quote some parts from the incipit of the novel to give examples of Takahashi's ability to release the disruptive potential of language.

不謹慎すぎます。関係者の処罰を望みます。

This goes beyond impudence! I hope there will be punishment for those involved. (Takahashi 2011b, 6)

This is the second quotation that Takahashi Gen'ichirō places at the beginning of the novel. This comment refers to the contents of the novel, and it is ascribed to the anonymous author of 'letter from a reader' (*tōsho*). The first opening quotation, which is as false as the second, is as follows:

すべての死者に捧げる... という言い方はあまりに安易すぎる。

I dedicate this book to all those who passed away... What a shallow way to say things! (6)

This line is supposed to have been taken from the imaginary 'Collection of Quotes from the Internet' (*Intānetto jō no meigen shū*). The dialogue between a hesitant author and an indignant reader is completed by the voice of Ishikawa, the protagonist of the novel, a character we will soon learn to recognise in the following pages because of his very colloquial tone. Ishikawa directs his harsh disclaimer to the reader:

いうまでもないことだが、これは完全なフィクションである。もし、一部分であれ、現実 に似ているとしても、それは偶然にすぎない。そもそも、ここに書かれていることが、ほんの僅かでも、現実 に起こりうると思ったとしたら、そりゃ、あんたの頭がおかしいからだ。

こんな狂った世界があるわけないじゃにあか。すぐに、精神科に行け! いま、すぐ! それがおれにできる、唯一のアドバイスだ。じゃあ、後で。

It goes without saying that this is a work of **complete fiction** (*kanzen na fikushon*). Even if some parts of it resemble reality, that's just a **coincidence** (*guuzen*). If you ever entertain the idea that there may be a slight chance of something written in this book happening in real life, that's simply because **you're barking mad** (*anta no atama ga okashii kara da*). How can such a **cra-**

**zy world** (*kurutta sekai*) exist! Go see a psychiatrist! Right now! That's **the only** piece of advice I can give you. See ya'. (7; emphasis in the original)

Contrary to the reader's first thought, the *kurutta sekai* we are drawn into is not actually the one in which an AV director wants to support a charity for the victims of a national tragedy by filming orgies and onanistic acts. The 'crazy world' Ishikawa hint at is one in which speaking about nuclear danger is taboo despite the evidence of a historical catastrophe. The discursive world created in *Koi Suru Genpatsu* is a noisy counterpoint (i.e. a *parody* in its etymological meaning) to the silence imposed on all other minority opinions by the predominant rhetoric of 'correctness'.<sup>4</sup> What is obscene – suggests Takahashi via Ishikawa's extraordinary venture – is not the naked body exposed in a porn movie. Instead, what is really outrageous is the fact that Japanese media choose to conceal the debris and the corpses in the aftermath of the catastrophe. Moral judgment is suspended because a crucial ethical question is at stake: what can be done to expose and overcome the withering away of critical thinking in Japanese contemporary society?

In this context, *warai* (laughter), with its empowering, liberating effect, has a central role. Included in the short summary of the novel presented in the table of contents of the *Gunzō* issue, the word also appears as another significant paratextual element in the promotional blurb<sup>5</sup> of the paperback edition of the subsequently published novel:

この世界の非情を前に無力を人間ができるのは、唯一、笑うことだ。

All that powerless human beings can do to face this cruel world is just one thing: to laugh. (Takahashi 2011b, cover)

This reference to laughing as a quintessential human activity can be considered an unsolicited moral defence, or, acceding to a *second degré*, a subtle *clin d'oeil* to Rabelais's reference to Aristoteles ("le

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<sup>4</sup> Takahashi was very active on this matter immediately after 3/11, especially through his Twitter account. The inherent violence of political language that tries to cover up dissent imposing a zealous call for 'correct behaviours and correct thoughts', such as 'solidarity' and 'hope', is the theme of several tweets that were later collected in a volume, *Ano hi kara boku ga kangaete iru 'tadashisa' ni tsuite* (What I've Been Thinking About 'Correctness' Since 'that Day') (see Takahashi 2012a).

<sup>5</sup> The *obi* is interesting even in its graphics. The most visible element is blue writing in a "hippie-inspired" font, reading "*sutei kurêji*" (ステイ・クレージー, stay crazy). The unlikely fundamental theme of the novel is then associated (by the publisher?) with a clear cultural frame: the one in which 'Power to the imagination!' was the keynote.



rire est le propre de l'homme"). Laughing in the face of tragedy is only possible in a Carnavalesque suspension of moral judgment; carnival's overturning allows the writer to show – and all of us to see – that the king is naked.

According to Philippe Lejeune, the paratext is “a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text” (cited in Genette [1987] 1997, 2). In my opinion, the paratextual elements, starting from the ambiguous title, reveal the entirety of the work from both the point of view of the contents and the linguistic choices made by Takahashi. We find at the threshold of the text some keywords and themes that are crucial in the interpretation of the novel, which can be read as a salient example of the anti-novelistic approach to plot construction (or rather de-construction, as we will see later) and language usage (or abuse), which are central to Takahashi's writing and his interpretation of literature. *Fukinshin* (impudence) is one of these keywords. Moving from peritext to epitext, it is interesting to note that the Japanese journalist who interviewed Takahashi in 2011 called the book a “fukinshin no katamari no youna shōsetsu” (cluster of impudence) and “an impudence that openly chooses to **ignore the self-control mood** of the Japanese society (*seken no jishuku mūdo*)” (Takahashi 2011c; emphasis added). Strictly related to this and obviously interrelated, *charity AV* and *shobatsu* (punishment and moral condemnation) are two other relevant keywords. As previously discussed, *warai* is the keyword that allows us to enter Takahashi's literary world in general and to understand his perspective on some of the urgent post-Fukushima questions in particular. Is it possible to take a stance against the violence of political language and show its implications through a completely unusual and ‘impudent’ point of view? What is the place of literature in such a socially fragmented context?

This fragmentation is reflected in the scattered elements that constitute the narration in which several micro-stories are related to different topics and moments of Japanese history. Nevertheless, the reference in the opening of the novel to the role of voices on the Internet and the social climate they contributed to creating after the triple disaster in Tohoku suggest that the importance of the debate in the social media is an underlying subtext that runs through the work. Another one that clearly emerges from the peritextual elements that I have discussed is the use of politically incorrect language to fight “the power of ideology to shape the perception of identity and meaning” (Yamada 2011, 3).

### 3 Through the Looking-Glass

In moving from the threshold of the novel, it is convenient to give some elements of the plot in order to delve into its composition although I think that 'plot' is a term that we should always 'put under erasure' in Derridean terms in considering Takahashi's construction of storylines. As in the majority of his novels, 'plot' here is 'an inadequate yet necessary' term used to describe the way in which the elements in the text are connected but still follow divergent paths inside and outside the main storyline, thereby often giving it a meta-fictional dimension.

In the opening of the novel, a man is looking at a black screen and listening to some unmistakably lustful groans, which are at a certain point interrupted by a voice singing a Japanese version of Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*. Then appearing on the screen are a group of monkeys and a monolith that are clearly the alter egos of the ones that appear at the beginning of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. However, these monkeys are engaged in an onanistic act, and the monolith displays words of nationalistic support to the victims of the great Tohoku catastrophe to whom the earnings of the 'charity AV' are dedicated.

我々は  
このあたりから、メッセージが始まっているようである。  
この度の震災で被災した皆さんを  
全力で支援します

モノリス... そっくりさんのくせに、やるじゃないか。キューブリックのモノリスの、なんかこうインテリっぽい、っていうかいかにも一神教てきな、ジコチュウな感じとはだいぶちがう。社会貢献か。いいんじゃないか。謙虚で、わかりやすいし。

頑張れ、ニッポン  
ニッポンはひとつ  
我々もニッポン人だ

正直いって、ちょっとしつこい。「ニッポン」とか「ニッポン人」ということばの繰り返しだが、なんか押しつけがましい... なんてことをいってはいけません。みんなが、それでいいというなら、反対する理由はありません。どうぞご自由に。

それにしても、スローガンはもいい、って感じだな。  
で、なに?

我々は、この作品の売り上げをすべて、  
被災者の皆さんに寄付します

そう来るか。いや、いいと思うけど。なにより、その気持ちがかげななんだ。

チャリティーAV

恋する原発

We

message starts here

**support with all our strength  
the victims of the recent disaster.**

Hey, look at you, monolith... a lookalike of that other one, but still not bad at all! I'd say that Kubrick's one is definitely not as intellectual as you are... [Y]ou're definitely less monotheistic and self-centered. Socially useful, no less! Not bad, not bad at all. And humble, easy to understand!

**Hang in, Japan!**

**Japan is one!**

**Je suis Nipponjin**

A little bit annoying, to be honest. The repetition of words like 'Japan', 'Japanese' is a bit pushy... I shouldn't be saying this. If you think this is ok, ladies & gentlemen, please, go ahead, I have no objection. Please feel free. Wait, what the heck?!

**We are engaged to allocate all the proceeds from this work  
to the victims of the disaster.**

Wow, I didn't see that coming. That's great, mind you. What counts is the intention.

**A Hot Nuclear Reactor**

**A Charity AV**

(Takahashi 2011b, 11)

Takahashi ironically points the finger of blame at post-3/11 slogans, which risk becoming formulaic and trite when they are blindly repeated to adhere to what is considered politically correct. Empty formulas allow the public to feel relieved by looking at itself in a glass that always gives the same feedback in a comforting image of correctness and social cohesion. Takahashi wants to convey the extreme

opposite by breaking that fragile glass to show an alternative reality in which contradictions and doubts are legitimate albeit troublesome. This excerpt from the first chapter clearly shows the dialogical and colloquial style Takahashi adopts in the novel (except chapter 7, as I will point out later). In his opinion, the tragic events of 3/11 are the right occasion to speak freely about national taboos, which are in this context, the risks of nuclear energy production and the smooth repression of conflicting opinions in the name of national harmony and social cohesion. To bury them with the victims as a sign of silent respect is the most disrespectful response to the tragedy, which Takahashi conveys in this novel and other related works.

**Table 1** Outline of *Koi Suru Genpatsu*

1	メイキング・1 ホワッツ・ゴイン・オン	Making of 1 - <i>What's going on</i>
2	メイキング・2 恋人よ、帰れ我が胸に (ラブアー・カム・バック・トゥ・ミー)	Making of 2 - <i>Lover, come back to me</i>
3	メイキング・3 この素晴らしい世界 (ホワット・ア・ワンダフル・ワールド)	Making of 3 - <i>What a wonderful world</i>
4	メイキング・4 虹の彼方に (オーブア・ザ・レインボー)	Making of 4 - <i>Over the rainbow</i>
5	メイキング・5 恋するために生まれてきたの (アイ・ウォズ・ボーン・トゥ・ラブ・ユー)	Making of 5 - <i>I was born to love you</i>
6	メイキング・6 守ってあげたい	Making of 6 - <i>Mamotte agetai</i> (I want to protect you)
7	震災文学論	<i>Literary theory of the Great Disaster*</i>
8	メイキング・8 ウィー・アー・ザ・ワールド	Making of 7 - <i>We are the world</i>

\*Emphasis added (Takahashi 2011b)

As shown in Table 1, the text is composed of seven different 'takes' (in cinematographic terms), which do not correspond to the actual filming of the charity adult video presented in the opening of the novel. However, the actual filming will never take place, and what remains of the entire challenging project is an incoherent and nonsensical sequence of scenes that do not have any logical progression in the storyline. Nevertheless, two apparently unrelated elements are recurrent: the leitmotiv of famous popular songs and characters somehow related to the protagonists, who are the film producers. They tell fragments of their personal stories, which are always connected to Japanese national taboos.

The purpose of these nonsequential scenes, which are not 'behind-the-scenes' of the film and which, like all taboos, remain a discursive construction, is to reveal the concealed stories in Japanese history and society: the comfort women; the spirits of Korean soldiers at Yasukuni *jinja*; the bombing of Hiroshima; the victims of Minamata dis-

ease; and, of course, the consequences of nuclear energy production as well as the life of people in the world of pornography. All these stories contribute to Japan's collective history, demonstrating that, as one of the characters in the novel says, "Japan **has been 'shaking' for decades**, without anyone realizing it" (Takahashi 2011b, 46; emphasis added). The introduction of pop songs as the basis of the plot is closely connected to the hectic pursuit of the author's objective, which Takahashi revealed in an interview with Sasaki Atsushi in *Gunzō*, underling the fact that the songs create the effect of *ostranenie* or defamiliarization (*ika kōka*), which is another strategy, in addition to the use of explicit content and language, to subvert common logics and received opinions (Takahashi 2012b, 225).

As shown in Table 1, the author added a chapter called *Shinsai Bungaku Ron* (Literary Theory of The Great Disaster), which is completely detached in terms of language and content from the rest of the novel. As observed by Ishino Hikari, because this chapter is the only part in the text immediately perceived as logical and coherent based on its plain essayistic style, the reader could conclude that it represents the 'real meaning' of the novel and that its contents are completely reliable (Ishino 2012, 27). However, as I will show later, this chapter is 'a work of complete fiction' (*kanzen na fikushon*) like the rest of the novel. In his books, Takahashi is an author who deliberately omits a *kaisetsu* in order not to force an interpretation<sup>6</sup> on the reader. Hence, he "encourages readers to question all discourse surrounding the disaster, and to be suspicious of language that appears to be logical and coherent" (Tokita 2017, 8). The production of a 'charity AV' is a potential disaster, and in the final chapter, the main character painfully admits the following:

いったい、この作品は、どこまで進んでいるのか。終わりに近づいているのか、それとも、袋小路に入りこんでしまったのか。ぜんぜんわからない。そもそも、始まっているのかさえ。

How much progress have we made in the story? Are we nearing the end, or have we entered a cul-de-sac? I have no clue. Has it even started? (Takahashi 2011b, 111)

The project has been impracticable since the beginning, as the director has intended to blend pornography and literature, adult videos and political issues, a merely profit-oriented film genre and charity

<sup>6</sup> "Takahashi resists the probing impulse of interpretation, argues Gabriel, by excluding the conventional analysis section (*kaisetsu*) included at the end of most paperback reprints. See Philip Gabriel, 'Interpreting the Postmodern: The Novels of Takahashi Gen'ichirō'" (Yamada 2011, 28).

purposes. This unlikely potpourri is reflected in the clumsy attempt to write a scenario based on scenes such as the one in which Higurashi Ichiyō reads a poem by Takuboku Ishikawa to Oussama Bin Laden before having intercourse with him (Takahashi 2011b, 23). If we read the creation of the film from a Bourdieusian perspective, the attempt to acquire symbolic capital for a genre that is usually intended for a large audience based on the disavowal of economic profit, creates a paradox that creates the effect of defamiliarization and then *warai*.

The serialization of *Meikingu Obu Dōji Tahatsu Ero* (Synchronized Erotic Attacks: The Making Of) between October 2002 and August 2004 occurred after the terroristic attacks in the US in 2001. After the publication of *Koi Suru Genpatsu*, Takahashi admitted on several occasions that for ten years he was not able to write the novel's ending, and he did not know the reason. In an interview in 2011, Takahashi admitted that after 'that day' (*ano hi*, which refers to 3/11 in various texts) (cf. Flores 2017, 154), he understood that the reason he could not finish the novel was that 9/11 was "someone else concern" (*tanin no mondai*), and it was impossible to include elements of *warai* in a work about a political and social problem - terrorism - that was mainly American and European (Takahashi 2012b, 219). *Dōji tahatsu ero* was the basis of *Koi Suru Genpatsu*. However, this time, Takahashi said, "*mejirushi wa warai deshita*" (the mark was the laughter) (Takahashi 2011c). I think this episode can be considered something more than just a part of the trivia regarding the genesis of the work, because it restates Takahashi's attitude toward the nonexistence of absolute signifiers. Terrorism, which has been central to his reflections since the beginning of his literary career (cf. Yamada 2011, 4, 12), needs to be situated in a social structure where the agency of discursive subjects always modifies the signifying process.

*Ano hi's* earthquake and its consequences have profoundly shaken Japanese society, and several intellectuals hold that it must be considered a point of no return: that day, according to Kimura Saeko, "the veil has been lifted from the eyes of the world, and our sense of values has been renewed" (Kimura 2013, 9). Takahashi defined *ano hi* as "a temporal shake" (Takahashi 2011a), a *caesura* not only in his literary production but also in contemporary Japanese history. For him, 3/11 is the end of the seemingly endless *post-war era*. In an article published in *The New York Times* (with Ikeuchi Satoru and Numano Mitsuyoshi) eight days after the event, he wrote, "this disaster is the war that many Japanese have been dreading and expecting for a long time" (Ikeuchi et al. 2011). After *ano hi* he felt the urge to write, especially through his Twitter account, but he was struck by the ubiquitous abuse of what he called "the political usage of language", in which "rhetoric is used to convince of its correctness not only as a form of language but as a projection of reality" (Yamada 2011, 7). Tamaki Tokita, in her article, "*Koi Suru Genpatsu* and the

violence of 'correct' language in post-Fukushima Japan" (June 2017) summarised the context of verbal conflict following 3/11 as being animated by two distinct counterposed groups: the pro-nuclear and the anti-nuclear camps. According to Tokita,

[W]hat Takahashi calls the 'politicalness' of language has reached extreme levels in this context, where both sides claim that their views are entirely correct to the exclusion of all others. Citizens are forcing each other to pick a stance between leftist anti-nuclear and rightist pro-nuclear and to accept every aspect of policy that accompanies their chosen stance. This discourse is of the same dogmatic and aggressive nature as that heard in the mainstream media during the student movements in the 1960s, and at many other points in Japanese history. However, the post-Fukushima situation represents a particularly pressing case because there are two fiercely competing versions of 'correctness' to which Japanese citizens from all walks of life are being equally exposed. (Tokita 2017, 231)

In my opinion, the reference to the tumultuous protests of the sixties is the key to accessing *Koi Suru Genpatsu*. In this novel, Takahashi reestablishes a direct connection with his debut work, *Jon Renon Tai Kaseijin* (John Lennon vs. The Martians, 1985). He feels that the climate of *jishuku* (auto-control, self-censorship), which was predominant in Japan in the aftermath of 3/11, is very similar to the *kotoba no jōtai* (the current status of the language) in the eighties. Hence, in the interview with Sasaki, he revealed that he had chosen to return to the language and the themes in *Jon Renon*. Since then, pornography has been a way for Takahashi "to thematize the liberation of meaning from conventional reading patterns imposed by mainstream media and literary criticism" (Yamada 2011, 20). However, in 2011, choosing to use pornography had a new meaning. In the interview, Takahashi stated that pornography is a perfect metaphor for contemporary Japanese society as well as a post-war genre in decline, which marks the end of an era. In Japanese AV, the technique of *bokashi* (shading of) is used to conceal the most important parts; however, this concealment actually confirms their existence. Sasaki concluded that speaking about AV means in the end speaking about post-war Japanese history (Takahashi 2012b). Pornography allows Takahashi to choose a completely illegitimate angle from which to examine and speak out against post-Fukushima Japan. In his vision, it is the peculiarity of literature to accomplish the fundamental task of changing the way of thinking: "writing a work of fiction is in itself a very political thing to do" (McCaffery et al. 2002, 197). An author, according to Takahashi, must accomplish this task by being unconcerned by what is supposed to be correct in any particular histor-

ical context. In a long TV interview<sup>7</sup> about the literary response to the great Tohoku catastrophe, Takahashi supported this idea by referring to *Quatre Heures à Chatila* (Four Hours in Chatila, 1982) by the French author Jean Genet after his direct experience of the immediate aftermath of the massacre of three thousand Palestinians in Beyrouth. Jean Genet was the first European to enter the camp at Chatila a few days after the massacre. According to Takahashi, Genet wrote about this experience in a beautiful, erotic style that is “Mishima no youna utsukushii buntai” (as beautiful as Mishima’s). Genet’s text overcomes the debate about whether it is correct for a literary text to portray disaster.

In moments of emergency, said Takahashi elsewhere, writers should trust their own instinct and act like the *bricoleur* of Levy Strauss in *La Pensée Sauvage*. The *bricoleurs* work with their hands in devious ways, combining pre-existing things in new ways, making do with whatever is at hand, and using existing signs in ways they were not originally intended (cf. Takahashi 2012b, 222).

The metaphor of the *bricoleur* can then be useful to shed light on the real meaning of the chapter *Shinsai bungaku ron* in *Koi Suru Genpatsu*. Takahashi uses parody strategically to create the sense of “repetition with critical distance” (Hutcheon 1985, 6) by integrating in the main text some plausible (but actually invented) examples of post-disaster literature. One excerpt is *Kamisama* (2011) by a ‘Kawakami Hiromi’, whose name is written in katakana. The reference is to the intertextual fiction, *Kamisama 2011*, by the writer Kawakami Hiro-mi, which is a rewriting of her 1993 story *Kamisama* (God Bless You). Takahashi rewrites both *Kamisama* and *Kamisama 2011* by superimposing the two texts and adding parentheses to indicate parts in the actual two texts by Kawakami were added or deleted. This *bricolage* creates a new text in which some characters reemerge from post-catastrophe oblivion. As Takahashi suggests, a new text allows a new interpretation that is not necessarily ‘true’ or ‘correct’.

This short example of Takahashi’s use of parody as a textual trope is significant at the macro level of the entire text. According to the paradoxical definition given by Inoue Hisashi in his essay, *Parodi shi-an*, parody is a mirror that deforms (*yugamu*) accurately (*seikaku ni*) (Inoue 1979, 39). This accurate deformation is exactly what Takahashi accomplishes in *Koi Suru Genpatsu* by using *warai*, which, in his opinion, is the final aim of literature as the ultimate weapon against political correctness.

<sup>7</sup> “Daishinsai to bungaku no yakuwari – Guest: Takahashi Gen’ichirō” (The Great Earthquake and the Role of Literature). *Nyūsu no shinsō*. Asahi Newstar, 11 June 2012. URL <https://youtu.be/7bC--ToTDU8> (2019-06-11).



## 4 Conclusion

On 26 August 2017, a video produced by the Miyagi Prefectural Government in the region of Tohoku was censured and removed from YouTube. As part of a Miyagi tourism campaign, the short video featured model and actress Dan Mitsu, who is known for playing erotic roles, as a tour guide wearing a kimono. According to the online version of the *Japan Times*,

The video was produced jointly by the Miyagi Prefectural Government, the Sendai Municipal Government, and the East Japan Railway Co. for ¥23 million, part of which came from a reconstruction fund for the March 2011 earthquake-tsunami that devastated large areas of the Tohoku region. [...] The video contains suggestive and provocative lines, while there are repeated close-up images of the actress parting her lips and rubbing the head of an animated turtle. [...] The prefecture planned to withdraw the video [...] amid unabated complaints from viewers and female members of the prefectural assembly.<sup>8</sup>

The video was sexually provocative because it is common knowledge in Japan that the association of 'turtle' 亀 with 'head' 頭 refers to the tip of the male genitalia. Funds made available for the reconstruction of the disaster-stricken area were then reallocated to the production of a sexually explicit video. The episode resembles an ironic inversion, that is, a distorted reflection in a parodic mirror, of the unlikely narrative expediently conceived by Takahashi in *Koi Suru Genpatsu*. This impudent, *fukinshin* attempt to draw attention to the region devastated by the triple catastrophe six years before was phagocytised by the political correctness of public opinion through censorship. The commendable attention to sexism actually perpetuates one of the most blatant national taboos. In Japan, pornography - like nuclear energy and its consequences - is ubiquitous yet invisible. As Ishikawa, *Koi Suru Genpatsu's* protagonist, comments, the idea of free speech, albeit referred to in the Constitution of Japan, is like a "rice cake in a painting" (Takahashi 2011b, 36): it looks very good on paper, but it does not exist in reality.

The Miyagi episode inevitably brings to mind Takahashi Gen'ichiro's harsh judgment of the Japanese media's avoidance of showing the corpses of the victims of *ano hi*. Not a single image of

<sup>8</sup> "Miyagi to Remove 'sexist' Tourism Video After a Month of Complaints". *The Japan Times*, 21 August 2017. URL <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/21/national/miyagi-remove-sexist-tourism-video-month-complaints/#.XFYoz1Z-0k2w> (2019-06-07).

the thousands of casualties was shown in a country that conceals what is considered *hidoi* or outrageous: genitalia, dead bodies, handcuffs, parting lips, and winking turtles (cf. Takahashi 2011c). “To resist what is ‘incorrect’ is easy”, concludes Takahashi. “However, resisting what is ‘correct’ is extremely complicated”.

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# Rethinking the Concept of 'Society' in the Age of Globalisation

## Society as a Whole, the Social, and Sociological Traditions

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**Abstract** The aim of this paper is to take issue with the opinion that, in sociology, the concept of 'society' was equated with the nation-state. Firstly, a diachronic analysis of the term 'society', as used by the general public, shall be attempted: 'society as a whole' and 'the social'. Secondly, the article shall illustrate that sociology has developed its own analytical concept of society within the space between the two lay terms. Thirdly, the fact that the process of globalisation yet again problematizes the distinction between 'society as a whole' and 'the social' shall be shown. The conclusion of the paper is that, by yet again, becoming aware of the three dimensions of the concept of 'society', we can provide cues for a theoretical reconstruction of the sociological concept of 'society' that will contribute to research on 'society' in the age of globalisation.

**Keywords** Society. The social. Society as a whole. The state. Civil society. Market economy. Nation-state. Globalisation.

**Summary** 1 Rethinking the Concept of 'Society'. – 2 The Distinction Between State and Civil Society. – 3 The Distinction Between Market Economy and 'the Social'. – 4 The Nation-state as 'Society as a Whole'. – 5 Legacies of the Sociological Theory. – 6 Social Study in the Age of Globalisation.



#### Peer review

Submitted	2019-01-29
Accepted	2019-05-28
Published	2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Utsumi, Hirofumi (2019). "Rethinking the Concept of 'Society' in the Age of Globalization. Society as a Whole, the Social, and Sociological Traditions". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 615-636.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/021

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## 1 Rethinking the Concept of 'Society'

I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand: "I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!" or "I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!" "I am homeless, the Government must house me!" and so they are casting their problems on society, and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. (September 23, 1987, Margaret Thatcher, Interview for Woman's Own)

This well-known statement was made by Thatcher, the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in 1987, in an interview she did for a magazine. What is meant here is that there are people who, on encountering a problem, tend not to try to solve it themselves but instead place the blame on the government, shifting responsibility by redefining their own problems as social ones. However, in Thatcher's opinion, a "society" is, in fact, just "individual men and women", just many "families" and nothing more. If that is the case, redefining one's own problems as 'social' ones do nothing except shifting the burden onto someone else's shoulders, and when people call for the government to take responsibility, they are merely justifying this kind of 'buck-passing' on an institutional level. However, before making demands of this sort, people should first and foremost try to look after themselves. She claimed that we should not think there is any kind of 'society' people can shift their personal problems onto and that from this time on, there is a need to foster and reinforce an attitude towards life that one's problems are one's own.

The reaction to this statement among sociologists has been summarised quite succinctly by Urry (2000, 1-20). At first, sociologists contended that there is, in fact, a society, an entity that is something more than just individual men and women and their families – the definition espoused by Thatcher. However, they were not able to clearly show what this 'society', in fact, was. And later, after the rise of globalisation theories in the nineties, sociological research critical of the concept started to appear as well. Many such critics focused on the tendency to equate the concept of 'society' with the nation-state. They pointed out that throughout its history, sociology had used the concept of 'society' to refer to nation-state-like entities. However, they argued, as long as the discipline remained confined to this traditional concept of 'society', sociology would be incapable of analysing the ever-increasing degree of global interdependence. Gradually, this understanding has become widely accepted by the discipline. But, this critique notwithstanding, no significant advances have been made as regards the theoretical reconstruction of the concept of 'so-

ciety', and, before long, voices proclaiming its demise started to appear (Latour 1987; Urry 2000; Rumford 2001). Without a unifying concept, sociological research in the age of globalisation appears to be nothing more than a hotchpotch of disparate analytical efforts. "Sociology thus appears to be cast adrift once we leave the relatively safe boundaries of a functionally integrated and bounded society, or of an autopoietic societal system *à la* Luhmann (1995). There is a theoretical and empirical whirlpool where most of the tentative certainties that sociology had endeavoured to erect are being washed away" (Urry 2000, 17). As Urry points out, in this sense "Thatcher was oddly right when she said there is no such thing as society" (12).

We believe that for sociology to analyse globalisation there is a need to reestablish the concept of 'society', tempering it into a tool appropriate for the requirements of the new era. The reason we want to attempt it, even though there are strong arguments for leaving it behind, is because we cannot agree with the most central of these arguments – the assertion that sociology has equated the concept of 'society' with the nation-state. We do not doubt the fact that the object of sociological studies in the latter half of the twentieth century has, in fact, been nation-states – it certainly was – but this does not mean that sociology was established as an independent discipline through studying nation-states, which sociologists viewed as 'societies'. We believe and shall argue below that sociology earned its place among already-established disciplines by drawing a distinction between 'society in a broad sense' and 'society in a narrow sense', and particularly by focusing on 'the social'. And this very distinction served as the basis whereby the discipline accumulated theoretical knowledge for an analysis of 'society'. Accordingly, the concept of society – a fundamental one for sociology – is a multi-dimensional one from the start, due to the dual nature of the object of its analysis, and also acquired further dimensions through the years of analytic pursuits, of which we shall speak later. If we forget this multidimensionality, we shall not only fail to come up with a sound counter-argument to Thatcher's statement but also – and even more importantly – we may well start to proclaim the death of this concept, central to our discipline, ourselves. Conversely, by yet again becoming aware of the multiple dimensions of the concept of 'society' in sociology, we can provide some cues for a theoretical reconstruction of the concept that could contribute to research on 'society' in the age of globalisation. And that is the conclusion at which this paper will arrive.

The paper is structured as follows. As we saw in Thatcher's statement, sociology holds no monopoly over the concept of 'society'. And even within the discipline, the concept is premised on the development of the term in various other areas. This development can be summarised as a process of division between the state and 'civil society' (§ 2), and that between the market economy and 'the social'

(§ 3), which both lead to the formation of the concept of 'society as a whole' - the nation-state (§ 4). In sociology, the concept of 'society' was developed along the same lines, but still walked its own independent path, which resulted in it becoming a more robust analytic tool (§ 5). Today, in the age of globalisation, the distinction between 'society in a broad sense' and 'society in a narrow sense' is once again becoming an issue. By searching for cues in a diachronic analysis of the concept of 'society', we shall try to find the theoretical knowledge related to the concept that has been amassed by sociology thus far and find hints to help us save the concept for the future (§ 6).<sup>1</sup>

## 2 The Distinction Between State and Civil Society

'Society' started to be viewed as an entity functioning according to its own unique principles from the time the concept of 'civil society' was born - in its modern variation. The term 'civil society' has a long history in Europe. However, in the linguistic tradition stretching from Aristotle to the mid-eighteenth century - the Graeco-Latin linguistic lineage starting from the politics of Classical Greece, moving on to Roman law and Christianity, then further to the rediscovery of Aristotle in scholasticism, and up to the natural law theory in the early modern times - the term 'civil society' was synonymous with the state and thus was not perceived as an entity with its own original principles. But if we look into the modern usage of the concept of 'civil society' - the civil liberalism of the eighteenth century that emerged from the modern natural law theory - the synonymy of the state and 'civil society' breaks down, with the latter starting to be perceived as an independent entity at odds with the state. The advent of this newly developed concept of 'civil society' denoting spheres of life beyond the control of the state also entailed the birth of the concept of 'society', an entity with its own principles (Hashimoto 1957; Riedel 1974; Dumont 1986).

The conceptual divergence of state from 'society' can be seen from two angles - state formation and independence of 'society'.

State formation can be perceived as an establishment of sovereignty, that is, as an establishment of a distinction between a king as an individual and the state apparatus per se (Kantorowicz 1957; Fuku-

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**1** To simplify the discussion, here we shall regard the birth of the modern concept of 'civil society' as the birth of the concept of 'society' as well and give a schematic picture of the subsequent transformation of the concept of 'society'. Furthermore, although our examination of 'society' here shall mainly focus on Europe, this does not mean that our world view is Eurocentric - even if we are to look into the concept of 'society' in Japan, where the author happens to live, we shall not be able to gain a proper understanding of this concept unless we look into its European history as well.



da 1985; Elias 1995b).<sup>2</sup> This process of differentiation is apparent in the formation of the doctrine of sovereignty and the establishment of absolutist states, in organisational diplomacy and modern international law. The formation of the doctrine of sovereignty and the establishment of absolutist states had dual consequences. On the one hand, the sovereign power of the kings was reinforced. On the other, the whims and caprices of individual kings were reined in.<sup>3</sup> The divorce of organisational diplomacy from the dispositions of individual kings resulted in an expansion of diplomatic networks, an expansion of the scope of modern international law, gradually creating an international power balance system premised on the independence of individual countries. Under pressure from both flanks – both domestically and internationally – the distinction between the mortal king and the immortal state apparatus grows more and more pronounced.

Concurrently with the formation of the state, a civil sphere separate from the state starts to be consciously noticed. This is evidenced in the transformation of the natural law theory. Instead of the static tradition of the natural law theory, which goes back to Aristotle and explains history as a movement from household economies towards economies of state, the modern natural law theory posits a dynamic relationship whereby nature is set against the human order, that is, the state. In other words, in the modern natural law theory, humanity, perceived as endowed with freedom and ownership rights, is charged with the task of overcoming the state of nature, where no guarantees for order are certain. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, for example, argued that this task is solved through contract. Contracts can be divided into two types: those of association and those of obedience. The logical organisation of the natural law theory, which, premised on the association of individuals, envisaged a delegation of power to the government and an agreement to obey it, was an important page in the history of state formation, on the one hand, and of the separation of state and 'society', on the other.

But what truly solidified the independence of 'society' from the state are the economic theories that appeared in the United Kingdom and France, closely connected to the increase in productivity, and the growth of the economy of exchange made possible by this increase. However, neither this productivity increase nor the economy of exchange could have immediately produced the idea of a 'society' endowed with its own principles. The mercantilism that flourished in

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**2** For an interpretation of the social theory of Elias, see Utsumi 2014.

**3** For a helpful discussion of absolutist states, see Duindam 2003. His book attempts to show that the conventional assumption that the courts of modern Europe are irrelevant to the history of nation-states is wrong and argues that the courts have played a vital role in the establishment of nation-states.

absolutist states did not produce the idea of a 'society' functioning in accordance with its own intrinsic principles either; rather, it expanded the state's control over economic activities. It is when state control comes to be perceived as a constraint unnecessary for an increase in productivity and the spread of the exchange economy that a new vision is born: a vision of a 'society' functioning in accordance with its own intrinsic principles, distinct from those of the state. The formation of these unique principles of 'society' - principles independent of the state's - can be perceived from two angles. One is self-containment, and the other is an orientation towards happiness. Firstly, to justify the liberation of this 'society' from the state, the logic it is built upon has to be intrinsically complete. Unless a 'society' is self-contained, it will need some support from without - from the state. Secondly, the self-containment of the 'society' is justified insofar as it yields useful results. If a self-contained 'society' is harmful, it also needs some intervention from the state - an entity beyond its confines. The first step in the direction of these two tendencies was made by the physiocrats, but the most decisive arguments were made by the Scottish moral philosophers and especially Adam Smith. They presumed that it is in human nature to pursue self-interest, and to do so freely and on an equal basis; and they envisaged a concept of 'civil society' consistent with the natural law theory, wherein individuals engaged in this pursuit, privately interconnected through the market and the division of labour, achieve prosperity together. This concept of 'civil society' is then given a historical perspective dimension. Under the name of 'civilisation', the history of civil society was characterised as humankind's natural progress on the road toward happiness. This is how the concept of a 'civil society' distinct from the state was born.

### **3 The Distinction Between Market Economy and 'the Social'**

The advocates of the modern theory of 'civil society' did not necessarily argue for the existence of a 'society' distinct from the state, limiting their vision to a narrow sphere of the market economy in the modern sense of the term. 'Civil society' was not immediately equated with the market economy. But as various markets increasingly become perceived as black boxes - constructs that allow no room for discussion - under the initiative of the state, 'civil society' comes to stand for the market economy. At the same time, a 'society in a narrow sense', one differentiated from market society, is born. This is when the term 'civil society' starts to acquire two separate dimensions - one denoting the market economy and the other standing for 'the social' (Hirschman 1977; Castel 2000; Polanyi 2001).

The earliest concrete manifestations of the modern 'civil society' theory can be found in the American War of Independence and the Virginia Declaration of Rights, in the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Developed later in the nineteenth century, modern civil law dismantled the conventional right of ownership, which made no distinction between ownership of land and control of people, and divided these old laws into laws of property and laws of obligations. The new legal system permitted control of things only, while relationships between people (which were seen as agents with free will) were to be handled through contracts. These two principles – the principle of private ownership and the principle of freedom of contract – became the foundation stones of modern civil law.<sup>4</sup>

Modern civil law served as a basis for the emergence of the cross-border labour market, the commodity market, and the capital market. For the first of these markets – the labour market – to function, it is necessary to dismantle such former systems as kinship, communal bonds, and guilds, transforming an individual into a product that can change occupation or place of residence according to the demands of the labour market. This transformation was expedited by the principle of contractual freedom and the threat of poverty. It is at the point of confluence of the two that we have the product of the labour market – the waged worker. Similarly, the formation of the second market – the commodity market – required the dismantlement of communal bonds and class systems hitherto connected to land systems, and required, too, that land becomes a product whose purpose of use and owner could be changed to fit the demands of the commodity market, and which could enable merchandise production according to the demands of the commodity market as well. This transformation was expedited by the establishment of the right of private ownership and the advances made in goods transportation technologies. At this time, we see the formation of spaces centred on towns and cities and capable of being quickly transformed in any way and producing all kinds of things to meet the demands of the commodity market. Lastly, the formation of a labour market and a commodity market required the creation and maintenance of a monetary system. This system was created mainly by the central banks of each country, with the gold standard used for international transactions and the convertible note system for domestic ones. At this stage, we also see the establishment of securities exchanges that increased the efficiency of fund procurement and utilisation of capital, and of banks that converted inactive capital to active. This is how the capital market was formed.

With the development of all kinds of markets based on modern civil law, individual capitalists and individual enterprises expanded

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<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of the modern civil law and social law theory, see Utsumi 2009.

the scale of their businesses. Before long, they had become organised business corporations. A particularly convenient form of organisation is the joint stock company system with its limited liability and transferability of shares, allowing entrepreneurs to mobilise large assets for their business. In connection with these developments, commercial laws, which had played but a small role in the modern civil law, merely governing relationships between merchants, start to gain importance. This process is accompanied by the following two transformations. Firstly, a corporate organisation – contrary to the individualistic assumptions of conventional commercial law, which presumed equality between individuals – entails a number of relationships that can easily lead to inequality, such as the relationship between a business enterprise and its partners, between major stockholders and minority stockholders, or between a business enterprise and its customers. And this is why this time period witnessed the emergence of business organisation laws, which add a non-individualistic aspect to commercial law – that of considerations for the common good. Secondly, commercial transactions laws (yet another category of commercial laws) ensure the principle of the freedom of pure profit pursuit. In this way, because a corporate business organisation (an organisational entity) devotes itself to the pure pursuit of profit (an individualistic endeavour), commercial laws come to occupy a unique position in civil law, to integrate these two heterogeneous properties of one endeavour. And so was established the market economy, a system where all kinds of business enterprises operate in various markets in accordance with civil law.

An essential role in the formation of the market economy was played by the state. The market economy was institutionalised not through the elimination of state control but rather through the reinforcement of that control in all kinds of aspects. As various markets, as a result of the state's control, become black boxes, civil society starts to be an embodiment of the market economy. The state takes two functions upon itself here – the political function of protecting its people from external threats within the international balance of power system and the economic function of maintaining an international market economy.

However, the latter half of the nineteenth century, when everything looked as if the reduction of the 'civil society' with all its possibilities to a mere market economy was inevitable, witnessed the launch of a movement against the market economy. This phenomenon can be understood from the viewpoint of threats created by the market economy. The formation of the labour market placed wage workers into severe labour conditions while also demanding constant fluidity of the labour force. The formation of the international commodity market placed wage workers, business enterprises, and people engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fishery into a state of in-

terdependence on a worldwide scale, subjecting them to a constant fluidity of conditions. The formation of the capital market exposed wage workers and business enterprises alike to the fluidity of all kinds of capital, including the fluidity of prices. The driving force behind the countermovement that occurred to neutralise these threats was truly diverse, comprising workers' unions, political parties representing workers, monopolistic industrial capitalists, agricultural powers, landowners, and even business enterprises. But although the development of this movement against the market economy was influenced by the interests of each of the actors, no individual actor can be perceived as the sole initiator of the movement – the sole initiator was the formation of the market economy itself. The movement resulted, by way of many twists and turns, in the formation of a great variety of practices and systems. These include labour movement, factory legislation, social insurance, sanitary services, public utilities, customs duties, incentive wages and subsidies, cartels and trusts, and prohibitions imposed on immigration, on import, and on capital movement, to name but a few.

In this way, 'civil society', which was born to serve as a counterforce to the state, has simultaneously emerged, through the control of the state, as the market economy. However, the market economy creates a number of new problems that cannot be dealt with by the respective markets. And these problems, wherever they happen, create cracks in the fabric of 'civil society'. What appears in these cracks is a countermovement against the market economy, that is, various collective protection measures and frameworks allowing actors deprived of security in the market economy to ensure that security through mutual connections. These collective practices and frameworks of protection were often referred to by the adjective 'social'. If we use the collective term 'the social' to describe them, 'the social' will refer to the various practices appearing in the crevices of civil society as a whole (including the market economy) while simultaneously referring to the prescriptive framework of cooperation for repairing these crevices. This is how the concept of 'society in a narrow sense', distinct from the market economy, was born.

#### **4 The Nation-state as 'Society as a Whole'**

The more distinct the twofold movement of the market economy and 'the social' gets, the more prominent the importance of the state as a mediator between the two becomes. As a result, the functions of the state proliferate, becoming tripartite or, perhaps, quadripartite. In addition to the functions the state had hitherto, that is, maintaining the trans-border market economy in the economic sphere and protecting its actors from external threats within the international

power balance system in the political sphere, the state starts to assume the function of ensuring security in internal affairs by mediating between the market economy and 'the social'. In this process, one category grows increasingly prominent - the category of 'nationals'. As this category gets applied to practices and systems in all kinds of areas, these areas, which abound with tensions both within them and between them, get increasingly united as one. This signifies the birth of a 'society as a whole', usually referred to as the 'nation-state' (Barker 1950; Anderson 2006; Utsumi 2006, 2007).

To guarantee the internal security of the system, the state needs predominantly to deal with the following two threats. One is a threat inherent in the market economy. Classical economics believed in the self-regulating nature of the market, and its motto was *laissez-faire*. However, the market economy, when left to its own devices, creates monopolies and unfair competition - both internationally and domestically. Thus, people gradually came to an understanding that an unconstrained economy obstructs the optimal distribution of wealth, which is the normative justification for the market economy in the first place. The second threat is the one posed, with a certain probability, by the market economy to specific business enterprises and individuals. As mentioned earlier, the real-life market is never so faultless that it can always achieve an impartial distribution of opportunities and wealth. However, even if we presume that a perfect market is possible, it will nevertheless always generate, with a certain probability, such phenomena as unemployment or bankruptcy that will - the efforts of individual persons or business enterprises notwithstanding - deal some damaging blows to certain people. Neither of the threats can be neutralised under existing civil law. And to remedy the situation, a framework to eliminate these threats is established and maintained by the state.

The state's attempts to eliminate threats manifest themselves very symbolically in the amendments made to civil law. Up to a point, protecting the principle of private ownership and the principle of freedom of contract formed the nucleus of civil law. One upshot of the fact that various countries established their civil laws this way was the ability of these countries to maintain an international market economy. But after the second half of the nineteenth century, civil laws start to exhibit a tendency that can only be interpreted as repentance. The amendments made changes to the principle of freedom of contract and placed restrictions on the principle of private ownership. This tendency consists of the following two directions. One is the attempts to thoroughly ensure the principles of modern civil law, and the other is to transcend them. The two are not necessarily contradictory - in fact, they often appear intermingled.

If we look at the institution of contracts - relationships between people - early modern civil law, adhering to the principle of freedom

of contract, did not concern itself with actual relationships, including the issue of inequality between the contracting parties, and by and large all aspects of the resulting relationship were left to the discretion of the contracting parties. Therefore, the principle of freedom of contract actually created contractual deprivation of freedom. This state of affairs came to be addressed from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards: to ensure the actual freedom of contract, the state started to have a say in the relationships between the contracting parties to ensure that the actual relationships were more in line with the principle of equality. During this same era, there was also a series of efforts to create functioning international laws and international organisations to ensure indiscriminate free trade and stabilise the foreign exchange, to expand the scope of economic law by adding antitrust laws, laws to prevent unfair competition, etc. At the same time, in order to rectify actual inequalities between states in the international market economy, all kinds of economic policies get implemented by the governments of various countries – the establishment of financial policies, including fiscal policies and provision of subsidies; the imposition of restrictions on immigration, imports, and capital movements; and the institution of approval systems for cartels and trusts. Also, labour laws are expanded to rectify inequality in the domestic labour market, resulting in a reduction of threats posed by the market economy to specific individuals. In the domain of private ownership of things, early modern civil law perceived private ownership as a natural right that had existed even prior to the establishment of any written laws. From the latter half of the nineteenth century, on the other hand, private ownership comes to be seen as a right only existing as long as it is put into statute. As a result, to reduce the threats posed by the market economy to specific individuals, the right of private ownership is subjected to progressively greater restrictions, while in addition to private ownership, which is seen as just one possible type of ownership among many, a new type called 'social ownership' appears, allowing property to be used for private benefit even though it is not privately owned. During this time period, the state starts to implement public works projects and to expand social welfare, providing public assistance and social insurance.

These amendments to civil law were made possible by the concept of 'nationals'. A term that initially referred to individuals inhabiting a specific geographic area, 'national' gradually comes to signify much more, a concept imagined as independent of the individuals that are supposed to comprise it. In other words, the term 'nationals' – given to a group of people consisting of  $N$  individuals, just as in the case of a collective concept in set theory – becomes relatively independent of the individuals that serve as elements in an extensional definition of the group, and is, in a sense, substantiated as a per-

son 'N+1'. Nationals are thus considered to be actors – particularly when it comes to relationships with external entities. Moreover, the concept of the 'national' exerts a unique effect on relationships between individuals within the geographic area with which the term is linked as well. If one group of people is assigned the term 'nationals', just as in the case of intentional definition in set theory, this assignment assumes that these people have some common properties, with 'culture' being the generic concept used to denote this commonality. Nationals – even if they have never met each other – are envisioned, according to the intentional definition, as a kind of culturally uniform community with shared beliefs, customs, and lifestyle.

This category of 'nationals' gets applied virtually everywhere – to all kinds of practices and systems in various areas including politics, economics, and 'the social' realm. In the sphere of guaranteeing security within the international power balance system, the category of nationals is perceived as the agent establishing political relationships with nationals of other countries on the one hand and, on the other, serves as a mechanism for the state to mobilise individuals within the geographic area under its control to ensure safeguards against external entities. In the sphere of guaranteeing security as regards the market economy, the category of nationals is, on the one hand, perceived as the agent maintaining the international market economy together with nationals of other countries and, on the other, serves as a mechanism to justify the state's interventions into the market economy within the geographic area it controls – it is nationals who reap the benefits from developments of the national economy. Furthermore, in the realm of 'the social', the category of nationals serves as a mechanism to transform people in all kinds of positions within the shared geographic area into members of a community who offer each other assistance when it comes to various life-related risks such as accidents, illnesses, unemployment, disasters, old age, and death. And lastly, the category of nationals operates as a mechanism enabling each of the individual geographic areas – which abounds with tensions both within them and between them – to function as integrated entities. In other words, the concept becomes a device for justifying the state's multilateral and highly potent functionality. If we look at the state's connections to its external milieu, this functionality involves maintaining the international market economy and transnational systems as well as securing the state's own independence from other states. Internally, this functionality includes interventions into the market economy and measures to enrich and maintain 'the social'. And finally, the state also functions as a mediator between all of the above.

With the establishment of this concept of nationals, we see the birth of a new concept of 'society' linking together the state, the national economy, and 'the social' – 'society' as a new totality, 'society as a whole' or, as it is most often referred to, the 'nation-state'.



## 5 Legacies of the Sociological Theory

But how should we place the sociological concept of 'society' within this framework of diachronic change of the layman's concept of the same name?

The birth of sociology coincides with the era of the development of 'the social', that is, the latter half of the nineteenth century and thereafter, when the concept of 'society in a narrow sense' was coined as a counterpart to the market economy. Up to that time, social theories within academia predominantly focused on the workings of the state and the market. But from that time on, social theories focusing on 'the social' started to emerge. What all these social theories had in common was their focus on the unintended results of civil society movements that pushed for 'liberty, equality, and fraternity'. Accordingly, these social theories – although to a varied extent – all take a critical stance toward the state and the market economy, which use the modern civil society theory as their theoretical crutch. Before long, these theories were given a name – sociology – and institutionalized as a new discipline.<sup>5</sup>

However, although they all may share an approach characterized by attention to 'the social', there is some variation in their respective stances. Marx [1867] (1976), who perceived the consequences brought by the vision of civil society when it became reality through the prism of the concept of class, analysed the birth of class from the viewpoint of changing production relations in the capitalist market economy, and argued that social change is necessary to overcome class distinctions. 'The social', which has been the focus of attention here, was, on the one hand, the class system – a problematic consequence of civil society – but on the other, it was the normative practices and frameworks necessary to overcome it. Durkheim [1893] (1984), conversely, interpreted the consequences of civil society using the concept of *anomie*. He proposed that anomie emerges due to changes in social solidarity and argued that, in order to prevent anomie, a new morality is required. 'The social' Durkheim focused upon was not so much the problematic consequences of civil society as the normative practices and frameworks needed to overcome them. Weber [1904-5] (2002), on the other hand, did not concern himself with 'the social' in the normative sense, perceiving the development of civil society through the concept of rationalisation and providing a thorough analysis of the past and future of rationalisation. But this does not mean that Weber had only a limited interest in 'the social' – although it may seem as if Weber distanced himself from normative theories, the persistency with which he pursued his analysis

<sup>5</sup> See Castel 2003; Koto 2009, 2010, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b; Utsumi, Takazakura 2014.

of rationalisation and its consequences shows the strength of his interest in the norms of 'the social', which lies behind it. Thus, in the formative years of sociology, there was a wide spectrum of stances regarding 'the social'. Some thinkers were strongly interested in the analysis of 'the social' as an unintended consequence of civil society; some were interested in the norms for 'the social' of a beneficial kind yet to come, while some were interested in the analysis of a broader 'society' that produces 'the social'.

Then came the twentieth century, an era when sociology developed more than during any other. For analytical purposes, it shall serve us to roughly divide the century into the first half and the second half.

The first half was the period of the birth of the nation-states, when within the boundaries defined by the term 'national' we see the strengthening of the connections between the state, the national economy, and 'the social'. Perhaps by way of response to this changing reality, sociology increasingly comes to focus its attention on society as a whole. Parsons (1951) used the word 'system' as a metaphor to describe it. According to Parsons, the social system of this 'society as a whole' is said to be comprised of relations of interdependence between its individuals. He argued that the functional prerequisites for the survival of a social system were the mediation of the relationships between members of the society and the mediation of the relationship between society and the environment. He particularly stressed the importance of subdivision into subsystems and their development. The propositions that defined sociology in its early stage - rationalisation, changes in social solidarity, changes in class relations and so forth - were later classified as the progress of social differentiation, characterised by development of the market economy and bureaucracy, voluntary association, and development of universal norms, all to be perceived as elements of a universal social change called 'modernisation'.

If sociology's focus in the first half of the twentieth century was on macrosocial issues, the century's second half witnessed a shift to the micro level, with a particular emphasis on interactions. Ariadne's thread for this endeavour was the theory of the self-proposed by Simmel (1890) and Mead [1927] (1934). According to them, an individual is not an absolute unity that should be used as the starting point for analysis, but an entity created through networks and interactions - and is thus secondary. Based on this viewpoint, Goffman (1959) and Garfinkel (1967) conducted a thorough analysis of the way interactions are organised. How do the elements structuring the interactions in which people engage over the course of their daily lives - such as positions and roles, norms and narratives, and power - function? How do participants in said interactions construct themselves and others as actors? Looking for answers to these and similar questions, Goffman and Garfinkel accumulated a body of

knowledge regarding interactions. The interest in and knowledge of such micro-interactions soon came to exert an influence on macrosocial analysis as well. Bourdieu, Elias, Foucault, Luhmann and Habermas,<sup>6</sup> the most prominent sociologists of the second half of the twentieth century, were all – although they emphasized different aspects – preoccupied with interactions, linking them to the individual (*habitus*) or else to the social system. The same trend shows in the increasingly frequent use of the concept of 'network' first espoused by Simmel and Elias, which served as a metaphor for analysing multi-lateral interactions of the 'social', while conveniently providing a way to avoid substantiation. At this stage, the analytic concept of 'society' in sociology gets structured as a complex one consisting of multiple levels, the main four being *habitus*, network, interaction, and system.<sup>7</sup>

Now, let us summarise the points made so far. The concept of 'society' in sociology has been developed in close connection with the diachronic change (as described in the preceding section) of the same concept in domains beyond sociology. A particularly significant influence on sociology was exerted by the move to distinguish between 'society as a whole' and 'the social', and particularly by the focus on the 'social'. But that does not mean that sociology concerned itself solely with the analysis of 'society as a whole' and 'the social' while turning a blind eye to everything else. Within the space between these two lay concepts of society, sociological analysis has been dealing both with 'society as a whole' and 'the social', addressing these from various angles and distances. And this is the reason why sociology has assembled an analytic concept of 'society' distinct from lay concepts such as 'society as a whole' and 'the social', encapsulating *habitus*, interactions, and system. We can thus argue that the concept of 'society', which has always been one of the concepts most fundamental to sociology, although it was forged to analyse 'society as a whole' and 'the social', has always been a multi-dimensional one.

## 6 Social Study in the Age of Globalisation

Now, what can we add to the arguments made at the beginning of this paper based on the analysis made so far?

First of all, Thatcher's assertion that 'society' does not exist may seem to be a reference to the nation-state, seen as 'society as a whole'

<sup>6</sup> Bourdieu 1980; Elias [1939] 1995a, [1939] 1995a; Foucault [1975] 1977; Luhmann [1984] 1995; Habermas [1981a] 1984; [1981b] 1987.

<sup>7</sup> We shall not give a detailed account here of the three dimensions comprising the traditional analytic concept of 'society' in sociology since they are not the main object of this paper; they shall be addressed in another article.

in the twentieth century. However, that is not the case. Based on our discussion, we can say that she was referring to 'the social', that is, the collective practices and frameworks of protection by those deprived of security in the market economy, to mutually guarantee security - particularly the mechanisms of social welfare created under the initiative of the state following the growth of the national economy. Of course, social welfare did not cease to exist. However, the connections between the state, the national economy, and 'the social' that were strengthened within the boundaries defined by the term 'national' did, in fact, slacken to some extent during the last quarter of the twentieth century. And as this established 'social' weakened, the nationals comprising 'society as a whole' became nothing more than "individual men and women" or just many "families". And when, in this situation, actors who find themselves in a precarious position in the market economy shift their problems onto 'society', this action is, in fact, tantamount to forcing their own problems onto the nationals - the "individual men and women" and the "families" - which is why they get thus criticized as 'nationals' unworthy of the name. Yet another phenomenon that goes hand in hand with it is when people, who find themselves in a precarious position in the market economy due to a weakening of 'the social', start attributing their instability to peripheral groups of an even weaker position. What we are seeing here is that, although the idea of 'nationals' is broadcast to all and sundry, there is, in fact, insufficient cooperation between the state, the national economy, and 'the social' taking care of the actors that inhabit this category, thus resulting in the concept of the 'national' being simultaneously too much and too little. Undeniably, the nation-state still exists. But today, as the aspect of 'the social' is weak, it is no longer 'society as a whole' that takes care of those defined as 'nationals', but, rather, a 'society' that forces them into taking care of themselves by themselves and torments those who oppose it while labelling them 'nationals' unworthy of the name - all as if simply to save itself from demise. Proclaiming a 'society' without 'the social' is a mere postponement of the problem concerning 'the social', not a solution. This is what Thatcher's statement meant.

No matter how often her words are repeated, there are still always those in the market economy in precarious situations. Accordingly, we will never see the disappearance of the various collective practices and frameworks of protection created by these actors to guarantee one another's security. In this sense, sociologists were correct in their retorts that there is a 'society' beyond "individual men, women, and their families". But they failed to clearly show that the 'society' they espoused was 'the social' sphere of mutual guarantees of security by those deprived of safety in the market economy, as well as the kind of 'society as a whole' that is needed for maintaining 'the social'. The reason stems from the fact that sociology forgot its his-

tory: a history of analysis, conducted from various angles and distances, of the 'society as a whole' and 'the social' within the space between these two lay concepts of society.

Oblivious to its own history, sociology since the rise of globalisation theory has experienced a surge of research asserting the limitations of the concept of 'society'. A point frequently stressed in such critiques of the concept is the problem of equating the concept of 'society' with the nation-state. However, it is not necessarily true that sociologists have traditionally envisioned 'society' as a closed and ontic nation-state. Granted, the discipline was to some extent influenced by the lay concepts of 'society', referring to 'society as a whole' and 'the social', but its main endeavour was to analyse, within the space between these two lay concepts, the two from various angles and distances. As a result, sociology has forged over the years an analytic concept of 'society' that spans a number of dimensions – the habitus, the network, the interaction, and the system. But as sociology forgot the very path it left behind, the discipline has fallen into self-criticism based on an oversimplified view that equates the concept of 'society' with the nation-state, with some even proclaiming the death of this central concept for the discipline themselves.<sup>8</sup>

In light of the social change known as globalisation, it is important for us to understand the problems faced by the concept of 'society' in sociology today. It does not, however, mean that all aspects of the existing concept of 'society' are invalid. What we need is a careful dissection of this conceptual tool.<sup>9</sup> And a helpful starting point for analysis of 'society as a whole' and 'the social' that are undergoing some important transformations in the era we live in is the concept of network woven by all kinds of actors. If we could capture an entire picture of all networks comprising all actors, we would be able to see various systems, unified to various degrees based on the intensity and closeness of the relationships of their participants, the level of organisation of interactions, and the shared definitions of reality. A nation-state now, even though those inhabiting it may perceive it as 'society as a whole', in this paradigm, will be just one of the systems – a system containing all kinds of other systems on the one hand and open to external interactions on the other. If we call the areas within the nation-state that are open to interactions with the outside world 'zones', good examples of such zones would be global cities and

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**8** A good example is the work of Latour (2005), where his depiction of the concept of society, which had been central to sociology so far, is purposefully caricature-like (a move often found in theoretical endeavours) to differentiate his own actor network theory. Otherwise, the book is very rich in substance, and, as we believe, would be even richer if it were to connect more widely to the existing findings of sociology.

**9** For a discussion of future directions for the development of the analytical concept in sociology in a modern form, see Utsumi 2018.

special economic zones (Sassen 2001; Ong 2006). Brisk movement of people, things, information, or capital such global cities and special economic zones provide a stage that serves as the foundation for the transnational system, at the same time triggering changes of all kinds of systems within nation-states. The emergence of the global elites that have the capital and the habitus enabling them to freely cross the borders of nation-states and, on the other end of the continuum, of the global underclass living in poverty and precariousness are both examples of such changes (Bauman 2001). An important nature of these changes is that they entail transformations of 'the social' that go further than a mere weakening of social welfare, which had played the role of the main representative of 'the social' so far. One example is the various assemblages formed between the global elite existing both within and across borders and the global underclass, or the increasing role played by such assemblages as they redefine (in a situation where the connections between the state, the national economy, and 'the social' remain insufficiently weak) the nationals and the transnational communities as 'society as a whole'. Globalisation thus poses, at least, two problems for us: how to create 'the social' and of what kind 'the social' should be, and how to re-envisage 'society as a whole'. In other words, the process of globalisation has yet again problematised the relationship between 'society in a broad sense' and 'society in a narrow sense'.

This problem brought about by globalisation closely resembles the situation in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the discipline of sociology was born (Koto 2011a, 72-4). At the outset, sociologists were living in and analysing society with a jungle law market economy and weak political powers, which lacked both the will and the capability to curb the strong preying on the weak. Sociologists focused on 'the social' that grew in the crevices of the two - the collective attempts to deal with risks too great for any individual to cope with. Globalisation requires us to seek answers to the very same questions posed by sociologists in the early days of the discipline. But we are better equipped than they were, because the sociology of today has a long history of analysing all kinds of phenomena on the continuum between 'society as a whole' and 'the social'; and we also have the concept of 'society', a tool well-honed over the century-old history of the discipline. The task of sociology in the twenty-first century is to provide a theoretical reconstruction, based on a critical analysis of the discipline's legacy, of the concept of 'society', and to do so in ways that would contribute to empirical research on 'society' in the age of globalisation. Through an accumulation of such theoretical and empirical research, sociology must also reconceptualize 'the social' and re-envisage 'society as a whole', or attempt to find new ways of conceptually combining 'the economic', 'the political', and 'the social'.

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# Lost Dolls, Lost Souls in Elena Ferrante's *La figlia oscura*

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**Abstract** This paper aims to analyse Elena Ferrante's use of the metaphor of playing with dolls in her novel, *La figlia oscura* (The Lost Daughter). With a view of shedding a light on this issue, the first part of the paper will review the prominent essays of Sigmund Freud, Ernst Jentsch, Walter Benjamin, Rainer Maria Rilke and Charles Baudelaire that question the nature of playing with dolls in terms of psychology with various focuses. These essays generally agree on the fact that playing with dolls is a strong threshold to come to terms with the self, as well as on the fact that this coming to terms with the self is by nature not guaranteed. The second part will examine Elena Ferrante's dealing with the problem of playing with dolls and her character's journey to death and a possible psychological resurrection.

**Keywords** Dolls as metaphors. Elena Ferrante. *La figlia oscura*. Inanimate objects in literature. Self-rotation.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 “Tell me how you play with dolls, I'll tell you who you are”. – 3 Playing Doctor with the Doll, Practicing Self-Surgery. – 4 Conclusion



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2019-01-24
Accepted	2019-05-29
Published	2019-06-27

## Open access

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**Citation** Kaya, Nilay (2019). “Lost Dolls, Lost Souls in Elena Ferrante's *La figlia oscura*”. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 637-650.

**DOI** 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/022

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## 1 Introduction

Kafka's lost manuscripts reveal a letter from a doll that is written to an anonymous girl. Kafka comes across this girl in 1923 while walking with his girlfriend, Dora Diamant. The little girl is crying because she has lost her doll. Kafka talks to the girl. Even though he hesitates at first, he tells the girl that the doll is not lost and has gone on a trip. According to what he says, her doll even has written a letter to the girl. The girl calms down a little but insists on seeing the letter. When Kafka goes home, he writes the letter and takes it to the park the very next day and gives it to the girl. For the next few weeks, he keeps writing letters to the girl on behalf of the doll. Although the doll likes the girl very much, she has been bored of living with the same family for a long time. Letters are about the adventures that prevent the doll from coming back home although the doll wants to go home eventually. When Dora Diamant tells this story to Kafka's friend and biographer Max Brod, she emphasises that the author was as much sensitive to writing these letters as writing other stories while struggling with his own sufferings a year before his death. The present work will deal with the theme of playing with the dolls in Elena Ferrante's novel, *La figlia oscura* (The Lost Daughter) which is thoroughly an interrogation of the self, but firstly it will revise the prominent essays that are written on dolls, in order to examine the nature of Ferrante's using the metaphor of dolls.

## 2 "Tell me how you play with dolls, I'll tell you who you are"

The nature of the relationship between the child's relationship with toys and the impulse to play, the change in the child's relationships with objects in the outer world, the seriousness of the play, the flirting with the adult world, especially the relationship between the doll and the human spirit is raised intensively for the first time with Sigmund Freud's famous article titled "Uncanny" (2001, 217-56). In fact, Freud writes this article in response to Ernst Jentsch's work titled in "On the Psychology of the Uncanny" (1997, 7-16). In his study, Jentsch says that the key element of uncanniness corresponds to the confusion between the living and the non-living. Based on this, Freud discusses the emotional impact of an inanimate object through a series of arguments such as the child's castration complex, the defence mechanisms s/he has developed upon coping with a loss, the child's desires and sexual and aggressive fantasies with Hoffmann's doll Olympia in the story "The Sand Man" (Hoffmann 1991).

Since Jentsch and Freud, some authors have approached the dolls, which are particularly indispensable for girls, in terms of the issue



**Figure 1** Joseph Cornell (1903-1972), *Untitled (Bébé Marie)*. Early forties. Painted wooden box containing a doll.  
© The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

of existence, on the basis of the psychoanalytic pre-acceptance that the relationship of the child with inanimate objects is the first act of abstraction, imagination and “the passage into a world of adult affections and demands and losses” (Gross 2012, xii). Why are dolls more interesting than swinging wooden horses or toy cars while entering the dream world and contemplating on existence? Why does the child prefer to get lost in a similar ‘other’? The doll, unlike the mother, does not answer the crying of the child, mirror her, endorse the good, punish the bad, and hold her out. It is usually physically smaller than the child herself/himself and against her/him when the child has to define her/his own identity. It almost stands on the edge of narcissism and puts an arrogant pressure on the child to create his own identity, it says ‘isolate yourself from the outside world’, but never answers any questions. When Walter Benjamin, in his essay “The Old Toys: The Toy Exhibition at the Märkisch Museum”, says, “When a doll is used in contempt, broken, repaired and broken again, even the most majestic becomes a proletarian comrade in the children’s play committee” (Gross 2012, 88), he develops a sense of companionship between the children and their dolls. However, it is also possible for these inanimate objects with a vivid appearance to create an

existential anxiety between the nature of things and human-beings.

Rainer Maria Rilke also puts forward a quite similar opinion in his essay titled "Dolls: On the Wax Dolls of Lote Pritzel" (2012, 51-63). He says that a doll he saw in a wax doll exhibition first helped him find his way in the place, thus, made him think about the existential rotation of the outer world surrounding him. According to him, the doll is no different from the universe that stays inert and carefree against the human's search for meaning. The external world evokes an absurd sense of reality with all its vitality, just like the silent doll standing in the face of all its deceptive vitality. Based on this argument, it is possible to say that the doll is not only a foolish tool that prepares a girl for motherhood by the patriarchal order/system, but also the mediator of an *anagnorisis* moment on the brink of the outside world. Although it seems extremely rational and comprehensible, indeed, it is a meeting with a very gray area of reality. Will this encounter be a joyful embrace, or will it turn into a fearful and disturbing experience? And this encounter is of high priority and a very critical moment in the construction of the subject.

According to another author, Charles Baudelaire, dolls are the *camera obscura* of the child's brain, those are the children themselves that are upside down. In his essay "The Philosophy of Toys" (Gross 2012, 11-22), while Baudelaire categorises the ways of playing with toys, he in fact points to different performance and self experiences in children's relationship with toys. First, all the children insistently talk to their toys, even if they do not get an answer. We should also note that Baudelaire labels the girls who imitated their mother as 'poor'. Some children take this course very seriously: they do not instrumentalize their toys in any ways, they collect them, they protect them, they arrange them in a row carefully, they create collections and museums from them, they refrain from showing the toys to their friends, and 'touching' them is a banned action. This is not the parents who put the babies in the glazed and locked windows, but the children themselves. Baudelaire takes his position against these "man-children". There are also some children that tend to damage their toys consistently. Let us think about the girls who bite the feet of plastic dolls, scratch their faces with pen, take their eyes out and tear their hair. Where does this *Angst* originate from? Baudelaire says that he does not know the reason behind the instinct that underlies this childish excuse, that this is a puzzling question, and that he cannot blame the children who did this. But, he is sure that this motive is the first metaphysical awakening in any case. It is obvious that what is experienced in this metaphysical lesson is the feeling that is close to melancholy and first dizziness. In any case, playing with dolls is a relationship model that is directed to the self and the other and points to the various secrets of human ego (Gržinic, Illic, Vidovic 2010, 45).

### 3 Playing Doctor with the Doll, Practicing Self-Surgery

Little Ayşe, little Ayşe  
Tell me what you are up to  
I'm looking after my baby, I'm feeding her  
I'm kissing on her rosy cheeks, I'm telling her a  
lullaby.  
(Anonymous Turkish lullaby)

*Küçük Ayşe, küçük Ayşe  
Napıyorsun bana söyle  
Bebeğime bakıyorum, ona mama veriyorum  
Gülyüzünü öpüyorum, ona ninni söylüyorum.*

Dolls that create dilemmas and tensions with their lifeless souls appear as powerful metaphors in the brilliant fiction of modern-day authors. One of them is the Italian writer Elena Ferrante who is famous for the 'Neapolitan Novels' around the world. Undoubtedly, Ferrante is being read fervently, but it is a controversial issue that she insists on hiding her identity as a writer. All of her works have been translated into various languages, including the so called "Neapolitan Novels" in the English speaking world: *L'amore molesto* (Troubling Love), *I giorni dell'abbandono* (The Days of Abandonment), *La figlia oscura* (The Lost Daughter), *La spiaggia di notte* (The Beach at Night), *La frantumaglia* (Frantumaglia: A Writer's Journey).<sup>1</sup> After the translation of Ferrante's works into different languages, various layers of her work has been studied as well as her 'fictitious identity of the author' based on critic texts like Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1977) and Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1974), dealing with the notions of "killer text" or "the dead writer", which we can no longer be considered as original points for discussion. The fact that Ferrante conceals her identity gives rise to this cult of literary criticism as the first reflex is nothing but a trap on the way to interpret her literary text. In fact, Ferrante killed the author 'from the start' with a clever move and is looking for her naive readers who are not under the spell of the phenomenon of 'mysterious writer'.

One of the multi-layering elements of Ferrante's work regarding the form and the context is undoubtedly the doll. The first book of the "Neapolitan Novels", *L'amica geniale* (My Brilliant Friend) and the last book *Storia della bambina perduta* (The Story of the Lost Child), based on two women's childhood friendship of more than a half a century, are completed by the circle drawn by a doll. The relationship be-

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<sup>1</sup> See Ferrante, Elena (1992). *L'amore molesto*. Roma: E/O; (2002) *I giorni dell'abbandono*. Roma: E/O; (2006) *La figlia oscura*. Roma: E/O; (2007) *La spiaggia di notte*. Roma: E/O; (2011) *L'amica geniale*. Roma: E/O; (2012) *Storia del nuovo cognome*. Roma: E/O; (2013) *Storia di chi fugge e di chi resta*. Roma: E/O; (2014) *Storia della bambina perduta*. Roma: E/O; (2017) *La frantumaglia*. Roma: E/O.

tween a daughter and her mother, a mother and her daughter, a girl and her female friend or her sister, a woman and another woman, but ultimately a woman's relationship with herself, and of course with the outer patriarchal world, is a matter of not only the "Neapolitan Novels", but also all of Ferrante's novels. And, dolls are in the centre of this relationship issue. Dolls are spirited miniatures that embody humanity, life and death, self and the surrounding, loneliness and communication, language and muteness, and anything that constitutes a matter of representation about human-beings. In particular, unusual mother-daughter relationships, girls discomfited by their mothers, mothers who abandoned or cannot abandon their daughters against their will, and who mother inanimate objects (dolls), girls and women who lost their voices and mute dolls are among the frequently used subjects, characters and motifs in Ferrante's novels (Milkova 2013, 91-109). *La spiaggia di notte* (The Beach at Night), which she wrote for children, is a first-person narration of a doll that fell into disfavour and was forgotten at the beach because of a sudden appearance of an adorable cat. The story of Celina - who is trying to get rid of the beach worker who cleans the garbage on the beach and trying to be protected from all kinds of threats in the outside world, loses her words and almost her name with the fear of being left behind, and does not want to be one of the dolls with plaques on which the same words are recorded - is Ferrante's one of the most striking examples of dealings with dolls. In the rest of this article, I will try to observe how the issue of dolls in her novel *La figlia oscura* (The Lost Daughter) expands Ferrante's fiction.

*La figlia oscura* focuses on Leda's lonely trip to a seaside town in the southern Italy. She is a teacher of English literature, a middle-aged widow and a lonely woman who devoted herself to her work and her two daughters. When Leda's daughters grow up, they move to Canada to live with their father. Leda goes on this holiday with mixed feelings of emancipation and longing for her daughters because they are now separated. While she is expecting a quiet sea holiday with her books, she goes through unexpected tensions in this holiday. She notices a family at the beach where she goes everyday. She starts to observe the young mother and the little daughter of this family with an increasing frequency. This observation turns into an uncomfortable experience after a while. The main object of the game that the mother and the daughter are playing on the beach is a doll. Leda's first encounter with the doll is described as follows:

In un'occasione le vidi giocare insieme con la bambola. Lo facevano divertendosi molto, la vestivano, la svestivano, fingevano di ungerla con crema solare, le facevano il bagno dentro un secchiello verde, l'asciugavano strofinandola per non farle prendere freddo, se la stringevano al seno come per allattarla o la rimpinzava-



no con pappe di sabbia, la tenevano al sole accanto a loro, sdraiata sul loro stesso telo. (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 17)

On one occasion I saw them playing with the doll. They did it with such pleasure, dressing her, undressing her, pretending to put sun-tan lotion on her; they bathed her in a green pail, they dried her, rubbing her so that she wouldn't catch cold, hugged her to their breast as if to nurse her, or fed her baby food of sand; they kept her in the sun with them, lying on their towel. (Ferrante 2007a, 19)<sup>2</sup>

I asked female friends around me how they played with their dolls during their childhood before I started writing this article considering Baudelaire's classification of the ways of playing with toys. No matter what the dolls are made of - paper, plastic, or porcelain - all the girls love to play with the dolls' clothes. Those who lived their childhood in the seventies were fond of dolls that were famous at that time and that had small sound recorded discs on their backs. If their parents allowed them to play with those precious dolls, the dolls were played until those records were broken. Well, what was playing on those records? Certainly, songs and speeches that gave the child some sort of instructions to mother the dolls. Of course, not every doll needed to have a disc on its back. Obviously, girls were often prone to mothering their dolls without the need for an instruction. A friend of mine told me that she threw away her dolls that she played with passion and started to mother her sister after her younger sister was born. It is understood that there are various ways of playing with dolls such as 'little artists' writing and exhibiting plays with dolls, playing for a variety of sadistic impulses, and playing to socialise with other children. However, it cannot be denied that the majority of girls like to be a mother to their babies, instinctively or through learning. This mothering play is what Leda first observes while the mother and the daughter are playing with the doll. Leda finds the mother and daughter artificial - imagine a scene where the mother speaks with a baby sound and the daughter pretends to be an adult - and thinks that the mother is showing off. According to Leda, this play is extremely annoying. Therefore, she expresses her negative feelings and impressions. As for the doll, it is ugly and dirty:

La piccola giocava con la bambola. Le parlava, ma non in quanto pupazza spelacchiata, il cranio mezzo biondo mezzo calvo. Chissà che figura le attribuiva. Nani, le diceva, Nanuccia, Nanicchia, Nennella. [...] Nani era una bambola brutta, vecchia, aveva in fac-

<sup>2</sup> For English translations see Ferrante, Elena (2007). *The Lost Daughter*. (trans.) Ann Goldstein. New York: Europa Editions.

cia e sul corpo segni di penna biro. Tuttavia in quei momenti spri-gionava una forza viva. (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 36)

The little girl was playing with the doll. She spoke to it, but not as to a mangy-looking doll, with a half blond, half bald head. Who knows what character she imagined for her. Nani, she said, Nanuc-cia, Nanicchia, Nennella. [...] Nani was an ugly old doll, her face and body showed marks from ballpoint pen. Yet in those moments a living force was released. (Ferrante 2007a, 37-8)

Considering that they are enthroned specifically in the horror cinema, we have to accept that the dolls have frightening appearances. The more they resemble living beings, the more they look scary. The doll plays a key role for children to get in touch with *things* and to get used to them, however, dolls lead to the damage on children's feeling of affection and even lead to the motive for damaging things through being alike to the children yet having totally different bodies from that of children's. In fact, the ultimate desire of children is to see the spirit of the toy, so they sometimes break the toy. When this action, which took place in the early stages of abstraction and imagination, fails to find the soul, it brings about the first disappointment and melancholy with it. As a matter of fact, the girl whom Leda is watching throws her doll on the sand at some point.

On the other hand, another striking element in the quote above is the issue of naming. Playing with the doll also includes the basic need for naming things: the need to communicate with another person or to fill a gap that creates a sense of longing is included in this need (Gržinic, Ilic, Vidovic 2010, 48). Indeed, Leda implies that the person to whom the child is talking is not a doll and she wonders what values the child attributes to the doll. One way or the other, this communication effort is not the type that ends very successfully. The fact that the child gives different names to the doll does not change the fact that she cannot get a response no matter how much she speaks to it. It is an experience that breaches between the self and the outside world, so that it is inevitable that it often turns into revolt and anger. Thus, the faces of those babies are painted with a pen, their arms are cut off, and their hair is removed. After a while, the image of the doll becomes heart-wrenching as well as scary. When Leda saw the doll, which was thrown aside the afternoon when the beach fun was finished, she described the doll as: "Era rimasta solo la bambola, ma in una posizione penosa, le braccia spalancate, le gambe divaricate, sdraiata sulla schiena ma con la testa semisepolta nella sabbia. Si vedeva il naso, un occhio, mezzo cranio" (Ferrante [2006]

2015, 37-8).<sup>3</sup> Leda pulls the doll out of sand, which was thrown on the sand, shabby, with half of its face covered with sand as if it was about to drown itself.

From this point on, Leda's point of view that she directed to the outside world through the doll will now turn into her inner self. Will the negation that she tends to have while she is observing the outside world be revealed in the relationship she has with the doll? She takes the doll and brings it to her hotel room:

Estrassi la bambola, me la rigirai perplessa tra le mani. Niente vestiti, chissà Elena dove li aveva abbandonati. Pesava più del previsto, doveva avere acqua dentro. I pochi capelli biondi le venivano fuori dal cranio a piccoli ciuffi distanziati. Aveva guance troppo gonfie, occhi azzurri stupidi e labbra piccole con un foro scuro al centro. (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 44-5)

I fished out the doll, turned her in bewilderment between my hands. No clothes, who knows where Elena had left them. She was heavier than I expected, she must be full of water. Her sparse blonde hair stuck out of her head in widely scattered tufts. Her cheeks were too puffy, she had stupid blue eyes and small lips with a dark opening at the center. (Ferrante 2007a, 46)

The doll, which is now 'lost' for the mother and daughter, is owned by Leda in a way. Leda's second critical encounter with the doll takes place when they are alone. Her first impression appears with the implications that the girl mistreats the doll. The doll is in a naturally pitiful state due to being mistreated, and this let Leda have already a compassionate feeling. On the other hand, she uses the expression "stupid blue eyes" for the doll's eyes: an uncomfortable feeling of compassion and another negation. The reason for this negation is gradually appearing as she remembers her own childhood and the doll that she used to play with:

Ne avevo avuta una con bei capelli a boccoli, me ne occupavo molto, non l'avevo mai persa. Si chiamava Mina, mia madre diceva che il nome gliel'avevo dato io. Mina, mamma. Mammuccia, mi venne in mente, una parola per dire bambola che da tempo non si usa più. Giocare con la mammuccia. Mia madre si era sempre concessa pochissimo ai giochi che cercavo di fare col suo corpo. Si innervosiva, si arrabbiava. La indispettiva che la pettinassi, le mettes-

<sup>3</sup> "Only the doll remained, but in a painful position, arms spread, legs a part, lying on her back, her head half buried in the sand. Her nose could be seen, an eye, half her skull" (Ferrante 2007a, 39).

si nastrini, le lavassi la faccia e le orecchie, la vestissi, rivestissi. (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 45)

I had had one with beautiful curly hair, I had taken great care of her, had never lost her. Her name was Mina, my mother said that I had given her the name. Mina, mamma. *Mammuccia* came to my mind, a word for 'doll' that hasn't been used for a long time. Play with the *mammuccia*. My mother had rarely yielded to the games I tried to play with her body. She immediately got nervous, she didn't like being the doll. She laughed, pulled away, grew angry. It annoyed her when I combed her hair, put ribbons on it, washed her face and ears, undressed her, redressed her. (Ferrante 2007a, 46-7)

It seems that Leda names her doll like the little girl on the beach, but, unlike Elena, she protected her doll and never lost it. She also played the game of mothering. "Mammuccia," is an old expression used for dolls in the dialect of Naples. When Leda calls the doll like this, she feels the tension caused by the pairs of provincialism and urbanism as well as daughterhood and motherhood. Leda's hidden anger to Elena because of the mistreatment of the doll is now directed to her mother. According to Freud, the uncanniness of the doll conceals or exposes the dynamics of the death instinct. Playing with the doll is a narcissistic union with the universe: first merging with the mother, then with earth through death (Sims 1996, 676). Leda wants to be merged with her mother through the games she wants her to be included 'physically' but her mother does not appreciate the games in which she should perform the baby. Thus, Leda's desire is not realised. Another memory that occurs to her right after this is about her mum's farewell on her deathbed. Her mother's last words are, "L'ultima cosa che mi ha detto, qualche tempo prima di morire, è stata, in un dialetto sfranto: sento 'nu poch'e friddo, Leda, e me sto caccanno sotto" (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 88).<sup>4</sup> Her mother dies after turning into a doll. Then, Leda remembers that she gives her own doll to her daughter to play. Neither she plays with her mother nor a positive bond is created among her daughter, the doll *mammuccia* and herself. The daughter ruins her childhood legacy, which causes Leda to get angry and throw the doll out of the balcony. In Ferrante's famous series of Neapolitan novels too, the toys were thrown away due to various instincts: rejection, resistance, jealousy, confronting and aggression are some of these instincts.

Despite the feeling of aggression that stems from the relationships with her own mother, with her own daughter, but basically with her-

<sup>4</sup> "The last thing she said to me, some time before she died, was, in a fractured dialect, I feel a little cold, Leda, and I'm shitting my pants" (Ferrante 2007a, 89).

*self*, Leda keeps having an extremely strong sense of compassion. She puts the doll on her knees and asks herself honestly why she took the little girl's doll: "Perché l'avevo presa. Custodiva l'amore di Nina e Elena, il loro vincolo, la reciproca passione. Era il testimone lucente di una maternità serena" (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 61).<sup>5</sup> Although she feels guilty for taking the doll, she buys a new dress for the doll whose dress got soiled because of the black liquid drooling down the doll's mouth. The next day she deceives herself by saying that she will give the doll in its new dress back to the little girl. She constantly buys new clothes and shoes for the doll, saying herself that what she is doing is 'pointless'. She is deceiving herself because she thinks that she is not a good mother and wants to consolidate her own motherhood by giving the doll to the little girl. At this point, the question of whether Leda would give the doll back becomes the main tension of the novel, and it starts to increase its dose because Leda's inner conflicts have increasingly exacerbated. The moment when she feels the doll alive for the first time is a sign that the conflicts will turn into a fierce knot. When she cannot find the doll the next morning where she has left it, she feels uneasy "as if the doll throws itself off the terrace at night". The feeling that occurs when she finally finds it sitting on a table in the kitchen, when the uneasiness is remedied, is an illusion of reality: "Per una frazione di secondo mi sembrò che muovesse le labbra e mi cacciasse la punta rossa della lingua come per gioco" (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 111).<sup>6</sup> The moments when Leda feels the doll is alive start to increase. That "creepy, scummy, black liquid" that runs from the doll's mouth because of its belly that is full of water turns into the leitmotif of the novel. As Leda cleanses the doll with alcohol in a bloodcurdling way, the doll with full of water slowly becomes Leda's and its name changes into Mina.

In the meantime, missing doll posters are hanged in various spots in the summer resort for the lost doll. Little Elena whose aunt is pregnant, plays games as if she is pregnant in the absence of her doll. Moreover, she is back to pacifiers since she lost her doll. The situation of Elena, who desires to become a baby again despite playing 'motherhood', indicates the contradictory nature of the relationship with dolls. Leda, who observes Elena, remotely tries to explain this complicated situation by saying, "O no, un bambino non vuole mai soltanto quello che chiede, anzi una richiesta soddisfatta gli rende ancora più insopportabile la mancanza non confessata" (Ferrante [2006]

<sup>5</sup> "Why had I taken her. She guarded the love of Nina and Elena, their bond, their reciprocal passion. She was the shining testimony of perfect motherhood" (Ferrante 2007a, 62).

<sup>6</sup> "For a fraction of a second it seemed to me that she moved her lips and stuck out the red tip of her tongue, as if playing a game" (Ferrante 2007a, 111).

2015, 129).<sup>7</sup> She thinks that taking the girl's doll makes the existence of the girl extremely troublesome. Although she feels guilty as if she has kidnapped a child, not a doll, she herself feels depressed about losing the doll. We see the tremendously ambivalent moods of the characters we meet in all of Ferrante's novels in the words of Leda saying, "Ero confusa, mi pareva a tratti che Elena non potesse fare a meno, mentre io no" (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 111-2).<sup>8</sup>

The unknown scummy liquid in the belly of the doll goes beyond being a leitmotif as it flows into Leda's sink. Leda, who sees this dirty water flowing, thinks about the vomiting during her own pregnancy. "Sono rimasta in cinta, ho partorito una figlia e non so nemmeno come sono fatta dentro. L'unica cosa vera che desidero è scappare" (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 139),<sup>9</sup> she says. Later on, Leda's desire to be both with them and free and away from them since they abandoned her or she left her daughters is an absurdly irritating feeling. She cannot find out what's inside the doll till the end. This time, she plays the 'doctor' and takes the unknown out of the doll carefully and she ends the surgery. It is time to recall Freud's argument that dolls' uncanniness either uncovers or reveals the dynamics of the death drive. In the case of Leda, this surgical operation is a narcissistic unification with the universe that corresponds to her confrontation with her mother, her own motherhood, 'other' women's motherhood and her girlhood. In Leda's eyes, it is the resurrection and the voice in a universe where all women are limited to being mothers and are left voiceless, it is the emancipation of the emancipation of the 'eternally guilty mother'. That's exactly why it is meaningful for her to answer the complaint of her daughter on the phone, "Mamma, che fai, non telefoni più? Ci fai sapere, almeno, se sei viva o sei morta?" (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 141)<sup>10</sup> with "Sono morta, ma sto bene" (Ferrante [2006] 2015, 141)<sup>11</sup> at the end of the novel. When the record on its back is repaired, the doll regains its voices inside. The doll is emancipated after getting rid of that scum filling inside.

**7** "Or no, a child never wants only what it's asking for, in fact a satisfied demand makes even more unbearable the need that has not been confessed" (Ferrante 2007a, 128).

**8** "I was confused; at moments it seemed to me that Elena could do without her, while I could not" (Ferrante 2007a, 112).

**9** "I got pregnant, I gave birth to a daughter, and I don't even know how I'm made inside. The only true thing I want is to escape" (Ferrante 2007a, 138).

**10** "Mama, what are you doing, why haven't you called? Won't you at least let us know if you're alive or dead?" (Ferrante 2007a, 140).

**11** "I'm dead, but I'm fine" (Ferrante 2007a, 140)

## 4 Conclusion

It can be concluded that Elena Ferrante's using the metaphor of dolls in *La figlia oscura* is more ambivalent, not a mere problem of paring the dolls but also because these may be mediators in the process of finding the self in a blurred existence. These inanimate objects, with their vivid appearance, first create an existential anxiety: as Charles Baudelaire puts it a *camera obscura* reflecting the self upside down, challenging the human ego in various ways. And as Sigmund Freud firstly suggested in the strongest possible terms, the uncanniness of dolls exposes the death instinct in the narcissistic union with the universe: first challenging, then coming to terms and finally merging with the mother, reversing the roles of mother and daughter, but in a wider perspective a thorough calling for escaping from the present existence, eluding the self from the every possible social role of the external world. Essentially this path is visiting the underworld and coming back with even an imbibed *savoir-vivre*. In *La figlia oscura* visiting the underworld is concretized by Leda's 'surgery of the doll' and herself in the end.

Finally, Ferrante questions the collective pre-acceptance that dolls are the main objects that prepare girls for motherhood, and she discusses (the necessity of) being mother for women by metaphorizing this phenomenon in this example. But she does not stop here: the dolls of this skilful raconteur produce different voices in the struggle to find existential rotation in correlation with their unliveliness and uneasiness. Similar to Rainer Maria Rilke's finding his way through a doll in the wax doll exhibition, Ferrante's character finally experiences an *anagnorisis* moment and gains an insight of her own by metaphorically killing her mother and her own motherhood.

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## **Recensioni**



# Eros Baldissera

## *Arabo compatto*

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**Recensione di** Baldissera, Eros (2017). *Arabo compatto. Dizionario Italiano-Arabo/Arabo-Italiano*. Bologna: Zanichelli, 576 pp.

A più di vent'anni di distanza dalla sua prima pubblicazione, il *Dizionario compatto Italiano-Arabo/Arabo-Italiano* di Eros Baldissera giunge alla sua terza edizione arricchendosi notevolmente nel numero di lemmi, locuzioni idiomatiche e fraseologiche. Oggi come allora, i destinatari rimangono gli stessi: studenti, turisti, operatori commerciali, sociali, mediatori culturali, ecc., o più in generale, chi si avvicina allo studio della lingua araba, pur non escludendo gli arabofoni che imparano l'italiano. Pertanto, lo scopo dell'opera rimane quello di fornire il lessico più ricorrente – della varietà di arabo standard – riguardante il linguaggio comune, ma anche argomenti di carattere letterario, sociale, politico, economico, scientifico, oltre che espressioni dell'arabo classico utili agli studiosi arabisti, terminologia tecnica, grammaticale e specifica dell'Islam.

Il suo pregio resta quello di aver concentrato in un'opera unica, per altro tascabile, i due versi di traduzione, facilitando specialmente lo studio dall'italiano all'arabo sentito per lungo tempo qualitativamente carente in Italia (Baldissera 2004, 5). In passato, come ha ben descritto Camera d'Afflitto (2017), per la traduzione di parole dall'italiano all'arabo si doveva ricorrere infatti a dizionari in lingua straniera, almeno fino alla pubblicazione delle opere di Jannotta (1964) prima e di Tillisi (1986) poi, che tuttavia riproducono un solo verso e – per quanto concerne la prima – non soddisfaceva completamente



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

Submitted  
Published

2019-05-13  
2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** Facchin, Andrea (2019). Review of *Arabo compatto. Dizionario Italiano-Arabo/Arabo-Italiano*, by Baldissera, Eros. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 653-656.

gli arabisti dell'epoca, per di più non trovandosi facilmente sul mercato (Camera d'Afflitto 2017). Il *Dizionario compatto* – e in seguito la sua versione maggiore – ha costituito, sin dall'inizio, una valida alternativa ai succitati dizionari e un aiuto, affiancandolo e non sostituendolo, al *Vocabolario arabo-italiano* di Renato Traini (1966-1973) edito dall'Istituto per l'Oriente di Roma, com'è noto, molto apprezzato dagli studiosi arabisti italiani.

Nel 1994 il *Dizionario compatto* nasce dunque «dalla consapevolezza dell'assenza di uno strumento pratico, tascabile e abbastanza preciso per tutti coloro [...] che possano necessitare d'incontrarsi con la lingua araba» (Baldissera 1994, 3). Nello specifico, la sua praticità e il formato tascabile hanno colto nel segno il cambiamento, ormai radicale, in atto nel campo dell'apprendimento delle lingue straniere e di conseguenza nelle esigenze del discente rispetto alla ricerca lessicale. Le suddette caratteristiche hanno fatto del dizionario – di per sé chiave per la comprensione linguistica – un oggetto facilmente trasportabile, quindi consultabile, ovunque anche in viaggio, precorrendo i tempi in cui grazie ai dispositivi mobili si possono consultare dizionari online per tutte le lingue e favorendo la spendibilità di questo strumento linguistico anche in termini di apprendimento autonomo da parte di studenti già avviati allo studio della lingua.

Il successo dell'opera ha portato, negli anni a seguire, alla pubblicazione della sua versione maggiore, *Il dizionario di Arabo*, nel 2004, dal quale è stata tratta la seconda edizione del compatto, l'*Arabo compatto*, nel 2008 e la prima e unica – per il momento – del *Mini di Arabo* nel 2009. La seconda edizione del *Compatto* proponeva nuovi lemmi e soprattutto ulteriori traducanti, 26.000 voci in totale, 245 frasi nell'appendice fraseologica, in un formato tascabile leggermente più grande del precedente. A questa è succeduta nel 2014 la seconda edizione del maggiore, dalla quale analogamente è stata realizzata la terza edizione dell'opera qui recensita. È doveroso precisare che *Il dizionario di Arabo* attualmente in commercio si trova in linea con le opere lessicografiche di nuova generazione, essendo disponibile oltre che nel suo volume cartaceo anche in versione digitale e-book, consultabile su applicazione mobile e online.

La terza edizione del compatto, come le sue edizioni e versioni precedenti, è figlia dei dizionari che l'hanno preceduto, come afferma il suo stesso autore (Baldissera 1994, 2017); nello specifico *al-Mawrid* (R. Ba'albakī 1991 e M. Ba'albakī 1992), *al-Munğid* (1992, 2000), il *Mounged classique arabe-français* e i dizionari di Traini (1966-73), Wehr (1979), Tillisī (1986) e Labanyeh (1995). La nuova edizione si presenta in sole 576 pagine, più di cento in meno rispetto alle edizioni precedenti, pur tuttavia corredata da una scelta di lemmi maggiore, oltre 29.000, e le ormai tradizionali guida all'alfabeto, pronuncia dell'arabo, note di grammatica e un'appendice fraseologica più ricca e perfezionata in termini di fruibilità per l'utente con sezioni temati-

che ben organizzate, ad esempio: mezzi pubblici, come parlare della salute, internet, connessione e telefono, ecc. Ordine e modalità di presentazione di lemmi, vocaboli e traduenti non variano rispetto alle edizioni precedenti; ciò che cambia è la veste grafica, per cui i lemmi sono ora in grassetto color blu, una scelta operata già nel 2014 con la pubblicazione della seconda edizione del maggiore e che rende questi ultimi più facilmente riconoscibili.

Tra le novità introdotte nella terza edizione si trovano i rinvii sia per l'italiano, ad esempio per 'ho' si veda 'avere', per 'col' si veda 'con + il' - pensati soprattutto per l'utente non italofono -, sia per l'arabo, particolarmente utili per l'identificazione di radici con vocali deboli, difficili da ricercare per i neofiti: per *mutasawwil* vedasi SAL, per *dam DMY*, ecc. In aggiunta la nuova edizione include indicazioni di reggenza più accurate (*šāraka aḥadan fī* 'partecipare con a', *atqana šay'an* 'intendersi di'), le quali stimolano la riflessione interlinguistica. Oltre a ciò segnaliamo la presenza di neologismi (*risāla iliktrūniyya* 'email', *kumbyūtir lawḥī* 'tablet', *kāmīrā wīb* 'webcam'), numerose locuzioni idiomatiche (*šifr al-yadayni* 'a mani vuote', *an zahr al-ḡayb* 'a memoria') e fraseologiche (*labbā al-da'wa* 'rispondere all'invito') che rendono questa edizione più dettagliata e precisa. Infine il carattere dell'arabo compare di dimensioni ridotte rispetto alla seconda edizione e se da una parte si potrebbe considerare questa scelta grafica come uno svantaggio, dall'altra chi ha potuto usare e confrontare la seconda e la terza edizione del compatto potrà confermare che essa è funzionale a una maggior velocità nella ricerca dei lemmi. Questo insieme di caratteristiche fa dell'*Arabo compatto* un ottimo dizionario al passo con i tempi e adeguato agli usi odierni della lingua.

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# Richard Gombrich *Buddhism and Pali*

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**Review of** Gombrich, Richard (2018). *Buddhism and Pali*. Oxford: Mud Pie, 118 pp.

This book is a very good introduction written in a didactic way to the history of Pāli language, its grammatical features, and its style. But this book is not just that, since a new theory concerning the origin of the Pāli language is introduced. The book in its first three chapters is a very good primer for a student who is approaching the study of the Pāli language without previous knowledge of Sanskrit, but also linguistics in general.

Chapter 1, “Pali in History”, deals with the origin and developments of Pāli. Richard Gombrich has based this chapter mainly on his own studies and the works of scholars such as Kenneth R. Norman and Oskar von Hinüber. In this chapter, Gombrich has argued that the word ‘Pāli’ “is connected with a Sanskrit verbal root ‘paṭh’, meaning ‘recite’, and originally meant ‘text for recitation’” (11). Concerning this etymology, Gombrich circulated a more detailed explanation that includes his justification for such kind of derivation via email. I hope that this document will be published in the future.

Chapter 2, “The Linguistic Character of Pali”, takes advantage of Gombrich’s experience in teaching Pāli. As Gombrich himself wrote: “[f]or many years I have been teaching courses in Pali, under the auspices of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies [...], [t]he main course is introductory, and I have written a primer of the language to serve as its backbone. Much of the information in this chapter can also be found in that course book” (25). The result is a chapter able



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

Submitted 2019-05-13  
Published 2019-06-27

#### Open access

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**Citation** De Notariis, Bryan (2019). Review of *Buddhism and Pali*, by Gombrich, Richard. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 657-660.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/024

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to lead by hand even the most inexperienced reader into the maze of the Pāli linguistics. Gombrich is able to present to the reader some technical arguments – such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon – through an appealing language, making use of practical examples which are sometimes even fun, just as when he explains the compound called in Pāli *bahubbīhi* (Sanskrit: *bahuvrīhi*): “[a] common kind of compound which is not very common in English is called ‘exocentric’ because it refers to something outside itself. A ‘redcoat’ is not a type of coat but a man with a red coat (in olden days, a soldier) [...], an ‘egghead’ is a person with an egglike head, not just the head of such a person” (39). Concerning this chapter, the only specification that I can offer regards the following statement: “[t]he verses of the *Dhammapada* are ascribed *en masse* to the Buddha. The commentary on the text always describes on what occasion the Buddha uttered the verse(s), but it is a very late composition, maybe a thousand years after the time of the Buddha, so this information may not be reliable” (45). Although the actual Pāli commentaries are works composed since the fifth century AD onward, the material on which they are based could be considerably older. However, Gombrich is certainly aware of this fact (as it is demonstrated by Gombrich 2009, 106), and I should specify that my specification does not affect his argument because a huge gap between the supposed period of the Buddha’s life and the material used to compose the actual Pāli commentaries could (and probably should) be assumed. Old commentaries – such as the *padabhājanīya* of the *Pātimokkha*, and the *Niddesa* – were, indeed, embedded within the Pāli canon (cf. Norman 1997, 149-50) and this could allow one to assume that the other commentarial material was most likely composed in later times, or at least remained open to changes for longer, since it had never achieved the canonical status. As far as we know, the Sri Lankan commentarial tradition was an open corpus of texts until the third century AD (cf. Mori [1988] 1989).

Chapter 3, “Pali Prose Style”, deals mainly with the orality as one of the main factors in determining the style of the Pāli Buddhist texts. In this regard, Gombrich quotes a very recent report from the *Scientific American*<sup>1</sup> in order to “dispel the scepticism likely to be found in the modern reader” (49) concerning the possibility to transmit orally a huge amount of texts (scholars may be interested in knowing that there is also a paper about it, see Hartzell et al. 2016).

Chapter 4, “Pali in Buddhist Ideology”, explains the most innovative theory within the book. Gombrich introduced his theory as follows: “[i]n my view – perhaps shared by no other modern scholar – it

<sup>1</sup> See <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/a-neuroscientist-explores-the-sanskrit-effect/> (2019-02-07).



[i.e. Pāli language] may also have been the language that the Buddha spoke, at least when preaching” (69). At first, Gombrich considers the Buddha’s approach against Sanskrit and the fact that he recommended the use of the local idioms, acknowledging a conventional character for all the languages. He argued against the widespread opinion that considers Pāli an artificial language: “[b]ecause of various inconsistencies, such as the use of some Sanskritisms and borrowings from other dialects, it is often said (I have said so myself) that Pali is an artificial language. But what does this mean? Modern English evolved from a large admixture of Norman French into Anglo-Saxon, and we still frequently add gallicisms and other borrowings from foreign languages” (75-6). Therefore, Gombrich suggests that Pāli was a kind of lingua franca, more specifically an argot, used by the Buddha and his followers to communicate with each other and with the population during their wondering in northeast India (84). This theory is certainly fascinating for any scholar involved in the study of Buddhism and especially for those who are interested in the study of the Pāli texts. I think that the theorisation of a kind of ‘ascetic argot’ could be an interesting solution for an intrinsic problem of the Pāli language structure. On the one hand, the Pāli language is full of the so-called *Magadhisim*, namely some inflexions or anomalous features which are ascribable to the eastern language of the Magadha. In this regard, Gombrich argued that some words such as the vocative plural *bhikkhave* “O monks!” (the expected form in Pāli should be *bhikkhavo*) and the odd term *sukhallika* ‘pleasure’ (with the superfluous suffix *-allika*) could be ‘frozen’ forms, a reminiscence of how the Buddha spoke (79). On the other, comparing Pāli with the Aśoka’s inscriptions “we can confidently say that Pali has a preponderance of what, two centuries (or a bit less) after the Buddha, were western rather than eastern features” (81-2). Assuming that Pāli was a language really spoken in India, a couple of questions would arise: Where it was spoken? By whom it was spoken? The theory suggested by Richard Gombrich, that I would call the ‘ascetic argot theory’, tries to answer to both questions. It goes without saying that the early Buddhists and the founder of Buddhism itself, namely the Buddha, not only had to speak one or more Indian languages, but had to communicate with a multilinguistic audience widespread in north India. A way of communication was needed and a proper way to communicate had to be developed if it had not already been in existence. Certainly, early Buddhists spoke in some manners. So, in this regard, Gombrich addressed the elephant into the room that, however, seems to be mostly ignored by scholars. If the early Buddhist had spoken a north India lingua franca that was not Sanskrit but a kind of Prakrit and we have the Pāli language, which is a Prakrit language that has features typical of the north India area in which the Buddha lived and preached according to the traditional sources, why could not it

be the language spoken by the Buddha? With ‘the language spoken by the Buddha’ Gombrich does not mean exactly the same language, but a language that although underwent a process of standardisation, could preserve memory of how the Buddha spoke: “[w]hen after some years his [i.e. Buddha’s] followers wrote down what he said and made some attempt to standardise it by giving it a set grammar and an orthography, they were to some extent guided by the only grammar and orthography which existed in their culture, those of Sanskrit, but they were also concerned to retain as best they could the precise characteristics of their teacher’s language as preserved by their oral tradition” (84-5).

In Conclusion, I strongly recommend reading this book since it does not only introduce the Pāli language in a didactic and appealing way, but it also provides scholars with something to think about. This is certainly a “bold hypothesis” as sometimes Gombrich himself admits (e.g. 46), however I think we still need brave scholars able to produce bold hypotheses in order to allow the Popperian epistemology based on conjecture and refutation, so dear to Gombrich, to work at its best. Without hypotheses there would not be refutation or corroboration, but without bold hypothesis there would not be intriguing challenges which are the propelling force that drives many individuals to continue doing research.

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# Yuming Li

## *Language Planning in China*

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**Review of** Li, Yuming (2015). *Language Planning in China*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 490 pp.

This book is a collection of translated works by Li Yuming, which discusses the state-of-the-art issues in Chinese language management and planning. The author, Li Yuming, is a seminal expert in Chinese sociolinguistics, in particular in the fields of child language acquisition and language planning. His research touches also on modern Chinese grammar, psycholinguistics and applied linguistics. Li Yuming is the president of the International Association of Chinese Linguistics (IACL) and the National Research Centre for State Language Capacity. He is also the chief editor of the *Chinese Journal of Language Policy and Planning*, and he has published over 10 books and 300 journal articles. Having dedicated his attention on language policy and planning (henceforth, LPP) in China for many years, he has excellent insights in the evolution of Chinese language policy and planning.

The book is laid out in thirty chapters; each provides readers with a lucid view of what can be expected in each chapter. It is thus possible to read only some parts of the book. The chapters basically cover five themes: dissemination of Chinese, acquisition of foreign languages in China, language life in modern China, history of Chinese language planning and policy, and modernization of Chinese in our current information age. The book places its main focus on the Chinese language, the mother tongue of the Han majority, but also briefly mentions other ethnic languages in China as reference. By examining the development of LPP in China from past to present, the



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

Submitted  
Published

2019-05-13  
2019-06-27

### Open access

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**Citation** Ding, Ying (2019). Review of *Language Planning in China*, by Li, Yuming. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 661-666.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/025

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book delivers a comprehensive account with a wide range of in-depth perspectives.

Despite the fact that LPP in China has been a very active field since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), research on LPP in China still remains at an early stage. This book presents thus a very welcome attempt at theorising China's experiences within international LPP frameworks. It serves as an excellent resource for scholars and students interested in China's linguistic situations and its evolution of LPP in the twenties and twenty-first century. His expertise and the wide range of topics he treats allow Li Yuming also to critically reflect on sociolinguistic research of LPP and possible ways of improving it.

LPP in this book is mostly, but not exclusively, concerned with governmental interventions on the sociolinguistic situation. Whilst stating that it is necessary to develop and popularise a standard variety in order to facilitate the flow of information, the author accentuates that a non-hostile language ecology calls for the maintenance of multilingualism and bidialectalism. Li evaluates China's LPP from three angles: first and foremost, standardisation and promotion of the General National Language (*guójiā tōngyòng yǔ*); secondly, preservation and utilisation of various language resources in China's territory; thirdly, planning of foreign language acquisition. The author attaches due importance to enhancing language capabilities in China by repeatedly emphasising the importance of foreign language skills in globalising milieus.

Grounded upon widely known LPP frameworks, discussions in the book embark on status planning, corpus planning, language-in-education planning, and prestige planning in China. Chapters 1-3 establish major issues that LPP sought to influence, followed by chapters 4 and 5, which discuss foreign-language acquisition. By way of exploring the economic resources that specific languages convey, the author calls for more importance of foreign language proficiency. Arguing that at the very early phase of China's LPP, i.e. at the beginning of the twentieth century, most attention was paid to ensuring communication across communities and to eliminating language barriers, this has also led to marginalising the cultural and economic values of other languages and dialects in China. The author therefore implies that Chinese LPP should take into account the peculiar value and role of each language in their specific functional domains. Many readers will probably find the author's differentiation between 'mother tongue' and 'first language' intriguing. Li asserts that one's language is closely, and primarily intertwined with one's identity. Mother tongue is one's ethnological identity that also implies one's belonging to a community. In other words, it is not a matter of the order in which it was acquired – an ethnic language can be 'mother tongue' and 'second language' at the same time.

Chapters 6-9 inspect various aspects of the language life in contemporary China. Li divides language life into three principal levels: macro-national, meso-regional, and micro-individual. This division concurs with the typological schema that Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) suggested towards an effective understanding of the diversity and complexity of language life. After illustrating different developments in the language life from ancient China until the present, and by paying due attention to the various effects of LPP in China in developing and spreading the national common language, Li underlines the importance of a thorough analysis and examination of the sociolinguistic situation. LPP should aim to adjust linguistic behaviours to changing social circumstances. In the information era, language life in China should be viewed and therefore managed also from an international perspective. According to Li, elevating the importance of and proficiency in a foreign language in the predominantly monolingual Chinese society is an urgent task in contemporary China.

In reading these chapters, readers are reminded of various limitations of monolingualism. Plurilingual competence entails benefits for individuals and on a national level. Among the many functions of language - instrument of communication, carrier of culture, symbol of belonging, etc. - it can also generate economic profits in globalising economies. Li emphasises language as resources, both the indigenous national minority languages and extraneous foreign languages.

While emphasizing that external factors provide the necessary condition for internal development, the author illustrates in chapters 10 and 11 that an indigenous prestigious dialect served as the foundation for language standardisation and serves as the main lingua franca inside the nation. Li Yuming discusses the case of the Beijing dialect as an instance of language prestige planning, expounding that in promoting Putonghua and standardising the lingua franca across China, prestigious pronunciation often plays a vital role. While chapter 13-17 depict the past and present, chapter 18-22 look into the future of Chinese LPP, discussing the subject in its interrelation with the information age. Dealing largely with corpus planning, these chapters address four larger themes: preservation of audio recordings and literature, standardisation of lexicon and terminology, modernisation of the lexicon, and digitalisation of spoken and written language. After introducing the governmental attempts of improving language standardisation, and in keeping pace with the times, chapter 23-25 provide for discussions of Chinese language spread across globe. Chapter 24 presents the history of Chinese language dissemination back to the Qin dynasty (second century BC), and chapter 25 looks into possible future developments in the international spread of Chinese. Li asserts that in order to extend the needs of learning Chinese, language planners and policy makers should first consider promoting the language's value that is tied to its linguistic, cultural, and economic advantages.

The remaining five chapters of the book are devoted to the formation of nation-wide language management in modern China. In these chapters, Li focuses on the *Qieyinzi* Movement that occurred in the late Qing dynasty. It was the first governmental-guided language planning movement, and it kicked off a strand of LPP activities that influence all the way to present-day China. Li states that this Movement has had a seminal impact on modern Chinese linguistics. It laid the cornerstone for standardisation works that followed it. As widely known, Chinese is a non-alphabetical language. The Movement was the first attempt using phonetic alphabet for Chinese characters, which substantially facilitated school education of the population at the time. *Qieyin*, literally ‘cutting the phonemes’, is in essence an annotating of Chinese characters on the basis of phonetic alphabets. Both the Latin alphabet and Japanese kana were initially proposed in the Movement. Worthy of attention is the author’s discussion of shortcomings of the Movement (chapter 28), where he states that the reformers’ understanding of dialects was insufficient and non-scientific. Such problems notwithstanding, the author highlights the nexus between the historical *Qieyinzi* Movement and present-day language management, such as the popularization of Putonghua. The book concludes that ongoing works on LPP in China are well advised to critically draw from the experiences of prior efforts.

With a comprehensive discussion of past and present LPP works in China, this book provides insights into China’s linguistic life and shifts under the impacts of LPP activities. The first half of the book deals with basic sociolinguistic notions in the Chinese setting, such as ‘mother tongue’ (chapter 2) and ‘linguistic resources and power’ (chapters 4, 5, 9, 12). Thereafter, it proceeds to specific discussion on the modernization and improvements of LPP in China (chapters 13-22). The last eight chapters review language activities in China’s history, and its indissoluble link to current language situation.

The book is highly informative and insightful, but it has occasional shortcomings, too. One is an imbalance in content. It tends to over-emphasize nation-state interventions, whilst paying relatively little attention to the individual as a bottom-up actor. Also, the actual impact of national LPP works on the population is often not sufficiently scrutinized. Despite having a large list of references, these are for the most part made up by literature in Chinese. Influential studies by foreign scholars are overlooked, for instance, work done by Bökset (2006) or Kaplan and Baldauf (1997). The literature revolving around ‘mother tongue’ and ‘native speaker’ is extant (e.g. Coulmas 1981; Davies 1991; Singh 1998), but none of these works is referred to in the book. Certain sources appear to be overly optimistic and must be taken with a grain of salt. One case in point, the author claims that the Manchu-speakers “now amount to only 0.01% of the Manchu population” (31), but experts who have conducted long-term fieldwork in

present Manchu villages state the number of native Manchu speakers is by no means over 100. Also, some sections of the book lack in-depth analysis. For instance, chapter 17 could be enriched, and hence more enlightening for the readers, with crucial evaluation alongside description on the *Lübishu* (Green Paper on the Language Situation in China). The book could have been improved by featuring a concluding chapter that summarizes all discussion in the previous chapters. There are some slight editing errors and organisational incongruities in the book and they may cause some misunderstandings.

All in all, Li's new book is well-constructed, informative and insightful. The theoretical discussions are easily comprehensible. The book is unique in providing a stimulating study of how institutional decision-making at the state level intervenes the language development in China. This adds crucial insights into a classical sociolinguistic question: what came first? Nation or language? The book is a pioneering work that demonstrates with the aid of many details that LPP requires the management of language functions. Furthermore, it offers a wide range of solutions and suggestions with regard to the future of languages and LPP in China. Although some of the solutions may not be feasible in present-day China, they nonetheless offer deep insights for a long perspective, and this may stimulate many more scholars to pursue further studies into this field.

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# Jie Dong

## *The Sociolinguistics of Voice in Globalising China*

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**Review of** Dong, Jie (2017). *The Sociolinguistics of Voice in Globalising China*. London: Routledge, 172 pp.

In the second book of her trilogy, Dong Jie discusses the results of the sociolinguistic fieldwork she has been carrying out in China over the past decade. While the first book, *Discourse, Identity, and China's Internal Migration: The Long March to the City* (Jie 2011), focuses only on rural-urban migration, this one widens the object of study, looking also at other forms of migration: labor migrants, elite migrants, cross-continental migrants and online 'netizens'. The author states that all kinds of analyzed mobilities - rural migrant workers and elite migrants within China's borders, transcontinental mobility and virtual mobility - are all the direct or indirect consequences of China's deeper involvement in globalisation. Indeed, as indicated in the title, voice and globalisation are two key concepts in this second volume. Voice - seen as both the personal defining features of speaking acts and the results of communicative events in social contexts - is the critical analytical tool in Dong's research on the structure of contemporary Chinese society and its ongoing change or 'reshuffling'. Voice is positioned against the backdrop of globalisation which, far from being a static context, plays an active role in destabilizing previous sociolinguistic patterns of stratification, making some linguistic forms more prestigious than others, while also offering new expressive potentials.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

Submitted 2019-05-13  
Published 2019-06-27

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**Citation** Gallelli, Beatrice (2019). Review of *The Sociolinguistics of Voice in Globalising China*, by Dong, Jie. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 55, 667-672.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2019/01/026

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The book is divided into three parts and each of them contains two chapters. Part I, “Voice”, revolves around the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study. Chapter 1 addresses the effect of globalisation on Chinese society and provides some key notions of ethnography, understood as a perspective on and an approach to studying language in society. Going beyond the distinction usually drawn between the notions of voice by Hymes (1996) and Bakhtin (1982), Dong provides an ‘inclusive’ perspective, i.e. voice is seen as the ‘concrete speaking personality’ (the fact that, for instance, one’s voice reflects one’s social class, group, etc.) and the outcome of communication (whether one succeeds or fails to be understood and have their voice heard). As Dong explains, language is both a symbol of national homogenisation and hierarchization, as it empowers some people while disempowering others. Voice is a key category for studying such interaction.

In Chapter 2, Dong discusses theories of social stratification, from classic ones (Marx, Weber and Durkheim) to their modern developments (Dahrendorf, Wallerstein or Parsons). Departing from such theoretical discussions, she then traces the stratification of Chinese society back to a time before 1949, then discusses its reformulation between 1949 and 1979, and finally addresses the changes that have occurred since 1979 with the implementation of the reform policies. The last part of Chapter 2 deals with the sociolinguistic complexity of contemporary China, where, alongside Putonghua (the official language of the People’s Republic of China standardised upon the variety used in Beijing), there are more than thirty officially written and nearly one hundred spoken languages. Even under the umbrella of one Putonghua, literally ‘common speech’, there are at least seven major ‘dialects’. As Dong explains, their definition as dialects derives from the Chinese point of view, according to which a common orthographic system, a literary corpus, historical roots, cultural heritage and political unity draw the boundary between dialect and language. In this linguistic complexity, the written language has always functioned as an element of conjunction across Chinese history, while the search for a national standard spoken language started between nineteenth and the twentieth century, and ended in mainland China with the codification of Putonghua in 1955. Since then, Putonghua has become the official language in the educational system, in mass media and in other state institutions. It is the most important linguistic tool to get things done and having one’s voice heard. The author then addresses the importance of English as a linguistic resource that also serves as another factor in social layering.

Part II, “Stratification of voice and stabilizing conditions of voice”, and Part III, “Restratification of voice”, constitute the core of the volume and are directly concerned with the results of Dong Jie’s fieldwork. Part II deals with the process of stratification of voice in China.

In Chapter 3, moving from Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic capital and symbolic power as applied to Parisian French and Agha's (2003, 2005, 2007) explanation of the process of 'enregisterment', Dong analyses the course through which one linguistic variety has become the national standard language that is known today as Putonghua. For Putonghua, as for all modern nation-state languages, the involvement of the education system in promoting one national language brings about two consequences. Firstly, Putonghua is perceived as a means for enhancing one's chances for success in the educational and labor market. Secondly, the rise of standard language devalues other languages and language varieties. This monoglot language ideology is enhanced also by means of state-supported campaigns, such as the annual 'promoting Putonghua', or by state-run newspaper articles, one of which is provided as an illustration. The article, as analysed by Dong, urges rural people to learn Putonghua before entering the city. A cartoon stressing the distinction between a smartly dressed urban young man and a rural couple in rags accompanies the text. Putonghua is a form of semiotic capital, and its standardisation comes along with an ideological process through which it has become as quasi-natural language, in such a way that, as shown by one of Dong's fieldwork interview, a primary school teacher in Beijing who has a migrant pupil in her classroom defines the pupil's lack of Putonghua competence as a 'problem' that is responsible for her slow learning progress.

In Chapter 4, Dong undertakes the task of analysing the voicing processes of people who move geographically and socially within China, more specifically migrant workers and 'elite migrants', the latter being individuals who have moved to the urban centres with high academic or professional qualifications and are part of the emerging 'middle class'. Despite some features that both groups share, migrant workers and elite migrants are crucially different in their access to linguistic resources. As a result, they have different voicing possibilities and this in turn affects their position in society. The main question underlying this chapter is how migrant workers and elite migrants negotiate their voice in their movement across social spaces. The first part of the chapter deals with the voice of labor migrants. In order to highlight the different values of regional varieties, Dong compares the voice of a migrant child in an urban public primary school, an example taken from mass media discourse, with that of a Beijing child she interviewed. The Beijing variety, once a local dialect, now enjoys a prestige status as it registers its users as legitimate speakers, as which they have been recognised also by those who have not mastered this variety. Dong's fieldwork depicts how this takes place concretely. The migrant child, in fact, attempts to get rid of her regional accent, perceived as a barrier, while the Beijing child feels proud of his Beijing pronunciation and makes fun of the non-standard pronunciations of some of his schoolmates. The voices of labour migrants are then compared to

that of elite migrants. The case study here is a group of young urban professionals who share the common feature of possessing and driving a specific brand of imported car. Dong shows how different voices reflect different social classes, which in turn is tightly bound to the potential for mobility. For instance, in contrast to the example in the first part of the chapter, one of the elite migrants ‘rejects’ the local variety and also does not use his hometown dialect, opting instead for Putonghua with an accent known as *gangtaiqiang* in Chinese (literally “Hong-Kong-Taiwan-accent”). The proficiency of these elite migrants in such a linguistic style frees them from being tied to one single place in China, while English skills offer them the possibility of having their voices also heard abroad.

In Part III, Dong turns her attention to transcontinental and virtual mobility. Chapter 5 analyses the voice of the new Chinese immigrants abroad, including highly educated and skilled immigrants. Dong does not select a particular receiving country in her studies. Many fieldwork interviews were conducted in Beijing and include, for example, a student migrant who moved to Canada and was sent back to China as a senior manager of a Canadian company, or a skilled migrant who is working in China to support his family in New Zealand. These new types of Chinese immigrants are a product of China’s new middle class. They present themselves as highly educated and professional, and are renegotiating the identity of what it means to be a Chinese living abroad. One eminent distinction of Dong’s work is that, in dealing with globalisation, she not only focuses on English, which usually draws most scholars’ attention, but she also addresses the increasing utility of Putonghua abroad. Putonghua has spread outside China to the point that it is replacing Cantonese among the Chinese diaspora. Putonghua has greater utility for facilitates career prospects also in the diaspora.

Chapter 6 deals with the discursive practices of Chinese netizens. Dong goes beyond the usual dichotomy that mainly concentrates on two topics – the Internet as a tool of liberation of various sorts and censorship by the state. Dong stresses the artifactual nature of the online – offline distinction, by illustrating the strong linkages between online voices and the formation of social groups. In case of the group of imported car drivers, she shows how they use online space to organise an offline event and then report the results of this event again online. Through such practices, the new Chinese middle class displays new forms of mobility, creating in so doing the voice of a new social class and new class culture. In the same way as language, the access to the Internet depends on a set of resources which are distributed unevenly. Therefore, despite providing new possibilities for mobility, the Internet also plays a role in empowering some and disempowers others.

In Chapter 7, Dong sums up her main arguments and the empirical

data examined. She points out the ways in which geographical and virtual mobility creates new class effects. She stresses that voice is a new class marker, which has been produced by and helps to create new forms of mobility.

In conclusion, this book is a valuable resource for those interested in the role of voice in social stratification. It is also of great use for those involved in Chinese Studies as it provides fresh insight and deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese society. One of the major merits of Dong's book lies in the ability to meticulously analyse a broad variety of materials (mass media discourse, fieldwork interviews and online data) with remarkable linguistic and cultural awareness. Dong provides thoroughly examined and well-argued case studies on the voicing processes of people moving within and beyond China's border, as well as in the virtual space. The examples in her book offer a strong basis for her main claim that voice is playing a crucial role in identifying and defining social layers – even in a society that is politically considered to not be distinguished by social class.

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# Rivista annuale

Dipartimento di Studi  
sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea  
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia



Università  
Ca' Foscari  
Venezia



ISSN 1125-3789



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