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Articles

Parlare di pandemia a bambini e adolescenti: la letteratura swahili nella prevenzione e lotta all'HIV/AIDS in Kenya e Tanzania

Graziella Acquaviva

Since the early 1980s, when the first cases of HIV/AIDS infection were detected in East Africa, local governments have acted in cooperation with international agencies in order to prevent a larger diffusion of the virus through information and prevention campaigns aimed in particular to fighting prejudices, stigma and discrimination against the sick individuals and their families. Children and adolescents make up the age group most vulnerable to contagion. How do you let somebody who is sexually active but not yet an adult understand how the virus is transmitted? And which intervention can be put in place with an aim at the well-being of school-age children? Most of all, from a strictly cultural perspective, what is the role played by literature in the collective effort to stop the spread of an invisible enemy that keeps claiming its victims? What are the common man's perceptions in this regard, and what else can change them into words and images – except a writer's pen and a poet's sensibility? These are the questions addressed, admittedly with no exhaustivity, by this study: a study voicing the fear and trauma created by a pandemic infection.

1. HIV/AIDS e campagne di sensibilizzazione per i giovani

A distanza di circa un quarantennio dai primi casi di contagio da HIV/AIDS, l'Africa sub-sahariana continua ad essere una delle aree più colpite dal virus con differenze patogenetiche dei sottotipi HIV-1, il più virulento, e HIV-2.

L'incidenza dei contagi ha spinto i governi della Tanzania e del Kenya ad intervenire attraverso la creazione di organi di monitoraggio. In Tanzania nel 1988 viene lanciato il *National AIDS Control Programme* (NACP) e nel 2000 viene istituita la *Tanzania Commission for AIDS* (TACAIDS). Benchè l'HIV si sia diffuso in maniera quasi uniforme nel paese, alcune categorie di individui, come i tossicodipendenti, gli omosessuali, i lavoratori in mobilità¹ e le prostitute², sono state considerate a

¹ Il fenomeno migratorio è molto comune in Tanzania. Gli autisti dei camion su tratte a lunga distanza, i lavoratori nelle piantagioni e i pescatori che trasportano il loro pescato nelle città sono individui altamente a rischio (Kepesa *et al.* 2018); l'espansione del settore minerario ha contribuito a creare una maggiore mobilità dalle zone rurali a quelle urbane, con un

più alto rischio di contrarre l'infezione. Le donne, appartenenti a qualsiasi fascia di età, risultano essere fra le più vulnerabili al virus poiché in genere hanno dei partners anziani³ o si sposano giovanissime (TACAIDS 2013). Secondo i dati del THIS (*Tanzania HIV Impact Survey*), la prevalenza delle infezioni riguarda i giovani di età compresa fra i 15 e i 24 anni, e i bambini da 0 a 14 anni (Ministry of Health Tanzania 2019).

L'incidenza dei contagi fra bambini e adolescenti ha richiesto l'intervento dei governi locali e di varie agenzie di sviluppo internazionale, con programmi di prevenzione rivolti in particolar modo agli studenti delle scuole primarie e secondarie. Nel 1992, educatori sanitari locali in collaborazione con alcuni ricercatori del *Center of International Health* di Bergen e la *Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation*, creano il programma *Ngao* ("Scudo"), un nome simbolico che va a rappresentare la possibilità che i ragazzi possono difendersi dall'AIDS. Il programma è stato ideato sui modelli offerti dalle teorie dell'azione ragionata e dell'apprendimento sociale⁴.

Fra gli obiettivi del programma: incoraggiare la comunicazione sull'AIDS in ambito scolastico e all'esterno, in modo da ridurre il rischio di contrarre l'infezione; offrire strumenti cognitivi ed esperienziali per alleviare le conseguenze dello stigma nei soggetti contagiati; fornire manuali bilingue – in swahili e in inglese – sia agli insegnanti che agli alunni.

Fra le attività previste: poster creati dagli allievi con illustrazioni che rappresentassero la loro percezione dei fattori di rischio dell'HIV/AIDS; scrittura e rappresentazione di poesie e canti sui pericoli della malattia; i giochi di ruolo sugli atteggiamenti a rischio; creazione di spettacoli teatrali sulla percezione dell'epidemia da parte delle comunità (Klepp 1997; Klepp *et al.* 1994; Stigler 2006).

Nel 1999 l'AMREF (*African Medical and Research Foundation*) in collaborazione con l'LSHTM (*London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine*) e il tanzaniano NIMR (*National Institute for Medical Research*)

aumento della prostituzione nelle aree di servizio per i camion e gli autobus e presso le miniere (Garbus 2004; Askew 2015). Il rischio di contrarre l'infezione non è esclusivo della popolazione maschile (TACAIDS 2013).

² In Tanzania la prostituzione è un crimine punibile dalla legge, tuttavia si stima che circa 150.000 persone, donne in primis, offrono sesso a pagamento in particolare nella città di Dar es Salaam. Nel 2018 il 15.4% delle prostitute risultava positivo all'HIV. Il fatto che il 'sesso commerciale' sia illegale, comporta in chi lo pratica una resistenza a sottoporsi al test dell'HIV e quindi ad affidarsi alle terapie con antiretrovirali (Kangolle *et al.* 2010; UNAIDS 2019).

³ In Tanzania esiste, per esempio, la cultura dello 'sugar daddy'. Giovani donne iniziano delle relazioni sessuali con uomini anziani in cambio di beni materiali o avanzamento sociale. È chiaro che in questo genere di relazioni le giovani donne si trovano spesso in una condizione di dipendenza in cui viene loro negate la possibilità di negoziare il tipo di rapporto sessuale che spetta quasi 'di diritto' al partner anziano (Maswanya *et al.* 2011).

⁴ La teoria dell'azione ragionata (Ajzen *et al.* 1980) mira a spiegare e a comprendere la maniera in cui si concretizzano i comportamenti degli individui. Si tratta di un modello generale ed applicabile in differenti ambiti. Secondo la teoria dell'apprendimento sociale (Bandura 1977; 1986) l'apprendimento non implica il contatto diretto con gli oggetti ma può avvenire anche attraverso esperienze indirette, ovvero attraverso l'osservazione del comportamento delle persone.

organizza il MEMA kwa VIJANA (“Il BENE per i GIOVANI”) un programma che prevedeva una serie di interventi in 62 Scuole Primarie nella regione di Mwanza. Nello stesso periodo, l’ONG ‘SPW’ (*Students Partnership Worldwide*) – operativa in Tanzania già dal 1992 – sottolineava la necessità di dare priorità all’educazione sull’HIV nelle Scuole Secondarie.

Nel 2001 in collaborazione con il patrocinio del *Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Culture*, e il finanziamento da parte di varie agenzie internazionali per lo sviluppo – *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO); *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency* (SIDA) – Tanzania; *Danish International Development Agency* (DANIDA); *United States for International Development* (USAID); *Elton John AIDS Foundation* (EJAF); *The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation* (SDC) – pianifica lo *School Health Education Program* (SHEP), ideato in modo da coinvolgere nelle campagne di prevenzione non solo le scuole ma le intere comunità, con l’organizzazione di eventi sociali e di festival. Le aree prescelte per il primo triennio del programma furono la regione di Iringa e le Southern Highlands, zone di migranti e di forte impatto di contagi. Il programma fu realizzato inizialmente in 19 Scuole Secondarie alle quali nel 2002 se ne aggiunsero altre 16. Alla fine del primo triennio, la stessa esperienza educativa fu portata nelle altre regioni del paese: Mbeya, Ruvuma, Morogoro, Dodoma e Rukwa. Fra le attività extracurricolari erano incluse le arti performative (The World Bank 2003).

Negli ultimi anni la Tanzania ha continuato ad investire nel settore della prevenzione per cercare di ridurre il numero delle infezioni sia con l’istituzione di curricula scolastici sia con campagne di sensibilizzazione rivolte alle fasce più deboli della popolazione: le puerpere (Ministry of Health Tanzania 2017) e i bambini. Nel 2003, per esempio, la scuola di un piccolo villaggio nel distretto di Arusha è stata coinvolta in un progetto realizzato in collaborazione con la Epic Change (<https://www.epicchange.org>) che ha visto la produzione di una serie di video i cui protagonisti sono gli allievi. In uno di questi, Glory testimonia la sua esperienza di orfana dell’AIDS attraverso il canto registrato in inglese :

My name is Glory

I’m crying for our nation

AIDS, AIDS has killed very many people (refrain)

We are the young generation

We are crying from our eyes

Remember to take care people

HIV is killing people

Remember to take care (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z80BFoV5y_U)

Una prima denuncia dell'emergenza HIV/AIDS in Tanzania era già arrivata nel 1996 con la pubblicazione di *Kilio Chetu* ("Il nostro lamento"), una *tamthiliya* (lett., testo teatrale che non deve necessariamente essere rappresentato a teatro) che strappa la coltre di silenzio che avvolge la società sull'argomento tabù della sessualità. La voce del lamento è quella dei ragazzi che rivendicano il diritto di ricevere insegnamenti riguardo agli accadimenti che possono in qualche modo 'macchiare' la loro vita.

Kilio chetu è un atto unico suddiviso in sei scene. Nella prima scena il narratore, figura tipica del teatro tradizionale, introduce l'arrivo del 'gigante', l'AIDS che sconvolgerà la vita di tutti.

Mtambaji:

Hapo zamani za kale paliondokea kisiwa kimoja kikubwa sana. Kisiwa kilikuwa na watu wa kila aina. Kulikuwepo matajiri na kulikwepo masikini. Watu waliishi kwa furaha sana. Punde dubwana kubwa likaiingilia kisiwa kile [...] Dubwana likaleta balaa kisiwani [...] Watu walitoka upele, wengine waliharisha, mara nywele kunyonyoka na vifo vikafuatia. Watu walipukutika, wakapukutika kama majani ya kiangazi. Wakapukutika. (Medical Aid Foundation 1996: 1)

Narratore:

C'era una volta, tanto tempo fa una grande isola. Abitata da ogni genere di persone. C'erano i ricchi e c'erano i poveri. La gente viveva felice. All'improvviso un gigante giunse sull'isola [...] il gigante portò una maledizione sull'isola. [...] Alcuni si ricoprirono di pustole, altri avevano dissenteria, i capelli cadevano e poi la morte. La gente periva, periva come le foglie nella stagione estiva. Morirono.

Il resto delle scene si dipana intorno alla storia d'amore di Joti e Suzi, due ragazzini la cui vita sarà distrutta dal virus. Joti morirà di AIDS mentre Suzi scopre di aspettare un figlio da lui.

Kilio chetu è stato introdotto nei programmi scolastici delle Scuole Secondarie come parte del modulo di letteratura Swahili.

Ancora nel 2018, circa 24.000 giovani nel paese risultava essere positivi all'HIV, e di questi i 2/3 erano giovani donne, con circa 16.000 nuovi contagi (UNAIDS 2019). Fra il 2016 e il 2017 il 3.4% della popolazione femminile fra i 20 e i 24 anni risultava essere positivo all'HIV rispetto allo 0.9% di quella maschile (Ministry of Health Tanzania 2019). Il timore di venire discriminati ha contribuito nel tempo a creare resistenze, da parte della popolazione, a sottoporsi al test HIV. Il governo tanzaniano ha quindi lanciato una serie di programmi pilota per offrire la possibilità ai cittadini di fare un test in autonomia fornendo dei *kit* sia a famiglie che a gruppi (PEPFAR 2019). Nel 2018 è partita la

campagna di prevenzione, *Furaha Yangu!* (“La mia felicità”) dedicata a giovani e ad adolescenti per esortarli a sottoporsi al test per l’HIV (Conserve *et al.* 2018).

La situazione in Kenya non è molto diversa, con circa 1.600.000 contagiati nel 2018 (UNAIDS 2019) e circa 660.000 orfani nel 2015 (UNAIDS 2015) e con una maggiore incidenza di contagi nei centri urbani di Nairobi e Mombasa (Kenyan Ministry of Health 2016). La prostituzione è uno dei fattori determinanti la trasmissione del virus (Musyoki *et al.* 2015). Più della metà delle nuove infezioni in Kenya si contano fra gli adolescenti e i giovani con un’incidenza femminile del 33% (Kenyan Ministry of Health 2016). Nel campo della prevenzione, il governo keniano ha promosso iniziative per l’uso dei profilattici solo a partire dal 2001; le fonti riportano che nel 2017, circa il 55% delle donne e il 73% degli uomini praticano sesso protetto (UNAIDS 2017). Nel 2018, l’ONG WOFAK (*Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya*), ha tenuto un seminario sulla salute riproduttiva e i diritti delle donne sieropositive, dando la possibilità a più di trenta donne di confrontarsi con rappresentanti del governo e delle Nazioni Unite. Sin dal 2003, il governo keniano si è mostrato particolarmente attento alla riforma scolastica con l’incremento di curricula dedicati all’HIV e dal 2013 i programmi prevedono lezioni sulla prevenzione, cura e sostegno per gli alunni ed per il personale docente (Ngugi 2014; Khalili and Mamai 2014; Majalia 2011; Van Buren 2011).

Mass Media ed iniziative a carattere sportivo hanno contribuito alle campagne di prevenzione e di sensibilizzazione rivolte agli adolescenti, come lo spettacolo *MTV Shuga*, sulle vite di un gruppo di ragazzi (CNN 2010) o i video di propaganda curati dal keniano Patrick Oyaro, medico e attivista nella lotta all’AIDS di cui si riporta qui il testo della canzone *Tuangamize Ukimwi* (“Sterminiamo l’AIDS”) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTuHRDMjf3M>):

<i>Tuangamize hili janga la ukimwi</i>	Sterminiamo questa calamità dell’AIDS
<i>Tuhakikishe watoto wawe huru</i>	Garantiamo ai bambini la libertà
<i>Tuwatafute, tuwapeleke ili wapimwe</i>	Stiamo attenti per loro, portiamoli a fare il test
[...]	[...]
<i>UKIMWI bado ni hatari</i>	L’AIDS è ancora pericoloso
<i>UKIMWI yaweza kuingwa</i>	L’AIDS si può prevenire
<i>UKIMWI ina makali</i>	L’AIDS è dannoso
<i>Lakini dawa yapunguza makali</i>	Ma la cura diminuisce il danno
[...]	[...]
<i>Jua kwamba mtoto aweza kuambukizwa</i>	Sappi che il bimbo può essere infettato
<i>Kwa njia nyingi, ninayokueleza</i>	In vari modi, che ti spiego
<i>Akiwa bado tumboni mwa mama yake</i>	Già nel ventre materno

<i>Akizaliwa, na pia akinyonyesha</i>	Durante il parto, e succhiando il latte
<i>Unajua hali yako ya UKIMWI</i>	Tu conosci la tua sieropositività
<i>Lakini mke, au mume wako</i>	Ma tua moglie o tuo marito
<i>Na watoto wako hawajui hali yako</i>	E i tuoi figli non sanno della tua condizione
<i>Na watoto, kweli hawana uwezo</i>	E i bambini, in realtà non hanno alcuna possibilità
<i>Wanakutegemea, ufanye uamuzi</i>	Si affidano a te, deciditi
<i>Ni jukumu lako kuokoa maisha yao</i>	Sei tu responsabile della loro vita
<i>Uamke sasa uwapeleke ili wapimwe</i>	Alzati ora, portali a fare il test
<i>Uamke sasa</i>	Alzati ora
<i>Kila mmoja twende</i>	Andiamo tutti
<i>Tuwapeleke</i>	Portiamo
<i>Watoto wapimwe</i>	I bimbi a fare il test.

In Kenya molte scuole e centri d'accoglienza per l'infanzia usano brevi *performance* teatrali per affrontare il delicato discorso legato all'AIDS e contribuire, in questo modo, a creare consapevolezza della malattia tra i membri della comunità. In alcune di queste rappresentazioni, il virus è assimilato ad un mostro invisibile, o a un serial killer che non fa distinzioni sociali. Anche le istituzioni religiose presenti nel paese tendono a promuovere rappresentazioni teatrali sull'HIV/AIDS, in particolare la KELC (*Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church*) che fra le sue attività ha incluso campagne di prevenzione e di controllo terapeutico (Van Buren 2011: 76-78). Altro contributo alle campagne di prevenzione e sensibilizzazione sono le iniziative della *Maisha County League*, che ha puntato sulla passione dei giovani per il calcio diffondendo messaggi ad hoc sull'HIV/AIDS.⁵ Messaggi di prevenzione sono stati, dunque, comunicati in vari modi, attraverso uffici e servizi dedicati, avvisi mediatici da parte dei Ministeri della salute e dei loro organi, politiche scolastiche e, soprattutto, attraverso il contributo offerto dalla produzione letteraria Swahili.

1.1. L'immagine dell'HIV/AIDS fra realtà e poesia popolare

Sin dall'inizio degli anni Ottanta del Novecento, periodo cui si fanno risalire i primi casi di contagio da HIV in Africa orientale,⁶ la centralità dell' UKIMWI, acronimo di "Ukosefu wa Kinga Mwilini" ("Perdita

⁵ https://nacc.or.ke/plus_wpgallery/world-aids-day-2016-maisha-county-league-finals

⁶ Sembra che il primo focolaio infettivo si sia sviluppato nel bacino del Congo per poi diffondersi in Rwanda prima di espandersi nell'area del Lago Vittoria e contagiare i paesi limitrofi (Johansson 2010; Iliffe 2006; Mutembei 2009; Mutembei 2011; Askew 2015; Mallya 2015).

delle difese immunitarie nel corpo”; AIDS) come malattia moderna e dai risvolti traumatici diviene testimone della nascita di una poesia che gravita fra ars poetica locale – nelle forme metriche dell’*utenzi*, *shairi*, *qāsida* (Acquaviva 2019) e verso libero (Mutembei 2009; BAKWATA & USAID 2008; Ongarora 2017) – e vita reale. Usata come forma di comunicazione e di negoziazione sociale, la poesia: “makes perfect Swahili sense to filter a biomedical AIDS discourse through a local, socially relevant sensibility” (Askew 2015: 269).

Come ha sottolineato Mutembei (2009), l’HIV/AIDS come topos comparve inizialmente nel genere poetico con i versi pubblicati sulle pagine dei giornali locali *Mzalendo*, *Uhuru* e *Nipashe*; versi composti da poeti ‘del popolo’, persone comuni che cercarono, all’inizio dell’epidemia, di confrontarsi con una malattia sconosciuta attraverso la poesia, e che funsero da testimonianza diretta di un cambiamento tematico in un genere letterario al passo coi tempi. La pubblicazione di poesie sulle pagine dei giornali è, d’altronde, una tradizione che si perpetua già dagli anni Sessanta del Novecento, epoca della proclamazione d’indipendenza dell’ex Tanganyika dal dominio coloniale. Inizialmente si trattò di una poesia di propaganda politica che vide impegnati, anche in quel caso, ‘poeti minori’, appartenenti a svariate categorie sociali e che avevano trovato, anch’essi, un proprio spazio espressivo nelle testate locali come *Ngurumo* e *Uhuru* (Kamenju and Topan 1971).

Il trauma del dolore è rappresentato da immagini di morte, *UKIMWI maana kifo* (“AIDS significa morte”; Mutembei 2009: 177), di disperazione per la mancanza di una terapia adeguata, di ‘puzzo’ di pustole purulente che insozzano le lenzuola del malato impregnandole delle loro fetide esalazioni:

<i>Nguo zimeharibika, na shuka za kitandani</i>	I vestiti si sono rovinati, e le lenzuola del letto
<i>Nilalapo nageuka, [...]</i>	Dormendo mi trasformo, [...]
<i>Kwa kuwa yamenifika, nitafanya jambo gani?</i>	Poichè mi sono capitate, cosa potrò mai fare?

(Mtenga 1984, in Mutembei 2009: 170)⁷

Se lo storico John Iliffe definisce l’epidemia una ‘catastrofe al rallentatore’:

[...] the distinctive features of HIV as a virus were that it was relatively difficult to transmit, it killed almost all those it infected [...], it killed them slowly after a long incubation period [...] when symptoms appeared they were often those common to the local disease environment. This unique

⁷ Tutte le traduzioni sono a cura dell’autrice.

combination of features gave a unique character to the epidemic, “a catastrophe in slow motion”, spreading silently for many years before anyone recognised its existence [...] (Iliffe 2006: 58).

l'immagine poetica del virus è quella di un ospite inatteso, l'AIDS, il cui giungere 'silente' è descritto nella prima stanza della poesia *Ni Mgeni Gani?* (“Che ospite è?”, 1982) di Emmanuel Lutashobia (Mutembei 2009: 169)

1. <i>Nimempata mgeni, asokuwa na barua</i>	1. Mi è giunto un ospite, senza preavviso
<i>Hakupiga hata honi, kwa ghafla akatua</i>	Senza chiedere il permesso, di colpo si è insediato
[...]	[...]
<i>Fumbo hili kufumbua, huyu ni mgeni gani?</i>	Questo mistero è da svelare, costui che ospite è?

Un 'male fantasma' l'AIDS, che si rende visibile solo attraverso 'segni' sul corpo (Mutembei 2001) come le pustole che devastano il corpo nella poesia *Nitumie Dawa Gani?* (“Quale medicina devo usare?”, 1984) di A. H. Mtenga (Mutembei 2009:169-170).

1. <i>Naja kwako kwa haraka, mhariri muhisani</i>	Mi affretto da te a venire, o gentile editore
<i>Ninaleta mashitaka, ya maradhi ya mwilini</i>	Una denuncia porto, di malattia del corpo
<i>Mapele yamenishika, sina raha asilani</i>	Le pustole mi hanno invaso, non ho più gioia dall'inizio
<i>Mapele yanisumbua, nitumie dawa gani?</i>	Le pustole mi tormentano, che medicina devo usare?
[...]	[...]
3. <i>Maradhi yamenishika, ya mapele mwilini</i>	La malattia mi ha colto, di pustole sul corpo
<i>Ngozi yote ni mabaka, kama chui wa porini</i>	Tutta la pelle è macchiata, come (quella di) un leopardo
<i>Sasa yametimu mwaka, mganguzi simuoni</i>	Ora un anno è passato, e un medico non vedo
<i>Mapele yanisumbua, nitumie dawa gani?</i>	Le pustole mi tormentano, che medicina devo usare?

O in *Ukimwi ni Pigo* (“L’AIDS è una calamità”, 2001) di Januari Mahundi (Mutembei 2009: 217):

<i>Dalili zake ni nyingi, mojawapo sitataja</i>	I suoi segni sono tanti, l’uno o l’altro non citerò
<i>Ninao uchungu mwingi, kurudia tajataja</i>	Provo tanto dolore, nel tornare a nominarli
<i>Waliofarikini wengi, hakuna hata faraja</i>	I morti sono tanti, non c’è alcun conforto
<i>UKIMWI ni pigo kubwa, hapa kwetu duniani</i>	L’AIDS è una calamità, qui da noi sulla terra
<i>Moja yake ni vidonda, nao mwili kukonda</i>	Uno di loro sono le piaghe, e il tuo corpo deperisce
<i>Hakuna atokupenda, utabaki na kitanda</i>	Non c’è nessuno che ti ami, resterai con il letto
<i>Mwilio utakuvunda, hakuna tena kuranda.</i>	Il tuo corpo ti si decompone, non c’è nulla di che vantarsi.

Il timore per l’avvento di questa malattia sconosciuta e la disinformazione su quelle che potevano essere le conseguenze ha fornito occasione di metaforizzare l’HIV/AIDS attribuendo loro termini di riferimento ‘altri’. Uno dei primi fu *Juliana*, nome delle stoffe importate illegalmente dall’Uganda nella regione di Kagera in Tanzania dove, nel 1983, furono individuati i primi casi di HIV/AIDS (Mutembei 2009: 36). Altre metafore sono *dubwana* (“gigante”; qualcosa di enorme di cui non si conosce il nome); *balaa* (lett. “maledizione”); *ngoma* (lett. “tamburo”); *jini* (lett. “spirito”); *Kinyamkera* o *Kinyamkela*, uno spirito malefico che si crede viva nel cavo dei baobab e sia portatore di malattie (TUKI 1981: 48; Nicolini 2016: 112; Reuster-Jahn and Kießling 2006; Mutembei 2009; Nyanto 2015); *mdudu* (lett. “insetto”; Mutembei 2015: 197, 198; Acquaviva e Tosco 2018: 175), come nella poesia *Mdudu* (“L’insetto”, 1992 in Mutembei 2009: 109):

<i>Mdudu katuvamia, si mwingine ni UKIMWI</i>	L’insetto ci ha invaso, non è altri che l’AIDS
[...]	[...]
<i>Hafanani na samaki, wala pweza baharini</i>	Non assomiglia a un pesce, e neanche a un polipo
<i>Usidhani mshikaki, chakula cha vitamini</i>	Non credere (che sia) uno spiedino, cibo

	vitaminico
<i>Ukakimbia masaki, au kule kinondoni</i>	Se scappi a Masaki, o lì a Kinondoni
<i>Mdudu katuvamia, si mwingine ni UKIMWI</i>	L'insetto ci ha invaso, non un altro è l'AIDS.

O ancora in *Mdudu katika tunda* (“L'insetto nel frutto”, 1997, in Mutembei 2009: 203). La metafora del frutto è un chiaro riferimento alla donna contagiata :

<i>Mdudu huyu hunyata, tunda ndani kuchimbua</i>	Quest'insetto cammina furtivo, il frutto all'interno rovina
<i>Umbole mdogo sana, makubwa maafa yake</i>	E' minuscolo, ma grandi le sue sventure
<i>Sababu hasa nakupa, tena nakueleza</i>	Ora te ne do il motivo, e te lo spiego pure
<i>Tunda mtu akipata, hula bila kuchungua</i>	L'uomo prendendo un frutto, lo mangia senza guardare
<i>Watu wameshalitupa, ndani limejiozea</i>	La gente lo ha già gettato, dentro è già marcio
[...]	[...]
<i>Ukila utabaini, ugonjwa umeingia</i>	Se lo mangi vedrai bene, la malattia è entrata
[...]	[...]
<i>Huna pa kukimbilia, marehemu utakua</i>	Non hai dove fuggire, defunto sarai.

Metafore, queste, dalla funzione ambivalente: da un lato creare una distanza emotiva dalla malattia dall'altro l'attribuzione di una colpa a chi con la malattia è entrato in contatto. Come tutte le malattie di cui non si aveva terapia certa, inizialmente HIV e AIDS sono stati circondati da un'aura di mistero. Sin dall' inizio, infatti, nell' immaginario collettivo locale il virus fu concepito come uno spirito malefico che si introduceva nella vita delle persone:

like a myth and haunted them seemingly by quirks of fate, it took possession of their bodies, one by one, invisibly [...] silently, until wearing them down in a slow, unbearable loss of life (Johansson 2010: 60).

o un nemico che avesse varcato i confini territoriali portando morte e distruzione, come in *Chanzo cha Ukimwi* (“L'origine dell'AIDS”, 1991; Mutembei 2009: 187) di F.M. Munema pubblicata su *Mzalendo*. In

questi versi è ben evidente il rapporto diretto tra il concetto di malattia e il concetto di ciò che è straniero, quindi minaccioso e aggressivo: non a caso si dice che l'Aids arrivi dall'Occidente, dall'America:

<i>UKIMWI ni ugonjwa, hauna dawa wala chanjo</i>	L'AIDS è una malattia, non ha cura né vaccino
<i>Hueneza na mgonjwa, washerati ndio mwanzo</i>	Si diffonde col malato, il malcostume è l'inizio
<i>Amerika aligunduliwa, [...]</i>	In America fu scoperta, [...]
<i>UKIMWI ni ugonjwa, mwisho wake huwa kifo.</i>	L'AIDS è una malattia, la sua fine è la morte.

Ci si chiede spesso il perché di determinati accadimenti e quale significato possano avere nella vita di un individuo, ma non sempre si riesce a dare una spiegazione e men che meno alle malattie, poiché nella maggior parte dei casi tali significati assumono valore moralistico: pregiudizi rispetto all'infezione e al contagiato, creazione di stereotipi e forme di discriminazione hanno, nel tempo, influenzato l'immaginario collettivo delle popolazioni colpite e i malati di AIDS, che oltre alla malattia devono combattere l'immagine della malattia, un nemico ancor più difficile da affrontare che non la malattia stessa (Sontag 2013).

1.2. La poesia come strumento di informazione e di educazione per i giovani

Attraverso immagini di povera gente che non riesce ad assicurarsi neanche i beni primari e ricorre alla prostituzione per sopravvivere - stile di vita comune fra i giovani e in particolare fra le ragazze - e che rappresenta uno dei maggiori pericoli di contrarre l'HIV/AIDS, i versi del poeta kenyano Kithaka wa Mberia proiettano le sensazioni più intime di coloro che subiscono abusi sessuali a scuola, da parte dei loro compagni o dai loro insegnanti. *Giza Mbele* ("E poi l'oscurità")⁸, *Pamela* e *Flora na wenzake* ("Flora e le sue amiche") pubblicate nella raccolta *Bara Jingine* ("Un altro continente", 2001) sono solo alcuni esempi che fanno riflettere sulle sfide che dovrebbero essere affrontate dai programmi d'istruzione rivolti innanzitutto alle ragazze.

⁸ *Giza mbele* ("E poi l'oscurità") fu rappresentata dal CHAKINA (*Chama cha Kiswahili cha Chuo Kikuu cha Nairobi* - Gruppo di Swahili dell'Università di Nairobi) nel 1988 al Kenya National Theatre; nel 1989 all'Università di Nairobi, oltre alla *Shule ya Upili ya Wasichana* (Scuola Secondaria femminile) di Pangani, nel nord della Tanzania e alla *Shule ya Upili ya Wasichana ya Muslim* (Scuola Secondaria Musulmana Femminile; Kithaka wa Mberia 2001: ix).

Giza Mbele

Wanafunzi na walimu

Wanatoleana kwa heri

[...]

Karibu na lango

Benzi jekundu

Limetulia tuli

Likisubiri

Kama chatu

Vitabu mkononi

Kutojua akilini

Umasikini nyumbani

Angojewa kwa hamu

Kama windo, anafika

[...]

Mkono mkongwe kama

Ukitetemeshwa na ndoto

Taratibu unaanza mwendo

Kuanzia miguu ya nje

Hadi maeneo ya mbali,

Katika akili ya mtoto

Wasiwasi unatanda

Na kufwatwa na ukungu

Na kisha giza (wa Mberia 2001: 26-27).

Pamela

III

Mbali na shule ya jana

Ambako ndoto zako

Zilikuwa wimbo mtamu

Katika masikio ya walimu

[...]

E poi l'oscurità

Studenti e insegnanti

Si salutano

[...]

Vicino al cancello

Una Mercedes rossa

E' ferma, immobile

Aspettando

Come un serpente

I libri in mano

Con nulla in testa

Povertà in casa

Era attesa con brama

Come una preda, arriva

[...]

Una mano vecchia come

Stesse tremando per un sogno

Lentamente inizia il cammino

A partire dall'esterno delle cosce

Sino ai 'luoghi' lontani

Nella mente della bambina

La preoccupazione dilaga

Seguita dalla nebbia

E poi l'oscurità.

Pamela

III

Distante dalla scuola di ieri

Dove i tuoi sogni

Erano un dolce canto

Per le orecchie degli insegnanti

[...]

<i>Pamela, mbali na shule</i>	Pamela, lontana da scuola
<i>Leo unazurura sokoni</i>	Ora girovagli per il mercato
<i>Ukiokota vitakataka</i>	Raccogliendo rifiuti
<i>Na kutokwa na maneno</i>	E dici parole
<i>Yanayochoma masikio</i>	Che feriscono le orecchie
<i>Kama cheche za moto</i>	Come faville di fuoco
<i>Na mara kwa mara</i>	E di volta in volta
<i>Uchi wako</i>	La tua nudità
<i>Ukitatiza macho ya watu</i>	Incuriosiva gli occhi della gente
<i>(wa Mberia 2001: 31)</i>	
<i>Flora na wenzake</i>	<i>Flora e le sue amiche</i>
<i>Wazazi na wanafunzi</i>	Genitori e studenti
<i>Humwita ‘Mwalimu-Mkuu’</i>	Lo chiamano ‘Gran-Maestro’
<i>Lakini jina lake halisi</i>	Ma il suo nome reale
<i>Ni Uozal!</i>	È Sporcizia!
<i>[...]</i>	<i>[...]</i>
<i>Darasa la Nane</i>	La classe ottava
<i>Tayari limejaa</i>	Si era subito riempita
<i>Kama ‘Mwalimu-Mkuu’</i>	Come il ‘Gran-Maestro’
<i>Alivyoagizia jana</i>	Aveva ordinato ieri
<i>[...]</i>	<i>[...]</i>
<i>Macho ya mkurukenge</i>	Gli occhi del direttore
<i>Yanatupa cheche kali</i>	Lanciano faville cocenti
<i>Zinazowasha mwako wa woga</i>	Che infuocano la fiamma della paura
<i>Kwenye akili changa.</i>	Nelle menti acerbe.
<i>Vidole bila adabu</i>	Dita sgarbate
<i>Na ngozi changa</i>	E la pelle pudica
<i>Zinakutana ghafla</i>	si incontrarono all’improvviso
<i>Na kuchanganyika</i>	e si mescolarono
<i>Chini ya sare ya shule (wa Mberia 2001: 33-34).</i>	Sotto la divisa scolastica.

Le comunità islamiche non sono rimaste insensibili alla necessità di creare dei materiali che potessero essere usate come informazione e prevenzione nella lotta all'HIV/AIDS.⁹ Redatto in forma di *utenzi*¹⁰ è il componimento *UKIMWI* (AIDS) di Abdalla bin Eifan, (<http://www.alhidaaya.com/sw/node/3418>). I versi offrono una serie di insegnamenti esortando a seguire i dettami della religione al fine di mantenere i giusti comportamenti sociali e poter, quindi, contrastare sia l'infezione sia lo stigma nei confronti dei bambini e degli adolescenti rimasti orfani e, spesso, sieropositivi o affetti da AIDS conclamato¹¹.

<i>Salaam kwa watu wote, wa bara hadi wa pwani,</i>	Pace a tutti gli uomini, dall'entroterra alla costa
<i>Dini ya Mungu tufuate, [...]</i>	La religione di Dio, orsù seguite [...]
<i>Ridha za Mungu tupate, tuwe katika amani,</i>	Che siamo da Dio benedetti, che stiamo in pace
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.
<i>Afya, ubora, uzima, ni matunda ya mwilini,</i>	Salute, bontà, vitalità, sono i frutti del corpo,
<i>Hii ni kubwa neema, kutoka kwa Rahmani,</i>	Questa è l'immensa bontà, da parte del Generoso,

⁹ Dalla propaganda mediatica appare chiaro che nella lotta all'HIV/AIDS, l'educazione religiosa islamica tenda a diffondere messaggi sulla necessità di seguire regole morali quali l'astinenza sessuale e la fedeltà coniugale come principale via di prevenzione, e la discriminazione nei confronti dei contagiati poiché hanno perseguito comportamenti peccaminosi. Tuttavia sia in Kenya che in Tanzania molte istituzioni religiose mussulmane stanno svolgendo un ruolo importante nelle campagne di prevenzione e di sensibilizzazione, organizzando corsi di formazione per operatori socio-sanitari, materiali didattici e teatro sull'HIV/AIDS (Svensson 2007; Morgan *et al.* 2014).

¹⁰ Con il termine *utenzi* si fa riferimento sia al poema come componimento, sia al metro caratterizzato da quartine, con versi di otto sillabe e rima che si ripete generalmente nei primi tre versi per tutto il poema (Acquaviva 2016; 2019; Wamitila 2001; 2003; Mazrui 2007).

¹¹ Alcuni studiosi hanno evidenziato come l'esperienza dello stigma e della discriminazione sociale abbiano contribuito all'aumento di problemi psicologici in soggetti che sono risultati positivi all'HIV/AIDS. Quello dello stigma non è un effetto immediato quanto, piuttosto, un processo dinamico. Incomincia con il sospetto dovuto all'improvviso dimagrimento della persona o alla morte di un congiunto. Quando i segni della presenza dell'AIDS appaiono inequivocabili, ha inizio il vero e proprio processo di morte civile ovvero l'allontanamento del malato, lo si evita fisicamente, si smette di comprare ciò che produce, qualunque cosa che possa essere stata toccata e contaminata dalla persona. Uno stato di cose, quindi, che relegano l'individuo ai margini della comunità di appartenenza (McHenry *et al.* 2017; Cluver and Frances 2007; Tsai *et al.* 2013).

<i>Na mtu mwenye hekima, hujua yake thamani,</i>	E colui che ha giudizio, conosce il suo valore,
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l' AIDS è una prova.
<i>Ukimwi wenye lawama, ugonjwa wenye huzuni,</i>	L' AIDS è una condanna, una triste malattia
<i>Watoto huwa yatima, madhambi yao ni nini?</i>	I bimbi orfani, che peccati hanno?
<i>Wakose baba na mama, waleleke masikini,</i>	Perdere il padre e la madre, crescere nell' indigenza
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l' AIDS è una prova.
<i>Tuwaonee huruma, wamekosa kitu gani?</i>	Guardiamo a loro con occhio pietoso, che sbagli hanno commesso?
<i>Huu kweli ni dhuluma, na adhabu maishani,</i>	In verità è un'ingiustizia, e una condanna nella vita,
<i>Matendo haya si mema, kinyume na yetu dini,</i>	Queste sono cattive azioni, contrarie alla nostra religione,
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l' AIDS è una prova.

L'obiettivo didattico del poema è ancora più evidente quando si pone l'accento sull'importanza di ricevere una giusta educazione religiosa che allontani l'individuo da comportamenti a rischio

<i>SABABU yake uzinzi, na kupotea imani,</i>	Alla base è la fornicazione, la perdita della fede.
<i>Pia kukosa malezi, watoto kule nyumbani,</i>	E anche che i figli non vengono educati bene a casa,
<i>Ni wajibu kwa wazazi, kuwaongoza kidini,</i>	E' dovere dei genitori, far prosperare la religione,
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l' AIDS è una prova.

Nei versi che seguono la denuncia contro l'Occidente, latore del malcostume, della prostituzione e dell'AIDS:

<i>Tumemsahau Mungu, kufuata ya duniani,</i>	Abbiamo dimenticato Dio, per seguire (i beni) terreni,
<i>Tunafuata ya Wazungu, tabia za hayawani,</i>	Seguiamo degli Occidentali, la natura bestiale
<i>Picha nyingi za Kizungu, uchafu tupu machoni,</i>	Tante le loro immagini, pura sporcizia per gli occhi,
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.
<i>Tunaigiza mavazi, na tabia za kihuni,</i>	Copiamo i vestiti, e la natura depravata
<i>Msichana yupo wazi, mtazame kifuani,</i>	La ragazza è scoperta, guardatele il petto,
<i>Maneno hasikilizi, amejipamba usoni,</i>	Le parole non si ascoltano, si è truccata il volto,
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.
<i>Yeye wa kujisitiri, anapotoka njiani,</i>	Lei che è da nascondersi, quando esce in strada
<i>Akae akifikiri, anafuatwa na shetani,</i>	Che si fermi a pensare, seguita dal diavolo,
<i>Asifanye ujeuri, akikanywa na jirani,</i>	Non vantarti, bevendo con il vicino
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.
<i>Na vijana kadhalika, na wao wamo kundini,</i>	E i ragazzi lo stesso, e loro sono in gruppo
<i>Tabia kubadilika, atuvalie hereni,</i>	La natura mutata, indossiamo orecchini
<i>Halafu hukusanyika, pamoja na wanandani,</i>	E poi si riuniscono, con i compagni
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.
[...]	[...]
<i>Kinga yake si mpira, kuivaa huko chini,</i>	La sua difesa non è il condom, da indossare lì in basso
<i>Kinga kumbuka akhera, na adhabu ya motoni,</i>	La difesa porta alla mente l'aldilà, e la punizione dell'inferno
<i>Kinga fanya maghfira, kwa Mungu sana ombeni,</i>	La difesa renda il perdono, pregate molto Iddio

Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.

Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.

Il poeta esorta a prendere consapevolezza della gravità dell'infezione attraverso l'informazione erogata dai vari canali, come la radio e la televisione. Le armi per combattere il male infido, l'AIDS, risiedono nella parola dei capi religiosi e nel contributo dell'istruzione scolastica:

Watu wapewe mawazo, wasikie redioni,

Che la gente possa riflettere, ascolti la
radio

Waeneze matangazo, kila siku gazetini,

Che si propaghino gli annunci, ogni
giorno sui giornali

Wafanye na maelezo, kwenye matelevisheni,

Che si diano spiegazioni, per i canali
televisivi

Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.

Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.

Na Mashekhe wasichoke, kuhubiri mitaani,

E i capi religiosi non si stanchino, che
predichino per strada
che raggiungano ogni angolo, e mettano
in guardia,

Kila pembe na wafike, waeleze hadharani,

Mabwana na wanawake, wote wamo hatarini,

Mariti e mogli, tutti siamo in pericolo,

Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.

Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.

Liwe somo la elimu, walifundishe shuleni,

Che sia materia di studio, insegnatela
nelle scuole

Wazingatie walimu, wakiwa madarasani,

Ascoltate gli insegnanti, stando in classe

Jambo hili ni muhimu, kulitia akilini,

E' una cosa importante, da tenere a
mente

Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.

Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.

Fanya ndoa ya halali, ukatulie nyumbani,

Che il tuo matrimonio sia puro, stai
tranquillo a casa

Shika kamba ya Jalali, mauti yapo mbeleni,

Stringi la corda del Glorioso, la morte è
avanti

[...]

[...]

Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.

Triste malattia, l'AIDS è un Esame.

<i>Hakika nasikitika, nina majonzi moyoni,</i>	In verità mi addolora, il mio cuore (è colmo) di tristezza
<i>Machozi yananitoka, nifikapo kaburini,</i>	Lacrime mi scorrono, giungendo alla tomba
<i>Hivyo wanapukutika, watoto wetu jamani,</i>	Così (essi) cadono come foglie, figli nostri,
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l'AIDS è un Esame.

Nella quartina finale, l'ultimo richiamo alla fede come rifugio:

<i>Kuwaaga sina budi, nawaomba samahani,</i>	Di salutarvi non posso far a meno, vi chiedo perdono
<i>Kwa Mungu wetu turudi, na tusome Qur-aani,</i>	Torniamo dal nostro Dio, e leggiamo il Corano,
<i>Na sana tujitahidi, kuswali misikitini,</i>	E sforziamoci, di pregare nelle moschee
<i>Ugonjwa wenye huzuni, UKIMWI ni Mtihani.</i>	Triste malattia, l'AIDS è una prova.

Nel 2008, il BAKWATA (*Baraza kuu la Waislamu* – Consiglio nazionale islamico) in collaborazione con l'USAID pubblica il testo *Kupinga Unyanyapaa na Ubaguzi kwa Watu Waishio na Virusi vya UKIMWI/UKIMWI* ("Impedire l'isolamento e la discriminazione delle persone affette da HIV/AIDS") alla cui stesura partecipano insegnanti di alcune scuole coraniche di Dodoma e Morogoro in Tanzania.

Il testo contiene 12 componimenti poetici e 4 brevi lavori teatrali sulle modalità di trasmissione del contagio. Componimenti come *Kujilinda na ukimwi* (Proteggersi dall'AIDS) (BAKWATA & USAID 2008: 10; 15) sono un netto richiamo alla necessità di evitare la promiscuità: *Ukimwi kisa ni nini?/Zinaa ndiyo sababu* ("Cos'è che causa l'AIDS?/L'adulterio ne è la ragione").

In *Vijana tuogopeni UKIMWI* ("Ragazzi, temiamo l'AIDS") (BAKWATA & USAID 2008: 9) si esortano i giovani ad evitare l'uso di sostanze stupefacenti, alcol e fornicazione in quanto: *UKIMWI wachagua, Kaburi halichagui* ("L'AIDS sceglie, la tomba non sceglie").

Una particolare attenzione nel testo è rivolta agli orfani dell'AIDS:

<i>Tazameni mayatima, kwa jina la huruma</i>	Guardate gli orfani, in nome della misericordia
<i>Mema kuwafanyia, misaada kuwapa</i>	Fate loro del bene, date loro aiuto
<i>Leo kwangu kesho kwako, [...]</i>	Oggi a me domani a te, [...]
<i>Yatima tuna simanzi, [...]</i>	Per noi orfani il dolore, [...]

<i>Machazi vifuani, njiani na shuleni.</i>	Lacrime sul petto, per strada e a scuola.
[...]	[...]
<i>Wazazi tumepoteza, kwa ugonjwa wa UKIMWI</i>	I genitori abbiamo perso, malati di AIDS
<i>Si Baba, si mama, tumebaki yatima</i>	Né padre, né madre, siamo rimasti
	orfani

(BAKWATA & USAID 2008: 17)

Benché non manchino programmi di supporto sanitario e psicologico per gli orfani dell'AIDS – il *Sawaka Jali Watoto/Care for children* o il *Mama Mkubwa Psychosocial Support Group* in Tanzania o il *Lea Toto* in Kenya (Nyangara *et al.* 2009) sono solo alcune delle tante iniziative sul campo – la percezione artistica dell'orfano è quella di colui che 'non esiste', dell'invisibile il cui lamento può essere ascoltato solo tramite la voce del poeta, come in *Yatima ni Mtoto* ("L'orfano è un bambino") (Mutembei 2009: 225).

<i>Yatima si jina langu</i>	Orfano non è il mio nome
<i>Nilifiwa na wazazi wangu</i>	Ho perso i miei genitori
<i>Kuondoka hao wangu</i>	Con il loro andar via
<i>Utambulisho wangu</i>	La mia identità
<i>Wote ukanipoteya</i>	Tutta mi è stata tolta
<i>Nilipozaliwa wazazi wakafurahiwa</i>	Quando nacqui i miei furono felici
<i>Ujio wangu ukawa</i>	Il mio arrivo fu
<i>Wa baraka maridhawa</i>	Una grande benedizione
<i>Mimi na wao tukawa</i>	Io e loro
<i>Twaishi bila mawaa</i>	Vivevamo senza alcuno stigma
<i>Na leo hawapo tena</i>	E oggi non ci sono più
[...]	[...]
<i>Ingawa tumeachana</i>	Benché separati
<i>Wameniathiri sana</i>	Mi hanno lasciato una forte macchia
<i>Watu menibadili jina</i>	La gente mi ha cambiato nome
<i>Si mtoto ni yatima</i>	Non sei un bambino sei un orfano.
<i>Naidai haki yangu [...]</i>	Pretendo giustizia,[...]
<i>Nionwe uwepo wangu</i>	Che io sia visto nel mio esserci
<i>Niitwe kwa jina langu</i>	Che sia chiamato col mio nome

2. La Didattica dell'HIV/AIDS

Vari studi hanno evidenziato come i programmi scolastici di prevenzione ed educazione sessuale siano stati importanti nella diffusione dell'informazione sull'AIDS: dai comportamenti a rischio alla necessità di avere rapporti sessuali protetti, nonché sull'uso dei profilattici fra gli studenti sessualmente attivi (Brooks-Gunn and Paikoff 1992; Klepp *et al.* 1997; Ngugi 2014; Mkumbo 2010). Nel 2004 il *Ministry of Education and Vocational Training* della Tanzania (oggi *Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Educational Training*) redigeva le linee guida per l'educazione sessuale, *Guidelines for Implementing HIV/AIDS and Life-Skills Education Programmes in Schools* (Mkumbo 2010: 617), i cui obiettivi principali erano l'introduzione dell'educazione sessuale nelle scuole pubbliche e private attraverso approcci interdisciplinari e la pubblicazione di materiali da fornire alle classi delle scuole primarie e secondarie¹².

HIV/AIDS and Life Skills education needs to impart to children the coping resources and personal and social competences in a supportive learning environment [...]. Furthermore, the education focuses on imparting knowledge in relation to decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, care in coping with emotion and coping with stress as one lives with HIV infection [...]. Thus HIV/AIDS and life skills education aims at minimizing young people's involvement in risky behaviours through instilling and maximising knowledge in adolescents on the sexual norms and values from one generation to another. (Rushahu 2015: 132)

Nel 2002 il Ministero dell'Istruzione del Kenya introduceva nei nuovi programmi scolastici lo studio della letteratura orale e scritta, lezioni sui diritti dell'infanzia, e programmi di prevenzione relativi agli abusi sessuali sui bambini e il contagio da HIV/AIDS (Ngugi 2014: 25). Nel 2003 viene pubblicato il testo *Hatua za Kiswahili. Masomo ya Msingi 6* (Waweru *et al.* 2003), il brano estratto è uno degli esempi

¹² L'interdisciplinarietà degli insegnamenti ha reso possibile la collaborazione fra ONG internazionali, nazionali e docenti delle scuole secondarie. Particolare è il contributo del *Femina-Health Information Project* (HIP) con sede in Tanzania e la sua rivista *Fema*, ideato per gli studenti delle Scuole Secondarie, e basato sull'idea dell'*edutainment*, un metodo che fa convergere tematiche culturali popolari e istruzione attraverso i mass media – riviste e programmi televisivi – che informino i giovani tanzaniani sulle cause e le conseguenze dell'HIV/AIDS. Tuttavia molti dei materiali forniti dal progetto furono inizialmente censurati perché non considerati in linea con la visione locale di un'appropriata educazione sessuale. Il progetto ebbe inizio nel 1999 con il patrocinio dell'*East African Development Communication Foundation* e finanziato inizialmente solo dalla SIDA (*Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency*) e in seguito anche da UNICEF (*United Nations International Children's Fund*) e USAID (*U.S. Agency for International Development*). Da allora ha coinvolto migliaia scuole secondarie del paese. Il suo approccio innovativo si basa sull'uso di testi teatrali, radio, televisione e riviste bilingue (Inglese e swahili; Phillips 2009: 57).

usati nelle scuole primarie nei programmi di prevenzione in cui si pone l'accento sull'importanza della scuola e dell'istruzione come armi con cui combattere l'HIV/AIDS:

Tahadhari kabla ya hatari.

Wanafunzi wametakiwa kuwekeza katika elimu ili waje kuwa wataalamu wa kesho na si kujiingiza katika matendo yasiyo na maadili ambayo yatawafanya kuwa wagonjwa wa kesho. Haya yalisemwa na afisa mmoja wa elimu katika kilele cha tamasha wa [...] vijana juu ya ukimwi iliyoandaliwa na kundi la kuhasisha vijana juu ya hatari ya ugonjwa huo ambao huwafisha sana hapo mjini [...] Alisema kuwa wanaofikiri kuwa ukimwi ni ajali kazini wanajidanganya. Ukimwi unaepukika ikiwa watu watazingatia ushauri wa elimu wanayopewa juu ya ugonjwa huu. "Kama ni ajali kazini, kwa nini watu wanaogopa kwenda kuwatolea ndugu zao damu au kupimwa na kujitangaza kama wameathirika na ugonjwa huo? Msidanganyike wanafunzi, kuweni makini na lugha hizo za kudanganyana. Tafadhali tahadhari kabla ya hatari" alisisitiza afisa huyu. Bwana afisa alisema wale wanaofikiri kuwa na wapenzi wengi ni ujanja wanajingiza katika shimo la moto, na watakufa kabla ya umri wao [...] Wananchi kwa jumla wanatakikana kuwa na utamaduni wa kupima afya zao kwani utawasaidia kuboresha afya zao [...]. (Waweru et al. 2003: 11)

Prevenire il pericolo...

Gli studenti sono tenuti ad imparare affinché possano essere i saggi di domani e non si facciano coinvolgere in azioni devianti che li trasformeranno nei malati di domani. Queste parole furono dette da un funzionario scolastico durante il festival [...] giovanile sull'AIDS organizzato da un gruppo per informare i ragazzi sui pericoli di questa malattia che ne aveva già uccisi molti in città [...] Disse che coloro che pensavano che l'AIDS fosse un incidente di percorso si ingannavano. L'AIDS si può evitare se la gente tiene a mente le informazioni scientifiche che vengono loro date su questa malattia. "Se si tratta di un incidente di percorso, perché la gente teme di andare a donare il sangue ai suoi parenti o di fare il test o a considerarsi come se fossero macchiati da questa malattia? Non prendetevi in giro, studenti, fate attenzione a questo linguaggio ingannevole. Per favore prevenite il pericolo" insistette. Il funzionario disse che coloro che pensavano che avere più partners significasse essere furbi stavano per gettarsi nel fuoco e sarebbero morti anzitempo[...] tutti i cittadini erano tenuti a far propria la cultura di farsi visitare poiché ciò li avrebbe aiutati a migliorare la loro salute [...].

Nel testo scolastico *Masomo ya Msingi. Darasa la 8. Kitabu cha Mwanafunzi* (Waweru et al. 2005), gli autori ricorrono all'oralità per definire la realtà innestata dal virus usando come strategia comunicativa funzionale all'apprendimento la *ngonjera*, un genere di poesia dialogata e drammatizzata:

Mama: Mwana nilete kiti, nibarizi kukalia

Nawe kwenye kizingiti, kaa nikupe wosia

*Magonjwa kama vijiti, ya Ukimwi unaua
Mwanangu unisikize, ujitunze utaishi.*

*Mtoto: Wewe yako yamepita, niuache wakati wangu
Ukimwi si utapita, kama mengine mamangu?*

*Mama: Ujana ni moshi vile, na katu! Hautarudi
[...] (Waweru et al. 2005: 211)*

*Mamma: Figlia, portami una sedia, che io parli da seduta
E tu sulla soglia, stai perché ti dia consigli di vita
Le malattie sono come grandi alberi, e l'AIDS uccide
Figlia mia ascoltami, abbi cura di te e vivrai.*

*Figlia: Il tuo tempo è passato, lasciami il mio
L'AIDS non passerà, come il resto madre mia?*

*Mamma: La giovinezza è come il fumo, e no! Non tornerà
[...]*

In *Hatua za Kiswahili. Masomo ya Msingi. Darasa la 3* (Waweru et al. 2011), gli autori propongono agli allievi un testo teatrale (*mchezo wa kuigiza*) per introdurre la lezione della trasmissione del virus da madre a figlio durante la gestazione o il parto:

Mama: Aaa! Hawa watoto wanaugua UKIMWI, wananivunja moyo sana.

Tatu: Eti, watoto gani, mama?

Mama: Hawa watoto waliozaliwa wakiwa na UKIMWI. Hawana lolote maishani. Ni kama tu ambao walizaliwa ili wafe.

Tatu: Kwani, Ukimwi ni nani, mama?

Mama: Ni ugonjwa hatari sana Tatu, tena hauna dawa.

Tatu: Ni kama saratani, mama?

Mama: UKIMWI ni kama saratani kwa sababu pia saratani haina dawa. Unanza na virusi vinavyoharibu kinga mwilini. Mwili unadhoofika na hauwezi kujikinga na magonjwa yoyote. Unaposhikwa na ugonjwa wowote tu unaweza kuaga dunia.

Tatu: Mama, mtu huambukizwa vipi ugonjwa huu wa UKIMWI?

Mama: Eh, kuna njia mbalimbali za mtu kuambukizwa UKIMWI.

Tatu: Hmmm! Lakini watoto wachanga huambukizwa vipi? Na wao huwa tumboni mwa mama zao?

Mama: Mama mjamzito akiwa na UKIMWI hupitisha kwa mtoto kabla hajazaliwa. Mtoto huyo huanza kuuqua na kuaga dunia mapema sana. Hata mwingine amekufa leo hospitalini. Jambo la kuhuzunisha ajabu!

Tatu: Looh! Ni jambo la kuhuzunisha kweli! (Waweru et al. 2011: 81).

Mamma: Aaa! Questi bimbi che si ammalano di AIDS, mi spezzano il cuore.

Tatu: Eh, quali bambini, mamma?

Mamma: Questi bimbi che sono nati con l'AIDS. Non hanno nulla nella vita. È come se fossero nati per morire

Tatu: Perché, l'AIDS chi è, mamma?

Mamma: È una malattia molto pericolosa Tatu, inoltre non ha cure.

Tatu: È come il cancro, mamma?

Mamma: L'AIDS è come il cancro perché anche il cancro non ha cure. Comincia con un virus che attacca le difese del corpo. Il corpo si indebolisce e non puoi più difenderti dalle altre malattie. Quando vieni colto da qualsiasi malattia puoi morire.

Tatu: Mamma, come ci si infetta con questa malattia dell'AIDS?

Mama: Eh, ci sono molti modi per cui l'uomo contrae l'AIDS.

Tatu: Hmmm! Ma i neonati come si infettano? E quelli che sono nel pancione delle loro mamme?

Mama: Se una mamma incinta ha l'AIDS lo trasmette al figlio prima che nasca. Il bimbo comincia a star male e muore presto. Anche un altro è morto oggi in ospedale. È davvero una cosa che intristisce!

Tatu: Ohh! E' una cosa triste davvero!

Oltre ai manuali scolastici, di cui si sono riportati tre esempi, nel 2008, la casa editrice keniana Sema Sasa pubblicava un racconto breve – solo 19 pagine - dal titolo *Siku ya Ukimwi* (“La giornata dell'AIDS”) di John Kobia, docente universitario di Kiswahili e autore di letteratura per ragazzi. La protagonista è Kadogo, una ragazzina che frequenta la settima classe della scuola primaria. Con le sue compagne partecipa al corteo organizzato per celebrare la ‘giornata mondiale dell'AIDS’. Già dalle prime pagine si nota l’obiettivo didattico del breve testo dedicato alla prevenzione e alla sensibilizzazione nella lotta all'AIDS e al superamento della superstizione che circonda l’infezione:

Watu [...] walibeba mabango yaliyotangaza waziwazi kwamba ilikuwa ni siku ya ukimwi [...]. Baadhi ya mabango yaliandikwa: UKIMWI SI UCHAWI. UKIMWI UPO. JIHADHARI [...] UKIMWI HAUNA DAWA. DAWA YA UKIMWI NI WEWE. (Kobia 2008: 3)

La gente [...] portava striscioni che dichiaravano questa come la 'giornata dell'AIDS'. [...] Su alcuni striscioni figuravano le scritte: L'AIDS NON E' STREGONERIA. L'AIDS ESISTE. FATE ATTENZIONE [...] PER L' AIDS NON ESISTE MEDICINA. LA MEDICINA DELL'AIDS SEI TU.

Durante la cerimonia, il patron invita Kadogo a salire sul palco e parlare della sua esperienza. Si scopre così che la protagonista del racconto è affetta da HIV. La sua testimonianza vuole essere di esortazione ad evitare il segno dello stigma che accompagna troppo spesso le persone contagiate:

Leo ni siku ya kusema ukweli. Leo ni siku ya ukimwi [...] katika jamii kuna ubaguzi wa kila aina [...] wa kijinsia [...] kazini. Lakini ugonjwa wa ukimwi hauna ubaguzi. Ukimwi unaweza kumpata yeyote. [...] Mnionavyo hivi mimi nina virusi vinavyosababisha ukimwi. [...] Msinihurumie. Jihurumieni. Kila mtu ajichunge. Lazima tubadilishe tabia zetu. (Kobia 2008: 7-8)

Oggi è il giorno di dire la verità. Oggi è la giornata dell'AIDS [...] nella società ci sono discriminazioni di ogni genere [...] sessuali [...] lavorative. Ma la malattia dell'AIDS non fa discriminazioni. L'AIDS può colpire chiunque. [...] Mi vedete così, ho un virus che causa l'AIDS. [...] Non abbiate pietà di me. Abbiate misericordia di voi. Che ognuno si prenda cura di sé. Dobbiamo cambiare il nostro modo di essere.

Per far comprendere meglio il messaggio al suo pubblico, Kadogo narra un racconto metaforico sulla responsabilità individuale:

[...] Kulikuwa na mtu aliyekuwa mkulima. Alikuwa na shamba lake la mahindi. Jirani yake alikuwa na mbwa [...] Mbwa hawa walikuwa wakiharibu mahindi ya yule mkulima. Walivamia shamba na kula mahindi mabichi. Mkulima hakufurahia kuona shamba lake likiharibiwa na mbwa. Siku moja, alitia sumu kwenye mahindi. Kila mbwa aliyekula mahindi yaliyotiwa sumu alifariki. Kila mbwa alikufa kifo kichungu. Baadhi ya majirani waliogundua mahindi yametiwa sumu waliwafunga mbwa wao. Hii leo duniani kote, mahindi yametiwa sumu. Kila mtu afunge mbwa wake. (Kobia 2008: 8)

[...] C'era una volta un uomo che faceva il contadino. Aveva un campo di grano. Il suo vicino aveva dei cani. [...] Questi cani stavano rovinando il grano di quel contadino. Avevano invaso il campo e mangiato il grano tenero. Il contadino non fu certo contento nel vedere il suo campo rovinato dai cani. Un giorno mise del veleno sul grano. Ogni cane che aveva mangiato il grano avvelenato morì. Ogni cane ebbe una morte dolorosa. Alcuni vicini che scoprirono che il grano era stato avvelenato chiusero i loro cani. Di questi

giorni, in tutto il mondo il grano è stato avvelenato. Che ognuno tenga chiuso il proprio cane.

Rivolgendosi agli studenti delle scuole primarie, Kadogo li esorta a fare attenzione poiché l'AIDS non colpisce solo gli adulti. L'ultima parte del racconto è concentrata sulla narrazione di come Kadogo ha contratto il virus, una narrazione che si configura come il ricongiungimento con la dimensione del ricordo misto a sensazioni informi:

Mimi niliambukiza ugonjwa wa ukimwi nikiwa katika darasa la sita [...] Nilikuwa kijana kama nyinyi [...] Nyinyi vijana [...] msifikiri ukimwi haupo. Ukimwi upo. Lakini dawa yake haipo. [...] Mimi nilikuwa nimealikwa kwenye karamu ya rafiki yangu. [...] kulikuwa na ngoma [...] Tulikula vyakula na kunywa vinywaji vya kila aina [...] Nilifanya kosa [...] Baada ya kunywa pombe iliyokuwa kali sana nililewa chakari [...] Nikajisahau. Sikujua nilikuwa wapi. Nikaingia katika chumba kimoja. Mmoja wa wavulana aliingia chumbani humo [...] Nilipoteza ubikira wangu.

[...]

Baada ya miaka miwili nikawa mgonjwa. Nilienda hospitali. [...] Muda si muda nikaanza kukohoa sana [...] Nikaamua kutembelea kituo cha kupima virusi vya ukimwi [...] Daktari aliniezea kuwa nilikuwa na ukimwi [...] Kumbe, yule mvulana alikuwa na virusi vya ukimwi [...] (Kobia 2008: 9-13).

Ho contratto l'AIDS mentre ero ancora alla sesta classe [...] Ero una ragazzina come voi [...] Voi ragazzi [...] non pensiate che l'AIDS non ci sia. L'AIDS c'è. La sua cura non c'è. [...] Ero stata invitata alla festa di un mio amico [...] C'era la musica [...] Mangiammo e bevemmo alcolici di ogni tipo [...] Feci un errore [...] Dopo aver bevuto dei super alcolici mi ubriacai [...] Mi dimenticai di me. Non sapevo dove fossi. Entrai in una stanza. Uno dei ragazzi entrò lì nella stanza [...] Persi la mia verginità.

[...]

Dopo due anni mi ammalai. Andai in ospedale. [...] Dopo un po' cominciai a tossire [...] Decisi di recarmi al centro per il test dell'HIV [...] Il dottore mi spiegò che avevo l'AIDS [...] Diamine, quel ragazzo aveva il virus dell'HIV [...]

Attraverso il personaggio di Kadogo, l'autore induce il lettore verso una forma critica di pensare la propria realtà applicando per analogia la teoria freiriana della comunicazione partecipativa. Freire (1970) aveva fondato la sua teoria sulla convinzione che ogni essere umano a prescindere dalla sua condizione sociale fosse capace di guardare in maniera critica al mondo in un confronto dialogico con gli altri. Se fornito degli strumenti idonei, l'individuo – in questo caso i giovani lettori – può gradualmente percepire la sua realtà personale o sociale e negoziare con essa.

Gli scrittori del Kenya sono effettivamente molto attivi su questo fronte. Un altro esempio di letteratura per l'infanzia mirata a educare sul tema dell'AIDS è un racconto di Clara Momanyi, pubblicato sempre da Sasa Sema, intitolato *Pendo katika Shari* (L'amore nelle avversità, 2008), in cui la protagonista viene contagiata dal marito, totalmente ignorante sulla malattia, pur essendo un uomo di ceto medio istruito. Saranno i figli di lei, consapevoli e informati grazie alla scuola, ad aiutare la madre a prendersi cura di sé stessa e a combattere il pregiudizio.

3. Note finali

Come tutte le pandemie, anche il virus dell' HIV/AIDS ha sconvolto e trasformato la vita sociale del mondo, con un impatto notevole nelle aree più povere dell'Africa subsahariana. Lo stato di emergenza ha imposto la necessità di agire organizzando campagne di informazione, prevenzione e sensibilizzazione che coinvolgessero intere comunità.

Sin dall'inizio dell'epidemia in Africa orientale si è notato come l'arte nelle sue forme orali e scritte sia riuscita a dire l'indicibile fungendo da agente catartico e divulgativo allo stesso tempo, riuscendo a codificare le percezioni del virus da parte dei gruppi sociali di volta in volta esaminati. A questo riguardo è bene ricordare alcuni degli studi sull'utilizzo della poesia e del teatro nelle strategie di intervento nella lotta all'HIV/AIDS (Wasike *et al.* 2019), studi che vanno dall'educazione-intrattenimento di massa (Vaughan *et al.* 2000; Bertrand *et al.* 2006), al rapporto comunicazione e cultura popolare (Barz and Cohen 2011) e agli interventi educativi nelle scuole (Maticka-Tyndale and Penwell Barnett 2010).

Sia nella comunicazione artistica che nei programmi governativi, una particolare attenzione è stata rivolta alle fasce più vulnerabili delle popolazioni colpite, ovvero i bambini e gli adolescenti. Le riforme scolastiche e l'introduzione di moduli dedicati all'educazione sessuale hanno contribuito alla lotta all'AIDS, benchè all'inizio ci fosse una certa resistenza da parte degli insegnanti a tenere lezioni su un argomento tabù come quello della sessualità. Per ottemperare anche questa difficoltà da parte del corpo docente, nel 2014 viene pubblicata dall'UNESCO la *Pedagogical Guide for competencies development in reproductive health and HIV and AIDS education* (www.ibe.unesco.org). L'obiettivo è sviluppare le competenze degli insegnanti al fine di realizzare una pedagogia attiva basata su tecniche di partecipazione che aiutino gli studenti ad interiorizzare e integrare le informazioni ricevute e l'insegnante dovrà agire da facilitatore. In realtà attività basate sul modello della pedagogia attiva erano state già esperite in Africa subsahariana qualche anno prima che l'UNESCO pubblicasse la sua guida. Ne è un esempio il lavoro di Mjomba Majalia in Kenya con il progetto *Ngoma Dialogue Circles* (Ngoma-Dice) realizzato presso la Murray Girls High School e la Kenyatta Boys High School nel

distretto di Taita/Taveta (Majalia 2011). E' necessario sottolineare che i programmi di prevenzione su base biomedica avrebbero ben poco successo se non fossero coadiuvati da un supporto di altro genere come le arti performative o la letteratura nelle cui espressioni la gente ritrova quella parte di sè che il trauma dovuto alla malattia ha frantumato o lacerato.

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La Busta dell'Ascari

War propaganda in Oromo in Latin script from 1940¹

Mauro Tosco

This article describes the first (and possibly only) issue of a four-pages newspaper issued by the Italian military command on the eve of the Second World War and designed to spread war propaganda among the *Ascari*, i.e., the Italian colonial troops. The main point of interest is provided by the use of four languages: Italian, Amharic, Arabic and Oromo, the latter written in Latin script and following the conventions of the Italian orthography. After an historical introduction (section 1.), sections 2. and 3. describe the orthography, language and contents of the Oromo text. Section 4. presents a large portion of the text itself, comparing it with the Italian text, analyzing it with the help of morphological glosses, and attempting a re-transcription in modern Oromo orthography. In the end, section 5. briefly comments on this historical document and the fate of this early attempt at writing down the Oromo language.

1. The *Busta* in its historical setting²

The object of the present notes is the first issue (and possibly the only one; see below) of a four-page bi-monthly newspaper published by the Italian military in East Africa on the eve of the Second World War and addressed to the colonial troops serving under Italian command. To the best of my knowledge, it has never been brought to the attention of linguists and historians. Still, it has a certain interest for its consistent use of four languages: Italian, Arabic, Amharic, and Oromo – the latter, and this is the main point of interest, in a rather idiosyncratic Latin script. The Oromo orthography and text will be the main topic of this article.

¹ Exceptionally, this contribution by *Kervan*'s scientific director has *not* been subject to double blind review.

² I thank Ernesto Milanese, emeritus from the University of Florence, for first telling me about the existence of this document. Ernesto was my colleague at the Somali National University, Mogadishu, in the late eighties of the past century and is a life-long collector and scholar of historical documents on the Italian presence in the Horn of Africa. I also thank my son Giorgio-Giòrs for having researched, found and photographed it at the National Library in Florence, and my friends and colleagues at Dilla University (Ethiopia) Ongaye Oda Orkaydo, Tadesse Girma and Yusuf Hussen for their precious assistance in the analysis and translation of the text and their comments on an earlier version. Any error or mistake remain of course my exclusive intellectual property.

The full title is *Busta dell'Ascari del Galla e Sidama*. *Galla e Sidama* was one of the six regions (Italian *governatorati*, singular *governatorato*) that made up the Italian African Empire from 1936 to 1941; it encompassed the southwest quarter of Ethiopia and was inhabited, among many other peoples, by the bulk of the Oromo of Ethiopia (who at that time were still called with the derogatory term “Galla”). As will be detailed below, *Busta dell'Ascari* roughly means “The colonial soldier’s (: *Ascari*) magazine (: *Busta*)”.

A single issue, number 1 of year 1, dated August 1940 – XVIII (i.e., the 18th year of the Fascist Era), is preserved at the National Library in Florence as a microfilm (catalog number: Microfilm 2045/1-9; the *Busta* is no. 7 of nine). The magazine was foreseen to be published twice a month, but it is unknown to the present writer whether other numbers were published; it looks very doubtful, given the quick end of the military operations in the Horn and the defeat of the Italian army. I do not even actually know whether this issue was ever printed and distributed, and how many copies were made.

The *Busta* was published by the *Comando dello Scacchiere Sud* (‘Command of the South Theater’); its director was a certain Lieutenant Colonel Matteo Caligiuri. The printer is unknown; the technical quality of printing is apparently quite good.

On the first page we have both text and B/W photos, pages 2 and 3 consist of text only, and page 4 of pictures with captions.

The newspaper’s title is written in Italian and repeated underneath in the other three languages:



Fig. 1. Under the title in Italian, from left to right the title in Oromo, Arabic, and Amharic.

The Oromo title reads: *Gasetta can Ascari can Galla Sidama* – in modern orthography, the Qubee, *Gaazexaa kan “Ascari” kan “Galla Sidama.”*

Pages 2 and 3 contain the same text in four columns, from left to right: Italian, Oromo, Amharic, and Arabic. Also the photos have captions in all the four languages.

Ascari (/‘askari/, with antepenultimate accent in Italian, as is often the case with foreign words) comes from the Arabic adjective ‘*askarī* ‘military’ (but here in the sense of ‘soldier’), itself from ‘*askar*

‘army.’ *Ascari* can be used in Italian as a singular noun (as in the *Busta*) or be interpreted as a masculine plural; in this case, a regular masculine singular *ascaro* (/‘askaro/) is backformed.

Nowadays the word *ascari* is scarcely used and hardly known, but in colonial times it was the official and common denomination of the African troops serving in the Royal Italian Army; the use started in 1885 when a mercenary group of Arab soldiers already present in Eritrea was literally bought in order to serve as irregular auxiliaries; recruitment in Eritrea started in 1889. Although Eritrea always remained the main source of enlistment, later on the *Ascari* were also recruited in Somalia and, from 1936, in Ethiopia. The *Ascari* grew in number and importance over the years, and in 1940 about 182,000 out of 256,000 effectives of the Italian army in the Horn were indigenous troops.

Although *Ascari* was also used informally for any African troops under Italian command, in Somalia another light infantry corps, the *Dubat*, was raised. *Dubat* is the Italianization of Somali *duubcad* ‘White Turban’ (from *duub* ‘turban’ + *cad* ‘white’), for the typical white turban they wore.³ The *Dubat* are mentioned in the text of the *Busta* (see below).

The publication name is striking: Italian *busta* (lit. ‘envelope’) is not normally used for publications, be them periodical or not. It is simply an envelope, a case or a folder; additionally, it can be a kind of lady purse (more often called *pochette*, a French loan) or the flat and foldable military cap variously called in English-speaking countries side cap, garrison cap, flight cap, wedge cap or field service cap. In Italian, the diminutive *bustina* is rather used in this sense. Interestingly, the *Ascari* never wore the *bustina* of the Italian army, but their typical red fez. I venture the hypothesis that *Busta* was chosen as the newspaper’s name with the implication that the newspaper was to be distributed among the colonial troops just as the Italian soldiers were receiving their mail from overseas in an envelope or folder.

2. The language and orthography of the *Busta*

The Oromo text of the *Busta* is consistently written in an Italian-based orthography. This means that the Italian writing rules are completely adhered to. Thus, <c> stands for /k/ before /a, o, u/ but for /tʃ/ before /e, i/ (and, conversely, <cia, cio, ciu> stand for /tʃa, tʃo, tʃu/, and <che, chi> stand for /ke, ki/).

As a consequence, a number of Oromo phonemes cannot have an autonomous graphic representation: this applies to the retroflex and slightly implosive phoneme written <dh> in the

³ The etymology proposed in the Italian Wikipedia (<https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dubat>) mistakenly mixes Somali and Arabic.

modern orthography, and to the whole series of the ejectives: /p'/ (in Oromo orthography <ph>), /t'/ (orthographically <x>), /tʃ'/ (orthographically <c>), and /k'/ (orthographically <q>). Even /z/ comes to be written <s> (<z> being reserved, as in Italian, to the dentoalveolar affricates /ts, dz/, absent in Oromo). The glottal stop (marked by <'> word-internally) is equally ignored. Vowel quality, too is generally left unmarked, except in a few cases.

The end result is the loss of much morphological distinctions (e.g., the genitive, marked by lengthening of a word final vowel; see below).

Consonant gemination, being phonological in both Italian and Oromo, fares better, but with many inconsistencies also within the text: e. g., *keessa* 'in; within' is written *chessa* as expected, but also *chesa*.

Pitch is occasionally marked on the last syllable only (as in Italian) by an accented vowel, as in *irrà* for *irraa* 'on; above.'

In order to distinguish /ɲ/ from the sequence /gn/ (which does not exist in Italian), the latter is written <ghn>, as in *giaghnuma* for *jagnummaa* 'courage.'

Furthermore, in *ogi* for *hoji* 'work' /h/ is not written, and this may show that the text was written down by a native speaker of Italian, who did not perceive any aspiration – as is so often the case with speakers of Romance languages.

The correspondences between the *Busta*-script and the modern orthography of Oromo (Qubee) are given below. The order follows the use of modern Oromo dictionaries, such as Akkaadaamii (1996) and Mekuria (1998). Graphemes not found in the *Busta* but that can be safely assumed on the basis of the orthography are in brackets.

Qubee	Busta	IPA	Qubee	Busta	IPA
a	a	a	n	n	n
b	b	b	q	c, chi/che	k'
c	c, ci/ce	tʃ	r	r	r
d	d	d	s	s	s
e	e	e	t	t	t
f	f	f	u	u	u
g	g, ghi/ghe	g	v	v	v
h	h, Ø	h	w	u	w
i	i	i	x	t	t'
j	g, gi/ge	dʒ	y	i	j
k	c, chi/che	k	z	s	z
l	l	l	ch	c, ci/ce	tʃ
m	m	m	dh	d	d'
n	n	n	ny	gn	ɲ
o	o	o	ph	(p)	p'
p	(p)	p	sh	sci/sce	ʃ

Table 1. The phonemes of Oromo in the orthography of the Busta compared to modern standard Oromo (Qubee), and their IPA correspondences.

The orthography of the *Busta* was devised by Italians whose foremost interest was readability (of course, for someone who knows the orthography of Italian). Not surprisingly, it is much different from what Italian scholars such as Enrico Cerulli and Martino Mario Moreno were using in those same years in their studies (cf. Cerulli 1922 and Moreno 1939): there, ejectives is transcribed with a dot underneath – following the Orientalist tradition for Semitic “emphatics” – and the *háček* is used for palatal consonants. In its consistent use of the Italian orthographic conventions, the *Busta* is rather closer to the orthography used in such Italian pre-scientific descriptions as Viterbo (1892). Actually, even a practical pocket vocabulary such as D’Arpino (1938) has more accuracy in transcription and keeps apart, e.g., /k/ and /q/.

Italian terms relative to the army are not translated in the *Busta* and are often capitalized: we thus find *Battaglione* ‘battalion,’ *Tenente* ‘Lieutenant,’ *Capitano* ‘Captain,’ *Finanza* ‘Customs and Border Corps,’ and *Muntaz* (a rank among the *Ascari*, equivalent to a corporal in the Italian Army; from Arabic *mumtāz* ‘excellent’), as well as *Bandiera italiana* ‘Italian flag’ – but *bandiera* is a well-established loan in the Horn of Africa; cf. not only Amharic *bandira* or *bandera* but also Oromo *bandiraa* and, e.g., Saho *bandeera* (Vergari and Vergari 2003).

Amharic is the main source of loanwords in this short text:⁴ the King is *neghesti* and the Emperor (in both cases the King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia, Victor Emmanuel III is meant) is *Negus-Neghesti* – the Italian transcription of the Ethiopian title *nəgusa nəgāst* – while *Duce* (i.e., Benito Mussolini) is not translated. The compounds *Abba dula*, i.e., *abbaa duulaa* ‘army commander’ is used for translating *Capo Supremo* ‘Supreme Commander’ (reference is to the King of Italy), while *sciumi guddi*, something like “big chief” (but *sciumi* is Amharic *šum*, see below) is introduced for *comandante* ‘commander’ (here the reference is to Benito Mussolini as chief of government).

For ‘machine gun’ we have *mitraieus* (but reading the microfilm is difficult in this point), very possibly corresponding to Amharic *mātrāyās* (the modern Oromo word is *matarayyasii*). On the other hand, Amharic words are usually Oromo-ized with a final vowel; a few are: *manghisti* (Amharic *māngəst*) ‘kingdom; government,’ *ghimbi* from Amharic *gənb* ‘tower,’ *sciumi* ‘chief’ (Amharic *šum*), *zabegna* ‘guardian, watchman’ (Amharic *zābāñña*), *uettaddera* ‘soldier’ (Amharic *wāttaddār*) instead of Oromo *raayyaa*, *sciallimati* ‘award’ (Amharic *šällāmat*; modern standard Oromo would rather use *badhaasa*), *mercheba* ‘ship’ (Amharic *mārkāb*; in Oromo we have *doonii*), and even *bahari* ‘sea’ (Amharic *bahər*) instead of Oromo *galaana* or *abbaayaa*.

Recent Oromo neologisms are obviously absent; thus, ‘airplane’ is not *xayyaara* or the like (from Arabic *ṭayyāra*) or *rophilaa* (from English *airplane*) but the compound *babura samai* (*baabura samii* in modern orthography), i.e. “train of the sky.” As a result of the absence of neologisms, the Oromo text looks at times as an abridged version of the Italian one, as will be shown in the next section.

In other cases the Oromo version simply omits a technical terms or an Italian word is inserted, as in the case of *camion* ‘truck, lorry’⁵ (modern written Oromo resorts to *konkolaataa* – or *makiinaa*, itself an Italian loan – *fe’isaa*, lit. “loading car”).

For *Medaglia d’argento* ‘silver medal’ the Italian expression is given in quotes: «*medaglia d’argento*,» while in just one case an Amharic word is followed in brackets by its Italian translation: *missighi* (*presidio*) – *missighi* (but *miscighi* on page 4) being Amharic *māššag* ‘fort.’

Names of countries are equally given in Italian: thus, *Etiopia*, *Germania*, *Italia*, *Somalia*, as well as, following the Italian orthography of the time,⁶ *Chenia*, i.e. ‘Ethiopia, Germany, Italy, Somalia, Kenya.’

⁴ Amharic loans in Oromo have not been properly addressed; Haacke (1967) and Gragg (1980) are two early exceptions. Needless to say, the Amharic words found in the *Busta* are not listed in any Oromo dictionary.

⁵ Although technically a French loan, *camion* (either /'kamjon/ or /'kamjoŋ/) is the common, everyday word for ‘truck, lorry’ in spoken Italian – *autocarro* being only used in the written and official registers.

⁶ It is simply <Kenya> in contemporary Italian, because orthographic Italianization of foreign words is no longer in use. The same applies to <Moyale,> without the occasional writing <j> for an intervocalic palatal glide as found in the text.

The corresponding forms in the modern orthography are *Itoophiyaa*, *Jarmanii*, *Xaaliyaanii*, *Somaaliyaa* and *Keeniyaa*. The same goes for *Africa Orientale Italiana* ‘Italian East Africa.’ An exception is *Fransai* ‘France’ (modern *Firaansi*) and *inglisi* ‘English’ (but British is actually meant here) – modern orthography *ingilizii*. Ditto for towns and villages: *Moiale* or *Mojale* ‘Moyale,’ *Cassala* ‘Kassala,’ etc.

An interesting lexical point is the constant use of *dula* (i.e., *duula*), lit. ‘raid, campaign’ for ‘war’ instead of the common word *waraana*, and consequently *mia duula* – standing for *mi’a duulaa* – for ‘weapon’ (lit. “goods of war”).

As for the grammar, it can be noted that genitival constructions are consistently expressed with the relative pronoun *can* (: *kan*), as in *bachè can egu* (i.e., *bakka kan eeguu*), lit. “place of guard,” as a translation of Italian ‘osservatorio’ (‘observation post’). The construction was probably felt to be clearer than the simple juxtaposition of Possessum and Possessee plus lengthening and high pitch on the final vowel, as in /mana namáa/ (orthographically *mana namaa*) ‘a man’s house’ (from *mana* ‘house’ and *nama* ‘man’).

It is very difficult, on the basis of the little available material, to ascertain the dialectal origin of the unknown author(s); the general dialect is certainly not a southern one, as shown by a form such as *lencia* (standard orthography *leenca* /le:ntʃ’a/) ‘lion’ vs. possible forms with an initial /n/, as Guji /ne:nk’a/ (Kebede 2012: 144), or /ɲ/, as Borana /ɲe:nɲa/ (Stroomer 1987: 375). On the other hand, a form such as *dina* (in standard orthography *diina* /di:na/) for ‘enemy’ points, according to Kebede (2012: 156), to a central area in Ethiopia, either Mecha (Oromo *Maccaa*), Tulema (*Tuulama*) or Arsi (*Arsii*).

Finally, the text displays the frequent use of many compound verbal forms with assimilation and affixation of the auxiliary which is not normally used in writing nowadays. Cases in point are the assimilation of the auxiliary *jir* ‘to be’ (a typical feature of Western Oromo dialects; Yusuf Hussen, p.c.), yielding such forms as *ogettaniru* for *hojjatanii jiru* ‘they have done,’ and *fudannera* for *fuudhannee jirra* ‘we have taken.’

3. The contents

The contents of the *Busta*, as can be expected, are nothing more than war propaganda of the worst kind: the strength of the Italian army is exalted, the courage and feats of the *Ascaris* are extolled, and the British army is defeated – or *about* to be defeated.

The text was especially composed for the colonial troops and probably translated, or better adapted, from an Italian original. A knowledge of Italian was not at all unknown among the Eritrean *Ascaris* (written Italian was a prerequisite for advancement), and Italian was probably the most

common written medium among a largely illiterate troop. Furthermore, some knowledge of the Italian orthography was obviously necessary in order to read the Oromo text itself. Still, the Oromo and Italian texts are on the whole quite independent.

The Ascari, and the Ascari only, are the protagonists of the short text, with no mention being made of the Italian army (e.g., air war and warfare are completely absent – a striking difference from Italian propaganda at home). The syntax and lexicon are extremely simple, with almost no subordination. The metaphors and figures of speech were not translated from Italian; not surprisingly, they make more sense in a language of the Horn than in Italian: e.g., the Ascari are lions, and their enemies are calves – how could calves ever oppose lions? Facts matter and words do not; facts are men's and words are women's, and the Ascari made themselves a necklace of facts with more beads than a *misbaḥa* – the Muslim string of beads – or a *māquṭāriya* – a string of beads used in the Coptic church (but both analogies are absent in the Oromo version).

The feats of the Ascari are obviously exaggerated, although they were indeed among the best colonial troops – the Eritrean Ascari in particular – and much akin in reputation to the British Gurkhas.

Among the historical facts alluded to in the short text are the Italian conquest of British Somaliland in August 1940; the operations along the Sudanese border, where the Italians captured the fort of Gallabat (which was at that time under the command of the famous voyager Wilfred Thesiger) and a certain number of villages along and near the border, among which it is possible to identify Kurmuk and a few others; and the occupation of Moyale (on the border along the main road connecting Ethiopia and Kenya), which was to remain in Italian hands until July 15, 1941.

As anticipated, the syntax of the text is very simple, and sentences very short. They are often further separated and highlighted with a long hyphen. In many cases, the absence of many technical words in Oromo leads to heavy cuts in the Oromo text. Thus, in Italian the last part of the first sentence on p. 2 reads:

[...] hanno moltissime grandi navi di ferro con grossissimi cannoni e migliaia di aeroplani.

(literally: [...] have many big iron ships with very big guns and thousands of airplanes; the subject being Italy and Germany).

The Oromo text is much shorter:⁷

⁷ Here and below the Oromo text of the *Busta* is followed by its equivalent in the modern orthography and a word-by-word English gloss. Foreign words are not given into standard Oromo.

mercheba giabà fi babura samai cuma fi cuma can cabda
 (Amh.) jabaa fi (baabura samii) kuma fi kuma kan qabda
 ship strong and vehicle sky.GEN thousand and thousand that get-MID-PRS.3M
 Literally: ‘... It has strong ships and thousands and thousands of planes.’

A few lines down, the Italian text reads:

- *I fatti contano e non le parole. I fatti sono degli uomini e le parole delle donne.*
- *I nostri bravi ascari di fatti ne hanno una collana più numerosa del masbaha o del mequterià*
 (- *Facts count and words don't. Facts are men's and words are women's.*)
- *Our brave Ascari have made for themselves a necklace of facts richer than a misbaha or a mequteria).*

The whole passage is reduced in Oromo to:

Dubbirrà ogitu ciala.
 dubbirraa hojituu caala.
 talk=from work=SUBJ.EMPH exceed-PRS.3M
 ‘Action counts more than talking.’

On the other hand, a few sentences are almost a verbatim translation of an Italian original, as in (again from p. 2):

- *Chi può resistere alla forza ed al valore dei nostri bravi ascari e dei nostri bravi dubat?*
- *Può resistere il vitello al leone?*
 (- *Who can resist the strength and courage of our brave Ascari and our brave Dubats?*
 - *Can a calf withstand a lion?*)

The Oromo text reads:

Humna fi giagnumaa can ascari fi dubat chenia egnu ciapsu
 humna fi jagnummaa kan A. fi D. Keeniyaa eenyu cabsuu
 force and courage that (Ascari) and (Dubat) Kenya who be_broken-CAUS-INF

 dandaa? Giabbi lencia cufisu dendaare?
 dandaa jabbii leenca kuffisuu dandaaree?
 be_able-PRS.3M calf lion fall-CAUS-INF be_able-PRS.3M-Q

Lit.: 'Who in Kenya can resist the force and courage of the Ascari and Dubat? Can a calf make a lion fall?'

4. The text

In the following the full Oromo text on p. 2 and the captions on p. 2-3 and 4 is reproduced. The shorter text on p. 1 is left out of consideration, also because parts of it are less readable in my copy of the document.

Lines are numbered according to the original. As in section 3., the text in the Busta's orthography is followed in turn by the same in Qubee orthography and the morphological glosses. In line 30. it was not possible to read two words; their place is marked by <XX>; in another case it was not possible to identify a word or understand its meaning in the text, and this is marked by <?>.

Finally, it must be remembered tha the frequent use of <gedani> (i.e., *jedhani*) 'they say' or the like does not have the dubitative meaning of its English translation.

4.1. The main text

1. *Italia* *fi* *Germania* *bia* *lama* *gudda* *uettadera* *fi* *mia* *dula*,
Xaaliyaanii *fi* *Jarmanii* *biyya* *lama* *guddaa* (Amh.) *fi* *mi'a* *duula*
 Italy and Germany country two large soldier and goods war

2. *malé* *can* *cabu*, *mitraieu* *medfe* *bombi* *lichi* *malé* *can* *cabu*,
malee *kan* *qabu* (?) *madfii* *boombii* *liqii* *malee* *kan* *qabu*
 except that get-DEP.3M machine-gun cannon bomb borrow without that get-DEP.3M

3. *Mercheba* *giabà* *fi* *babura* *samai* *cuma* *fi* *cuma* *can* *cabda*
 (Amh.) *jabaa* *fi* *baabura* *samii* *kuma* *fi* *kuma* *kan* *qabda*
 ship strong and train sky thousand and thousand that get-MID-DEP.3M

Italy and Germany are two great nations that have soldiers and instruments of war, among which machine-guns, cannons and bombs, and without getting any [exterior] help; they have thousand and thousands of strong ships and airplanes.

The Italian original reads:

L'Italia e la Germania sono due grandi Nazioni che hanno milioni e milioni di soldati armati di mitragliatrici, di cannoni, di carri armati e di bombe; che hanno moltissime grandi navi di ferro con grossissimi cannoni e migliaia di aeroplani.

An English literal translation runs as follows:

Italy and Germany are two great nations, with millions and millions of soldiers armed with machine-guns, guns, tanks, and bombs; they have many big iron ships with very big guns and thousands of airplanes.

4. Italia fi Germania cana dura Fransai moaniru
 Xaaliyaanii fi Jarmanii kana dura Firaansi moo'anii jiru
 Italy and Germany this before France defeat- PRS.3P be-PST.3P

Italy and Germany have already defeated France.

which corresponds in the Italian version to:

- *L'Italia e la Germania hanno già vinto la Francia.*

5. Ammammo Inglisi dulani mouf ademu.
 ammammo ingilizii duulani moo'uuf adeemu
 now=also English attack-PRS.3P defeat-INF=DAT go-DEP.3M

They are now fighting and going to defeat England.

corresponding again to the Italian text:

- *Adesso stanno vincendo l'Inghilterra.*

6. Gia lama chessa, utu dulu, bia baiè dinarrà Africa
 Ji'a lama keessa utuu duulu biyya baay'ee diina irraa Afrikaa
 month two in while attack-DEP.3M country many enemy from Africa

7. chessa fudannera
 keessa fuudhannee jirra
 in take-PST.1P be-PRS.1P

In two months of war we have taken much land from the enemy in Africa.

The Italian text reads:

– *In poco più di due mesi di guerra grandi vittorie abbiamo riportato sul nemico in Africa Orientale* (lit.: *In little more than two months of war we had great victories over the enemy in East Africa*).

8. *Bia Galla Sidama uettadera Chenia Inglisi irrà Mojale fi lafa*
biyya G. S. (Amh.) Keeniyaa ingilizii irraa Moyyaalee fi lafa
country Galla Sidama soldier Kenya English from Moyale and earth

gudda

guddaa

large

9. *Bia Mojale fi Kurmuk, Ghesan chenya fudaniru bia*
biyya Moyyaalee fi K. G. Keeniyaa fuudhanii jiru biyya
country Moyale and Kurmuk G. Kenya take-PST.3P be-DEP.3M country

Gambela

G.

Gambela

10. *Iocau Kurmuk Ghesan acca chenya galfataniru.*
Y. K. G. akka Keeniyaa galfatanii jiru
(Y.?) Kurmuk (G.?) like Kenya bring_back-MID-PST.3P be-DEP.3M

In Galla and Sidama we had taken from the British troops in Kenya Moyale and a great part of Moyale country, as well as Kurmuk and Gesan in Kenya, and have conquered Gambela, Yokau and Kurmuk [in Sudan].

The Italian version reads:

– *Nel Galla e Sidama le nostre brave truppe coloniali hanno conquistato Moiale inglese e molto territorio del Chenia; Gambela, Iocau, Kurmuk, Ghezan sono in nostre mani.*

(lit.: *In Galla and Sidama our brave colonial troops conquered English Moyale and a great territory in Kenya; Gambela, Yokau (?), Kurmuk and Gezan (?) are in our hands*).

11. *Bia Moiale fi Kurmuk, Ghesan Debel can gedani chessa, bandiera*
biyya Moyyaalee fi Kurmuk G. D. kan jedhani keessa (It.)
 country Moyale and K. G. D. that say-PRS.3P in flag
12. *dinarrà fudannera*
diina irraa fuudhannee jirra
 enemy=from take-PST.1P be-PRS.1P
We took from the enemy flags in Moyale, Kurmuk, Ghezan, and Debel.

The Italian version has:

- *Abbiamo preso ai nemici molte bandiere: a Moiale, a Kurmuk, a Ghezan, a Debel nel Chenia.*
 (lit.: *We took from our enemies many flags: in Moyale, Kurmuk, Ghezan, and Debel in Kenya.*)

13. *Mia dula, callabas, camion baié lacopa can incabu, acca*
mi'a duula (Ar.) (It.) baay'ee lakkoofsa kan hinqabu akka
 object weapon cloth truck many number that EMPH=get-DEP.3M as
chenia galfannera.
Keeniyaa galfannee jirra
 Kenya import-MID-PST.1P be-PST.1P
We took over a great number of weapons, clothes and trucks, like in Kenya.

vs. the much longer and detailed Italian version:

- *Armi, munizioni, viveri, materiali, automezzi in grande quantità sono caduti nelle nostre mani. A Kurmuk un'intera carovana di rifornimenti è caduta nelle nostre mani.*
 (lit.: *A great quantity of weapons, ammunitions, provisions, goods and vehicles has fallen in our hands. In Kurmuk a whole convoy of supplies has fallen in our hands.*)

It will be noticed that the second part of the Italian sentence has been omitted in Oromo.

14. *Cara Asmara bia Cassala fi Gallabat cabnera*
Karaa A. biyya K. fi G. qabnee jirra
 road Asmara country Kassala and Gallabat catch-PST.1P be-PRS.1P
[Along] the Asmara road we took Kasala and Gallabat.

The Italian text makes reference to Amhara country rather than to Asmara:

- *Nell'Amara abbiamo conquistato Cassala e il paese di Gallabat.*

i.e.: *In Amhara (country) we conquered Kassala and Gallabat town.*

15. *Somalia inglisi can bedani, gutusà can chenia taera.*
Somaaliyaa ingilizii kan badanii guutuu isaa kan keeniyaa taa'ee jira
Somalia English that lost full 3M that ours stay-PST.3M be-PRS.3M
*English Somaliland that before was not ours is fully in our possession.*⁸

Italian has:

- *La Somalia inglese è tutta in nostro possesso,*

i.e.: *English Somaliland is fully in our possession,*

16. *Humna fi giagnuma can ascari fi dubat chenia egnu ciapsu denda?*
humna fi jagnummaa kan A. fi D. Keeniyaa eenyu cabsuu dandaa
force and courage that Ascari and Dubat Kenya who cut-INF be_able-PRS.3M
Who in Kenya can oppose the strength and courage of the Ascari and Dubat?

which is almost a verbatim rendering of Italian:

- *Chi può resistere alla forza ed al valore dei nostri bravi ascari e dei nostri bravi dubat?*

i.e.: *Who can resist the strength and courage of our brave Ascari and our brave Dubats?*

17. *Giabbi lencia cufisu dendaare?*
jabbiin leenca kuffisuu danda'aree
calf lion fall-CAUS-INF be_able-PRS.3M=Q
Can a calf make a lion fall?

Corresponding in the Italian text to:

- *Può resistere il vitello al leone?*

i.e.: *Can a calf withstand a lion?*

⁸ The Oromo text pretends Italy had “lost” British Somaliland – which of course was never actually an Italian colony.

18. *Inglisimò humna chenia, humna lencia can faccatu, attamitti*
ingilizimmoo humna Keeniyaa humna leenca kan fakkaatu akkamiitti
 English-also force Kenya force lion that look_like-DEP.3M how

19. *irrà indendaa?*
irraa hindanda'a
 on EMPH=be_able-PRS.3M
And how can the army of Kenya withstand a force that is like a lion's?

The Italian text has:

- *E come possono resistere gli inglesi alla nostra forza che è grande come quella del leone?*
 i.e.: *And how can the English resist our strength, which is as big as a lion's?*

20. *Dubbirrà ogitu ciala.*
dubbirraa hojituu caala
 talk=from work-SUBJ.EMPH exceed-PRS.3M
Action counts more than words.

As anticipated, the Italian text is much longer:

- *I fatti contano e non le parole. I fatti sono degli uomini e le parole delle donne.*
 - *I nostri bravi ascari di fatti ne hanno una collana più numerosa del masbaha o del mequterià*
 I.e.:
 - *Facts count and words don't. Facts are men's and words are women's.*
 - *Our brave Ascari have made for themselves a necklace of facts richer than a misbaha or a mequteria.*

21. *Ascari giaghna chenia duguma ogi giaba baié ogettaniru.*
 A. *jagna Keeniyaa dhuguma hojii jaba baay'ee hojjatanii jiru*
 Ascari brave Kenya true work strong many work-MID-PST.3P be-DEP.3M
The brave Ascari have truly made much good work in Kenya.

This sentence does not find a direct correspondence in Italian, unless it stands for the missing part of the preceding sentence.

22. *Bia Namaraput can gedani, muntaz tocco ascari scian Tenente*
biyaa N. kan jedhani M. tokko A. shan (It.)
land Namaraput that say-PRS.3P M. one A. five Lieutenant
- tocco nagin*
tokko ?
one ?

23. *dina dibba lammarrà dula ciapsaniru.*
diina dhibba lammarraa duula cabsanii jiru
enemy hundred two=from attack resist-PST.3P be-DEP.3M

They say that in Namaraput, five Ascaris and a Muntaz, under (?) a lieutenant, withstood the attack of 200 enemies.

In the Italian text:

- A Namaraput, cinque ascari e un muntaz, al comando di un Tenente, hanno combattuto contro una colonna di oltre 200 nemici.

I.e.:

- In Namaraput, five Ascaris and a muntaz, under the command of a Lieutenant, fought against a column of over 200 enemies.

24. *Ascarota chenia aca lencia taaniti, dina baiè ariani*
A.-ota Keeniyaa akka leenca taa'anitti diina baay'ee ari'ani
A.-P Kenya like lion in= PST.3P-stay enemy many chase_away-PST.3P

25. *aggessani, fi madessani.*
ajjeesanii fi madeessani
kill-PST.3P and wound-PST.3P

The Ascaris in Kenya have been like lions. They made many enemy run away, they killed them and wounded them.

The Italian text has:

I nostri ascari sono stati dei leoni. Hanno combattuto per molte ore facendo scappare il nemico che ha avuto morti e feriti.

i.e.:

Our Ascaris have been lions. They fought for many hours and they made the enemy run away with many deaths and injuries.

26. *Bia Cognarè can gedama, ascari digdani scian Tenente sani naggin*
biyaa K. kan jedhama A. diigdama shan (It.) saani ?
land K. that say-PASS-PRS.3M Ascari twenty five Lieutenant their ?

27. *dina dibba fi sciantama dulani, ciapsaniru.*
diina dhibba fi shantama duulani cabsanii jiru
enemy hundred and fifty attack-PRS.3P break-PST.3P be-DEP.3M

It is said that in Cognarè 25 Ascaris and (?) their lieutenant have fought and defeated against 150 enemies.

Again, the Italian text is richer in details:

- *A Cognarè 25 ascari nostri con un Tenente hanno combattuto vittoriosamente contro 150 nemici per tre giorni. Il nemico ha avuto molti morti.*

English translation:

- *In Cognarè 25 of our Ascaris and a lieutenant have victoriously fought against 150 enemies for three days, and the enemy had many deaths.*

28. *Bia Iocauti zabegna lama Finanza can gedani ascarota torba naggin*
biyaa Y.=ti (Amh.) lama (It.) kan jedhani A.-ota torba ?
land Y.=LOC guardman two customs corps that say-PRS.3P Ascari-P seven ?

29. *missighi (presidio) can Inglisi itti arianiti Capitano tocco fi*
(Amh.) (It.) kan ingilizii itti ari'anitti (It.) tokko fi
fort garrison that English in chase_away-PRS.3P=LOC Captain one and

30. *ascari cuda scian bogia-ani XX XX hunduma irrà guraniru.*
A. kudha shan booji'ani XX XX hunduma irraa guuranii jiru
(Ascari) ten five seize-PRS.3P XX XX all from collect-PST.3P be-DEP.3M

They say that in Yokau, two guards of our Custom Corps and (?) seven Ascaris XXX have captured a Captain and seized all the guns and ammunitions of an English garrison strong of 15 enemies and a captain.

The Italian text reads:

- *A Iocau inglese, due nostre guardie di finanza con sette ascari hanno catturato tutti i fucili e le munizioni del presidio inglese forte di 15 nemici ed un capitano.*

I.e.:

- *In English Yokau, two guards of our Custom Corps and seven Ascaris seized all the guns and ammunitions of an English garrison strong of 15 enemies and a captain.*

4.2. The pictures and their captions

In the center of the page we find two pictures and the relevant captions. The Oromo text reads:

(above) *Mia dula dinarrà bia Moiale Chenia chesa can*
mi'a duulaa diinarra biyya Moyyalee Keeniyaa keessa kan
goods war.GEN enemy=from land Moyale Kenya in that

fudanè

fuudhane

take-PST.3P

'War implements (that were) taken from the enemy in Moyale country, Kenya.'

(below) *Iadaccia dula (bandiere)*
Yaadacha duulaa (bandiraa)
remembrance war.GEN (flags)

'War relics: flags.'



Fig. 2. Pictures and captions from p. 1.

Page 4 contains five photographs. Picture #5, the most interesting and clearest, is reproduced in Fig. 3.



Fig. 3. A Dubat standing guard in Moyale (p. 4).

In the center of page 4 we find the captions, from top to bottom in Italian, Oromo, Amharic, and Arabic:



Fig. 4. Italian and Oromo captions of the photographs on p. 4.

The Oromo captions read:

1. *Ghimbirra can Mojale Bandiera italiana fannisamera*
 (Amh.)=*rra kan Moyyaalee (It.) (It.) fannisamee jira*
 (tower)=from that Moyale (flag) (Italian) hang-PASS-PST.3M be-PRS.3M
 ‘The Italian flag hanging from the tower of Moyale.’

2. & 4. *Afan can sodacisu can Mishighi Harrington;⁹ Ascarotamò can*
afaan kan sodaachiisu kan (Amh.) H. A.-ota=mo kan
 mouth that fear-CAUS-DEP.3M that fort Harrington A.-P=also that

Galla Sidama ircan sani buchisaniru.

G. S. ilkaan saani buqqisanii jiru

Galla Sidama teeth his extract-PRS.3P be-DEP.3M

‘A threatening mouth in Fort Harrington; but the Ascari of Galla and Sidama have taken off its teeth.’

3. *Bia Mojale Chenia*
biyya Moyyaalee Keeniyaa
 land Moyale Kenya
 ‘Moyale (country), Kenya.’

5. *Bachè can egu; dubati tocco can Galla Sidama egu*
bakka kan eeguu tokko kan G. S. eeguu
 place that guard Dubat-SUBJ one that (Galla) (Sidama) guard

itti gira.

itti jira

for be-PRS.3M

‘Observation post; a Dubat of Galla and Sidama standing guard.’

⁹ Fort Harrington was the original name of the British settlement in Moyale.

5. Conclusion: some serendipity from colonialism and war?

In order to better fight the Ethiopian empire and the Amhara insurgence, Italy often sided with the minority and oppressed peoples of Ethiopia, trying to win them over and ensure their collaboration.

Oromo (still “Galla” in 1940) was not only called by Orientalist Martino Mario Moreno ‘la più importante e anche la più dolce [lingua] dell’Impero’ (‘the most important and also the sweetest language of the Empire;’ Moreno 1939: 17); it was also the obvious choice in order to challenge Amharic as a written medium – all the more so in the Ethiopian South. And, as reminded by Gragg (1976: 171), in those very years the Italian administration made the first attempts at radio broadcasting in Oromo.

Beyond its simplistic contents and duplicitous aims, the *Busta* project was certainly generous: to devise an orthography is always a challenge, and if the language has not been adequately described the whole enterprise can easily turn into a nightmare.¹⁰ Anyhow, the whole project was doomed to failure: too hasty and haphazard its preparation, too insecure and approximate the texts, maybe simply too ambitious the goals.

And then, obviously, history took a totally different course...

Abbreviations and morphological glosses

Amh.	Amharic	LOC	Locative
Ar.	Arabic	M	Masculine
CAUS	Causative	MID	Middle
DAT	Dative	P	Plural
DEP	Dependent	PASS	Passive
EMPH	Emphatic	PRS	Present
GEN	Genitive	PST	Past
INF	Infinitive	Q	Question marker
It.	Italian	SUBJ	Subject marker

¹⁰ The problem of the graphization of Oromo was briefly treated by Andrzejewski (1980); Griefenow-Mewis (1994) provides a short but rich history; an updated and much longer – if at times militant – treatment may be found in Teferi Degeneh Bijjga’s PhD Thesis (Teferi 2015).

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¹¹ In a few cases the publication year found in the source is in accordance with the Ethiopian calendar (*ankutataš*). The Gregorian year follows here in square brackets.

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Lost in Translation:

perdite culturali nel passaggio dall'arabo all'italiano

Naglaa Waly

This article investigates the Italian language rendering of some colloquial expressions, idioms and proverbs in the Egyptian vernacular that have been cited in literary works. The aim is to verify any cultural losses due to the difficulty of translating social and anthropological realia of Egypt. This article does not pass judgments on the strategies adopted by the various translators or on the correctness of the translation. Its aim is rather to find equivalents of expressions closely related to local Egyptian referents. In proposing the various solutions, the anthropological sources of the said and or of the term will be analyzed. This research could start an inventory of the losses deriving from the lack of cultural equivalence in literary translation, through a comparative method between the Arabic, Italian and possibly English versions of the text. The corpus is a list of idiomatic expressions and cultural elements from two stories by the Egyptian writer Yūsuf Idrīs: *Arḥaṣ layālī* (“The Cheapest Nights”), a short story published in 1954 in a collection that bears the same title and the second story *Bayt min laḥm* (“House of Flesh”), published in the collection that bears the same title in 1971. Both stories were originally translated into Italian by Luisa Orelli and published in the collection *Alla fine del mondo* in 1993.

1. Introduzione

Considerate le note difficoltà a rendere i passaggi letterari da una lingua e una cultura all'altra, questo articolo vuole investigare la resa in lingua italiana di alcune espressioni colloquiali, idiomi e proverbi in dialetto arabo egiziano che sono stati utilizzati in opere letterarie. L'obiettivo è verificare le perdite culturali dovute alle difficoltà di tradurre i realia sociali e antropologici dell'Egitto.

Il corpus è costituito da alcune espressioni idiomatiche e elementi culturali, estrapolati da due racconti dello scrittore egiziano Yūsuf Idrīs: *Arḥaṣ layālī* (“Notti da poco”), pubblicato nel 1954 nella raccolta dall'omonimo titolo e *Bayt min laḥm* (“Casa di carne”), ugualmente pubblicato nella raccolta con il titolo omonimo nel 1971. Entrambi i racconti sono stati tradotti in italiano da Luisa Orelli e pubblicati nella raccolta *Alla fine del mondo*¹ nel 1993. Verrà inoltre presa in esame la traduzione inglese

¹ Il contenuto della raccolta italiana non corrisponde a quello della raccolta *Aḥir al-Dunyā* (“Alla fine del mondo”) di Yūsuf Idrīs pubblicata nel 1961; si tratta infatti di racconti tratti da svariate raccolte, come evidenzia la traduttrice nella sua introduzione.

di *Arḥaṣ layālī*, tradotto per la prima volta in inglese nel 1978 con il titolo *The cheapest nights, and other stories*, a cura di Wadida Wassef², e quella di *Bayt min laḥm*, tradotto come *House of flesh* a cura di Denys Johnson-Davies nel volume *the Essential Yusuf Idris: Masterpieces of Egyptian short stories* (Johnson-Davies 2009).

In effetti, della vasta produzione letteraria di Yūsuf Idrīs³, poco è stato tradotto nelle maggiori lingue europee, come osserva Denys Johnson-Davies (2009: 2): “Few translators had devoted any time to rendering Yusuf’s large volume of work, mostly in the form of short stories, into the major languages”. La prima raccolta di Idrīs in Italiano è stata *Il Richiamo* (traduzione italiana: Margherita 1992) che costituisce tuttora, con *Alla fine del mondo*, le uniche due raccolte di racconti in lingua italiana. Recentemente è stata tradotta l’opera teatrale *al-Farāfir* (Suriano 2018).

La produzione letteraria di Yūsuf Idrīs è anche stata oggetto di numerose analisi accademiche e di critica⁴. Alla luce degli studi precedenti, il presente articolo ha lo scopo di mettere in evidenza la resa in lingua italiana delle espressioni colloquiali presenti nei due racconti selezionati di Idrīs e trovare equivalenti delle espressioni più strettamente legate a referenti locali egiziani. A questo scopo verranno analizzate le principali fonti sulle tradizioni popolari egiziane, come Burckhardt (1875), al-Ġabartī (1998), al-Quwaynī (2016), Amīn (2013), Taymūr (2002, 2014), Ġād (2007) e Ša’lān (2003). Questa ricerca è l’inizio di un inventario delle “perdite in traduzione” derivanti dalla mancanza di equivalenza culturale basata sulla comparazione tra l’originale arabo e le sue traduzioni (italiana in primis, eventualmente anche inglese).

2. Il colloquiale egiziano in letteratura

In Egitto, come in altri paesi arabi, si verifica ovviamente il ben noto fenomeno della diglossia (originariamente analizzato da Ferguson 1959). Badawī (1973: 89-91), in *Mustawayāt al-‘arabiyya al-mu‘āšira fī Miṣr* (‘Livelli dell’arabo contemporaneo in Egitto’), dedica un ampio studio sulle varietà linguistiche e suddivide il colloquiale egiziano in cinque livelli linguistici:

² Come spiega la traduttrice nella sua introduzione, questa raccolta porta il titolo della prima raccolta di racconti di Yūsuf Idrīs *Arḥaṣ layālī*, pubblicata nel 1954, ma contiene anche racconti di altre cinque raccolte successive. In effetti il libro riporta la traduzione di 15 racconti, fra cui 12 pubblicati tra il 1954 e il 1960 e tre tra il 1966 e il 1970 (Wassef 1997).

³ Si tratta di 7 romanzi, 11 raccolte di racconti brevi, 8 opere teatrali e due libri di riflessioni letterarie e articoli. Cfr. Idrīs (1990).

⁴ Barresi (1977), Kirpičenko (1980), Kurpershock (1981), Somekh (1976, 1984 e 1985), Mikhail (1990), Allen (1994), El-Enany (1997), Camera d’Afflitto (1998), Rosenbaum (2001), Cross (2009), al-Masri (2009), Guardi (2014), Boustani et Germanos (2016).

- *fuṣḥa al-turāt* (*fuṣḥa* della traduzione, cioè la lingua classica pura del patrimonio arabo classico), non contaminata e limitata all'uso dei teologi e religiosi);
- *fuṣḥa al-'asr* ('*fuṣḥa* moderna', contaminata e influenzata dalla civiltà moderna e usata nei circoli letterari, scientifici, nelle relazioni delle conferenze, ecc.);
- '*āmmiyat al-mutaqqafīn* ('colloquiale dei colti'), influenzata dal *fuṣḥa* e dai termini della civiltà moderna, come usato ad esempio nei programmi radiotelevisivi nei dibattiti;
- '*āmmiyat al-mutanawwirīn* ('colloquiale degli istruiti'), un colloquiale influenzato dalla terminologia moderna e in uso tra coloro che hanno studiato;
- '*āmmiyat al-'ummiyīn* ('colloquiale degli analfabeti').

Utilizzando la terminologia di Halliday (1985), il continuum di Badawī viene così reinterpretato da Holes (1995: 282):

The multiple factors which operate to produce Badawi's continuum can perhaps be more clearly illustrated in terms of the Hallidayan system of field (subject matter) tenor (relationship of participants) and mode (speech v. writing).

Il colloquiale egiziano emerge in campo letterario nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento. Le prime pubblicazioni apparvero in tre riviste satiriche (Sa'īd 1964: 257) di carattere socio-politico quali *Abū-Nazzāra* (1878) del giornalista Ya'qūb Ṣannū', *al-argūl* (1894) di Muḥammad al-Naḡḡār, poeta e insegnante ad al-Azhar (m. 1911), e *al-Ġazāla* (1896) di Ġurġī al-Zānanirī. Ed è proprio grazie a Ṣannū', secondo Benham (2004: 28), che si devono le prime traduzioni e adattamenti teatrali in colloquiale egiziano:

the first European-style Arabic productions where translated and adapted European classics acted in colloquial Arabic by Yacub Sannu's National Theatre company in 1870. Sannu (1839-1912), a Jewish Cairene journalist, later fell out of favour with the Khedive, who closed him down for political criticism.

In tutti questi casi il colloquiale veniva impiegato per semplificare concetti politico-culturali troppo complessi per il lettore medio e attirare l'attenzione del pubblico. Ṣannū' trovava nel vernacolo una fonte umoristica per poter indirettamente criticare la realtà politica del paese e allo stesso tempo sfuggire alla censura. Fin dal primo numero definiva la sua rivista *ġarīda musalliyya wa-mūḍḥika* ('rivista

divertente e comica'), mentre Nafūsa Sa'īd (1964: 78) osserva che 'con questo stile comico-realistico riusciva a criticare le condizioni politiche e sociali d'allora in modo allegorico'.⁵

Un ruolo simile fu svolto da 'Uṭmān Ğalāl (1829-1898), co-fondatore della rivista *Nuzahat al-'aḥkār*. Ğalāl iniziò già nel 1870 a tradurre e arabizzare per il teatro alcuni testi della letteratura occidentale poiché trovava il colloquiale più adatto al suo pubblico come sostiene Lucia Avallone:

Ğalāl traduce i testi teatrali di diverse opere di Molière, adattandole al pubblico egiziano e alla lingua che esso parla, da *Le Malade imaginaire* (di cui non è rimasto il testo) a *Le Médecin malgré lui* [*al-Faḥḥ al-mansūb li-l-ḥakīm al-maḡṣūb*], a *Le Tartuffe* [*aš-Šayḥ Matlūf*], *Les Femmes savantes* [*an-Nisā' al-'ālimāt*] e *L'Ecole des maris* [*Madrasat al-azwāġ*]. Le ultime tre opere citate, assieme a *L'école des femmes* [*Madrasat an-nisā'*], appaiono pubblicate nella raccolta *al-Arba' riwāyāt min nuḥab at-tayātarāt* [Quattro commedie dalla selezione di opere teatrali, 1889] (Avallone 2015: 119).

In altri casi, come nota Somekh (1975: 89), i dialoghi teatrali erano un misto di classico e colloquiale:

Yet at times we find the author dabbling in a mixed dialogue, in a fashion used in the early stages of modern Arabic literature by such authors as Farah Antun, Mikhail Naimy.

L'uso del colloquiale egiziano nelle opere letterarie è argomento già ampiamente trattato (cf. Sa'īd 1964, Allen 1982, Somekh 1991, De Angelis 2007, Avallone 2015). Un momento storicamente importante nel processo di introduzione del dialetto nella lingua letteraria fu la proposta, lanciata nel 1913 da Aḥmad Luṭfi al-Sayyid (1872-1963) in sette articoli della rivista *al-Ġarīda* (Sa'īd 1964: 134), di "egizianizzare" la lingua araba o almeno trovare una via di mezzo tra l'arabo classico e il colloquiale in modo che essa venisse semplificata e avvicinata all'uso quotidiano.

In quell'epoca un autore teatrale di spicco era il drammaturgo, narratore, poeta e critico letterario cairino Muḥammad Taymūr, forte sostenitore dell'uso del colloquiale come espressione più vivace, pulsante e rappresentativa della società. Altri scrittori tendono invece all'utilizzo di un dialogo misto caratterizzato da espressioni colloquiali inserite nella lingua letteraria. *Zaynab* (1913), di Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal⁶, è considerato da tanti critici il primo romanzo non storico in lingua araba (Allen 1982): ambientato nella campagna egiziana, per la prima volta il colloquiale vi viene usato nei dialoghi e in frasi ed espressioni (in alcuni casi posti tra parentesi) per maggiore espressività e fornire

⁵ Tutte le traduzioni dall'arabo sono a cura dell'autrice dell'articolo.

⁶ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, letterato e uomo politico egiziano (Kafr el-Ghannam, Daqahliyya, 1888 – il Cairo 1956).

un'aria rurale e realistica. Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī⁷ (2019: 55) nota che 'oltre all'uso nei dialoghi, Haykal ha sparso in tutto il romanzo termini colloquiali' e ricorda che nella scheda della Biblioteca Nazionale il romanzo è schedato come 'novella letteraria, romantica, moralista e rurale in arabo colloquiale' (*qiṣṣa adabiyya ġarāmiyya aḥlāqiyya riḥiyya bi-l-luġa al-‘āmmiyya al-dāriġa*). Tuttavia, l'uso del dialetto non era frequente: "we have to admit that there is not a great deal of it in this novel" (Allen 1982: 31).

Un altro esempio di scelta del colloquiale per rispondere alle esigenze narrative è costituito dai dialoghi del romanzo *'Awdat ar-Rūḥ* ('Il ritorno dello spirito', 1933) di Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm. Altri casi significativi si ritrovano nel romanzo *Qanṭara allādī kafara* ('Qanṭara che perse la fede') di Muṣṭafā Mušarrafa, scritto negli anni quaranta, e nell'autobiografia *Mudakkirāt ṭālib bi'ta* ('Memorie di uno studente all'estero') di Luwīs 'Awaḍ, composta nel 1942 e pubblicata nel 1965.

L'idea che il vernacolo potesse essere mezzo adatto alla letteratura impegnata fu enfatizzata dal passaggio all'indipendenza politica del mondo arabo alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale, come ricorda Holes (1995: 304):

After the coming to power in 1954 of Nasser and the Arab Socialist Union with its avowedly populist agenda, the debate in Egypt concerning the appropriacy of using dialect in serious literature became particularly bitter. The dispute was between, on the one side, the old literature establishment, many of whom doubled as members of the Arabic Language Academy, the bulwark of linguistic conservatism and self-appointed defender of linguistic purity, and on the other, a loose assemblage of mainly young, mainly leftist writers.

Ed è proprio nella seconda metà del Novecento che appare Yūsuf Idrīs, uno dei maggiori sostenitori dell'impiego del vernacolo egiziano in letteratura.

3. Yūsuf Idrīs

Quando Naġīb Maḥfūz ottenne il Premio Nobel nel 1988 non solo rese immediatamente omaggio alla generazione di grandi scrittori arabi che lo avevano preceduto, ma fece anche notare che molti suoi contemporanei erano altrettanto meritevoli candidati. Citò tra l'altro i connazionali Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī e Yūsuf Idrīs come due dei più eccellenti innovatori della letteratura araba. Yūsuf Idrīs (1927-1991) è stato una delle figure di maggior rilievo tra gli intellettuali egiziani della seconda metà del XX secolo. Nato nel villaggio di al-Bayrūm, nella provincia di al-Šarqiyya, all'età di 18 anni si trasferisce al Cairo

⁷ Uno dei pionieri del movimento letterario egiziano, romanziere e intellettuale enciclopedico.

per studiare medicina. Faceva parte, in quanto membro del movimento marxista, del comitato di operai e studenti formatasi nel 1946 per la lotta al colonialismo inglese. Esordisce con il suo primo racconto *La'nat al- ġabal* ('La maledizione della montagna') nel 1950 sulla rivista *Rūz al-Yūsuf*. Nel 1957 abbandona la professione medica e si dedica completamente alla scrittura. La sua produzione letteraria è vasta, e spazia dai racconti brevi ai romanzi e ai drammi. Tante le sceneggiature di film egiziani tratte dalle sue opere.

Idrīs optò per l'uso del colloquiale nei dialoghi dei suoi racconti per serbare l'espressività di una realtà fortemente egiziana fatta di visioni, odori, suoni e ceti sociali. Questa sua scelta non fu troppo ben vista dai grandi scrittori a lui contemporanei. Così Taha Ḥusayn, nella prefazione alla raccolta *Ġumhūriyyat Faraḥāt* ('Repubblica di Farahat'), pubblicata nel 1956, pur lodandone il talento gli rimprovera l'uso del colloquiale e gli suggerisce di abbandonarlo e adottare in futuro un puro linguaggio letterario:

spero che abbia indulgenza della lingua araba e le doni la sovranità meritata ai suoi personaggi, come fa egli stesso quando parla, invece di farli esprimere in venacolare nei loro dialoghi. (Idrīs 2017: 9)

Somekh (1976) divide il mondo narrativo di Yūsuf Idrīs, come spiega C. Lindely Cross, in tre fasi o momenti: *Social Moment*, *Psychological Moment* e *Shattered Reality*. La fase sociale dura fin quasi alla metà degli anni '60: in questi primi anni Idrīs è molto legato alla realtà sociale egiziana e ne rappresenta i più umili ed emarginati. Quest'empatia si riflette sul suo linguaggio:

According to the realities of the situation, the characters, and the narrating voice, he blends this neutral, rather featureless prose with an assortment of colloquial registers, ranging from the conversational language of educated elites (al-'āmmīyah al-muthaqqafah) to regional dialects, most notably the peasant ṣa'īdī of rural Egypt and the slang and argot of underclass Cairo (Cross 2009; <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu>)

La fase psicologica vede un venir meno dell'aspetto sociale a favore di una maggiore concentrazione sul ruolo generale dell'uomo nel mondo. Da qui si passa a una terza fase, quella della *Shattered Reality*:

Reading this prose aloud can resemble the reading of poetry; anadiplosis (repetition and duplication), synthaesthesia (the use of one sense-impression to refer to another), asyndeta and parataxis (the stringing together of clauses without any joining words), onomatopoeia, inversion, rhyme, and paranomasia (punning and other wordplay) are all distinctive features of the later period (Cross 2009; <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu>).

I racconti selezionati di seguito appartengono a due fasi diverse del mondo narrativo di Idrīs e rispecchiano due diverse tecniche narrative.

4. *Arḥaṣ layālī* ('Notti da poco')

Come già accennato nell'introduzione, questo racconto fu pubblicato per la prima volta nel 1954 in una raccolta dal titolo omonimo. Sin dal titolo, أرخص ليالي *arḥaṣ layālī* piuttosto che أرخص ليالٍ *arḥaṣ layālīn* come corretto in arabo standard, si manifesta la scelta di Idrīs per uno stile vicino al modello sintattico vernacolare, come egli stesso ebbe a dichiarare: 'I don't want to be a philologist, I want to become an artist, even though I write in the language of street' (Kurpershoek 1981: 115). In effetti nella prima stampa del libro l'editore, per correttezza grammaticale, aveva ommesso la lettera *yā'*; finale; Idrīs insisté invece nel mantenerla per preservare la pronuncia colloquiale di 'notti' del titolo invece Idrīs insisté nel mantenerla per preservare la pronuncia colloquiale. Jacquemond (2008: 52) nota:

When he published his first volume of short stories, Arkhas layalī (1954; translated as The Cheapest Nights, 1978), Yusuf Idris discovered that a copy editor had changed the spelling of the title, getting rid of the final ya of layalī in order to bring the word into line with grammatical norms. Idris, however, had deliberately added this to the manuscript because as he declared at the time, 'I respect the laws of life in my writing, not those of grammar'.

Questo racconto appartiene alla fase "sociale". L'attenzione è rivolta alla rappresentazione della dura vita dei contadini e dei cittadini dei ceti più umili:

Perhaps more than any other Arab literary figure, Idris's direct personal knowledge and sympathetic understanding of the hard life of ordinary citizens—in his case Egyptian peasants and lower echelons of Cairene society—dominated both content of his writing and the linguistic form it took (Holes 1995: 305).

Arḥaṣ layālī narra di un contadino, 'Abd al-Karīm, che, uscito dalla moschea del villaggio dopo la preghiera della sera, beve una tazza di té offertogli da un tale Ṭanṭawī. Il té è così forte da causargli uno stato di agitazione tale che, incamminatosi, comincia a mescolare dentro di sé ingiurie e maledizioni contro l'uomo che glielo ha offerto. La sua mente vaga al pensiero della crescente massa di giovane umanità che, ne è sicuro, morirà di fame o di colera. Poi, vagando per il villaggio in cerca di compagnia

o di un posto dove andare, comincia a sentire sia il freddo che la solitudine e, di nuovo maledicendo l'uomo del tè, gira sui suoi tacchi e si dirige verso casa. Arrivato, visto che il pavimento è diventato il letto su cui dormono i suoi sei bambini, per non calpestarli striscia sui loro corpi e raggiunge il calore e la consolazione della moglie sonnolenta, da cui viene eccitato. Nove mesi più tardi egli riceve le congratulazioni per la nascita di un altro bimbo mentre continua ad arrovellarsi e chiedersi da dove mai siano venuti tutti questi figli.

L'uso che Idrīs fa della lingua è da subito rivoluzionario, come viene sottolineato da Johnson-Davies (2009: 2):

He was also acutely aware of the vast gulf that separated the educated classes from the man in the street, a gulf brought about by divisions of language, of which the vast majority of Egyptians were ignorant or at best ill-informed. For this reason, Yusuf Idris quickly became fervent supporter of colloquial Arabic.

'Abd al-Karīm parla nel linguaggio tipico del repertorio linguistico di un contadino. Il suo monologo interiore, ricco di battute, imprecazioni, proverbi e modi di dire è tipicamente impregnato dalla cultura popolare orale dei contadini analfabeti egiziani, o, come scrive Holes (1990: 305): '[C]ontains plentiful examples of dialects lexis and even syntax'.

Arḥaṣ layālī offre quindi abbondante materiale per uno studio delle possibili perdite culturali in traduzione. In questo lavoro riporto alcuni esempi di espressione idiomatiche e di elementi culturali per esplorare le strategie traduttive e le possibili equivalenti.

4.1. La strofa popolare

'Abd al-Karīm, non sapendo dove andare, esprime tutta la sua perplessità nello stare per strada e teme di essere preso in giro da certe ragazzine che erano solite ridicolizzare i passanti cantando la seguente strofa di una filastrocca:

يا ابو الريش انشا الله تعيش /Ya abū- al-rīš inšalla ta'īš/⁸ (lett. 'Tu che sei piumato, che Iddio ti dia lunga vita'). (Idrīs 2007: 6)

⁸ La trascrizione riproduce la pronuncia dell'autrice, originaria del Cairo.

Si tratta di un vecchio detto popolare ritmato dall'allitterazione della lettera /š/. Orelli (1992: 26) lo traduce in italiano con: 'Gran-de-pen-nuto pre-ga-d-dio-che-sei-vis-su-to', mentre nella traduzione inglese di Wadida Wassef, è stato omissso. Propongo, per conservare il ritmo tramite in questo caso la rima 'O, tu dalle piume cinto, possa dalla vita non essere vinto'.

Nelle fonti di tradizioni popolari consultate (Taymūr 2002 e Ġād 2007) si tratta di una canzoncina folcloristica legata ad una pratica antica della campagna e dei quartieri popolari del Cairo. La si cantava ai padri i cui primi figli erano morti prematuri: al primo figlio che sopravviveva, per scacciare il malocchio, si metteva al padre una corona di piume di oca o tacchino sulla testa, lo si faceva cavalcare un asino seduto al contrario e poi i bambini gli cantavano questa filastrocca (Taymūr 2002: 932). In un'altra fonte si dice che si portava il neonato nudo per la strada e gli si cantava la canzoncina (Ġād 2007: 218).

Nel dizionario dialettale Badawi-Hinds (1986: 361), il termine *rīš* è indicato come segue: '/Rii/'⁹ (coll n) feather,; /Rayyi/ (vi) to put out feathers, to grow feathers to acquire money or material possessions'. Nello storico dizionario del dialetto egiziano *al-Tuḥfah al Wafāiya fi l-'āmmiyya al- maṣriyya* del 1890 a cura di Wafā al-Quwainī (2016: 241)¹⁰, sotto il lemma *rīš*, l'aggettivo /mītraīš/, letteralmente 'piumato', è riportato come equivalente a *في سعة متوسطة من المال* *fi sa'a mutawwasīṭa mina l-māl*, cioè 'benestante'; in nessuno dei due dizionari è invece menzionata la filastrocca.

Il termine è associato nell'inconscio collettivo egiziano al benessere, al lusso e alla vita agiata, con una connotazione particolare che richiama i ventagli di piume di struzzo alla *Mille e una notte* e nelle fiabe popolari che parlano della vita nei palazzi dei sultani. Le parole di questa strofa denotano concetti assenti nella cultura occidentale. Per questo propongo una traduzione che possa trasmettere un significato comprensibile al lettore e tale da aumentare la sua curiosità di conoscere l'originale: come sostiene Benvenuto Terracini, 'una buona traduzione suscita nel lettore il desiderio di conoscere l'originale' (Terracini 1983: 37).

4.2. Imprecazioni e insulti

'Abd al-Karīm, continuando il suo monologo interiore, a un certo punto lancia un'imprecazione contro Ṭanṭāwī, causa principale della sua agitazione, dicendo:

⁹ Le citazioni dal dizionario Badawi-Hinds (1986) ne riproducono la trascrizione originale, a sua volta basata su Mitchell (1962), come espressamente notato in Badawi-Hinds (1986: xvii).

¹⁰ Wafā al-Quwainī (1849-1899), autore di uno dei primi vocabolari di dialetto egiziano.

حائط /wa rāḥ fi l-nōm... nām 'alayih al-ba'id 'ātqal ḥā it/ (Idrīs 2007: 7), lett. 'Sarà sprofondato nel sonno, che gli crolli addosso la parete più pesante, a quell'Eccetera Eccetera!'

Orelli (1993: 28) rende in 'dormiva già profondamente, gli fosse sprofondato addosso un intero muro' mentre Wassef (1997: 4; in Johnson-Davies 2009: 7) traduce 'God in heaven, let him snore his way to hell!'

Oltre al significato abituale di "dormire", nel colloquiale egiziano il verbo *nām* vale anche 'crollare, cadere', 'to lie flat' o 'to go flat' (Badawi-Hinds 1986: 892). Il termine *al-ba'id* è chiarito in Badawi-Hinds (1986: 86) come una 'insulting 'form of address', in which mention of the name of the person addressed is deliberately avoided'.

L'imprecazione è riportata da Ša'lān (2003: 319) come نامت عليك حيطه /nāmat 'alik haiṭa/ ('Che ti crolli addosso un muro!'). Modificata da Idrīs aggiungendo l'elativo *atqal* 'la più pesante', è abbastanza diffusa nel colloquiale egiziano e si usa spesso anche come risposta umoristica a chi insiste a far tardi e resiste al sonno. Di solito viene usata tra amici, persino da una madre quando il figlio non vuol andare a dormire, e non è offensiva (cf. Boustani et Germanos 2016: 57). La bisemicità del verbo *nām* dona quindi un valore espressivo che viene perso in una traduzione puramente letterale.

La traduzione inglese ha optato, mediante la parafrasi, per un equivalente funzionale. Non essendoci un equivalente in lingua italiana con la stessa connotazione, si può avvicinarne il senso al lettore con l'espressione 'ti cada il cielo in testa!' oppure 'ti venga un colpo!' Proponendo il detto in traduzione, anche se non si trasmetterà tutta la figuratività dell'originale, non porterà a perdita di significato e sarà comprensibile al lettore. Suggerirei: 'Sarà sprofondato nel sonno, che crolli il muro più pesante addosso a quel maledetto!' In questo modo si conserva il valore semantico del verbo *rāḥa* che in dialetto esprime anche la supposizione.

Continuando nei suoi insulti contro Ṭanṭāwī, 'Abd al-Karīm pronuncia quest'altra imprecazione:

الله يخرّب بيتك يا طنطاوي /allah yaḥrib baītak yaā Ṭanṭāwī/, lett. 'Che Iddio ti rovini la casa, o Ṭanṭāwī!' (Idrīs 2007: 6).

La resa italiana di Orelli (1993: 25) è 'Che Iddio ti rada al suolo la casa!', e quella inglese di Wadida Wassef (Johnson-Davies 2009: 7) 'God bring your house to ruin'. Badawi-Hinds (1986: 244) nota 'yixrib beet-ak = (God) damn you! (used as a curse but also to denote surprise or wonder)'.

Quest'imprecazione è molto diffusa in Egitto e in altri paesi arabi e non ha di solito una connotazione negativa. Nell'uso comune è anche una locuzione antifrastica per esprimere ammirazione (come chiarito in Badawi-Hinds 1986). La casa, in questa collocazione, viene percepita

dagli arabi non solo nella forma fisica ma anche nel senso metaforico di benessere e stabilità economica. Questa locuzione nella traduzione del romanzo *Zuqāq al-midaq* ('Il Vicolo del Mortaio') di Maḥfūz è stata resa da Paolo Branca in 'che tu possa andare in rovina!' (Branca 2009: 137), mentre Clelia Sarnelli nella traduzione di *Bayna al-qaṣrayn* ('Tra i due palazzi') la rende con 'che possa andare in rovina la tua casa!' (Sarnelli 1996: 392). La formula 'che ti venga un accidente!' rende il senso figurato di questa locuzione ma non trasmette la sua stessa carica espressiva in lingua araba. A mio avviso questa locuzione e il modo di dire succitato non possono essere sostituite con altre espressioni idiomatiche italiane perché il loro significato letterale è importante quanto quello idiomatico, in quanto esprimono la grettezza del protagonista e contengono nozioni interessanti sul contesto culturale dell'opera.

4.3. Termini della campagna egiziana

Ad un certo punto del monologo di 'Abd al-Karīm troviamo una serie di termini pertinenti non solo al colloquiale egiziano ma anche alla cultura rurale. Infatti, l'autore si immedesima con il protagonista quando si chiede se andare ad 'Izabt al-Balābsa (il latifondo di *al-Balābsa*) dove ci sono più possibilità per passare una bella serata:

فهنالك سامر وليلة حنه وغوازي وشخلة وعود وهات ايدك..... من أين يا عبد الكريم ((النقطة))؟
/fa-hunāk sāmār wa-līlat ḥenna wa-ḡawāzī wa-šaḥla'a wa-'aūd wa ḥāt īdak..... min ayn yā
'Abd al-Karīm al-noqṭa?/ (Idrīs 2007: 7).

Il tutto è tradotto da Orelli (1993: 28) con 'Serata in buona compagnia: c'era una veglia di nozze con tanto di danzatrici, signore vistose, musica per liuto e su vieni a ballare con me. Ma dove andare a pescare soldi per il regalo'. Nella versione inglese troviamo 'There was fun to be had over there. Wedding feasts, and dancing girls, and high jinks, and merry-making and what-have-you. But where all the money for all that' (Johnson-Davies 2009: 7).

'Abd al-Karīm elenca le attrazioni di una serata di festa come viene percepita da un contadino in villaggio nel Delta del Nilo. I termini usati da 'Abd al-Karīm (*sāmār wa līlat henna wa ḡawāzī wa šaḥl'aa wa 'aūd wa ḥāt īdak e noqṭa*) denotano referenti inesistenti nella cultura e nella lingua italiana.

Il lemma *sāmār* in arabo standard indica la festa notturna (al-Wasīṭ 2011: 448) mentre nel colloquiale egiziano è in particolare una 'informal evening performance of traditional entertainments' (Badawi-Hinds 1986: 429). *līlat al-henna* è invece la vigilia della notte di nozze, o, come spiega il Badawi-Hinds: '*leelit il-ḥinna* eve of consummation of a marriage when the bride and groom are traditionally decorated with henna' (Badawi-Hinds 1986: 230).

Nella stessa fonte, il termine غازية /*ḡaziyya*/ indica una 'female dancer and singer especially in rural areas' (Badawi-Hinds 1986: 622), mentre Snodgrass (2016: 25) riporta il termine al plurale come

ghawazee, e spiega: 'In Egypt ghawazee, a harem dance to percussive castanets and brass finger cymbals evolved into the *raks sharki* (Oriental dance)'.

Il lemma شخلة /*šahl'a*/ è spiegato nel dizionario dialettale di Taymūr (2002: 1125) come 'camminare ancheggiando' (Taymūr 2002 :1125) e nel Badawi-Hinds come 'cause to move sensuously, cause to sway' (Badawi-Hinds 1986: 455).

نقطة *nuqta* in arabo standard non è solo 'punto' o 'goccia', ma anche il denaro dato in dono agli sposi. Nell'uso colloquiale egiziano, però, *noqta* è anche 'money given as a present to, e.g., a child at birth or circumcision, or a bride or groom at a wedding, money given to a musician or dancer while performing (as largesse or in payment for complimentary toasts called by the leader of a band)' (Badawi-Hinds 1986: 882). Insomma, il termine *noqta* evoca nella mente del lettore egiziano valori connotativi ben diversi da *hadīya* 'regalo'. Rendere *al-noqta* semplicemente con 'regalo' fa perdere la connotazione culturale del termine.

Infine, *līlat al-ḥenna* nella tradizione egiziana è 'la notte che precede le nozze e si tinge di *al-ḥenna* le mani ed i piedi degli sposi, seguito del bagno della sposa' (Amīn 2013: 331)¹¹.

In questi casi la traduzione deve tenere conto dell'immagine che l'autore vuole trasmettere ed evocare nella mente del lettore. La traduzione inglese ha optato per la strategia della *domestication*, che ha reso le frasi fluide ma piatte e completamente prive di riferimenti culturali interessanti. La scelta dei termini per rendere i realia culturali è un processo molto delicato; per esempio, nella versione italiana tradurre 'danzatrici ancheggianti' con 'signore vistose' dirotta l'immagine lungo un altro binario, verso un'immagine di festa più di città che da realtà contadina.

Direi sia meglio straniare un poco, a detta di Eco (2018: 174), e lasciare i due termini in originale come *līlat ḥenna* e *ḡawazī* per dare l'opportunità al lettore di percepire questa atmosfera particolare e per introdurlo alle immagini dipinte nel testo.

Ritengo opportuno anche mantenere l'ellissi dell'originale: *wa ḥāt Iydak...* per trasmettere al ricettore l'ambiguità ammiccante voluta dall'autore, nonché il valore connotativo che l'espressione /*ḥāt īdak*/ 'dammi la mano' ha per un contadino egiziano.

Per il termine *ḡawazī* opterei per una traslitterazione anche non scientifica, come *ghawazee*, termine proposto da Lane (1908: 419) in quanto abbastanza rintracciabile dal lettore occidentale nelle enciclopedie e nei motori di ricerca.

¹¹ Così lo descrive Amīn (2013: 331): "questa pratica aveva un'importanza particolare nelle zone rurali dove veniva vietato alla ragazza di lavare il corpo a partire dai 10 anni circa fino alla notte del matrimonio. Nelle città non c'è questa abitudine, perciò *līlat al-ḥenna* non ha tutta questa importanza ed è semplicemente una festa in cui si usa *al-ḥenna*".

Propongo pertanto: ‘Lì c’è serata in bella compagnia, notte di *henna* (veglia di nozze), *ghawazee* (danzatrici) ancheggianti, procaci, musica di liuto e dai, dammi la mano... Ma dove li trovi i soldi, ‘Abd al-Karīm, per un dono?’

4.4. Proverbi e modi di dire

‘Abd al-Karīm, inserisce nel suo discorso diversi proverbi e modi di dire che rappresentano indubbiamente una grande difficoltà per il traduttore, essendo ancorati alla cultura e alla storia di un paese, come nel caso del proverbio ما يغطي شقته /illi yazammar, ma yağatī-š da’n-u/, lett. ‘chi suona il piffero non copre il mento’, citato da Idrīs in forma di domanda retorica in arabo standard: وهل الذي يزمر يغطي شقته؟ *wa-hal alladī yuzammiru yuğatī daqna-hu?* (Idrīs 2007: 8) ‘ma chi suona il piffero, riesce a coprirsi il mento?’

Nella resa di modi di dire in un’altra lingua, bisogna star attenti non solo a decodificare il loro significato a livello linguistico ma anche a livello culturale profondo. La traduzione dei proverbi rappresenta una sfida particolare per il traduttore, poiché non si tratta solo di rendere la funzione espressiva ma anche vocativa, come sostiene Enani (2000: 51):

the proverb-category is by definition, untranslatable. Many proverbs have of course their near – but never exact equivalents.

Orelli (1993: 30) ha tradotto ‘[C]hi suona di piffero, può forse coprirsi il volto?’ mentre nella versione inglese il tutto è stato semplicemente omissivo.

Il proverbio è riportato in Badawi-Hinds (1986: 379) come ‘/illi yazammar ma-yğatī-š daqn-u/ (the piper cannot cover his chin) = you cannot hide your actions’, mentre Taymūr (2014: 75) ne esplicita il senso figurato: ‘non si possono nascondere le cose palesi’. Si usa quando qualcuno fa qualcosa, che richiede la sua presenza fisica e malgrado ciò cerca di negarla. Il personaggio qui si ridicolizza citando questo proverbio, paragonando la sua illusione di trovare cibo o bevande a casa all’illusione di colui che pensa di nascondere il mento mentre suona uno strumento a fiato.

Ovviamente, una traduzione letterale non può trasmettere il senso figurato del proverbio, come ben nota Larson (1984: 20): ‘The real danger comes in translating an idiom literally, since the result will usually be nonsense in the receptor language’.

Propongo un’equivalente espressione idiomatica italiana che realizzi la funzione dinamica di questo proverbio e risulti più adeguato a trasmettere lo stesso effetto dell’espressione egiziana sul lettore italiano: ‘Ma come? Posso mica nascondermi dietro un dito’. Resta tuttavia una perdita nella

funzione vocativa del proverbio, perché gli arabi considerano chi suona il piffero o chi lo fa per mestiere un poveraccio e una persona che osa farlo è poco rispettata. Ovviamente, tutte queste connotazioni non esistono nella cultura italiana.

Un altro modo di dire presente nel testo è أنظف من الصيني بعد غسله /andaf min aš-šīnī ba'da ġasīl-u/ lett. 'più pulito di un piatto di porcelana lavato' (Idrīs 2007: 6). Questa espressione è resa nella versione italiana con 'Peggio di un piatto appena ripulito' (Orelli 1993: 27) e in inglese con 'His pockets picked clean' (Johnson-Davies 2009: 7); la traduttrice della versione inglese ha cioè optato per un'equivalenza dinamica, o, per usare le parole di Baker (1992: 73), '[U]sing an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form'.¹² Si tratta di un modo di dire molto usato in Egitto e riportato nel dizionario Badawi-Hinds (1986: 517) come '{prov}' ('cleaner than china after washing), completely cleaned out (of money)') e nella raccolta di proverbi egiziani di Taymūr (2014: 108) come: 'si dice per chi è al verde'. In effetti, gli egiziani denominano i servizi da tavola (piatti, tazze, ecc.) con il termine *al-šīnī* (Amīn 2013: 68). Le difficoltà di tradurre questo proverbio non sono quindi linguistiche ma di riferimenti culturali. In questo caso occorre cercare un'espressione che provochi lo stesso effetto nel lettore italiano. Come spiega André Lefevère:

la difficoltà della traduzione dei modi di dire contenenti allusioni culturali è forse attribuibile al fatto che le allusioni mettono in luce il fondamentale aporema della traduzione, l'intraducibilità, che non dipende dalle particolari strutture sintattiche o semantiche, quanto piuttosto dal modo specifico in cui ogni cultura elabora un proprio "codice cifrato", di cui le allusioni sono appunto una manifestazione. (Lefevère 1998: 58)

Propongo la resa con l'equivalente italiano 'povero in canna' perché allude alla povertà completa ed evoca un effetto sul ricevente del testo di arrivo simile a quello esercitato sul ricevente del testo di partenza, come ricorda Nida (2000: 129): 'the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message'.

4.5. Collocazioni colloquiali

Il racconto di Idrīs è impregnato dall'uso di collocazioni tipiche del colloquiale egiziano come خطف رجله *ħaṭaf reglu* ('si affrettò ad andare') o خطف الركعات الأربع *ħaṭaf al-raka'at al-arba'* 'ha fatto le quattro *raka'a* alla svelta' (Idrīs 2007: 5), tradotta in italiano con 'Dopo aver molto approssimativamente abbozzato le

¹² Cfr. Baker (1992: 72-78) per le strategie di traduzione delle espressioni idiomatiche.

sue quattro genuflessioni' (Orelli 1993: 23); simile è anche la versione inglese: 'He rushed through the four prostrations' (Johnson-Davies 2009: 5).

Nel dizionario arabo *ḥaṭaf* vuol dire 'tirare e prendere qualcosa velocemente' (al-Wasīt 2002: 244) mentre il termine non è riportato nel dizionario dialettale di Taymūr (2002). L'uso colloquiale di questo verbo è indicato invece nel Badawi-Hinds (1986: 256) nell'espressione *xataft rigli*: 'Nip out, get oneself off' (Badawi -Hinds 1986: 256).

In questa collocazione c'è quindi anche la connotazione ad un realia religioso, cioè le unità rituali della preghiera islamica. Propongo di lasciare il termine *raka'a* traslitterato per trasmettere il realia religioso e mantenere il colore del testo.

4.6. Termini gastronomici

Nel racconto troviamo anche due nozioni gastronomiche relative al modo di fare il tè e servire il caffè nella campagna egiziana (كوب الشاي الزرد, *kūb al-šāy (al-zard)*, lett. 'bicchiere di tè troppo forte' (Idrīs 2007: 5) e قهوة علي البيشة, *qahwa 'alā al-biṣa*, lett. 'caffè servito in una piccola tazza senza manico' (Idrīs 2007: 6). Il primo è reso da Orelli in 'quel bicchiere di tè dolcissimo' (Orelli 1993: 25) mentre nella versione inglese è addomesticato in un semplice 'a glass of tea' (Johnson-Davies 2009: 6).

Il tè è senza dubbio la bevanda più diffusa tra i contadini egiziani ed è bevuta più volte al giorno; nel colloquiale viene spesso qualificato con gli aggettivi *ḥafif* 'leggero' o *ta'īl* 'forte'. Il termine *al-zard* usato nel racconto e menzionato in Badawi-Hinds (1986: 368)¹³ '*Zard*, a strong dark tea' non è invece così diffuso. Di solito è limitato alle zone del deserto e della costa occidentale dell'Egitto e indica un tè bollito e ribollito fino a diventar molto forte e che viene servito in piccoli bicchieri. L'immagine del tè forte, quindi, evoca l'atmosfera del deserto e dei beduini con tutti i suoi referenti esotici. Per questo propongo 'Per quel bicchiere di tè *zard* (nero forte)'.

È da notare che Idrīs nacque nel governatorato di Šarqiyya, la porta orientale dell'Egitto e da dove prima arrivarono le tribù arabe provenienti dalla Penisola Arabica. A mio parere, l'autore ha usato il termine che si usa nella sua regione d'origine piuttosto che nel dialetto dell'ipotetico contadino 'Abd al-Karīm, che abita a *Dāqahliya*, come s'evince dal nome del luogo verso cui voleva dirigersi per passare la serata, *Izbat al-balābsa* (nome di un piccolo villaggio dipendente dalla città di Dasuq, situato nel governatorato di Kafr aš-Šayḥ nel Delta del Nilo).

¹³ Il termine *al-zard* non è stato trovato negli altri dizionari consultati, quali Taymūr (2002) e Wāfaa (2016).

L'altro termine riguarda il modo di servire il caffè nei locali contadini قهوة على البيشة *qahwa 'alā l-bīša*, lett. 'caffè in una *bīša*' (Idrīs 2007: 6), tradotto in 'un caffè sul suo piattino' (Orelli 1993: 27) e nella versione inglese 'He ordered a coffee' (Johnson-Davies 2009: 7).

Il termine *al-bīša* non è presente nel Badawi-Hinds (1986). Si trova, invece, nel dizionario di Taymūr (2002: 224): '*al-bīša*, piccole tazzine senza manico né piattino vengono usate nei caffè popolari e di solito si mette una tazzina su un'altra al posto del piattino'. Il termine appare anche nell'opera di al-Ġabartī (1754-1825) '*Aġā'ib al-āṭār fi l-tarāġim wa-l-aḥbār*' (al-Ġabartī 1998, vol. 3: 340) e nel dizionario colloquiale di Taymūr (2002: 489).

È chiaro che rendere con 'un caffè sul suo piattino' dà l'idea di un caffè servito in un locale di città, creando una perdita culturale non indifferente. Io opterei per mantenere il termine in trascrizione onde conservare il colore culturale del testo.

5. *Bayt min laḥm*

Il secondo racconto, pubblicato nel 1971, appartiene al periodo della *Shattered Reality*. Il racconto narra di una giovane vedova che vive in profonda povertà con tre figlie da sfamare. La sua unica via d'uscita consisterebbe nel farle sposare, ma poiché le figlie sono povere e poco attraenti non trovano pretendenti. Alla fine convincono la madre a sposare un giovane cieco che usava venire a casa loro a recitare il Corano ogni venerdì in memoria del defunto. In questo modo non sarebbe stato indecente ricevere altri uomini a casa e far conoscere le ragazze. Questo, tuttavia, non accade. Dato che vi è solo una camera per ospitare tutte e cinque le persone, le ragazze sono tormentate dalle espressioni soffocate della madre e del marito durante l'atto sessuale; infine, una di loro ruba l'anello di nozze mentre la madre è fuori casa e, avendolo messo al dito, s'accoppia con il patrigno. Alla fine il segreto viene scoperto; sopraffatte dalla certezza di essere troppo povere e troppo brutte per essere chieste in sposa, le ragazze iniziano a fare girare l'anello tra loro per soddisfare il loro desiderio. Durante l'atto stanno zitte per non tradirsi e anche il marito accetta (per convenienza o ignoranza) il loro silenzio quando si accoppia. Si rende conto dal fatto che la donna con cui sta dormendo è diversa ogni notte ma, senza il beneficio della vista, non può esserne del tutto sicuro. Si tratta di uno dei racconti più famosi di Idrīs:

There is no doubt that the title story of House of Flesh is among his most famous, largely due to the sophisticated technique Idris developed over ten years of creative output, as well as its provocative plot. (Cross 2009: <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu>)

5.1. Proverbi e allusioni culturali

In questo racconto è meno forte l'uso degli idiomi e proverbi perché la voce del narratore prevale sul dialogo.

Tuttavia, in un dialogo tra la madre e le figlie, alla prima che propone il giovane cieco come sposo, le ragazze rispondono con una espressione proverbiale:

نصوم ونفطر علي أعمى /naṣūm wa-naftar 'ala a'ma?/, lett. "facciamo un lungo digiuno per romperlo con uno cieco" (Idrīs 1990: 12).

Si tratta di un gioco di parole sul proverbio egiziano /aṣūm wa- aṣūm wa-aftar 'ala baṣāla/ 'faccio il digiuno poi lo rompo con una cipolla'. Il passaggio del racconto è tradotto in italiano con 'Così lungo digiuno non merita essere rotto per un cieco' (Orelli 1993: 14) e nella versione inglese come 'Shall we fast and break that fast with a blind man?' (Johnson-Davies 2009: 221).

Il proverbio in questione è considerato tra i più diffusi nella tradizione popolare egiziana. Infatti è indicato nella maggior parte dei libri di usi, costumi e proverbi¹⁴ ed è elencato nel dizionario al-Badawi-Hinds (1986: 515): '*yiṣuum wi-yiftar ʿala baṣla*: ('fasts (for ages) and then breaks his fast on an onion'), (a comment on illogical behaviour, or an expression of sympathy at a disappointing outcome)'.

Questo proverbio, come nota Gabriel Rosenba¹⁵ può essere letto come *fuṣḥa* anche se l'espressione è colloquiale, fatto che comporta minori difficoltà nella traduzione.

Il detto ha più di una connotazione per il lettore arabo: il digiuno legato al rito religioso del mese di Ramadan, la cipolla come cibo povero non gradito. Tutti referenti che non portano gli stessi valori per il lettore occidentale o italiano. Qui le differenze culturali sono evidenti, tuttavia la resa italiana di questa espressione idiomatica in 'Così lungo digiuno non merita essere rotto per un cieco' è facilmente rintracciabile e riconoscibile per un lettore italiano anche con poche nozioni riguardante il Medio Oriente e permette di comunicare un'espressione di coloritura culturale egiziana.

Altro esempio di espressioni idiomatiche si trova in un proverbio citato dalla madre sulla possibilità di trovare comunque mariti per le figlie povere e brutte:

¹⁴ Il proverbio fu citato da Burckhardt (1875: 115-116): "he fasted for a whole year and then broke his fast with an onion' when the Ramadan is over; the Moslems break their fast on the morning of the great feast with some dainty morsels from their kitechens. It is thought meritorious on that occasion to eat first a few dates after the example of Mohammed, and it would be shameful to use so mean a thing like an onion'. Per Taymūr (2014: 274) vale 'tanta pazienza senza ottenere nulla'.

¹⁵ G. Rosenbaum <https://www.academy.ac.il/SystemFiles/2108>

فلكل فولة كيال ولكل بنت عدلها /fa-li-kul fūla kayâl-ha wa li-kul bint 'adal-ha/ (Idrīs 1990: 13), lett. 'Ogni fava ha qualcuno che s'interessa di pesarla' (cioè, ogni ragazza ha il suo perfetto marito).

Il proverbio è stato tradotto in italiano come 'A ogni fava nel sacco riposo, a ogni ragazza il suo giusto sposo' (Orelli 1993 :12) e nella versione inglese reso con 'Even a rotten bean finds some blind person to weight it out' (Johnson-Davies 2009: 220).

Il proverbio è riportato in al-Badawi-Hinds come '*kull fuula w-laha kayyaal* [prov] (every bean has its weigher) 'every Jack has his Jill' (al-Badawi-Hinds 1986: 773) e nel *Qāmūs al-'ādāt wa al-ṭaqālid al-maṣriyya* ('Dizionario dei costumi e tradizioni egiziani') nella versione /*kull fūla masawwisa, la-ha kayâl 'awar*/ 'ogni fava marcia ha un guercio a cui interessai (Amīn 2013: 302), cioè anche un oggetto mediocre potrà trovare chi lo apprezza; Taymūr riporta il proverbio come /*li-kull fūla kayâl-ha*/ (Taymūr 2014: 378) 'Ogni fava può trovare la persona a cui interessa'.

Riassumendo, Idrīs ha inserito nel monologo della madre un proverbio della tradizione popolare egiziana (/li-kull fūla kayâl-ha/) e dopo l'ha specificato con un enunciato in forma proverbiale (/wa-li-kul bint 'adal-ha/).

La fava è il legume più diffuso in Egitto ed è molto presente nella tradizione culinaria sia per i poveri che per i ricchi. Numerosi i proverbi egiziani che lo citano, come /*fihamt al-fūla*/ (lett. 'ho capito la fava'), l'equivalente italiano di 'ho mangiato la foglia'. Si nota che la traduzione inglese in 'Even a rotten bean finds some blind person to weight it out' ha usato letteralmente una delle versioni antiche del proverbio. Questo proverbio ha il suo equivalente in Toscana: 'ogni vite vuol il suo palo, nessuna giovane dee disperare di maritarsi' (Giusti e Capponi 1871: 68). La versione italiana ha optato per una soluzione ottimale per la forma proverbiale scelta da Idrīs, poiché ne ha mantenuto la rima e il sapore culturale.

6. Conclusioni

Questo articolo si è concentrato sulle perdite culturali che si verificano nella traduzione Italiana di alcuni realia sociali e religiosi della società egiziana che denominano referenti inesistenti nella cultura e nella lingua italiana. Con diversi esempi estrapolati da due racconti di Yūsuf Idrīs ho tentato di negoziare le differenze culturali, in ciò seguendo Susan Bassnett nella sua proposta di una 'negotiation of difference that is both linguistic and cultural' (Bassnett 2014: 9).

Si sono riportate, oltre alle proposte dell'autrice dell'articolo, anche altre soluzioni di traduzioni in italiano e inglese. Con gli esempi citati, si è investigato sulle cause di eventuali perdite culturali e su quelle, inevitabili, avvenute nel passaggio da una cultura all'altra.

Si possono trarre le seguenti indicazioni:

- Le perdite sono legate alla mancanza di informazioni culturali inerenti al livello simbolico e/o profondo del testo di partenza. Pertanto, continuano a verificarsi anche quando si ottiene linguisticamente l'equivalenza.
- Nel caso di termini che denominano dei referenti inesistenti nella realtà della lingua d'arrivo, è preferibile ricorrere alla traslitterazione, ed eventualmente fornire la traduzione con poche, essenziali note in un glossario in fondo al libro. Ciò, per non interrompere il flusso narrativo ed aiutare a mantenere il riferimento della lingua di partenza portando il lettore verso il testo. Quanto sopra è stato fatto, ad esempio, traducendo i termini di gastronomia locali come *Zerda* e *Biša*.
- In alcune soluzioni riportate nelle traduzioni inglesi, ho trovato conferma all'ipotesi di Venuti sulle strategie dei traduttori che hanno preferito rendere il testo più fluente a scapito dell'eliminazione del colore socio-culturale del testo originale (Bassnett 2014: 14).

Nella traduzione di proverbi ed alcune espressioni idiomatiche, si è optato, ove possibile, per equivalenti culturali funzionali in modo di riprodurre lo stesso effetto dell'espressione del testo fonte nella lingua d'arrivo. Si reputa dare un senso riconoscibile al lettore lo aiuterebbe, a percepire meglio la carica espressiva del detto ed a penetrare più profondamente nel mondo narrativo dell'autore. Ciò non impedisce di lasciare trasparire il sapore della lingua del testo fonte e mantenere gli elementi culturali che distinguono l'altra cultura. È un tentativo di negoziare tra il rendere il testo accessibile al lettore e tra il condurlo al mondo culturale del testo.

La traduzione delle opere di Idrīs rappresenta una sfida particolare per il traduttore, non soltanto per le difficoltà di rendere i realia culturali e sociali della società egiziana ma anche per le varietà di registri linguistici usati, come anche evidenziato da Orelli (1993: 10) nella sua introduzione:

Idrīs gioca con i registri linguistici, media continuamente fra dialetto e lingua letteraria, inventa una sorta di lingua intermedia, un parlato di livello superiore, inserendo termini aulici in strutture dialettali o viceversa, espressioni gergali in costrutti classici. Ne risulta una lingua in cui i termini di registro elevato convivono con quelli dialettali: una lingua tanto ricca quanto difficile da tradurre.

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Enjeux de l'enseignement du français aux arabophones : le cas de l'Université de Jordanie à Amman

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This study examines the teaching of French to Jordanian Arabic-speaking people at the French department in the University of Jordan in Amman. The new technological tools used recently in the department offer promising perspectives and they prepare the department to offer some better targeted courses for French language students in Jordan. These innovating practices of teaching included in the project of the University of Jordan are dedicated to cultural and international openness. Still, assessing the needs of learners in academia is difficult to establish and to be clearly expressed once and for all. The questions that arise in this context are: Does technology limit the teacher's role in the classroom? And how do affective factors influence the learning of a foreign language in the presence of technological tools and hybrid and distance learning? How to create with these new tools classes designed to arouse in the Arabic-speaking student a certain behaviour or activity? It is in this sense that we speak in general pedagogy of active methods, which designate all that a teacher can do to create and maintain in his students the maximum of interest and participation in class. Thus, this study will show that in the background, despite all the technological development in the field of language pedagogy, the affective dimension and the communicative approach must necessarily be added to the teaching materials of the teacher to make it more effective for language acquisition of the learner of French, especially the Arab native student. The teacher plays an essential emotional and human role in this learning process, whatever the teaching approach or tool used.

1. Contexte linguistique

Le français est une grande langue de communication internationale. En Jordanie, depuis l'accord de coopération culturelle et technique signé le 16 juin 1965 entre le gouvernement de la République Française et le gouvernement de la Jordanie (France Archives, 2020 : en ligne), l'enseignement du français, soit à l'école ou bien à l'université, devient une nécessité dans la société jordanienne. Les coopérations franco-jordaniennes de cet accord portent sur des secteurs essentiels de l'économie jordanienne que cela soit l'industrie, le tourisme, la recherche scientifique, l'agriculture et l'irrigation, la santé et l'éducation. Cette nécessité naît du fait que la Jordanie n'est pas un pays francophone et le français ne s'enseigne pas dans toutes les écoles jordanienues. De plus, notre pays

fut placé sous mandat britannique depuis les années vingt jusqu'à 1946, c'est d'ailleurs pourquoi l'anglais y est devenu la deuxième langue la plus parlée après l'arabe. Ainsi, la plupart des étudiants admis dans le programme de B.A au département de français à l'Université de Jordanie ont un niveau de vrai débutant en français.

Il est vrai qu'il existe une possibilité d'apprendre le français comme deuxième langue étrangère dans quelques écoles privées à Amman, mais celles-ci ne concernent qu'une minorité de ces étudiants. S'y ajoute le fait que le nombre d'heures consacré aux cours de français dans ces écoles est inférieur à celui de l'anglais. Donc, on ne parle pas d'un niveau linguistique avancé même dans les écoles privées. Or, l'enseignement scolaire du français en Jordanie — nous parlons ici de la période jusqu'aux années 90 — s'agissait d'apprendre par cœur des listes des mots et des dialogues correspondant aux différentes situations de la vie. Cet enseignement était théorique et basé sur la compétence de lecture et de transcrire sans faute orthographique. Cela dit, les étudiants ayant appris le français à l'école arrivent à l'université avec un grand bagage de vocabulaire sans pouvoir maîtriser les compétences d'expression et de communication orale et écrite. L'acte de l'enseignement ne prenait pas donc en considération le côté communicatif et celui affectif de l'enseignement de la langue.

À l'Université de Jordanie, l'approche pédagogique prend un autre tournant que celui de l'école. Le programme du B.A en langue et littérature française a commencé en 1987/1988 à l'Université de Jordanie faisant partie — lors de son lancement — du centre de langues, puis du département de langues modernes avant de se constituer en tant que département indépendant en 1997 dans la faculté des Lettres désormais nommée « la faculté des langues étrangères ». Ce département vise à fournir aux étudiants des compétences linguistiques et culturelles en langue française. Ainsi, les cours ne sont pas de cours magistraux. De plus, les étudiants ont des cours spécialisés de production écrite et orale ce qui aide à améliorer le niveau linguistique des apprenants.

Pourtant, les objectifs d'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère ont énormément varié depuis 1988 à l'Université de Jordanie. Au départ, l'objectif culturel était prioritaire; en effet, on étudiait une langue étrangère par et pour sa littérature et sa culture. En revanche, à partir de l'année universitaire 1999/2000, on a préféré l'objectif pratique qui privilégiait un enseignement de la langue considérée comme un outil de communication destiné à engager efficacement une conversation avec des personnes dans un contexte authentique. Le professeur joue un rôle d'animation affective importante dans ce processus communicatif. On a commencé à introduire une approche communicative dans notre approche pédagogique combiné avec des facteurs affectifs motivants que nous allons clarifier plus loin dans cette étude.

L'aspect communicatif est essentiel dans l'apprentissage des langues étrangères en effet. Selon Stevick (1980 : 4), le succès dans l'apprentissage de langues étrangères dépend moins des matériaux, des techniques et des analyses linguistiques : « que de ce qui se passe dans et entre les personnes pendant la classe ». La dimension affective s'ajoute aussi aux matériaux pédagogiques de l'enseignant pour rendre plus efficace l'acquisition langagière de l'apprenant. Beaucoup de travaux en effet soulignent l'importance des facteurs affectifs pour l'apprentissage. Dans son article « Comment les facteurs affectifs influencent-ils l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère ? » Jane Arnold confirme que la dimension affective atteint tous les aspects de notre existence et de manière très directe ce qui se passe dans la salle de classe, y compris celle de langues étrangères : « Puisque l'influence des facteurs éducatifs dans le domaine de l'enseignement et l'apprentissage de langues étrangères est très large » (Arnold 2006 : 407).

Rodríguez, Plax et Kearney (1996: 297) expliquent le facteur affectif disant que : « affect is by definition, an intrinsic motivator. Positive affect sustains involvement and deepens interest in the subject matter ». Ces facteurs positifs intéressent les professeurs parce qu'ils sont susceptibles de faciliter l'apprentissage de la langue. De surcroît, le Cadre commun européen de référence (Conseil de l'Europe 2000), reconnaît de manière explicite l'importance de l'affectivité dans l'apprentissage dans le paragraphe 5.1.3. La compétence « existentielle » (savoir être), il indique que:

L'activité de communication des utilisateurs/apprenants est non seulement affectée par leurs connaissances, leur compréhension et leurs aptitudes mais aussi par des facteurs personnels liés à leur personnalité propre et caractérisées par les attitudes, les motivations, les valeurs, les croyances et les types de personnalité qui constituent leur identité (Conseil de l'Europe 2000 : 84).

Dans notre département, la méthodologie de l'enseignement du français à l'université est devenue plus active et plus communicative à partir de 1999/2000. Il s'agit de faire acquérir à l'étudiant les règles fondamentales du français et de développer les compétences nécessaires en compréhension et expression orales et écrites. Nous comptons surtout sur la méthodologie directe permettant d'éviter le recours à l'intermédiaire de la langue maternelle dans l'apprentissage. S'y ajoute le recours à une méthodologie audiovisuelle, répondant ainsi à un objectif visant l'utilisation conjointe de l'image et du son. Le support sonore était constitué par des enregistrements magnétiques et le support visuel par des vues fixes. Dans la méthodologie audiovisuelle, les quatre habiletés étaient visées, bien qu'on a accordé la priorité à l'oral sur l'écrit. Dans son article « L'évolution des méthodologies dans l'enseignement du français langue étrangère depuis la

méthodologie traditionnelle jusqu'à nos jours », Ana Rodríguez Seara souligne que la méthodologie audiovisuelle prend aussi en compte l'expression des sentiments et des émotions, non considérés auparavant. Puis, la méthode active est présente dans la méthodologie audiovisuelle¹ : « puisqu'on sollicite l'activité de l'étudiant à travers l'image qui stimule la motivation » (Seara 2001 :149).

Les méthodes employées à ce temps — à partir de 2000 jusqu'à 2018 — *Tempo I* et *Tempo II*, puis *Forum I* et *II*, *Alter Ego I* et *II*, *Echo I* et *II* et enfin *Latitude I* et *II* ont été utilisées pour faire acquérir à des débutants, en peu de temps, les bases de la langue française pour qu'ils soient capables de suivre les cours de spécialisation de langue et littératures françaises. Ces manuels sont basés sur une méthodologie communicative qui a pour objectif de développer les quatre compétences langagières de compréhension et expression orales et écrites.

Ainsi, dans les deux premières années de B.A l'étudiant apprend à lire et à écrire. Il doit connaître également le contenu grammatical suivant : le présent, les règles principales concernant les noms et les adjectifs, les adjectifs possessifs, les nombres, la négation et des prépositions, les adjectifs démonstratifs, les pronoms relatifs et les pronoms personnels objets, le passé composé/imparfait, le futur, le conditionnel, l'impératif et le discours indirect. Par ailleurs, des cours de pratique de l'oral donnent aux étudiants les moyens de s'exprimer naturellement dans des situations quotidiennes à travers des activités variées et intéressantes.

Dans la deuxième année, des cours comme *Compréhension orale I* améliore la compréhension orale à partir de supports variés. On proposera notamment aux étudiants des dialogues oraux qui présentent des situations diverses de la vie française. Par ce biais, les étudiants apprendront à s'exprimer dans des situations diverses et à améliorer leur prononciation. Puis, avec *Compréhension orale II*, l'étudiant développe la compétence acquise dans la matière précédente. Ce cours se fait aussi à travers l'usage de cassettes variées, mais à un niveau supérieur et plus spécialisé. Il présente également des aspects divers de la vie quotidienne des Français, incluant notamment des actes de communication avec différents niveaux de langue. En parallèle, et en même année, nous travaillons dans d'autres cours comme *Expression écrite I* et *II* sur la compétence de l'expression écrite. L'étudiant apprendra à analyser, à organiser sa pensée dans un texte et à s'exprimer clairement. Il apprendra aussi à résumer des textes. Après *Expression écrite I* et *II*, l'étudiant devrait être capable d'écrire des

¹ Seara (2001 : 149) ajoute à l'égard de la méthode audiovisuelle que sur le plan de l'apprentissage « la MAV suivait la théorie de la Gestalt, qui préconisait la perception globale de la forme, l'intégration par le cerveau, dans un tout, des différents éléments perçus par les sens. Dans le cas des langues, l'apprentissage passerait par l'oreille et la vue. La langue étant considérée comme un ensemble acousticovisuel, la grammaire, les clichés, la situation et le contexte linguistique avaient pour but de faciliter l'intégration cérébrale des stimuli extérieurs ».

textes courts en français simple et clair. Dans *Expression écrite (niveau avancé)*, nous passons à un niveau plus avancé : l'étudiant apprend à exprimer ses idées, à discuter, commenter et critiquer et exprimer des idées différentes en écrivant des articles et des essais. Or, *Expression écrite (niveau avancé)* est un cours optionnel de quatrième année.

Par ailleurs, le département de français de l'Université de Jordanie s'est beaucoup développé dans les cinq dernières années, notamment avec l'ouverture du programme de Master en traduction français-arabe et d'un nouveau programme de B.A., un double majeur (français-anglais). De plus, le corps enseignant s'est enrichi de nouveaux membres et le nombre d'étudiants a augmenté.

2. Enseigner le français à un arabophone

En effet, dès l'inauguration du département, l'enseignement se basait dans la plupart des cours sur des méthodes (papiers) faisant recours de temps en temps aux cassettes ou bien aux films enregistrés effectués dans un laboratoire multimédia. Ce dernier permet essentiellement un travail sur la phonologie. Néanmoins, les cours consacrés pour ce travail phonologique sont très limités, donc insuffisants. Ainsi, l'approche pédagogique du département ne fournissait, d'après l'expérience, des stratégies cognitives suffisantes préparant, par la suite, les étudiants à arriver à un niveau plus avancé dans des domaines divers en langue française. Il importe donc pour un enseignement efficace de connaître les outils par lesquels doit se faire cet apprentissage du français. L'approche d'enseignement de la langue française ne doit donc pas viser uniquement à aider les étudiants arabophones à acquérir des connaissances linguistiques, mais aussi et surtout à leur habituer au système d'articulation et de prononciation. Il faut également viser à préparer les apprenants pour le marché de travail que cela soit dans les domaines du tourisme, de l'enseignement, des affaires ou de traduction.

Notre département revoit très régulièrement les maquettes des programmes et les méthodes et manuels adoptés afin de se mettre à jour dans le domaine de l'enseignement-apprentissage de la langue, culture et littérature françaises. En réalité, promouvoir les capacités linguistiques des étudiants est devenu une nécessité urgente pour faire face à l'augmentation de la demande locale, nationale et régionale de spécialistes parlant français. Cela requiert une méthodologie pédagogique qui use de l'audio, du Visio en parallèle avec le fichier texte. Le développement de la compétence communicative est bien aussi l'un de nos objectifs au département. Les recherches dans le domaine de la communication, domaine qui a plusieurs coïncidences avec l'enseignement des langues étrangères et secondes, se sont penchées sur le concept de disposition à communiquer que

McCroskey et Richmond définissent dans « Willingness to communicate : A cognitive view » comme une disposition à participer, si l'occasion se présente, dans un acte communicatif (McCroskey et Richmond 1990 : introduction). Nous tenons compte ainsi au département que la communication est le but final de l'apprentissage d'une langue. À cet égard, McIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei et Noels affirment que :

The ultimate goal of the learning process should be to engender in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness actually to communicate in them. That is, a proper objective for L2 education is to create WTC. A program that fails to produce students who are willing to use the language is simply a failed program (McIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei et Noels 1998 : 547).

L'utilisation de la langue étrangère ou seconde, à des fins communicatives, se situe au sommet d'une pyramide et repose directement sur la disposition à communiquer dans la langue cible. Ana Rodríguez Seara(2001) note que l'approche communicative s'est développée en France à partir des années 1970 en réaction contre la méthodologie audio-orale et la méthodologie audiovisuelle. Selon elle, cette approche apparaît au moment où l'on remet en cause en Grande-Bretagne l'approche situationnelle et où aux États-Unis la grammaire générative transformationnelle de Chomsky est en plein apogée. Au départ, cette approche était appelée approche et non méthodologie par souci de prudence, puisqu'on ne la considérait pas comme une méthodologie constituée solide. Ainsi, avec cette méthodologie communicative, l'apprentissage n'est plus considéré comme passif, recevant des stimuli externes. L'enseignant devient ainsi "un conseiller" selon la terminologie de Seara (2001 : 150): « Il doit recourir à des documents appelés "authentiques", c'est-à-dire non conçus exclusivement pour une classe de langue étrangère ».

3. Méthode ou méthodologie

Manuels, livres d'exercices, cours avec leur livre du maître, leurs bandes enregistrées ou bien leurs films sont tous des méthodes utilisées dans l'enseignement de la langue française à l'Université de Jordanie. Et c'est par des méthodologies différentes. Méthodes ne veut dire pas méthodologies. Méthode est l'outil et le matériel de l'enseignement alors que méthodologie revient à l'approche pédagogique qui comprend les objectifs du cours, son contenu et la démarche d'enseignement. Cela se différencie selon les enseignants, les époques et les méthodes utilisées. D'après Christian Puren, les termes utilisés dans le passé pour désigner la méthodologie traditionnelle d'enseignement des

langues *vivantes* ou *modernes* (désormais siglée MT 1) peuvent se classer en quatre catégories suivant les différents critères de référence utilisés:

- **L'institution scolaire** : la « Méthode des Écoles » est une appellation courante au XVIII^{ème} et au XIX^{ème} siècle : on la trouve chez l'abbé Pluche en 1735 comme chez F. Gouin en 1880, qui parle aussi de la « méthode universitaire »; ce genre de référence disparaît naturellement après 1902, date où la méthodologie directe est imposée officiellement dans l'Enseignement secondaire français.
- **La filiation historique** entre cette MT et la méthodologie d'enseignement des langues anciennes fournit des expressions comme « les procédés pédagogiques des langues anciennes » (Bailly 1897: 161) ou « les procédés éprouvés des langues classiques » (Berger 1947b: 149).
- **La chronologie** donne les expressions les plus répandues en France à la fin du XIX^{ème} siècle : on parle alors de « méthode classique », « ancienne », et, dès l'imposition de la méthodologie directe, de « méthode » ou « pédagogie traditionnelle », comme déjà Hoffman (1904: 529).
- **Les méthodes** qui font partie du « noyau dur » de la MT, enfin, sont fréquemment utilisées dès le XVIII^{ème} siècle dans des expressions comme « la méthode grammaticale », « la méthode de (la) grammaire » et « la méthode de (la) traduction ». Avec la méthodologie directe apparaîtra plus tard celle de « méthode indirecte » (par ex. chez N. Wickerhauser 1907: 213 et E. Gourio 1909: 51) (Puren 1988: 17).

En réalité, depuis les utilisations des moyens techniques modernes, la didactique des langues vivantes étrangères s'est évoluée d'une manière remarquable. À cet égard, les méthodes et la méthodologie de l'enseignement du français dans notre département vivent une période de transition. Les nouveaux outils technologiques et l'intérêt de l'approche communicative et interactive de l'enseignant ont ébranlé la méthodologie traditionnelle de l'enseignement de la langue. De nos jours, le professeur n'est pas la seule référence de la langue à enseigner. En outre, la présence de l'audio-visuel dans les pratiques de l'enseignement des langues vivantes met l'accent sur les autres côtés non linguistiques ou extralinguistiques de la langue. Désormais, l'étudiant vit et entend plusieurs accents, plusieurs versions phonologiques d'une langue; il se voit dans le contexte socioculturel et pratique l'intonation et l'articulation tous à la fois.

Le code verbal dont usait uniquement le professeur dans la méthodologie traditionnelle de l'enseignement constitue une difficulté majeure pour l'apprenant arabophone. C'est pourquoi, l'audio-visuel vient en aide pour compléter, décoder et expliciter le côté verbal du français. Des

nouveaux outils technologiques viennent en aide pour compléter la mission d'enseignement-apprentissage.

4. Outils pédagogiques utilisés au département

Parmi les multiples pratiques innovantes de l'enseignement du français au département sont les sites web offrant gratuitement des cours de français comme le site *Apprendre le français avec TV5 MONDE*² lancé par Yamina Benguigui, ministre déléguée chargée de la Francophonie, le 18 juillet 2013 à Lille. C'est déjà accessible partout dans le monde en sept langues – français, anglais, allemand, coréen, espagnol, japonais, vietnamien. Les débutants arabophones peuvent apprendre le français en utilisant des chansons ou une fiction produite par Hachette FLE et aborder des thèmes variés de la vie quotidienne ou professionnelle. Le site contient des exercices interactifs, une librairie en ligne, un guide et des ressources pédagogiques. Il propose également une carte interactive qui permet à l'utilisateur d'identifier partout dans le monde les Institut français, les Alliances françaises et les centres français labellisés où il est possible d'apprendre le français.

*Bonjour de France*³ est un autre site d'apprentissage que le professeur peut proposer à ses étudiants. Un site qui pourrait être consultés pour chercher des exercices, des tests et des jeux pour apprendre le français ainsi que des fiches pédagogiques à l'attention des enseignants de français langue étrangère (FLE). Ce site met à la disposition des étudiants aussi des dialogues différents et des actes de parole sur divers supports : vidéos, textes, enregistrements audio suivis d'exercices de français, pour améliorer leur compétence communicative. L'étudiant n'a qu'à choisir son niveau de français et cliquer sur les exercices adaptés au niveau choisi. Ce qui est intéressant dans ce site est que l'étudiant peut choisir la catégorie dans laquelle il souhaite perfectionner son français. Le professeur peut également y tirer des exercices efficaces pour ses étudiants. Il y en a plusieurs : grammaire, civilisation, examen de DELF, jeux pour apprendre le français, histoire de la francophonie, fichiers pédagogiques, expressions idiomatiques ou parler français. Puis, on choisit l'outil par lequel on préfère acquérir le français: image, audio, karaoké de FLE, test, dictée, phonétique ou conjugaison. Par ailleurs, dans la rubrique *Bonjour de France* on propose une sélection de sites Internet qui peuvent apporter des informations sur le monde du FLE, l'apprentissage de la langue française mais aussi sur la culture francophone et l'expression de sa diversité sur le web. L'étudiant ou

² <http://www.fle.fr/fr/pages-pro/article/523/Apprendre-le-francais-avec-TV5MONDE-le-site-est-desormais-disponible-en-arabe>.

³ <http://www.bonjourdefrance.com/>

le professeur pourraient aussi y ajouter ou modifier un site. Il est possible de travailler sur des supports variés (son, image, recherche Internet, etc.) avec un seul et même outil.

Dans la même veine, plusieurs méthodes contemporaines d'apprentissage du français langue étrangère ont un site en ligne comme *Echo* (CLE international)⁴ – méthode utilisée au département de 2012 à 2014 dans le cours de première année – *Latitudes*⁵ (méthode utilisée depuis 2016 jusqu'à maintenant) et *Accord*⁶ (méthode consultée souvent par les professeurs). Ces manuels de français proposent sur leur site web des exercices complémentaires qui sont corrigés automatiquement. Les exercices sont classés par dossiers, par unités et par objectifs d'apprentissage selon leur ordre d'apparition dans le manuel. Le manuel numérique comprend le livre de l'étudiant, le cahier d'activités, des ressources multimédia (audio, vidéo), un lien vers l'espace virtuel pour accéder à des ressources complémentaires et enfin le guide pédagogique et des corrigés et transcriptions (seulement pour le professeur). Les exemples de ce genre des sites sont plusieurs. L'utilité de cet outil se constitue dans l'autonomie et la rapidité de l'apprentissage. Et dans tous les cas, les consignes données par le professeur sont essentielles pour que l'apprenant profite pleinement de cette extension du domaine de la classe. Les étudiants peuvent apporter leurs ordinateurs personnels ou bien des tablettes pour se servir de cet outil pédagogique. Les cellulaires peuvent aussi être une autre solution pour travailler.

De surcroît, le smart phone offre plusieurs services pédagogiques. Tout d'abord, l'enseignement ne reste plus limité à l'espace et au temps de la classe. L'apprenant peut recevoir ou télécharger un fichier son au format MP3 (format compressé) en tout temps. Par le biais de cet outil technologique, l'exercice de la compétence de la compréhension orale peut être tellement efficace. Les fichiers son que cela soit une chanson, une anecdote en français, un journal télévisé, ou bien une scène théâtrale ou cinématographique proposent un corpus permettant la pratique de l'écoute. Cela pourrait être également un outil nécessaire pour les cours de la phonétique et de l'articulation. Il faut signaler, à cet égard, que l'apprentissage et l'exercice par ce moyen technologique est individualisé. L'étudiant peut arrêter, interrompre ou répéter le fichier tant et quand il le souhaite facilitant ainsi de retenir et de comprendre le document enregistré. Le smart phone offre, à part le son, des images animées. La compréhension du document devient encore plus facile en raison de la présence de l'image. En effet,

⁴<http://www.nathan.fr/webapps/cpg2-0/?idcpg=1000>

⁵<http://www.didierlatitudes.com/>

⁶<http://www.didieraccord.com/>

l'image ouvre la pédagogie linguistique vers une autre dimension laquelle porte sur la culture et la civilisation familiarisant par la suite l'apprenant avec le contexte authentique francophone.

5. Projets réalisés et projets à venir

Cette étude est orientée en fonction de la réalité de l'expérience pédagogique du français à l'Université de Jordanie et de la culture et de la société jordanienne. À cet égard, il faut dire que malheureusement, les outils innovants de l'enseignement du français au département sont très limités. Nos besoins dans le département dépassent notre capacité ce qui exige une coopération ou un partenariat avec d'autres organisations et institutions francophones afin d'accomplir notre mission pédagogique et professionnelle mise à jour. D'où notre partenariat avec l'Agence Universitaire de la francophonie. En effet, l'Université de Jordanie est membre de l'AUF depuis 2006. Ce partenariat permet à notre université de renforcer ses relations avec les universités francophones. Par contre, nous cherchons à consolider notre partenariat avec l'AUF. Le département est en manque au sujet des matériels technologiques et électroniques et de références ce qui empêche notre programme de M.A ainsi que notre programme de B.A d'élargir leur capacité ainsi que d'enrichir leurs moyens de recherches lesquels sont indispensables au développement des enseignants et des étudiants. D'où, d'ailleurs, la nécessité de fonder des programmes d'accès aux bases de données, une visioconférence qui permet d'organiser des conférences, des cours, des soutenances de mémoire ainsi qu'un tableau interactif lequel pourrait être très utile à nos étudiants de premier et deuxième cycle. Ainsi, un projet de point d'accès à l'Information "PAI" a été à l'étude depuis voici quatre ans avec étroite concertation entre le département et la présidence de l'université d'une part et l'AUF d'autre part : l'idée est d'être "connecté", c'est-à-dire de pouvoir dispenser surtout aux étudiants de Master de la documentation en langue française, laquelle fait défaut dans un pays comme le nôtre qui est traditionnellement tourné vers l'anglais.

Cette implantation a été réalisée et inaugurée en 2017. Notre perspective était dans le but d'aider le département de français à fournir aux étudiants ainsi qu'au corps enseignant francophone de notre université (lequel arrive à 45 professeurs de différents domaines) un laboratoire de recherche. Le PAI constitue un centre de ressources, voire, un centre d'accès à l'information permettant la consultation à prix subventionné des grandes bases de données internationales et la commande de documents, d'articles scientifiques, ainsi que l'accès à une documentation électronique et physique. Cela nous aiderait également à maintenir et à développer des opportunités appropriées pour les étudiants et les professeurs souhaitant poursuivre le développement des programmes d'enseignement qui couvrent

les objectifs des cours visés. Ce centre se servira également d'un réseau utile par le biais duquel notre université, en particulier, notre département, pourraient développer des connexions et des relations avec les organisations internationales ainsi qu'avec d'autres universités françaises et francophones pour échanger des expériences.

Le tableau interactif est nécessaire comme outil facilitant et modernisant les méthodes d'enseignement-apprentissage des différents cours que ce soit au niveau de la licence ou du master. On pense par exemple aux cours de la première année, tels que : *Français pour la Spécialisation I, II et III* et les cours intitulés *Entraînement Langagier I et II* pour lesquels nous adopterons depuis la rentrée 2016 une nouvelle méthode de FLE comme *Latitude* qui est tout à fait axée sur l'apprentissage interactif. Pour les cours avancés, le tableau interactif serait un outil de point pour présenter les devoirs et les exposés des étudiants mais aussi pour naviguer sur le web et découvrir ensemble en classe des documents sur la culture et la langue françaises et pour préparer des exercices. Avec cet outil, toute la classe peut réaliser un travail collectif, que cela soit un fichier visuel ou audio, puis discuter, analyser et tirer le sens d'abord oralement puis à l'écrit. De plus, le TBI connecté au réseau Internet par l'ordinateur permet d'afficher directement le contenu des sites visités collectivement par les étudiants à une activité de recherche en ligne. Notre vision pour la période suivant cette implantation est d'associer notre tableau à des tablettes interactives à disposition des étudiants pour accroître l'interactivité collective de la classe. Cela aidera effectivement les étudiants à poursuivre leur devoir ou le travail à l'extérieur de la classe ou chez eux.

S'agissant des cours du Master, le tableau interactif nous semble indispensable pour présenter, discuter et corriger ensemble les devoirs et les traductions des étudiants dans les différents cours et plus particulièrement pour le cours intitulé "TIC et Traduction" que nos collègues préparent en partenariat avec les universités membres du Bureau du Moyen Orient et pour lequel, nous avons l'intention d'utiliser la plateforme Moodle de l'AUF.

Le tableau interactif va sûrement attirer l'attention de nos apprenants et de renforcer la motivation et les échanges entre eux. Les étudiants deviendront des vrais acteurs de leurs cours et de leur apprentissage du français en raison de la fonctionnalité interactive de l'outil pédagogique. En outre, la compréhension, la prononciation, l'orthographe et la mémorisation du nouveau vocabulaire se trouveraient facilitées puisque l'image animée et l'audio-visuel rendent l'apprentissage vivant et facile à digérer.

Dans les cours de niveaux avancés, nous réfléchissons à mettre en place des liens actifs avec la communauté francophone locale et constituer ainsi un réseau d'invités permanents à des projets de département ou de classe. Les invités peuvent être des Français habitant ou travaillant en Jordanie,

ou bien des Jordaniens ou de Libanais francophones ; c'est-à-dire, des gens qui maîtrisent le français; l'ayant appris à l'école ou à l'université. Une visite d'un spécialiste francophone a été faite en 2017 dans le cadre du cours de *Littérature III*. Il s'agissait d'une professeure allemande spécialiste en littérature française contemporaine. Lors de cette rencontre, certains apprenants ont commencé à saisir avec enthousiasme l'occasion de s'adresser à des francophones en dehors du contexte de la classe. Cela nous a fait apercevoir une amélioration linguistique notable de la qualité d'expression orale et une confiance accrue chez les apprenants.

Bien sûr, avec cette méthodologie centrée sur la communication, la possibilité d'interactions à risque d'anxiété a augmenté de manière importante chez les apprenants. Ceci nous a requis des efforts supplémentaires pour la construction d'un environnement émotionnellement sécurisant pour nos étudiants adultes intimidés par leur niveau pas très avancé en français. Dans ce cas, nous avons trouvé que l'attitude du professeur et l'atmosphère que celui-ci crée dans la classe jouent un rôle indispensable dans la réduction de ce sentiment ennemie de l'apprentissage d'une langue. La dimension affective de l'enseignement pèse ainsi beaucoup dans l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère. Dans une recherche concernant des étudiants universitaires dans le domaine de la communication, Ellis travailla dans « Perceived teacher confirmation. The development and validation of an instrument and two studies of the relationship to cognitive and affective learning », avec un modèle de la « confirmation du professeur », qui s'intéresse aux messages verbaux et non verbaux que l'étudiant reçoit du professeur et qui lui font se sentir accepté et valorisé. Le comportement qui confirme peut créer une zone de sécurité où l'apprenant n'a pas peur de prendre les risques impliquant la prise de parole en langue étrangère (Ellis 2000 : 265). Dans une recherche hongroise menée par Dörnyei et Csizér, le facteur le plus important pour induire la motivation des élèves fut le comportement du professeur suivi du climat créé dans la salle de classe ; tous les deux ont une influence directe dans la réduction de l'anxiété (Dörnyei et Csizér 1998).

Notre but dans cette pratique est de mettre les étudiants en situation de communication orale authentique sans avoir peur de prendre la parole. Il s'agit dans cette approche pédagogique d'englober la pratique de la langue avec la découverte de la culture. Ces rencontres ont bien sûr des effets pédagogiques incontestables et motivants sur les étudiants. Par contre, l'heure de cours traditionnelle est trop courte pour permettre d'entrer efficacement dans cette dynamique. C'est pourquoi, on réfléchit, au département, de faire animer des clubs ou d'ateliers pendant la pause méridienne afin que cela soit pour deux ou trois heures de suite avec une pause de 10 minutes et cela va être avec les lecteurs Français qui donnent les cours intensifs du français en été. Nous soulignons ici l'avantage qu'on pourrait avoir en ancrant l'utilisation de la langue française dans de vraies

situations de communication. Les apprenants arabes sont obligés ainsi à être exposés à la langue cible tant en compréhension qu'en production. Cet aspect est intéressant pour les étudiants dont la plupart n'ont pas les moyens ou la possibilité d'envisager un séjour linguistique en France ou dans un autre pays francophone.

Par ailleurs, l'Université de Jordanie a commencé à intégrer un nouveau projet de formation hybride et une autre à distance depuis janvier 2015. Quelques cours universitaires dans le programme de la faculté des lettres et la faculté de l'ingénierie sont déjà en ligne et s'apprennent à distance. Ce projet va toucher en septembre prochain (2019/2020) toutes les autres disciplines y inclus le français. Les professeurs vont suivre une formation pour pouvoir utiliser le système et faire des cours en ligne. Les étudiants vont avoir la matière du cours en ligne et vont pouvoir ainsi étudier chez eux, à leur propre rythme tant et quand ils le désirent. La formation à distance ou hybride va être la meilleure solution et alternative pour les étudiants qui ont un emploi et souhaitent le conserver. Dans son ouvrage *La formation à distance*, Jean Lochard définit la formation à distance ainsi :

La formation à distance n'a pas de limites précises. N'importe quelle émission de télévision, n'importe quelle bande vidéo ou quels que soient les logiciels que l'on manipule peuvent être considérés comme de la formation à distance. Dès l'instant où un intervenant ou un professeur n'a pas de participants ou d'élèves devant lui, tout ce que fait le formé dans le cadre d'un parcours est de la formation à distance (Lochard 1995 : 18).

Selon Lochard, le rôle essentiel de la formation à distance est la facilitation. Par contre, cette nouvelle approche pédagogique va être utilisée, surtout au département de français, d'une manière partielle. Des cours comme *Littérature*, *Français de spécialisation* et *Exposé et débat* par exemple vont garder la rencontre habituelle avec les apprenants tout en ayant en ligne des devoirs avec leurs consignes. Alors que dans d'autres cours, comme *Expression écrite*, à côté du travail désigné en ligne, le professeur va organiser des rencontres hebdomadaires ou mensuelles avec ses étudiants pour analyser régulièrement leur progrès. En 2018, le cours *Expression écrite (niveau avancé)* s'est transformée en un cours hybride. Par hybride nous entendons des séances présentielles et d'autres à distance. L'équipe d'animation du *Profweb* –un webinaire crée en avril 2014– définit le cours hybride ainsi:

La classe hybride allie environnements numériques d'apprentissage, visioconférence, réseaux sociaux et outils de télécollaboration. Elle offre un espace pédagogique qui multiplie les modes d'interactions et de partage, que ce soit en mode synchrone

(échanges simultanés) ou asynchrone (échanges non simultanés) (Profweb 2014 : en ligne).

La classe hybride au sein de notre Université est devenue un cours qui comporte en général 5 à 6 séances à distance, intercalées avec des séances en classe. Les séances à distance sont présentées sous forme de capsules vidéo, d'exercices et de lectures complétant la matière normalement vue en classe. De cette façon, les étudiants peuvent, selon leur horaire, compléter les exercices, explorer le matériel mis à leur disposition et visionner les capsules et de faire le devoir demandé par le professeur. Ceci requiert de la part de l'enseignant le recours à une démarche délibérée visant à réviser la structure, les activités pédagogiques et la répartition des heures en présence et en ligne.

La formation à distance ou celle hybride comme une pratique innovante de l'enseignement peut se révéler pratique et efficace surtout pour les étudiants employés ou ceux qui habitent loin géographiquement de l'Université de Jordanie. Selon l'équipe de Profweb, l'un des avantages notoires de la classe hybride est la participation accrue de plusieurs étudiants qui, autrement, seraient plus introvertis. Le cours hybride permet d'ajouter des modes d'interactions entre étudiants ce qui est un élément fondamental de l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde. Surtout que dans l'enseignement des langues étrangères ou secondes, la timidité freine parfois l'apprentissage. Pourtant, dans cette approche, l'étudiant est seul face à ses cours. Il est sans professeur faisant de démonstration orale ou écrite et sans camarades pour se motiver. En effet, l'absence, que cela soit partiel ou totale, de l'encadrement de l'apprenant pourrait conduire à une mauvaise gestion et à une mauvaise organisation de l'apprentissage. L'échange linguistique avec les autres étudiants ou avec le professeur et l'expression orale sont très nécessaires dans l'apprentissage du français surtout pour un Jordanien qui ne vit pas dans une ambiance francophone. Ainsi, malgré les avantages de la formation à distance et hybride, elle a aussi des inconvénients et des limites lorsqu'on parle de l'enseignement d'une langue étrangère surtout quand il s'agit de l'absence totale du guide tel que signale Lochard (1995 : 23):

La formation à distance peut être l'amorce d'un cursus personnalisé alliant la formation individuelle à la formation en groupe. Quel que soit le domaine d'action, la formation à distance ne résout pas tout. La formation à distance avec les multimédias a ses limites.

Donc, la formation à distance doit être plutôt un complément dans un parcours de formation classique où l'échange et la présence d'un professeur est indispensable. En revanche, la classe inversée exerce un attrait indéniable sur les enseignants qui souhaitent diversifier leurs approches

pédagogiques et tenter de nouvelles expériences avec leurs étudiants. Isabelle Nizet et Florian Meyer – professeures à l’Université de Sherbrooke au Canada – expliquent cette notion d’*inversée* dans leur article « La classe inversée : que peut-elle apporter aux enseignants ? » comme une simple inversion : « d’activités typiques d’un enseignement traditionnel : au lieu d’écouter l’enseignant en classe et de faire ses devoirs seul à la maison, l’élève réalise des apprentissages de manière autonome à l’aide de matériel numérique à la maison et fait des exercices en classe avec l’enseignant » (Nizet et Meyer 2015: en ligne).

Au département de français, l’inversion de la classe était une expérimentation effectuée dans le cadre du cours *Expression écrite (niveau avancé)* en 2018. Cela a consisté à proposer en classe des activités traditionnellement effectuées sans l’aide du professeur. Ce dernier propose des activités qui favorisent l’explicitation et l’utilisation des connaissances acquises dans la démarche d’auto-apprentissage à la maison dans des problèmes à résoudre et des tâches à accomplir. La classe inversée offre ainsi la possibilité de restructurer le temps et l’espace universitaire pour privilégier la communication pédagogique en vue d’un meilleur apprentissage.

Or, nous avons remarqué que les étudiants ne sont pas tous prêts à adopter une posture plus active en classe et à la maison. Il sera nécessaire donc dans ce cas d’apprendre aux étudiants à devenir plus autonomes. C’est pourquoi nous pouvons concevoir que l’évaluation des besoins des apprenants en milieu universitaire reste difficile à établir et à être exprimé clairement une fois pour toute en début d’apprentissage de la nouvelle langue. C’est dû au fait que ces besoins évoluent au cours même du processus d’apprentissage.

6. Conclusion

Il est évident que la technologie et les nouvelles pratiques techniques utilisées dans la didactique des langues, en général, et du français, en particulier, a fait évoluer la réflexion sur l’enseignement et l’apprentissage. Pourtant, il n’en est pas moins vrai que ces outils et ces pratiques innovantes de l’enseignement font également apparaître les limites de la machine. L’utilisation de l’audio-visualisation permet par exemple l’acquisition de certaines compétences. Cela promet l’interactivité et la rend possible. Or, même si l’autonomie de l’étudiant dans le processus de l’acquisition des connaissances est prioritaire et le fait qu’il faut qu’il devienne un partenaire à part entière dans le processus de l’apprentissage d’une langue, la présence d’un animateur (professeur) en classe paraît aussi importante au niveau culturel surtout pour un arabophone. La mission du professeur ne se limite pas au fait de transmettre des savoirs linguistiques. L’enseignant doit assumer d’autres

responsabilités selon Byram, Gribkova et Starkey. Ces derniers confirment que l'enseignant de la langue doit assumer une figure qui consiste à : « faire naître des capacités, des points de vue et une prise de conscience tout autant que la simple transmission d'un savoir sur une culture ou un pays donné » (Byram, Gribkova et Starkey 2002 : 15). De plus, l'enseignant est vu par l'apprenant comme : « le relais nécessaire, le médiateur privilégié vers cette autre culture, celle dont il enseigne la langue et vers la sienne propre, celle dont l'enseignant lui-même est issu » (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2004 : 11). N'oublions donc pas que c'est le professeur qui introduit des textes et des documents dans ses cours favorisant l'interculturel. C'est le professeur donc qui favorise le respect de la différence culturelle et la différence entre les personnes.

Sur le plan de la compréhension et l'appréhension des documents, c'est également le professeur qui oriente les étudiants vers les éléments-clefs; ceux qu'il ne doit pas rater afin d'avoir une compréhension minimale du document entendu, vu ou dit oralement. Il peut ainsi attirer l'attention de ses apprenants sur ce qui n'a pas été perçu et ce faisant l'impliquer davantage. Il organise des situations d'enseignement-apprentissage, conçoit et fait évoluer des dispositifs de différenciation entre les étudiants. Dans le fond, la présence du professeur est une manière de faciliter l'apprentissage et de maintenir continuellement l'attention, la curiosité et la motivation de l'apprenant.

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Motion Verbs of Manner in *FrameNet*:

A Comparison between Persian and English

Zolfa Imani and Rezvan Motavallian

This study aims to comparatively investigate the semantic frames of motion verbs in Persian and English within the framework of the frame semantics theory (Fillmore 1977; 1982; 1985). As far as motion verbs are concerned, Manner is considered as one of the motion components expressed by either the verb or any element other than the verb. In English – a satellite-framed language (Talmy 2000b) – Manner is shown by motion verbs, whereas in Persian it is typically indicated by non-verbal elements, although there are also some verbs via which Manner is encoded. Within this study, thirty English verbs of manner were selected from among the ones Levin (1993) has introduced and then the verbs were translated into Persian and looked up through the Persian Corpus of Bijankhan to achieve their contexts of use. Next, *FrameNet* was asked for the semantic frame each verb evoked. Thereafter, comparing the semantic frames in the two languages, it was revealed that not every verb of manner does exist as a Lexical Unit in *FrameNet*. Likewise, not for every verb was a specified semantic frame either. Moreover, the frames for some other verbs have been defined in such a way that they cannot semantically distinguish those verbs from each other, whereas such distinctions are prominent in both manner verbs and the frames they evoke especially in Persian.

1. Introduction

Frame semantics is a theory that describes events, relations, objects or participants involved in the events. Fillmore (1977, 1982, 1985) introduced the theory the fundamental building blocks of which are such concepts as semantic frame, frame elements, as well as frame-frame relations. *FrameNet*, hereafter FN, has been founded on the basis of the frame semantics theory. The main idea behind FN is to perceive the semantic aspect of words based on the frame semantics theory. For example, the concept of cooking contains such concepts as cook, food, dish as well as the source of heating (<http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu>). FN discusses each lexical unit, that is to say each entry along with its frame, and annotates them, as a result of which the semantic and syntactic valences of the lexical units are described. For instance, Motion Frame points out a situation in which Theme moves

from Source, passes through a Path and arrives at a Goal (Petrucci 1997). Sentence 1. illustrates a lexical unit in Motion Frame:

1. “The swarm went away to the end of the hall.”

Figure Move Path Goal Ground

In 1., “went” is considered as a lexical unit in Motion Frame. According to Talmy (2000b), motion enjoys the following indispensable components: Figure which is an entity that moves; Ground which is an entity with respect to which Figure moves or located; Path which refers to the way that being passed through; and Move which refers to the motion event itself.

Talmy (2000b) also provides us with the following example to show the representation of Figure and Ground:

2. “The pen lay on the table.”

In 2., the noun phrase the pen refers to Figure, whereas the noun phrase the table refers to Ground. The structure of FN for motion verbs is that by inserting the word motion into the Search Box of the website, FN provides users with 4 main entries, namely Frame, as follows: Motion; Motion-directional; Motion-scenario; and Motion-noise.

By Motion-noise, FN means the sound verbs pointing out motion like bang, whirl and rumble, and by Motion-scenario, it means relating two situations to each other like travelling and arriving where travelling from one place leads to arriving at another place. Motion-directional Frame points to the motion verbs having the meaning of direction like climb in which the direction towards which Figure’s moving is upward. And Motion Frame refers to a frame including every verb of motion.

It is worth noting that what Talmy (2000b) called Figure is the same as what FN defines as Theme. However, other components of motion enjoy the same name in the two theories (Fillmore 1985; Talmy 2000b): Path; Source; Goal; and Direction. In addition to what Talmy (2000b) has presented as a theory of motion event, he has also provided a classification, namely typology, in which the languages are considered as either verb-framed or satellite-framed. His classification is based upon the fact that how such components as Path and Manner are presented in sentences. Additional information relevant to the classification will be elaborated on in section 5.

As the focus of this study is on motion verbs of manner, the following section would provide a brief description on the works which have been conducted so far around the motion verbs in Persian.

1.1. Review of the Literature

From among the works carried out on motion verbs in Persian, the most outstanding of which that can be referred to are Seyedan (2019), Eslamipour and Sharafzadeh (2018), Shahhoseini *et al.* (2017), Akhavan *et al.* (2017), Mesgarkhooei (2014), Hamedei Shirvan and Sharifi (2013), Azkia (2012), Feizabadi and Pado (2012), Babai (2011), Golfam *et al.* (2012), as well as Amouzadeh and Soltani (2011).

It is worth noting that none of the abovementioned works have studied motion verbs with respect to frame semantics theory. However, there is one work recently conducted within the framework of the theory in which two verbs in Persian such as touring and traveling were examined. In the work, the semantic frames of the two verbs were studied so that the principles governing FN would be determined for developing an FN in Persian (Safari and Rahmatinejad 2018).

1.2. Statement of the problem and structure of the study

The aim of this study is to realize whether the semantic frames of the motion verbs of manner in English and Persian are the same or different. Consequently, the research question can be raised along these lines: What peculiarities do the semantic frames of the verbs of manner exhibit in Persian and English?

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: section 2 elaborates on the method through which the data have been collected and analyzed. In section 3, the data including manner verbs in the two languages in question as well as their semantic frames extracted from FN would be tabulated. Section 4 discusses the verbs features and the aspects making them different from each other. And as a final point in section 5, the concluding remarks will be described.

2. Method

First of all, the class of manner verbs introduced by Levin (1993) was checked and then, 30 verbs were selected from among them. Next, consulting one of the most reliable and practical bilingual English to Persian dictionary (Haghshenas *et al.*, 2002), the Persian equivalents of the manner verbs were obtained. Then, each Persian equivalent was inserted into the Search box of the Persian Corpus of Bijankhan¹ to access its linguistic context. The corpus is a set of Persian texts including over 2 million and 600 thousand words, which have been labelled by 550 types of POS labels. It also comprises over

¹ <http://corpora.phil.hhu.de/bonito/>

4300 topical tags such as political, historical, social as well as artistic ones. In order to extract the texts related to the motion verbs, they were typed in the Search Box of the corpus, as a result of clicking the OK button of which, a large number of sentences were presented. Afterwards, the selected English verbs were searched through FN, asking for the relevant semantic frames in a way that firstly the verb was typed in the Search Box of FN website and secondly by clicking the SEARCH button, the relevant semantic frames were exhibited in a rectangular box including 5 different items as Lexical Unit, Frame, Lexical Unit Status, Lexical Entry Report as well as Annotation Report. Under the Lexical Unit item, the grammatical categories relevant to the verb are shown and under the Frame item, a number of the semantic frame(s) belonging to the verb are revealed. The items called Frame can be clicked for additional information relevant to that Frame. For example, for the verb glide, there is only one Lexical Unit, which is the verb itself and only one frame which is Motion, whereas for a verb like swing, FrameNet has defined 11 Lexical Units, one of which is swing as a noun and the others of which are swing as a verb. Moreover, it has determined 11 semantic frames, each of which belongs to one Lexical Unit. Indeed, the number of Lexical Units equals the number of the Frames. Each semantic frame was written down exactly in front of its related verb so that they could be referred to easily at the stage of making comparison and analysis. It is worth noting that for some verbs only one semantic frame was defined, whereas for some others, more than one was determined. Interestingly, there were some verbs for which neither Lexical Units nor semantic frames did exist in FN.

The English verbs of manner along with their semantic frames and their Persian equivalents are tabulated in the following section.

3. Results

In this section, the 30 motion verbs of manner in English as well as their relevant semantic frames are tabulated. Table 1. shows the English verbs of manner along with the semantic frames FN has defined for them and Table 2. the Persian equivalents of each English manner verb; the Persian verbs are in the infinitive form (marked by final *-æn*). The next section will present the explanations relevant to the two abovementioned tables.

<i>Manner Verb</i>	<i>Semantic Frames</i>	<i>Manner Verb</i>	<i>Semantic Frames</i>	<i>Manner Verb</i>	<i>Semantic Frames</i>
“run”	Fluidic-motion; Self-motion; Path-shape	“float”	Motion	“twirl”	Moving-in-place; Cause-to-move-in-place
“rotate”	Moving-in-place	“glide”	Motion	“stalk”	Self-motion
“dance”	Self-motion	“crawl”	Self-motion	“amble”	Self-motion
“jump”	Self-motion; Change-position-on-a-scale	“swing”	Motion; Self-motion; Moving-in-place; Change-direction; Path-shape; Change-position-on-a-scale	“scud”	—
“bounce”	—	“twist”	Path-shape; Go-into-shape	“spin”	
“tumble”	Change-position-on-a-scale	“jog”	Self-motion	“push”	Cause-motion

“roll”	Cause-motion; Moving-in-place; Cause-to-move-in-place; Motion; Mass-motion	“lope”	Self-motion	“pull”	Cause-motion
“blunder”	—	“swagger”	Self-motion	“throw”	Cause-motion
“slide”	Motion; Change-position-on-a-scale Cause-motion	“drift”	Motion	“rush”	Fluidic-motion; Self-motion
“stumble”	Self-motion	“whirl”	Motion-noise	“fluctuate”	Change-position-on-a-scale

Table 1. Semantic frames of English verbs of manner

<i>Manner Verb</i>	<i>Persian Equivalent</i>	<i>Manner Verb</i>	<i>Persian Equivalent</i>	<i>Manner Verb</i>	<i>Persian Equivalent</i>
“run”	<i>davidan</i>	“float”	<i>šenavar budan</i>	“twirl”	<i>čarxāndan</i>
“rotate”	<i>čarxidan</i>	“glide”	<i>xarāmidan</i>	“stalk”	<i>bā ehtiyāt raftan</i>
“dance”	<i>raqsidan</i>	crawl	<i>xazidan</i>	“amble”	<i>āheste qadam zadan</i>
“jump”	<i>paridan</i>	“swing”	<i>navasān kardan</i>	“scud”	<i>tond rāh raftan</i>
“bounce”	<i>jahidan</i>	“twist”	<i>tābidan</i>	“spin”	<i>dor-e xod čarxidan</i>
“tumble”	<i>laqzidan</i>	“jog”	<i>yurtme raftan</i>	“push”	<i>hol dādan</i>
“roll”	<i>qaltidan</i>	“lope”	<i>jast-o xiz kardan</i>	“pull”	<i>kešidan</i>
“blunder”	<i>bā telo telo xordan</i> <i>rāh raftan</i>	“swagger”	<i>bā takabor rāh raftan</i>	“throw”	<i>partāb kardan</i>
“slide”	<i>sor xordan</i>	“drift”	<i>bi maqsad raftan</i>	“rush”	<i>hamle kardan</i>
“stumble”	<i>sekandari xordan</i>	“whirl”	<i>čarxidan</i>	“fluctuate”	<i>navasān kardan</i>

Table 2. English verbs of manner and their Persian equivalents

4. Discussion

In this section, at the outset, Talmy's typology and the criterion he has applied to classify the languages would be introduced. Accordingly, languages throughout the world are classified into two groups as verb-framed and satellite-framed languages. The criterion for such classification refers to the way the two components of motion, that is to say Path and Manner, are encoded on the verb. In other words, according to Talmy, a motion event consists of four major components, namely Figure, Ground, Path and the fact of Motion along with two minor components that is to say Manner and Cause. Figure which is a moving object moves along or towards another object which is Ground through a way called Path. The overall phenomenon is determined by the fact of Motion, typically shown by motion verbs. It is worth noting that from among the six components mentioned earlier, it is Path which is considered the typologically distinctive criterion for classifying the languages of the world. As he stated, on the basis of encoding Path, the languages can be divided into verb-framed and satellite-framed languages. Such a classification has led Talmy to introduce the lexicalization patterns to the linguistics society. Accordingly, verb-framed languages are those which encode Path on the verbs, whereas satellite-framed languages are those which encode the same component on any element other than the verbs. In other words, verb-framed languages are known as Path verb languages while satellite-framed languages are known as Manner verb languages. Indeed, it is the Manner which is encoded by the verbs in satellite-framed languages. Based on what Talmy (2000) provides us with about the dichotomous typology of languages, the English language belongs to satellite-framed languages group while a language like Spanish have its place within verb-framed languages category. Examples 3. and 4. depict the motion components as well as the distinction between English and Spanish:

3. "The bottle floated out." [English]

4. *La botella salio de la cueva.* [Spanish]

the bottle move-out from the cave

"The bottle exited from the cave, floating."

It should be said that when it is stated that English is considered a satellite-framed language, it does not mean no path verbs may be observed in it, but few path verbs does exist such as rise, fall, crash, climb, ascend, descend, enter, and exit. Despite having such path verbs, English speakers utilize particles or prepositions to show Path, as indicated by example 3. in which the path of motion is specified through the adverb out. By contrast, in Spanish, a verb-framed language, Path is encoded on

the main verb, as indicated in 4. where the verb *salio* comprises both the fact of motion and the path of it: move + out.

As a further example, sentence 5. can be referred to in which Path is expressed by preposition, whereas Manner is stated by the verb:

5. “He ran into the park.”

In 5., the fact of motion together with the manner of motion is encoded by the verb *run*, whereas the path of motion is encoded by *into*.

Additional point to be mentioned refers to what proposed by Slobin (2004) about the binary typology advocated by Talmy (2000). As Slobin argues, the Talmy’s classification fails to cover languages throughout the world since there are some languages which share the features of both verb-framed and satellite-framed languages while belonging to neither. For the same reason, Slobin (2004) proposes a third type, namely equipollently-framed languages category including Mandarin Chinese and Thai, as two examples.

As for the Persian language which is the focus of this study, it ought to be mentioned that based on what scholars have investigated in recent years, the language could be placed somewhere in between. As Hamedī Shirvan and Sharifi (2014) state, Talmy’s binary typology does not hold true for Persian as the language enjoys the features of both. Thus, it cannot be claimed that Persian merely belongs to either of them. They also believe that the third type proposed by Slobin (2004) is not compatible with Persian either. Due to this, the typology should have been defined as a continuum, as Persian shares some features with the languages of the two categories. Indeed, according to Hamedī Shirvan and Sharifi (2014), if the dichotomous classification suggested by Talmy is assumed as a continuum on one side of which verb-framed languages and on the other side of which satellite-framed languages are placed, the middle position of the continuum will be occupied by Persian, as there are some verbs like *raqsidan* “dance,” and *čarxidān* “rotate” in which Manner is encoded on the verbs, whereas in such verbs as *oftadan* “fall” it is Path which is encoded by the verb.

In the Persian language, Manner can be expressed by both verbal and non-verbal elements. Manner is shown by verbal elements in such verbs as *čarxidān* “rotate,” mentioned earlier, *paridan* “jump,” *xazidan* “crawl,” *larzidan* “tremble” which include both Motion and Manner, whereas in such sentences as 6., it is the non-verbal element — the adverb — which shows Manner:

6. ... *gošād gošād rāh miraft*
loose loose way was going
“ ... (He) was striding.”

As for 6., it should be stated that it is the adverb *gošād gošād* “with wide spread legs” which denotes Manner.

In Persian, besides the non-verbal elements which express the manner of motion, there are some motion verbs which show Manner along with Motion and Path. Such verbs are morphologically classified into two groups as follows: simple and complex. The members of the former include such verbs as *čarxidan* “rotate,” *paridan* “jump,” *xazidan* “crawl,” *larzidan* “tremble” while the members of the latter have typically a non-verbal element being affix or noun. The verb *parse zadan* “wander,” for instance, can be referred to the morphological structure of which is consisted of two parts: *pørse* “wandering” and *zadan* “hit.” In fact, the two parts form a complex predicate altogether, where the second part – *zadan* “hit” – functions as a light verb.

The verbs illustrated in Table 1. are those having Manner inside. However, they can be used with the adverbs of manner to indicate the manner of motion as well. For instance, the verb crawl in sentence 7. is considered as a verb of manner which expresses the manner of motion, whereas in sentence 6., the manner of motion is expressed by the adverb of motion:

7. *tāmi be taraf telefon xazid*
Tommie to side telephone crawl (PAST TENSE)
“Tommie crawled towards the phone.”

The number of the adverbs which semantically express Manner is not great in such languages as Persian because in these languages, which are located between verb-framed and satellite-framed groups (Hamedei Shirvan and Sharifi 2014), Manner is often stated via verb, whereas Path is expressed by non-verbal elements or satellites, as Talmy (2000) put forward.

As Table 1. depicts, there are thirty verbs of manner in this study for some of which FN has defined no semantic frame as scud, whereas for some others, it has defined more than one semantic frame like roll from among the proposed frames of which, sometimes one frame and sometimes more than one frame is compatible with the motional aspect of the verb. For example, for run, FN has defined fifteen semantic frames from among which only three are relevant to motion events while others have nothing to do with the motional nature of the verb. Another point to be mentioned refers to the fact that the Persian equivalents of the English verbs of manner are in some cases a

combination of a verb and an element other than the verb which expresses the manner of motion. Such verbs as “drift” and “swagger,” for example, are respectively translated as going with no destination and walking with conceit in both of which Manner is expressed by with no destination and with conceit. Like drift and swagger, a verb such as stalk has a Persian equivalent as walking with caution in which Manner is stated through the adverb with caution. Reviewing the semantic frames of the motion verbs in general and those of manner verbs in particular reveals the fact that the most prominent criterion for determining the frames defined by FN has been the agent that enjoys volition whose subject or doer may be a person or any other animate entity. Thus, the semantic frame for such verbs is defined as Self-motion. In contrast, there are some motion verbs the subject of which lacks volition to move. For such verbs, depending on the verb in terms of transitivity as well as the path which the verb passes through, the semantic frame would be different. For instance, for the verbs “pull” and “push,” what makes Figure to move is an external factor. In other words, Figure by itself cannot move on the Ground but it is moved by an external force which causes it to move. In sentences 8. and 9., He is Figure and the table is Ground, and what has made Figure to move is the force used for the act of pulling or pushing:

8. “He pulled the table.”

9. “He pushed the table.”

As a result, only one frame is there for the two verbs, that is to say Cause-motion.

As for the verbs for which more than one semantic frame has been defined, it can be claimed that it is the different contexts in which motion verbs take a variety of meanings that specify which frame the verb evokes. For the verb “roll,” for example, several semantic frames have been specified from among which merely five frames are relevant to the motion event such as Cause-motion, Moving-in-place, Cause-to-move-in-place, Motion, and Mass-motion. This reveals the fact that the verb roll evokes different frames in different contexts. Indeed, different semantic frames are specified as a result of different meanings that the verbs relevant to the frame show in different contexts. For instance, in Cause-motion Frame, FN states sentence 10. in which Figure is Pat, whereas in Moving-in-place Frame, it states sentence 11. in which Figure is balls:

10. “Pat threw the china at the wall.”

11. “Balls spin on their axis.”

From the examples 10. and 11., it can be concluded that roll as a Lexical Unit evokes several semantic frames in which a variety of verbs such as throw and spin can be used. In other words, one of the frames such Lexical Units as throw and spin evoke are Cause-motion and Moving-in-place Frames which in turn are relevant to a Lexical Unit as roll.

Interestingly, regarding the Persian equivalents of the manner verbs on the one hand and the semantic frames defined by FN on the other, it should be mentioned that the following three verbs in English are translated as *čarxidān* in Persian by which it is meant moving around a constant point or axis. Such movement can take place by Figure itself or by an external force making Figure move. If Figure starts rotating, its semantic frame, as was already talked about, must be Self-motion; otherwise, such frames as Moving-in-place and Motion-noise would be appropriate. Nonetheless, for none of the 3 verbs Self-motion has been defined by FN. Therefore, if there is an FN for Persian motion verbs in general and for verbs of manner in particular, for the verb *čarxidān* Self-motion must be defined as well.

Even if the English verb turn is going to be considered as one of the equivalents of *čarxidān*, there is still no Self-motion Frame in the English FN.

In addition to what has been argued, there are also some verbs for which no semantic frame was defined by FN such as scud, bounce, and blunder which point out the manner of motion and are translated as *tond rāh raftan* “to walk fast,” *jahidan* “to jump,” and *bā telo telo xordan rāh raftan* “to walk in an unsteady manner; to stagger.” Except for the verb *jahidan*, the other verbs express Manner with the help of such adverbs as *tond* “fast” and *bā telo telo xordan* “in an unsteady manner.”

Another point to mention refers to the fact that some semantic frames for the motion verbs cannot distinguish the verbs from each other. For instance, for such verbs as pull, push, and throw, the relevant semantic frame defined by FN is Cause-motion, which does not necessarily exhibit in what way the verbs are semantically different. Indeed, the verbs “pull” and “push” show opposite directions relative to each other, whereas the verb “throw,” besides the fact that its Direction is forward, its Path lacks a straight pathway, unlike “pull” and “push.” Moreover, the force making an object be thrown is always so great that the object can reach its Goal. However, none of such features were proposed by FN in the semantic frames of the 3 aforementioned verbs. Apart from the verbs of manner, FN has defined no semantic frames for Path verbs in English, the argumentation about which is beyond the scope of this study. It is the topic of another article by the same authors which will be published in the near future.

5. Conclusion

Discussing motion verbs have always been the focus of study on behalf of linguists and the interested in typology. In Persian, the subject has been worked on from a variety of perspectives especially cognitive linguistics. In the current paper, manner verbs of motion were concentrated on within the field of frame semantics theory in general and the FrameNet in particular. Focusing on these verbs raised a question based on which the authors attempted to determine the semantic frames relevant to the verbs in both Persian and English. By selecting 30 verbs of manner in English and finding their Persian equivalents in Persian on the one hand, as well as asking FrameNet for the semantic frames of the verbs on the other hand, the authors concluded that there are some empty places for the semantic frames of some verbs of manner in English such as “scud,” “bounce,” and “blunder” since *FrameNet* has defined no frame relevant to them. Furthermore, there are also some verbs of manner for which the proposed semantic frames are the same while the verbs are by nature different. The verbs such as “pull,” “push” and “throw” are referred to by way of example. Interestingly, such a semantic distinction is more outstanding when the English verbs of manner are translated into Persian, as in their Persian equivalents, Manner is shown by non-verbal elements, as a result of which the semantically distinct frames such verbs in the two languages evoke will be more noticeable.

All in all, the most remarkable distinction among the manner verbs of motion as well as the frames they evoke in both English and Persian refers to 3 differences: First, some manner verbs in English equal motion verb plus a non-verbal element in Persian. In other words, unlike their English counterparts, these Persian equivalents are a combination of a motion verb and a non-verbal element which itself includes the velocity as well as the quality of motion which together shows Manner. Such verbs as “blunder,” “swagger,” “drift,” “scud,” “amble” and “stalk” can be pointed out which, as Table 2 illustrates, are expressed with an adverb showing the manner of motion.

Second, for some manner verbs in English, no semantic frame has been defined by FN while they each evoke a specific frame in the speakers’ minds. Such verbs as “bounce,” “blunder,” and “scud” can be referred to which, as Table 1. depicts, lack semantic frames.

Third, the manner verbs introduced by Levin (1993) and selected for the present study are not the same in evoking the semantic frames, as their semantic aspects and pragmatic usage are totally different. As a result, each of them evokes a frame peculiar to it while FN has specified one single semantic frame for them all. Among such manner verbs, “swagger,” “drift,” “amble” and “stalk” can be pointed out for which FN has defined Self-motion, Motion, Self-motion, and Self-motion Frames respectively, while taking their Persian equivalents into account, it would be more obvious that they

are so different that each will evoke a distinct semantic frame. Consequently, such inadequacies may be helpful to the Persian developers of *FrameNet* in the future.

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The Language of Death and Bare Life:

Revisiting Forugh Farrokhzād's Poetry

Masoud Farahmandfar

Death is a timeless subject which has occupied the minds of human beings throughout their far-reaching history, and scholars and writers have dealt with this subject in their own ways. In contemporary Persian poetry, death has an imposing presence, a good many modernist poets have tried to tame this wild subject in their artistic work, especially the poets who were writing during the period from the 1953 Iranian coup to the very beginning of the 1970s, when a degree of social peace and prosperity began to shine on the whole nation. An influential poet who was active at the first half of this period was Forugh Farrokhzād (1934-1967), who believed that every human being discovers the secret of their individuality in the mirror of their death, and it is in the face of death that they mature.

What [literature] does is plunge into this depth of existence which is neither being nor nothingness.

— Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* (1995: 340)

The imaginary of a proleptic death - death that is in the future but has to be experienced today - is the sight from which thoughtful and concerned people write.

– Homi K. Bhabha (“The Burdened Life: On Migration and the Humanities,”

Nov. 1st, 2018; University of Cambridge)

1. Introduction

One of the amazing intricacies of human existence is that all experiences, even bitter and sad ones, become enjoyable and worthy of attention to readers when transmitted through art; and each artist renders them based on their thoughts and temperament. One such intricacy is death. Death is as old as human creation. For a long time, the problem of human mortality as a complex mystery has preoccupied the human mind and has been the subject of many philosophic, ritualistic and literary studies. Being and remaining unknown, death has caused different reactions from different people in different periods. Four thousand years ago, the Babylonian hero Gilgamesh thought about death. The whole story of *Gilgamesh*, the first known epic of humanity, is about confronting death and thinking

about it. The death of his friend Enkidu made Gilgamesh think about death and mortality, and he went on a quest to find immortality; however, his quest, like that of Orpheus's, did not come to fruition because, to use Lacanian terminology, the realm of the Real is beyond mortal reach, and only a kind of short, transient pleasure, in the form of *jouissance*, can be achieved.

Philippe Aries in *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (1974) offers a historical survey of death as a concept and argues that in the Middle Ages, death was not a terrifying concept but a necessary part of everyone's life cycle and people were not affrighted facing death as much as we are today. Coming to terms with death was a kind of acceptance of the order of nature. The concept of "Dance of Death" was introduced during the Middle Ages, and showed the universality of death and that everyone was equal in the face of death. "In the Middle Ages the ambition was to achieve a 'good death', and practical instruction manuals in the techniques of dying well, the *ars moriendi*, were written to this end" (Noys 2005: 14). For example, Rumi (1207-1273), a noted Persian poet and Sufi mystic, and his disciples saw themselves as the 'children of joy' (*Abnā' al-Sorur*), and they did not deny death; instead, they considered it an escape from the fetters of worldly life. They even say that Rumi ordered Salāh al-Din Zarkub not to let anyone cry and mourn after his death, as was usual then, but to celebrate and perform *Samā'* (a Sufi ceremony). Death was thus present everywhere and it was not an external phenomenon. As a result, there was no fear and anxiety.

Nevertheless, in the eighteenth century, the private and personal nature of death gradually diminished, and death was pulled into a more public atmosphere. What aroused fear was not so much "my death" as the "death of the other." It was as if another's death mattered, and there was a kind of disconnection between the individual and the concept of mortality. In the nineteenth century, when sentimentalism intensified, death enkindled intense emotions in people. No longer was death related to the individual himself but to the public, with a form of pretense and hysterical mourning. "[N]ovelistic episodes as the death of Little Nell in Charles Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) and the death of Little Eva in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)" are telling examples (Abrams and Harpham 2005: 293). In the middle ages, it was not common to imagine a visit to the grave by a family member of the deceased, but in the nineteenth century, these mourning ceremonies became part of culture, and thus the cemetery became part of the public space of each city. In this situation, coming to terms with death is very difficult. Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" shows this change in the perception of death from a personal to a public matter. It also shows that people think death only comes for the other, not them. "This new form of death produced an 'intolerable anxiety,' as we have to live with the knowledge that we are always exposed to mass anonymous death" (Noys 2005: 14).

Such an anxiety, which was created in the modern era and was only exacerbated by two infamous world wars and the ever-present threat of a third nuclear war, exposes life to death and reduces life to what Giorgio Agamben (1942-) in *Homo Sacer* (1998) aptly calls “bare life,” a life reduced to mere survival, an exposed form of just being alive which can be taken at any moment.

The present article argues that the poetry of the famous Iranian poet Forugh Farrokhzād (فروغ فرخزاد, 1934-1967)—an iconoclast and feminine pacemaker whose life tragically came to an end in a car accident—can best be understood and appreciated on the basis of an Agambenian understanding of ‘bare life’.

Forugh’s early poetry reflects her riotous family life; her father was an irascible officer in the army of Reza Shāh who managed his house in a dictatorial manner. She thought marriage would be a way out, so she married in the very first years of high school and then dropped out. However, after a short tumultuous married life, she was violently separated from her husband. That is perhaps the reason behind all the rage in her first published poems. Forugh sent her first poems to the renowned poet Fereydoon Moshiri (1926-2000), who was then in charge of the ‘Poetry Page’ in *Roshanfeker Magazine*. Her early poetry is characterized by a wild Romanticism and a candid sensuality which is narrated, for the very first time in Persian poetry, from a ‘feminine’ perspective.

2. Agamben’s Language of Death and ‘Bare Life’

Death is exclusive to human beings; animals simply perish because they have no consciousness of death and do not think about it. Heidegger believes that the only way we can understand the meaning of our whole existence is to consider our death not a distant possibility but an imminent certainty that may occur at any moment. In other words, we are “beings-towards-death” (Rée 1999: 42). In “Literature and the Right to Death,” in *The Work of Fire*, Maurice Blanchot voices his interesting view that “[d]eath alone allows me to grasp what I want to attain.... Without death, everything would sink into absurdity and nothingness” (Rée 1999: 324). Therefore, thinking about death and mortality is a distinctive aspect of being human. Human existence is defined by death. In the Book of Genesis it is stated that “thou shalt not eat of [the tree of knowledge]; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). To be human is thus to know and to think about death. Death is an intrinsic part of everyman’s life. Since we live in and by language, we should note the relationship between language and death. When we use language, death speaks in us. This is where Agamben’s ideas come to the fore.

There are three figures in the history of Western philosophy that had a permanent and fundamental influence on Agamben’s thought: Aristotle, Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin. The

conceptual framework in which Agamben works is largely taken from Aristotle, and his approach to issues of being, language and death is a complex combination of Heidegger and Benjamin's thoughts. Agamben believes that explaining the link between language and death is not possible without an explanation of the negative.

Human beings use language, but language is neither natural nor internal; it is 'outside,' 'extrinsic,' and must be learned from outside, from others. In other words, language is not owned by us and it does not belong to us. However, human culture has long been defined by its extrinsicness. The history of metaphysics has always recognized the human on the basis of his definite distinction from the animal, and the criterion of this distinction has always been the language (*logos*). In other words, human beings have always been defined as rational animals or, more precisely, animals that can use language. Agamben argues that this understanding of the existence of man, which defines him precisely because of what he lacks, leads to 'negativity' and cracks his existence. Thus, the history of metaphysics is faced with this fact that the most important aspect of our being—that is, language—is always a lack. As a human being, we have no home in language. This, Agamben argues, leads to nihilism. Therefore, nihilism is not a recent phenomenon, and has always been with us.

Giorgio Agamben opens his book *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity* (1991 [1982]) with a passage on the nature of language by Heidegger that reads:

Mortals are they who can experience death as death. Animals cannot do so. But animals cannot speak either. The essential relation between death and language flashes up before us, but remains still unthought. It can, however, beckon us toward the way in which the nature of language draws us into its concern, and so relates us to itself, in case death belongs together with what reaches out for us, touches us. (Agamben 1991: xi)

Agamben ties the faculty for language with the concept of death and goes on to explore this connection, which is indeed related to the problem of the negative: "Just as the animal preserves the truth of sensuous things simply by devouring them, that is, by recognizing them as nothing, so language guards the unspeakable by speaking it, that is, by grasping it in its negativity" (Agamben 1991: 13). Thus, the human becomes the "place-holder" of nothingness (Agamben 1991: xii). The existence of life is incumbent on death; everything that enters life perforce moves towards death. This is the paradox of living and by taking every breath moving nearer to death.

By using language we expose ourselves to death; we live in "an unlocalizable zone of indistinction" between life and death (Agamben 1998: 19). In *Homo Sacer* (1998) Agamben observes that "The Greeks had no single term to express what we mean by the word life" (Agamben 1998: 1).

They distinguished between the term *zoé*, which designated life in its general sense, and *bios*, “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group” (Agamben 1998: 1). In other words, “This distinction corresponded to a fundamental division in the Greeks’ political landscape. For them, ‘simple, natural life’ (*zoé*) was not the affair of the city (*polis*), but instead of the home (*oikos*), while *bios* was the life that concerned the *polis*” (Durantaye 2009: 205). However, it is not always easy to keep the private and public life completely aside; therefore, Agamben adds a third form: bare life (*La nuda vita*), which is neither *bios* nor *zoé*, but an abandoned life, reduced to its unspeakable violence, a life divested of its lifeness.

Bare life is tied to sovereignty and hence ‘thanatopolitical’: “If there is a line in every modern state marking the point at which the decision on life becomes a decision on death, and biopolitics can turn into thanatopolitics, this line no longer appears today as a stable border” (Agamben 1998: 122). Forugh’s poetry dramatizes this experience of being exposed to bare life in modern culture and reveals the “link between this exposure to death and our exposure to power” (Noys 2005: 6). Her poetry shows the “conceptual importance of the maintenance of a suspensive state between being and not-being” (Mills 2008: 38).

3. Forugh: Poetic Rebellion of a Captive

Agamben “rejects the simple opposition and hierarchy of philosophy and poetry that has structured Western thought at least since Plato. [...] Ultimately, he argues for a kind of synthesis of poetry and philosophy, which gives rise to an understanding of ‘critique’ as a particular way of knowing” (Mills 2008: 40-1). Here stands Forugh’s poetry and her fresh experiments with language. Her poems offer not only philosophical insights but also social critiques. Her poetic language has a unique relationship with the truth. She firmly believed that a poet’s task is not to cover things conservatively but to speak truth (truth in Greek philosophy is *Aletheia*, meaning “to uncover” or “to reveal”). Her documentary *The House Is Black* (1962) revealed for the first time the plights of Iranian lepers to the whole nation, those who “have neither the will to live nor the will to die” (Agamben 1998: 138.)

The first phase of Farrokhzād’s poetry, according to Shafi’i-Kadkani (1939-), coincided with the period that began with the 1953 Iranian coup d’état and lasted until the years 1961-1962. The government places certain restrictions upon artistic expression; therefore, the voice we hear in the poetry of this period is the voice of social symbolism, which is visible in Forugh’s early poems such as *The Captive* (1955), *The Wall* (1956) and *Rebellion* (1958). The issues of death and despair dominate the poetry of this period, and poets often think about death. These were all due to the defeat of the National Front after the August 1953 Coup (Shafi’i-Kadkani 2008: 60-62). As a result of the

government's thanatopolitics, the whole nation became exposed to a feeling of disillusionment as to the present condition and uncertainty as to the future. Artists turned to themselves and tried a more encoded manner of communication. In the case of female artists, the situation was even worse; they had to resist patriarchal cultural assumptions too:

Her poetry reveals the problems of a modern Iranian woman with all her conflicts, painful oscillations, and contradictions. It enriches the world of Persian poetry with its depiction of the tension and frequent paralysis touching the lives of these women who seek self-expression and social options in a culture not entirely accustomed to them. It explores the vulnerability of a woman who rejects unreflective conformity with the past and yet suffers from uncertainties about the future. (Milani, quoted in Brookshaw and Rahimieh 2010: 4-5)

Here the female body becomes politicized, or as Agamben puts it, “the individual as a simple living body become what is at stake in a society's political strategies” (1998: 3). The sovereign power produces a political body, and the poet, representing Iranian women, defies such power operations and in *The Captive* says: “I am tired and disgusted with my body,”¹ a body that was subject to “fear, suffocation and abject existence” (Farrokhzād, in Katouzian 2010: 15). This is in line with the Agambenian idea of ‘inclusive exclusion:’ “There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion” (Agamben 1998: 8). As a nonconformist female artist, Forugh is excluded, an *extraneus*, and yet is included in the shared destiny of the whole nation and hence subject to “the pure force of the law” (Agamben 1998: 27). Forugh's poems occupy a liminal space, and compellingly display how femininity can take the form of a “threshold of indiscernibility between exteriority and interiority, which the juridical order can therefore neither exclude nor include, neither forbid nor permit” (Agamben 1998: 136-137).

The marginal space of Forugh's poetry is indeed the peripheral space of femininity in a male-dominated society of her time, where women “are told nothing but tales of female lustfulness / That they are created to give men pleasure” (Farrokhzād 2014: 37); where women are “locked in domestic cages” and have forgotten “any hope for love” (Farrokhzād 2014: 54). This is the reason why the poet repeatedly asks death to “come over and give [her] lips and eternal kiss”:

¹ آه خدا چگونه تو را گویم / کز جسم خویش خسته و بیزار (translation by the author).

مرگ من روزی فرا خواهد رسید
 در بهاری روشن از امواج نور،
 در زمستانی غبارآلود و دور
 یا خزانی خالی از فریاد و شور،
 مرگ من روزی فرا خواهد رسید
 روزی از این تلخ و شیرین روزه
 روز پوچی همچو روزان دگر
 سایه‌ای ز امروزها، دیروزها،
 ناگهان خوابی مرا خواهد ربود
 من تهی خواهم شد از فریاد درد.
 (Farrokhzād 2014: 215)

Death will come to me someday,
 One day in spring, bright and lovely,
 One winter day, dusty, distant,
 One empty autumn day, devoid of joy.
 My death will come someday to me
 One bittersweet day, like all my days
 One hollow day like yesterday,
 In shadow of today or of tomorrow.
 Suddenly sleep will creep over me,
 And I will become empty of all painful cries.²

Forugh used poetry as a vent for her ideas about social injustice towards women which has robbed women of life zest: “This is a pain that has to be cured / Lest death might intervene” (Farrokhzād 2014: 56). Forugh was the first poet to publicly attempt to erase patriarchal views and values from Persian poetry. Her social outlook was shaped by her feminine emotions, and her artistic rebellion was indeed an uprising against violence and discrimination towards women.

The next phase of Forugh’s poetry, from 1961 up until her untimely death in 1967, was formed, according to Kadkani (Shafi’i-Kadkani 2008: 64), in a period which witnessed the rise of armed struggles against the Shah and his government. It is when the breakdown of traditional interests becomes more pronounced, and the frustration of the poets gains an existential orientation. Many a great writer of this period seeks to examine the meanings attached to the concept of death. Therefore, one dominant theme in the poems of Mehdi Akhavān Sāless (1929-1990), Ahmad Shāmlu (1925-2000), and Forugh Farrokhzād is death and despair—the ‘bare life.’

² Translation by the author.

Akhavān's poem "Inscription," as well as his famous "Winter," illustrates the poet's bleak view of life. He paints a cold world, a world full of darkness in which people are not able to communicate; this dark image of life and the themes of defeat and disappointment are almost always evident in Akhavān's poetry. Thus, the feeling of defeat in understanding the world, the belief in difficulties of life, compels the poet to present an unpleasant image of life: "The lover knows love / So do I the life / I have seen its ups and downs / Fie on it / And whatever meaning it may have" (Akhavān 2015: 233).³

Forugh's view of life and her sense of frustration are to some extent close to the viewpoint of Akhavān. Apart from many an emotional failure she suffered in her youth, Forugh found herself caught up in a sociopolitical space filled with anxiety and absurdity, to the point that she saw everything in a halo of death: "Believe me, I am not alive / I am so dead that nothing else proves my death" (Farrokhzād, 99). Thus emerges 'bare life,' when the borderline between life and death blurs. "In the notion of bare life the interlacing of politics and life has become so tight" that it has affected aspects as diverse as biological life, sexuality, death, etc. (Agamben 1998: 120). This 'politicization of life' is an implicit signifier of totalitarianism, "marking the point at which the decision on life becomes a decision on death, and biopolitics can turn into thanatopolitics" (Agamben 1998: 122). In *Another Birth* (1963) she sees oppressive power relations in "[her] little night [which] is filled with fear of destruction" and asks her readers to harken to the "blasts of darkness" (Farrokhzād 2014: 34). She feels like a captive who "[f]rom the impasse of darkness / From the morose morass of this world / [releases her] needful cries" (Farrokhzād 2014: 37) In a letter, Forugh writes: "I don't know what it means to arrive, but it must be an end towards which the whole of my being moves" (Katouzian 2010: 15). Sometimes Farrokhzād seems to accept death as a way of escaping from deceit and duplicity:

می‌سوزم از این دورویی و نیرنگ
/ یکرنگی کودکانه می‌خواهم،
ای مرگ از آن لبان خاموش
/ یک بوسه جاودانه می‌خواهم.
(Farrokhzād 2014 : 67)

I'm burning from this duplicity,
I want a kind of childish honesty;
O death! From thy sweet lips,

³ (translation by the author) عشق را عاشق شناسد، زندگی را من / من که عمری دیده‌ام پایین و بالایش / که تف بر صورتش، لعنت به معنایش

I want an eternal kiss!⁴

4. Conclusion

Death is one of the most important facts of human life, and thinking about death leads to fundamental questions concerning the concept of life and its meaning. Given the everlasting presence of death in all literature, it can be said that it is *in* language that death exists. Using language is the sign of pain; it guards the unspeakable. There is a negativity that dwells inside the meaning, the *Meinung*. The meaning defies and defers expression. Moreover, when we use language in society, we find a political existence. Our bare life is now politicized; *zoé* is replaced by *polis*, where power dominates. The concept of ‘bare life’ or life devoid of value applies to people who have lost their individuality in the thanatopolitical power operations of the ruling regime. Agamben believes that the production of a thanatopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power. Yet Forugh believed that every human being discovers the secret of their individuality in the mirror of their death. It is in the face of death that they mature. Thinking about the meaning of life and death may reduce the fear of dying and enable us to speak truth to power.

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⁴ Translation by the author.

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Hindu Theodicy and Jana Gopāla

David N. Lorenzen

In the view of Max Weber, a theodicy refers to the way in which different religions represent how what happens to persons after death is determined by their actions in their present lives. The standard Hindu theodicy claims that our behaviour in this and previous lives leads to a better or worse rebirth. This essay discusses how this Hindu theodicy was modified by religious thinkers who wished to accommodate this system to a more egalitarian and fluid social system through the infusion and elevation of the concept of religious devotion or bhakti. The main example used is the work of a seventeenth-century Hindu poet named Jana Gopāla. His views are compared to those of earlier Hindu texts and to those of an eighteenth century Italian Christian missionary in India.

It's modern civilization, this godless civilization, that makes men attach such importance to their own skins. ... Only the soul is immortal, alas! But what does the soul count for now? One's skin is the only thing that counts. ... Men no longer fight for honor, freedom and justice. They fight for their skins, their loathsome skins.

Curzio Malaparte, *The Skin*: 130.

1. Introduction

One of the chief aims of any religion is to provide a blueprint of how society should be organized in order to avoid conflict between individuals and groups within society and to provide the solidarity necessary to protect society and the religion itself from outside rivals and enemies.¹ In complex

¹ I would like to thank Purushottam Agrawal, Monika Horstmann, John S. Hawley and Pinuccia Caracchi for their critical comments and help with some of the material presented in this paper. Sanskrit and Hindi words in Roman transcription use the standard scholarly method for Sanskrit including diacritics with the following exceptions. The unaspirated mute palatal is written as “ch,” and the related aspirate as “chh.” Also words now commonly used in English like Krishna, Vishnu, Purana, Vaishnava, Shaiva, and Hindu are given their common English spellings. Proper names in the Hindi texts of Jana Gopāla often have quite different (and inconsistent) forms and spellings from the same names in Sanskrit texts, but I have Sanskritized the names to make them easier to recognize. The *Brāhmaṇa varṇa* is written as “Brahmin,” the god *Brahmā* as “Brahma,” and *Brahman* (ground of being) as “Brahman.”

societies that embody unequal distributions of wealth and power, people regularly seek ways to justify or to compensate for this inequality and the associated sufferings and injustices. Religions do this by claiming that after our deaths we will receive rewards and punishments for the good and bad behavior and the good and bad fortunes experienced in our present lives. The sets of ideas that embody this claim are called “theodicies.” Without these promises of just rewards and just punishments after death, most religions argue, there is little incentive for people to behave in an honest and moral way. Without these promises, life would be ruled only by the principle that the big fish eat the smaller fish, what Sanskrit texts call *matsya-nyāya*, or by the rule that only one’s own skin counts, as in the above quote from Malaparte’s novel.

In a text written in 1913, the sociologist Max Weber posited the existence of three main ideal types of theodicies: the theodicy that seeks justification for worldly suffering by rebirth in a different body, the theodicy that seeks justification in a future victory of one’s descendants, and the theodicy that seeks justification in an existence in heaven or hell after death. Weber (1967: 275-76) wrote:²

One can explain suffering and injustice by referring to individual sin committed in a former life (the migration of souls), to the guilt of ancestors, which is avenged down to the third and fourth generation, or — the most principled — to the wickedness of all creatures *per se*. As compensatory promises, one can refer to hopes of the individual for a better life in the future in this world (transmigration of souls) or to hopes for the successors (Messianic realm), or to a better life in the hereafter (paradise).

These three types of theodicy respectively correspond, in Weber’s view, mainly to, first, the religions native to India (those of the Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs) that offer future rewards and punishments in a rebirth in a new body; second, the religion of the Jews that offers future rewards and punishments for the community on earth; and, third, the religions of the Christians and Muslims that offer future rewards and punishments for each person in heaven and hell.

All these religions have, of course, long been present in South Asia and all of them have had to contend with, and adapt to, the dominant social norms of South Asia. From late Vedic times, these dominant social norms have been those of the Hindus that are centered on the hierarchical social institution labeled *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the duties assigned to one’s *varṇa* or hereditary rank and stage in life (*āśrama*). For Hindus, a future rebirth in a better body depends on our past actions, our karma,

² Very few recent scholars of South Asia have made much use of the theodicy concept and Weber’s discussion of it. One of the few to do so is Lawrence Babb 1983: 163-81.

our each having followed a moral life appropriate to our *varṇa*. The concepts and practices associated with *varṇāśrama-dharma* changed substantially over the centuries, but three basic ideas remained constant: first, that society was and should be organized in a hierarchy; second, that the parts of the hierarchy were each associated with certain occupations; and, third, that one's place in the hierarchy was determined by blood, by hereditary descent.

The present essay discusses some of the ways in which some texts and sects of Hindu religion attempted to incorporate and mollify persons of lower social rank by introducing important changes in the way that the links between the social hierarchy of *varṇāśrama-dharma* and the theodicy of rebirth were conceptualized. The discussion will highlight the views of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and of the seventeenth-century Dādū Panthī author Jana Gopāla. The discussion will end with a brief look at the critique of the Hindu theodicy made by the eighteenth-century Catholic missionary Giuseppe Maria da Gargnano in his Hindustani “Dialogue between and Christian and a Hindu about Religion” and his presentation of the Christian theodicy that he claims tells the truth about what happens to us after death.

One of the earliest theodicies of Hindu tradition appears in the early *Chhāndogya-upaniṣad*.³ In it, different sorts of human souls are said to take one of two different paths after death. The wise sages who meditate on faith and austerity (*śraddhā tapa ity upāsate*) take a path that leads to Brahman and the gods. Those who practice sacrifices and do good works (and also, apparently, those who behave badly) take the path that leads to the world of the fathers (*pitṛ-loka*). The former do not return to earth, the latter do return and take birth again in different *varṇas* according to their behavior in their former lives.

Closer to early modern and modern Hindu ideas about what happens to us after death is the theodicy found in pre-modern Dharma-śāstra texts such as the *Mānava-dharma-śāstra*. This text describes in some detail how a person who behaves in a moral fashion and follows the customs of his *varṇa*, his social and occupational class, will, through the accumulation of positive karma, eventually be reborn as a male Brahmin. In this Brahmin body, he then has the possibility of a salvation that is usually described as a total escape from the cycle of rebirth: either a life with God in heaven or personal dissolution into the ground of being known as Brahman. If a person acts against the approved social norms, he will, through his bad karma, be reborn in ever lower circumstances, even as an animal. This theodicy obviously fosters a model of society that is deeply hierarchical, male-centered, and permits

³ See *Chhāndogya-upaniṣad* 4.15.2 and 5.10.1-7. The second of the two earliest Upanishads, the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-upaniṣad* 6.2.2 also mentions these two paths, although in less detail.

very little occupational mobility. It assumes that Brahmins and other upper-caste males are, in some innate sense, superior to all women regardless of their castes and to all men from lower castes. Not surprisingly, this theodicy has never been fully acceptable to many of these persons. The traditional theodicies of Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikh religion do not promote the idea of reward and punishment via caste identity, but they do also rely on a similar idea of rebirth in higher or lower bodies that is determined by karma in order to foster the norms of proper social behavior.

One obstacle to convincing people to accept this idea of rebirths determined by karma, as Lawrence Babb (1983) has ably discussed, is that in everyday life Hindu persons (and presumably also Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists) generally prefer to attribute their own (and possibly others') personal misfortunes and suffering to the power of arbitrary fate or to the bad actions of other persons rather than to the consequences of the karma associated with their own actions in this life or in past lives. Neither of these explanations (i.e. fate or the evil actions of others) has much directly to do with religion. They have the effect of nullifying the Hindu theodicy by breaking the religious link between karma and rebirth. In other words, in everyday practice the theory of karma and rebirth may not be as influential as its religious proponents would like.

Another factor to consider is the fact that the theodicies that promise rewards and punishments after our death for our behavior in this world are always backed up by more pragmatic policies that aim to lessen the sufferings and injustices that we face in this life *before* we die. A variety of different policies are emphasized in different religions. For instance, in Buddhism there is an emphasis on compassion (*karuṇā*) as a way to alleviate the suffering of others. In Jainism an emphasis is placed on avoiding harm to living creatures (*ahimsā*). Islam emphasizes charity and obedience to the law. Christianity stresses charity and brotherly love.

None of these ideals is absent from Hindu texts, but Hindu texts generally subordinate them to the idea that the power of devotion, or *bhakti*, can lessen, and even short-circuit, the rigid functioning of the law of karma and its link to *varṇāśrama-dharma*. The key text here is, of course the *Bhagavad-gītā* and its advocacy of the path of *bhakti-yoga* combined with righteous, *varṇa*-appropriate action. By means of this “discipline of devotion” to God, the suffering devotee, particularly the female and/or low class devotee, is offered a way to shorten the lengthy series of rebirths and achieve salvation in more direct fashion. Krishna says: “For those who take refuge in Me, ... though they are lowly born, women, *Vaiśyas*, as well as *Śūdras*, they also attain to the highest goal.”⁴

⁴ Verse 9.32 (trans. by Radhakrishna). See also the quite similar passage in the later *Íśvara-gītā* 4.10-11 (2015).

This inherent tension between *bhakti* and the maintenance of the norms of the social and political order becomes more explicit, but also more problematic, in various religious stories of the Hindu Puranas that attempt to argue both that karma determines rebirth in accordance with the parameters of *varṇāśrama-dharma* and that *bhakti* can short-circuit this process. The key text here is the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, a Sanskrit text dedicated to the worship of Vishnu probably written in the Tamil region in the tenth or eleventh century. By the fifteenth century, if not before, the *Bhāgavata* had become the single most important text for Vaishnava religion in both northern and southern India.

2. The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*

The seventeenth-century poet and story-teller Jana Gopāla wrote retellings in Hindi/Braj of three *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* stories: those of Dhruva, Prahlāda, Bharata.⁵ Two of these stories reinforce the idea of the relentless operation of karma from one life to the next through backstories about the previous births of their protagonists. Prahlāda is the son of Hiranyakaśipu, who in a previous life had been Vishnu's gatekeeper named Vijaya. Vijaya had blocked some sages from passing through the gate and had been cursed to be reborn in a demon womb as Hiranyakaśipu. Bharata, the protagonist of the second story, had, in a previous life, been reborn as a deer after having become obsessed with caring for one instead of fulfilling his hereditary obligations. The Kṣatriya prince Dhruva's story does not have a similar previous-birth backstory. Nonetheless, in the text (4.8.17) Dhruva's mother consoles him for his rejection by the king saying that a man reaps the sufferings he has given to others in previous lives.

These defenses of the idea of karma and rebirth in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* stories, need to be set alongside the strong arguments for a direct salvation through *bhakti* put forward by the *Bhāgavata* in these same stories. In a 1966 article titled "The Social Teaching of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*," Thomas Hopkins showed how the *Bhāgavata* defends the right of low caste persons, even *Śūdras* and members of what are now known as scheduled tribes and castes to achieve salvation or *mukti*. In other words, the *Bhāgavata* short-circuits the theodicy of the worldly suffering of virtuous low-caste people in a similar, but more decided and direct fashion than the *Bhagavad-gītā*. According to the *Bhāgavata*, this salvation is obtained through proper conduct coupled with *bhakti* to Vishnu and his avatars. Here is one passage from the Purana that Hopkins uses to illustrate its view that lower caste persons are as

⁵ See *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* (1971: books 7, 5, and 4 respectively). Jana Gopāla makes his reliance explicit in his *Dhruva charitra* where he says (1.2): "This is a story told in the fourth chapter of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*." There are in fact numerous verses in all three of Jana Gopāla's retellings of the stories of Dhruva, Prahlāda, and Jaḍa Bharata that indicate a direct reliance on the *Bhāgavata* text.

eligible for salvation as Brahmins. The speaker here is the demon devotee Prahlāda, to whom I will return shortly:

I consider a dog-eater (*śvapacha*) whose mind, speech, activity, purpose and life are fixed on the lotus feet of Vishnu to be better than a learned Brahman possessed of the above twelve qualities who has turned away from His feet. The former purifies his clan (*kula*), but the latter, whose pride is great, does not.⁶

What Hopkins does not adequately stress in his essay is the fact that the *Bhāgavata* also repeatedly defends the hierarchical norm of a human society built around the four *varṇas*, not only in the frame of the stories themselves, as has been noted, but also in the more didactic chapters that accompany them. For instance, immediately after the end of the Prahlāda story the *Bhāgavata* dedicates a full chapter (7.11) to an exposition by the sage Nārada of the proper social and religious duties and economic professions of the four *varṇas* and of the still lower “mixed races” (*saṃkara-jāti*): the Antyajas and the Antevasāyins (7.11.30). In other words, the *Bhāgavata* repeatedly juxtaposes passages that partly deviate from traditional social and religious norms through the promotion of the power of bhakti with passages that offer didactic defenses of those same norms.

Beginning in about 1500 CE, many of the religious stories of the *Bhāgavata* were retold in vernacular versions. In North India, these retellings were mostly composed in the Braj language. Sheldon Pollock, Christian Novetzke and other scholars have debated about the role of state actors in fomenting the historical process of vernacularization of written documents and literature in India.⁷ Pollock’s main claim is that state actors were instrumental in initiating this process, and he uses texts in Kannada as his prime example. Novetzke argues that vernacularization into Marathi was initiated principally by religious authors, most notably by the author of *Līlā-charitra* (1278 CE) and by Jñānadeva, the author of the *Jñāneśvarī* (1290 CE.)

Pollock and Novetzke both accept that the decision to write in vernacular languages had important political and social dimensions regardless of whether it was state actors or religious authors who initiated the process. Novetzke, in particular, also argues that “vernacularization is to be understood as the process of social critique that is implied and enacted when idioms of power are transferred into the field of everyday life” (2019: 92). For the texts Novetzke discusses, this social critique tends to favor the non-elite classes and he generally assume that this non-elite bias is inherent

⁶ *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* 7.9.10. Translation mostly based on Hopkins (1966: 17).

⁷ See Novetzke (2012, 2019) and Pollock (2009).

in the very process of vernacularization. To some extent, this may be the case, but early vernacular religious texts in North India in fact express a wide range of social and political points of view, both conservative and egalitarian, both Tulasīdāsa and Kabīra.

When we get to the vernacular retellings of the stories found in the *Bhāgavata*, the social messages of the retellings tend to divide into two camps: those that support a relatively liberal *varṇāśrama-dharma* tempered by *bhakti*, and those oppose the whole idea of an innate social hierarchy. Roughly speaking, these two camps correspond to retellings by *saguṇī* and *nirguṇī* authors respectively. Since most of the vernacular retellings of the *Bhāgavata* stories have not been adequately studied, this contrast needs further research. One obvious difference is that *nirguṇī* authors such as Kabīra and Raidāsa generally preferred to avoid even references to (or at least *positive* references to) stories about Krishna, stories that are a favorite of *saguṇī* authors.⁸ The one important exception is in songs (*pad*) written in the *viraha* mode, a topic that is discussed below. This absence of Krishna in *nirguṇī* texts is hardly surprising since *nirguṇī* authors mostly, if somewhat inconsistently, opposed the idea of avatars and other embodied forms of God.

The *Bhāgavata* stories discussed here—those of Prahlāda, Dhruva, and Bharata — are retold in vernacular languages, mostly Braj, in early modern North Indian texts attributed to Raidāsa (Prahāda), Agradāsa (Prahāda, Dhruva), Rāmchandra Dube (Prahāda, Dhruva), Paramānandadāsa (Dhruva), Madhukaradāsa (Dhruva), Muralīdāsa (Dhruva), Śaśinātha Mathura (Dhruva), and Gurudāsa (Prahāda).⁹ All three stories are retold in Braj by the early seventeenth-century Dādū Panthī author Jana Gopāla. All three stories are also briefly retold in Rāghavadāsa's (ca. 1720) vernacular *Bhakta-māla*. The pious demon Prahlāda, in particular, is also frequently invoked in songs by *nirguṇī* poets such as Kabīra, Raidāsa, the Sikh Guru Amara Dāsa, Rajjaba, and Bhikhā Sāhab.¹⁰

⁸ The anti-Krishna, anti-avatar songs of Kabīra, particularly in the *Kabīra-bijaka*, will be discussed in a future essay. For a preliminary discussion of this topic, see Lorenzen (1987).

⁹ These names are taken from the manuscript catalogues of the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur (vols. 3 and 4, 1974 and 1978) and from that of the Jaipur Palace library (Bahura 1976). In these archives the manuscripts of the Hindi *charitras* by Jana Gopāla are by far the most numerous. As far as we know, none of the other texts have been published. The *charitras* of Agradas (in the *saguṇī* /Brahmin line of spiritual descent from Rāmānanda) in particular would make an interesting comparison with those of Jana Gopāla.

¹⁰ For some of these many *nirguṇī* references to the Prahlāda story, see Lorenzen (1996: 15-35).

3. Vernacular retelling and Jana Gopāla

All these three stories, even in their *Bhāgavata* versions, feature protagonists who radically deviate from accepted Hindu social norms, the norms of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Prahlāda rejects his hereditary duties as both demon and royal prince in favor of dedication to the holy Name of Vishnu. Dhruva, as a young prince, responds to an insult by abandoning the royal palace and going to the forest to live as an ascetic. Bharata, once a great emperor, becomes an ascetic and retires to the forest where he falls in love with a young deer. When Bharata dies, he is reborn as a deer. Finally, he is reborn as a Brahmin who is regarded as a fool (*jaḍa*) but eventually becomes the priest of King Rahūgaṇa.

Why did these three stories, in their vernacular retellings, become so popular from about the fifteenth century in North India? The most plausible general explanation is that in early modern North India, the challenge from Islam opened up a space for some lower and middle caste groups to develop a more socially, and linguistically, liberal Hindu religion embodied in a great variety of religious sects, some led by Brahmins, some not. Purushottam Agrawal (2009) has claimed that this process created an early indigenous modernity (*deśaja ādhunikā*) in North India that he associates especially with the ideas and influence of Rāmānanda and Kabīra.

I have elsewhere used the term “non-caste Hindu religion” to describe the *bhakti* movement associated with Rāmānanda and his non-Brahmin disciples led by Kabīra.¹¹ At least in North India, the major part of this non-caste Hindu religion is formed by the various so-called *nirguṇī* sects that reject the worship of embodied forms of God and prefer a formless (*nirguṇa*) God or Supreme Spirit. Nonetheless, two other characteristics of non-caste Hindu religion seem to me to be more important. First, the founders of the sects associated with non-caste Hindu religion were all non-Brahmins and a large majority of their followers have come from castes belonging to the modern categories of Other Backward Castes and Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Second, the religious ideas expressed in the literature of these sects either openly reject the hierarchical structure of *varṇāśrama-dharma* or pay minimal attention to it.

Today traditional North Indian religious groups that follow this non-caste religion together with a mostly Vaishnava-inflected *nirguṇa* theology include the Kabīra Pantha, the Dādū Pantha, the followers of Raidāsa, and the now non-Hindu Sikh Pantha. The mostly Shaivite Nāthas descended from Gorakhnātha can also be included.¹² Among groups that follow a *saguṇī* theology (but not a *saguṇī* social

¹¹ See especially Lorenzen (1987).

¹² Not included here are religious groups founded in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, some of which claim to be socially progressive.

ethos) the followers of Mīrābāī, who are devotees of Krishna, can be considered to be followers of non-caste religion from the point of view of their generally more liberal views about caste and gender.¹³ On the other hand, nowadays the followers of Rāmānanda himself, the Rāmānandīs, are both worshippers of embodied forms of Vishnu and socially conservative supporters of *varṇāśrama-dharma*.¹⁴

In his Braj version of Prahlāda's story, one directly based on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, Jana Gopāla repeatedly mentions the Brahmin (*vipra*) status of Prahlāda's demon teachers and strongly contrasts their Brahminical teachings with Prahlāda's devotion to Vishnu. Since Prahlāda is the son of the demon king Hiranyakaśipu, the demon teachers' lessons are said to emphasize the statecraft appropriate for Kṣatriya royalty. The conceptual tension between Prahlāda's *bhakti* and the Kṣatriya statecraft of his Brahmin teachers is also present in the *Bhāgavata* version of the Prahlāda story. In the earlier *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* Prahlāda's demon teachers are said to be reciters of the *Sāma-veda*, but the text does not specify exactly what they taught to Prahlāda.¹⁵ Both Jana Gopāla and the *Bhāgavata* also evade a clear answer to the question of whether Prahlāda should be considered primarily as a royal Kṣatriya or as a demon without caste status. Where the *Prahlāda charitra* most clearly diverges from the story told in the *Bhāgavata*, however, is in Jana Gopāla's outright denial of the presence of innate pollution in the demon body of Prahlāda or, by extension, in the bodies of all low-caste human persons.

For example, in three verses found at the very beginning of the *Prahlāda charitra* (1.2-4), Jana Gopāla invokes, rather perfunctorily, the four Vedas and *varṇāśrama-dharma*, but he does so without noting anything more than differences in the styles of worship – not differences of rank, purity or occupation – and then extends the possibility of salvation even to Muslims:¹⁶

Corresponding to the four yugas, the Veda has four parts: the *Ṛg*, *Yajur*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva* Vedas. Through the fifty-two syllables, the sound OM becomes manifest as the three worlds.

There are four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*. Their various dharmas have been indicated. One person may dedicate himself to yoga, another to sacrifice (*jīga*). Another sets his mind on pilgrimages and religious vows.

¹³ On this topic, see Mukta (1994).

¹⁴ A large part of the Rāmānandī sect was earlier more socially radical than most of its present day adherents. On this topic see especially van der Veer (1989).

¹⁵ *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* (1989: chapter 17, verse 48).

¹⁶ It is likely that the author of the *Bhāgavata* had little knowledge of Muslims, but the text also never extends the possibility of salvation to either Christians or Jinas, groups that were undoubtedly better known to the (likely southern India) author of the text.

Another says that charity and virtue are best. Another says that one should save the soul. The Hindus and the Turks proclaim two separate paths. If one meets the True Guru, the two become one.

Three verses subsequently spoken by the sage Nārada — in response to a query by the god Indra about how a demon such as Prahlāda came to be a devotee of Vishnu — offer a similar argument. Here Jana Gopāla asserts the equality of all living bodies and emphasizes that it is only by their conduct that humans are differentiated into high and low. This is again an argument that goes well beyond the “even a dog-eater” argument of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. Here is what Jana Gopāla, via Nārada, says (2: 21-24):

Then Nārada said: “Listen, o lord of the gods, For Hari, the lord of the three worlds, no one is high or low. One is called high or low according to one’s conduct. Hari’s devotees worship Hari and become one with Him.

“If a poison is given to high and low persons, they will both die when they eat it. Likewise, if high and low persons sit together in a boat, they both will cross to the other shore.

“Thus there is no special cause [to determine who is born] into Hari’s family. Both Untouchables (*antija*) and Brahmins (*vipra*) should worship Him as their savior (*tāraṇa*).

Moreover, no physical body is high or low. All bodies are made from the same five elements.”

Jana Gopāla forcefully reiterates his view about the relation of *bhakti* and *varṇa* in a song (*pad*) found in several different sources. Jana Gopāla says:¹⁷

As long as you stick to the ways of caste,
what benefit is won
By tying on a garland of beads
or giving yourself a *tilaka*?

While Brahmins stick to Brahmin-hood,
and Vaiśyas stick to commerce,
While *Kṣatriyas* refuse to leave their daggers,
not one of them knows *bhakti*.

¹⁷ This translation and text of the *pad* (with variants) are found in Agrawal and Lorenzen (forthcoming: *pad* no. 8). The *pad* begins: *joloṃ jāti svabhāva liye*.

While caste remains, there are no *bhaktas*.

Think about caste and *bhakti*.¹⁸

Straddling two horses or two boats,
no one reaches the goal.

No trust? Consult the *Bhāgavata*
about the ways of Sants.

His servants are apart from other *varṇas*,
their love is recalling Hari.

Nārada's concern is saying Nārāyaṇa,
and not with finding caste.

Love filled Mādhava does not give birth
to Brahmins and *Chaṇḍālas*,
So says Jana Gopāla.

4. Giuseppe Maria da Gargnano's Christian-Hindu Dialogue

In the case of the other two principal religions of the Indian subcontinent — Islam and Christianity — rebirth into differently ranked social classes is replaced by a single eternal destiny for humans, or at least human souls, in heaven or hell. This theodicy has proved to be compatible with both radically egalitarian social and political movements and with rigidly conservative social and political movements. Here I want to look at the example of a text that espouses a quite conservative view of the implications of Christian religion for the proper ordering of society.

This text is the “Dialogue between and Christian and a Hindu about Religion” (*jabāba-svāla aika krīstīāna aura aika hīndu ke bīcha mo imāna ke upara*) written in Hindustani by an Italian Capuchin missionary named Giuseppe Maria da Gargnano (1709-1761).¹⁹ Giuseppe Maria presented the text to the king of Bettiah in northwestern Bihar in the year 1751. The Dialogue is of course fictitious and meant to show the superiority of Christianity over Hindu religion. To do this, the author had to point out what he considered to be the major failings of Hindu religion and the major virtues of Christian religion. His

¹⁸ The reading *na* maybe is better, but it is found in only one of four texts available to me. The phrase would then mean: “Think about *bhakti*, not caste.”

¹⁹ Ed. and trans. in Lorenzen (2015).

arguments included both an attack against the ideology of caste and rebirth and a parallel defense of the practical need for social hierarchy based on an economic and political division of labor.

Although Christianity never had the same impact on North India that Islam did, European Christian missionaries were active in the region from at least the early part of the eighteenth century. The history of Christianity in south India of course begins in the early centuries CE and was reinforced in this region and in Goa and coastal Maharashtra by a second wave of missionary activity under the auspices of the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Capuchin mission to which Giuseppe Maria belonged, however, was not sponsored by the Portuguese but instead was directly financed by the Vatican through the congregation known as Propaganda Fide. Giuseppe Maria da Gargnano and his successors, most notably Marco della Tomba, did manage to establish a small Christian community in Bettiah.

The thorniest problem faced by the European Christian missionaries was the endogamous nature of caste (*jāti*) in Hindu society. The conflict over what to do about caste practices between the Christian missionaries Roberto Nobili (1577-1656) and Gonçalo Fernandes (1541-1619) is well known.²⁰ The norm of caste endogamy gave the leaders of Hindu castes the ability to effectively ban Christian converts from finding marriage partners for their children. The only practical solutions were for whole castes to convert or for the Christian converts from one or more castes to form a new Christian caste. The latter solution was eventually adopted in Bettiah with the encouragement of Giuseppe Maria's successor, Marco della Tomba (1726-1803).²¹ This caste of Bettiah Christians still exists.

On the other hand, the practical difficulties posed by the Hindu caste system did not mean that the missionaries necessarily supported a significantly more egalitarian social order. The Christian theodicy that Giuseppe Maria presents in his *Dialogue* argues that a solid social and economic hierarchy is necessary for the proper functioning of political and economic life in this world. Where Giuseppe Maria's theodicy differs from that of Hindu religion is in the afterlife. After death there will be no possibility of any rebirth. After death all human beings will be judged equally for their moral and religious behavior in their earthy life and be eternally rewarded in heaven or punished in hell accordingly. In the *Dialogue*, the Christian says this:²²

²⁰ See especially Zupanov (1999).

²¹ See Lorenzen (2003: 15-20).

²² Lorenzen (2015: 173-174, 235). Compare this with the following from the famous speech on hell found in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (2001: 86): "What did it avail then to have been a great emperor, a great general, a marvellous inventor, the most learned of the learned? All were as one before the judgement seat of God. He would reward the good and punish the wicked."

Among all persons who have been born in this world, no one has had merit [from a previous birth]. All were equal [at birth]. But the Supreme God, for the welfare of the world, makes someone a raja and makes another a subject. He makes some wealthy and some poor. But he has given his word to all persons that he will give joy in salvation or misery in hell to each according to what he has earned. He will not pay attention to who was a raja, who was a peasant, who was wealthy, who was poor. ... Moreover, if a poor person has earned merit, he will get salvation. And if a raja has earned sin, he will get hell ... If a poor person acts in his own condition in accordance with the Supreme God's commands, then after death he will get as great a reward in heaven as the greatest emperor can get.

In order to make this model of hierarchy in this world and equality after death plausible, Giuseppe Maria evidently feels that it is necessary to argue against not only the theodicy of karma and rebirth but also against the idea that “each person's karma is written on his forehead by Brahma” (*sabha ādamīvo ke līlāra mo apanā apanā karma brāmhā so liṣā jātā hai*. Lorenzen 2015: 149, 214). As was noted above, Lawrence Babb (1983) found that fate or destiny and the bad actions of other persons were the two principal everyday explanations that people in India commonly use to account for their own bad fortune, not karma from their past lives. Giuseppe Maria draws the ultimate logical conclusion from the reliance on fate that this leads to moral nihilism: what is the point of worshipping gods or of practical human effort to achieve goals or to behave in moral fashion if everything important is fore-ordained by what Brahma has written on one's forehead?

As for the idea of karma and rebirth, Giuseppe Maria cannot attack it directly for the obvious reason that it involves unprovable assumptions about what happens to us after death (as of course does his own proposal of an after-death experience of heaven or hell). What he does instead is to claim that social inequalities in this world should not be understood as the product of karma but rather are a God-ordained necessity for society to function. The Christian of the dialogue says (Lorenzen 2015: 170-71, 232-233):

You do not understand things correctly if you believe that people get good births and bad births because of what they earned in their past life, since the real cause of people's separate fates is nothing other than the welfare of this world. This is because it is necessary for the welfare of this world that [our] portions (*aṃsa*) in this world not be equal. Rather one must be greater than another, and one person must be subject to the command of another. This is because if all men were kings, when who would be the kings' peasants? If all were wealthy, then who would do the work of the wealthy persons' servants. ... [etc.]

Giuseppe Maria's Christian vision of the afterlife is, of course, subject to its own logical and philosophical objections, but the Hindu of the dialogue is never allowed to present them in any serious fashion. Perhaps most notable in this regard is the logical conflict between God's omniscient foreknowledge, a knowledge that implies fatalism (what is written on one's forehead), and human free will. This is the problem that many Christian thinkers — for example John Milton in *Paradise Lost* — have traditionally wrestled with.²³

It is also worth noting that the Christianity presented in Giuseppe Maria's Christian-Hindu dialogue is a sort of stripped-down, simplified version of Christianity, one that omits several doctrines that complicate the contrast with Hindu religion. It is clear that this minimal version of Christian doctrine was purposely put forward by missionaries such as Giuseppe Maria in order to not confuse new Hindu converts. One of the key omissions is the doctrine of original sin. This could easily be taken as a sort of universally inherited bad karma that infects all humans. A second key omission is the doctrine of the Trinity. As many have noted, the Trinity definitely complicates the claim that Christianity is a strictly monotheistic religion. The elevation of the Virgin to the status of Queen of Heaven is open to a similar objection.

Two other Christian doctrines that have a more direct connection with the main Christian theodicy were also studiously ignored in Giuseppe Maria's text. One is the early doctrine, most prominent in the second and third centuries, of a universal bodily resurrection and final judgment of human beings at the impending End Time. This doctrine could be taken as claiming that we all will be reincarnated, though not transmigrated to a different body, instead of passing directly to an eternal life in heaven or hell. A second doctrine that complicates Giuseppe Maria's straightforward theodicy is that of purgatory, an idea that was not fully developed until after about 1150 CE. According to this doctrine, the souls of persons who were destined for heaven but were neither absolute saints nor absolute sinners would have to spend time in purgatory purging their sins before God's previously made final judgment was put into effect. Since these souls could be helped to a quicker passage to heaven through prayers and monetary donations to the Church from living friends and relatives, the existence of purgatory did in fact make it easier and quicker for rich and influential persons to enter

²³ In Milton's *Paradise Lost* (3. 111-119), God says that Adam and Eve cannot "... justly accuse / Their maker, or their making, or their fate, / As if predestination overruled / Their will, ... / ...; they themselves decreed / Their own revolt, not I. If I foreknew, / Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault, / Which had no less proved certain unforeknown." In other words, here Milton claims that foreknowledge is like memory. God knows what will happen but does not cause it to happen (Milton 2005: 84). Unfortunately for this argument, God's foreknowledge is, more correctly, like a memory of an event that has yet not happened.

heaven, the very thing that Giuseppe Maria denies. The hapless, imaginary Hindu in Giuseppe Maria's *Dialogue* has, of course, nothing to say about any of this.²⁴

5. Denying theodicy

In his comments on the sociology of religion, Max Weber notes that one important strain of religious thought, a strain evident in at least Judaism and Islam, has the effect of religiously negating the idea of a theodicy leading to rewards and punishments after death (Weber 1964: 142-43):

As people continued to reflect about the insoluble problem of the imperfections of the world in the light of god's omnipotence, one result was inevitable: the conception of an unimaginably great ethical chasm between the transcendental god and the human being continuously enmeshed in the toils of new sin. And this conception inevitably led to the ultimate theoretical conclusion, apparently assumed in the Book of Job, that the omnipotent creator God must be envisaged as beyond all the ethical claims of his creatures, his counsels impervious to human comprehension. Another facet of this emerging view was that God's absolute power over his creatures is unlimited, and therefore that the criteria of human justice are utterly inapplicable to his behavior. With the development of this notion, the problem of theodicy simply disappeared altogether.

This view that God's behavior and God's justice are often inscrutable, impervious to human understanding, is of course present (though not usually dominant) in virtually all religious systems. In Judaism and in Christianity this view is closely tied to the idea of *deus absconditus*, the hidden or absconded God, a Latin phrase borrowed from the vulgate translation of Isaiah 45.15. In the Christian New Testament, a vivid example of this idea is the cry of Jesus as he is being crucified: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"²⁵ Christian thinkers such as St John Chrysostom and Martin Luther made this *deus absconditus* a major part of their theologies.²⁶ Giuseppe Maria da Gargnano's Christian-Hindu *Dialogue*, however, ignores the idea completely, presumably because it is simply too pessimistic an idea for prospective new converts to accept.

²⁴ On the Christian ideas about a universal final judgment and about purgatory, see Brown (2015) and Le Goff (1981).

²⁵ Mark 15.34. John S. Hawley noted to me that Jesus's words are taken directly from Psalm 22.

²⁶ Although I am not enough of a Biblical scholar to properly document this claim, it seems to represent a consensus among experts. Luther, in his famous "Disputation Held at Heidelberg" of 1518 directly cites the *deus absconditus* passage in Isaiah 45.15. Luther here argues that what we can know of the invisible, hidden God is learned through our knowledge of the suffering of Jesus on the cross. See Luther (2018: 40-42).

In *bhakti*-oriented Hindu religion, more specifically Vaishnava *bhakti*, a key example of this idea of *deus absconditus* appears in the laments of the *gopīs*, or female cowherds, who have been abandoned by the cowherd Krishna, whom they love so desperately that in order to be with him they are willing to abandon their husbands and families. In this mode of separation (*viraha*) the *gopīs* are known as *virahaṇīs*. In the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, the text known as The Song of Solomon, also called The Song of Songs, has a similar theme in verses 5.2 to 6.3. The commentator of *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary* (Mays 2000: 472) argues that the Song of Songs is a set of very human love songs. The Jesuit scholar Francis X. Clooney (2014), however, prefers to view the Song of Songs as metaphorical, like the Hindu *virahiṇī* songs. In his study titled *His Hiding Place Is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence*, Clooney compares the Biblical text of The Song of Songs, to a South Indian Hindu text about the *gopīs* called *Holy Word of Mouth (Tiruvaymoli)*.

The laments of the *gopīs* are, of course, a standard motif of the many *virahiṇī* songs in Hindi composed by early modern poets such as Sūradāsa, Mīrābāī, and Tulasīdāsa, and even by *nirguṇī* poets such as Kabīra, Dādū, and Jana Gopāla. In these songs the composers take on the persona of the abandoned female lover and call out to their errant male lover, who is God himself, to return to them. Here is a beautiful song lyric in this mode composed by Jana Gopāla:²⁷

I long for a sight of Him, but He
neither speaks nor shows Himself.
Nothing touches Hari's heart.
He never feels remorse.

Without water, a fish flops about,
and life leaves its body.
Unless an act of mercy is shown,
its hold on life is lost.

The lotus deeply loves the sun
that causes it to grow,
But if the lotus has no water
the sun will only burn it.

²⁷ Agrawal and Lorenzen (forthcoming): song no. 6. It begins: *hoṃ darasa piyāsī mujha kāhe na diṣāve*.

Calling “my love, my love” the rain bird
 flies from place to place.
 But the cruel cloud delays its thunder
 and never speaks a word

I spend my life flopping about,
 burning, and calling out.
 Jana Gopāla says life is hard
 for those who fall in love.

As Weber notes, the net effect of describing God as hidden, unconcerned about his devotees’ distress, and ultimately incomprehensible, is to religiously cancel, or at least make extremely doubtful, the operation of any logically ordered theodicy. In the absence of some divine controlling hand, the theodicy of karma and rebirth – not to mention the escape clauses of salvation through bhakti and the grace of God – remains a problematic, uncertain mechanism. Only hope remains. The *deus absconditus* might possibly someday return or reveal himself, but the certainty of the promise to provide a future reward either in a future life or in heaven is lost. We cannot know our future fate. In practice this decidedly pessimistic view of the nature of God and God’s justice never entirely replaces the more hopeful rules of theodicy in Hindu or other religions, but it remains a vision that inserts a dire warning in the minds of the devotees about the inscrutability of God and God’s will.

6. Summary

What I have tried to show here are some of the historical modifications found in different constructions of the dominant Hindu theodicy, and also how this Hindu theodicy was attacked and compared to a Christian theodicy in Giuseppe Maria da Gargnano’s fictional Christian and Hindu dialogue. Three versions of the Hindu theodicy are highlighted: those found in the *Mānava-dharma-sāstra*, in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, and in texts by the Dādū Panthī author Jana Gopāla. One element of these theodicies offers a key point of comparison. This is the element of social mobility and hierarchy. Here the views of both the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and Giuseppe Maria are clearly aligned against Jana Gopāla. Both Giuseppe Maria and the *Bhāgavata* accept the possibility of salvation for people in low-status occupations, but both postpone the possibility of social equality and occupational mobility to another life after one’s death in this life: the life of the saved in heaven and the damned in hell for Giuseppe Maria, and either

a rebirth, for better or worse, or a final escape from rebirth (*mukti*) for the *Bhāgavata*. Reading between the lines, it is reasonable to suggest that both Giuseppe Maria and the *Bhāgavata* would accept the possibility of downward occupational mobility in our present lives (for example, kings and priests and merchants becoming thieves, or, in Hindu law, the possibility of becoming an ascetic renouncer or of taking up an “emergency or *apad-dharma* occupation), but neither Giuseppe Maria nor the *Bhāgavata* would easily accept the propriety of upward occupational mobility (for example, carpenters or weavers becoming religious leaders, despite Jesus and despite Kabīra).

For Jana Gopāla, a person from a Baniya shopkeeper family, things were not so simple. He accepted rebirth, but did not accept the predetermination of social status and occupation through past karma that the standard Hindu theodicy proposes. Following the ideas of Kabīra and Dādū, Jana Gopāla evidently believed that there is a divine spark in everyone and that a single underlying Brahman, or Ground of Being, is the basis of all physical reality. For this reason, for Jana Gopāla social and occupational hierarchy was apparently not predetermined by karma from past lives or by the functional requirements of society itself. He could not, of course deny that in practice one’s birth in a family of a certain class largely determines one’s status and, at least partly, one’s occupation, since these were the dominant social norms of the Hindu society to which he belonged. Nonetheless, for Jana Gopāla, love and devotion toward the Supreme God, one loosely identified with Vishnu, and the moral behavior and compassion fostered by this God were the things that he hoped could help hold society together.

Jana Gopāla’s refusal to accept the necessity and validity of a social and occupational hierarchy predetermined by past karma was particularly true in religious matters. For groups such as Jana Gopāla’s Dādū Panth, the Brahmins had no right to a monopoly control over religious rites and religious education. This horrified more traditional Hindus like Tulasīdāsa. In the Kali Yuga, Tulasī says (1989: 985), “The *Śūdras* dispute with Brahmins. They cast angry looks and scold: ‘Are we something less than you? Whoever knows Brahman becomes a noble Brahmin.’” Jana Gopāla, for his part, says (*Prahlāda charitra* 2.25): “The Brahmin and the Untouchable share a single essence. Gold is not different [no matter what shape it takes].”

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Playing with Words and Rhythms in *Khālī jagah*: Translating a Hindi Novel and its Texture into French

Nicola Pozza

The novel *Khālī jagah* (2006) by the Hindi writer Geetanjali Shree mainly focuses on the topics of violence, loss, and quest for identity in the contemporary world. In this text – and in others too, but maybe here more than elsewhere – the author makes use of a very hybrid and idiomatic Hindi. Moreover, she repeatedly plays with iterations and alliterations, assonances and consonances, onomatopoeias and neologisms, and creates a particular syntax that might be described as dismembered, dislocated, and breathless. To these elements must also be added the inclusion of excerpts from folk songs as well as the essential role played by silences and unsaid things. If all these features are to be taken into account when translating such a narrative – as its content is tightly coupled to its form – it makes for a highly complex and challenging task.

After providing a very brief summary of *Khālī jagah*, I will first highlight a few rhythmic and translation related issues, before analysing in detail some excerpts from the novel, in order to explain the choices I have made for its French translation (*Une place vide*, Infolio, 2018) and compare some of the results with an English translation primarily focused on the content (*The Empty Space*, Harper Perennial, 2011).

1. Introduction and presentation of the novel

The novel *Khālī jagah* (2006) by the Hindi writer Geetanjali Shree¹ mainly focuses on the topics of violence, loss, and quest for identity in the contemporary world. In this text – and in others too, but maybe here more than elsewhere – the author makes use of a very hybrid and idiomatic Hindi. Moreover, she repeatedly plays with iterations and alliterations, assonances and consonances, onomatopoeias and neologisms, and creates a particular syntax that might be

¹ Geetanjali Shree was born Geetanjali Pandey in Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh, in 1957, but chose to be called by her mother's family name (Shree) once she started writing fiction. So far, she has published five novels in Hindi: *Māi* (1993), *Hamārā sahar us bars* (1998), *Tirohit* (2001), *Khālī jagah* (2006), and *Ret-samādhi* (2018). She has also published several collections of short stories and worked for the theatre. She began her career as a literary historian, and published her PhD research on Premchand, titled *Between Two Worlds: An Intellectual Biography of Premchand* (1989). The English translation of *Māi* contributed to her fame as a global author, and her works were translated into several European and Asian languages. She is the recipient of several literary awards and is regularly invited abroad for writer residencies and conferences. She brings an original voice to contemporary Hindi literature through the use of a very personal, experimental syntax and lexicon, making her writing dense and complex.

described as dismembered, dislocated, and breathless. To these elements we should add the inclusion of excerpts from folk songs as well as the essential role played by silences and unsaid things. If all these features are to be taken into account when translating such a narrative – as its content is tightly coupled to its form – it makes for a highly complex and challenging task. After providing a very brief summary of *Khālī jagah* (henceforth KhJ), I will first highlight a few rhythmic and translation-related issues, before analysing in detail some excerpts from the novel, in order to explain the choices I have made for its French translation (*Une place vide*, Infolio, 2018) and compare some of the results with an English translation primarily focused on the content (*The Empty Space*, Harper Perennial, 2011).

The novel begins in an unspecified university cafeteria where a bomb explodes, killing nineteen people, presumably future students.² Among them is a young boy aged eighteen who had come to register for his studies. The boy's name is not mentioned and the narrator speaks of him as *vah* ('he'). His body, or rather the ashes and fragments that remain after the explosion, are returned to his parents in a box by the government. In a symbolic exchange for the lost son, a small three-year-old child is given up for adoption to the grieving parents. This little boy was also present in the cafeteria during the explosion but was miraculously spared by the bomb – he was hidden in a small, empty place (*khālī jagah*), hence the title of the novel. It is the story of this little boy adopted by the family that is narrated in the book; or more precisely, it is the child himself, once he turns twenty or so, who tells the story, acting as the first-person narrator looking back at this dramatic event and what followed.

The main theme of the novel lies in the uncertainty and confusion linked to the identity of the two boys. The eighty-seven chapters of the book are focused on the gap between the central role played by the little boy as a narrator and his unsettled position in the family as a substitute for the dead son. Everything he does is compared by the parents and their community to what the lost son did. Throughout his childhood he is unable to establish his own identity in the family, and even, as he reaches eighteen, he decides to study at the same university the dead son had intended to. For his new parents, but for him too, his life, his deeds, his mere presence, everything remains symbolic: the place he occupies in the family is neither his own nor the dead son's. Nothing seems concrete, nothing looks or feels real, not even the bombing! The turning point comes with the arrival of a girl, who we come to understand as the person to whom the

² Parts of this summary are taken from Pozza (2016).

narrative is addressing and who appears to be the ex-girlfriend of the deceased son. It is through her, and her patient listening, that the adopted son recovers the will to speak and the desire to assert himself in response to his hitherto insignificant role. The potential of life suddenly becomes apparent to him – although the end of the novel offers another perspective. This novel, therefore, deals above all with the question of identity, of the violence of an unstable identity, and of exile and nostalgia (Pozza 2016). The bombing is, however, eminently important, since it is the departure point for all the main themes of the book. Moreover, it is another explosion, in the same cafe, that concludes the novel. Once again, the narrator miraculously escapes death, but the bomb kills the girl and with her, every hope she represented for the boy.

It is ultimately a story about the impossibility of belonging to any place, to any culture, to any history. Devoid of any specific geographical frame and with only rare references to Indian culture (mostly culinary and musical references), the novel aims to represent the global, contemporary world. Geetanjali Shree herself makes this explicit in an article she wrote about her novel and her own tentative translation of it:

This novel is not narrowly culture-specific. It belongs anywhere, to a contemporary pain. It deals with terrorism, which is global, ubiquitous, like the market. (Shree 2010b: 275)

The novel, steeped in the young history of this century and its ubiquitous terrorism, can be seen as a story of absence, of the void – *but* a void imbued with potential – and of the lack of permanent and fixed roots.³ The following passage, close to the end of the novel, represents a good example both of the idea of uncertainty and instability, and of the style of the text:

There is certainly a return, but to nowhere, and this nowhere is the only somewhere, because there are no roots anywhere, we are the roots, where we

³ Although KhJ does not, strictly speaking, deal with terrorism, the way it focuses on the life and feelings of the adopted son echoes one of the theses put forward by Appelbaum and Paknadel (2008: 415) in their comprehensive study of a thousand English-language novels written between 1970 and 2001, in which terrorism is, in one way or the other, present as a topic: “The story of terrorism in such novels is not the story of violence planned and exacted, but the tale of a disruption [...]. It is as much a story of something missing or taken away—a continuity in everyday life, a familiar landmark, the life of a loved one—as it is a story of assertive aggression. Indeed, [...] for most novels it is the disruption that is decisive. And so it is not the terrorism that is fully present in the novel, but terrorism’s effects.” On terrorism and KhJ, see Soni and Baghel (2009).

stand, speechless, not knowing whether the return here or the departure there is the true return.⁴

Moreover, the very idea of fragmentation is constitutive of the novel, since it is present in all aspects of the book: (a) first, in the content (i.e. the bomb explosion and the boy's quest for a stable identity); (b) second, in the form of the narrative, with its unique syntax and its play on sounds and words; (c) and, finally, in the structure of the novel itself, which is divided into eighty-seven short chapters over 244 pages.⁵

It is therefore obvious that all these semantic and syntactic features are to be seriously considered when one decides to translate such a poetic narrative. Attempting, in response to the difficulties raised by the Hindi version, to smooth the translated version to make it easier to read would certainly represent a kind of betrayal of the text, and for sure would be grist to the mill of the famous saying “traduttore, traditore”. But then, which translational strategy should be adopted, and which solutions to the many challenges posed by this Hindi novel should we seek?

2. Some introductory notes on the language and rhythm of the novel

From the very first reading of KhJ, I was struck by the particular rhythm of the novel, by its ‘poetic’ nature. I felt that its dynamic, punchy style was capital to the right understanding and appreciation of the text, to the fact that the message of the text was not to be limited to its semantic content. On the contrary, the division of the paragraphs, the syntax, and the sounds of the words, their musicality, are all features that demonstrate the need to take into consideration all the aspects of the text. In the author's own words (expressed during a conference in Lausanne), this can be summarized thus: “For me it's not so much what I write about, as how I write anything, something” (Pozza and Shree 2016). Echoing this statement, the famous French translator and linguist Henri Meschonnic had written that, with regard to

⁴ *Lauṭā zarūr jātā hai par kahīm nahīm aur kahīm nahīm hī hai kahīm, kyomki jaṛ kahīm nahīm hotī, ham hī jaṛ hote haiṁ jahām hote haiṁ, khaṛe avāk ki idhar lauṭeṁ to lauṭnā yā udhar cal deṁ to?* (Shree 2010a: 209). Unless otherwise stated all English and French translations are mine.

⁵ This pervasive idea of fragmentation is, however, already present in *Hamārā śāhar us bars* (1998). On this novel, see Consolaro 2010, and especially pages 120–125 for the topic of fragmentation. On the question of (cultural) translation and identity in connection to Geetanjali Shree's novel *Mai*, see Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère and Sareen (2014).

rhythm, it is necessary to “translate what words do not say, but what they do”.⁶ And not only what they do to the reader, but also what they can do to the author: “language tricks – blackmails! – me more than I construct it” (Pozza and Shree 2016). Shree summarizes the writing process thus: “When you write you are playing games, you are creating something, you don’t just go straight” (Consolaro 2007: 126).

It was therefore essential to find the right tone, style, and an appropriate rhythm, in order to reproduce – or, rather, recreate – the originality of the Hindi text and to make the French translation as lively as the Hindi original.⁷ In other words, I felt it necessary to listen to the rhythm and the “discourse”⁸ of KhJ and its specificity within the Hindi language in order to keep present, or even visible, the double “relation” (Fr. *rapport*) that exists between, first, the reader and the original work, and second, the discourse of that work and the language in which it is written. In Meschonnic’s terms:

The relation shows the translation as such. [...] It is twofold: in relation to a work, which is a discourse, and in relation to what the discourse in its source language does with that language, receives constraints from it, but also invents constraints that are peculiar to that discourse, and make it recognizable.⁹

The sentences in the Hindi original are often elliptical, the lexicon fairly eclectic, and the syntax all but standardized. With regard to French standards of syntax, it was very tempting to make the translation clearer and smoother, to make it more “readable” for French readers, for fear that the text would be rejected due to its “uneasy” rhythm. However, trying to “fill out” the text and make it more explicit – when the Hindi version favours parataxis – or follow the academic rules of French syntax – for instance, by avoiding disjointed sentences and repetitions, frequent in Hindi but generally avoided in French – would have been a mistake. The translation would have lost both the originality and the intrinsic link between content and form of the Hindi

⁶ “Traduire ce que les mots ne disent pas, mais ce qu'ils font” (Meschonnic 1995: 514).

⁷ On the creative dimension of translation, see Bassnett (2016).

⁸ “Discourse”, in contrast with “text”, “refers to the whole act of communication involving production and comprehension, not necessarily entirely verbal” (Bloor and Bloor 2013: 7).

⁹ “Le rapport montre la traduction comme telle. [...] Il] est double: rapport à une œuvre, qui est un discours, et rapport à ce que le discours dans sa langue de départ fait de cette langue, en reçoit de contraintes mais aussi lui invente des contraintes qui sont seulement à lui, et qui le font reconnaître” (Meschonnic 1999: 95).

version. It would certainly have been smoother, but less relevant and less challenging – which seems, at times, to be the case with the English translation (Shree 2011).¹⁰

Thus, the challenge of this translation was to be able to reproduce the specific rhythm of KhJ, while making the French version “faithful” and readable. Geetanjali Shree perfectly describes this challenging task in her aforementioned article on translation and writing:

it has a rhythm of its own that I am struggling to translate. Already expressed eclectically, even borrowing from non-Hindi and non-English tongues, what variety of tongues do I introduce in the English translation and in which arrangement? A repeated eclecticism, I fear, can sound gimmicky, but without that play with tongues and rhythms it might become a “poodle”! (Shree 2010b: 275)

In order to retain and reproduce as far as possible the peculiarity of the Hindi version, its twists and turns, I have been careful in translating it into French to keep in mind the following features:¹¹

- the frequent use of iterations and alliterations, consonances and assonances, as well as onomatopoeia;
- the elaborate syntax of the text, for which the standard, expected order of words is constantly reorganized and contradicted, thus making the orality of the text, as well as the unspoken and silences in it, particularly important;
- the alternation between extremely short sentences – sometimes limited to a phrase or even a single word – and very long sentences, covering several lines, resembling a soliloquy;
- the segmentation of sentences, and the strong presence of punctuation marks;
- the repetition of privileged and salient words, in direct connection with the “explosive” subject matter of the novel;
- and the presence of snippets of songs, hymns, or Urdu poetry.

¹⁰ In this paper the English translation of Shree’s novel by Nivedita Menon is used from time to time to compare with the French. However, this comparison should not be seen as diminishing the value of Menon’s work. Its sole purpose here is to show the different ways one can translate the text and its rhythm. There is also a German translation, *Im leeren Raum* (2018), by Georg Lechner and Nivedita Menon, which I was not able to consult before writing this article.

¹¹ These features can be classified into four levels of analysis (Pekkanen 2014: 144): phonological (onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, etc.), lexical (words, syllables, salient terms, etc.), syntactic (phrases, clauses, paragraphs, etc.), and semantic (content, prominence given to various content elements, etc.).

Many of these features are illustrated in the examples that follow and all of them are essential to understanding the challenges I faced in translating KhJ. However, if these features are all more or less directly related to the question of rhythm and its translation, their enumeration and presence in the excerpts that follow does not mean that they constitute a definition in itself of what is or should necessarily be ‘rhythm’. They are used here to illustrate the style of the novel and the choices I made in translating it.

Before moving onto the excerpts, a final remark to clarify the position I adopted while translating this particular novel with regard to the question of the “effect” of a text on its readers. In the process of translation, the work of the translator depends on what the text he or she is translating can say and do to him or her, and not on the intentions the author had, presumably, in mind or wanted to create. The task of the translator, in this case, is to identify and “recreate” the rhythms he or she feels while reading the original. Differences in perception necessarily occur between the author and his or her translator – not to mention those among readers. Otherwise, if only one “true” perception or only one “right” rhythm was to be found while reading a text, it would mean that there is only one possible effect – which is clearly as absurd as saying that a text has only one true meaning!¹²

3. From Hindi to French: some examples

3.1. Excerpt I: chapter 33

This excerpt alone contains almost all of the above-mentioned features: short and snappy words, consonances, repetitions, plays on word order, an excerpt from a hymn, truncated sentences. It contains four paragraphs of unequal length. Both the Hindi original (in transliteration) and my French translation are given below, followed by explanations of my translation choices.

¹² Meschonnic (1999: 146) warns us of the desire to seek *the* effect (in the singular) of a text and to reproduce it in the translation: “If we try to put the equivalent, no longer in the meaning, but in the effect, we enter into an untenable pseudo-pragmatism. Since, besides reducing the meaning to the effect, which is a mistake, no one can know what this effect was first on an original addressee. And on each addressee.” (Si on tente de mettre l’équivalent, non plus dans le sens, mais dans l’effet, on entre dans un pseudo-pragmatisme intenable. Puisque, outre la réduction du sens à l’effet, qui est une erreur, nul ne peut savoir ce qu’était d’abord cet effet sur un destinataire d’origine. Et sur chaque destinataire.)

Ek ghaṭnā. Vahī sab kuch.

Tumhīm ho mātā pitā tumhīm ho ! Tumhīm ho bandhu sakhā tumhīm ho !

Ghaṭnā jo bace hue jīvan jaise kuch kī cālak aur pālak. Ghaṭnā jisne de diyā rūpak bār bār dohrāne ko. Vahī coṭ, vahī śiddat, vahī bas hai honā, usse kam kuch nahīm honā, usse kam kuch kā nahīm honā, usse kam kuch nahīm kā honā !

Sabūt hai gar sabūt kā sabūt na māṅgo. Bāp hamāre. Ṭukṛe ṭukṛe unkā baccā aur ṭūṭ gae unke ṭukṛon ke āpas ke tār. Uṛ gae ṭukṛe aur uṛan chū kanaikśan ! Jīne kī cāh ṭukṛe ṭukṛe. Kabhī ve is ṭukṛe meṁ, kabhī usmeṁ, jo sāre juṛ jāte to ban jātā pūrā ādmī. (Shree 2010a: 93)

Un incident. Qui dit tout.

C'est toi ma mère mon père c'est toi ! C'est toi mon parent mon ami c'est toi !

Un incident qui conduit et nourrit le reste d'un semblant de vie. Un incident qui a créé cette allégorie, sans cesse répétée. C'est cette blessure, c'est cette intensité, c'est cela qui est, qui doit être, moins que cela c'est n'être rien, moins que cela c'est ne pas être, moins que cela c'est n'être rien qui soit !

La preuve existe, si tu ne demandes la preuve de la preuve. Notre père. Brisé cassé son fils, brisés aussi les liens qui liaient ses parts à lui. Envolés les fragments, volatilisée la relation ! L'envie de vivre brisée cassée. Lui parfois dans ce fragment-ci, parfois dans celui-là, tous ces fragments qui, rassemblés, formeraient un être complet. (Shree 2018: 106)

(i) In the first line, I wanted to keep the brevity of the two utterances and retain the punctuation in order to make it a kind of heading, as it is in the Hindi. These two utterances contain mainly plosive consonants, adding to the dynamic and explosive rhythm of the line. To keep both the meaning *and* the rhythm, I translated them as “Un incident. Qui dit tout.” It seems to me more faithful to the Hindi than the approach taken by the English translation, which ignores the full stop and adds the determiner “my” for extra clarification: “One incident and that becomes my everything.” (Shree 2011: 81).

(ii) In the second line, there were several aspects to maintain in order to keep both the meaning and the musicality of the hymn: (a) the repetition, twice, of *tumhīm ho* (you are), with the enclitic *hī* stress on the pronoun *tum* (you), and the rhythmic effect emphasized by the chiasmus in both sentences; (b) the consonance, present in the /tā/ of *mātā pitā*, which I reproduced with the /ère/ of *mère* (mother) and *père* (father); and (c) the proximity of the two pairs of names (*mātā pitā* and *bandhu sakhā*). Of course, the melody that may arise in the mind of

the Hindi-speaking reader, who is expected to know this very popular hymn,¹³ cannot arise in the same way in the mind of the French-speaking reader. Nevertheless, what matters here is the possibility that some melody emerges in his or her mind.

(iii) In the third paragraph, the first two clauses start with the word *ghaṭṇā* (incident), which is already present in the first paragraph, and thus becomes very insistent. Although no article precedes it, unlike in the first paragraph, I preferred to repeat the form “Un incident”, used in the first line, in order to echo this insistence. Since the Hindi text is inexplicit with regard to whose rest of life it is (*bace hue jīvan*), I have chosen to follow the Hindi version and keep this ambiguity alive. Even if it can be assumed that it is the narrator’s life, I preferred to use the expression “un semblant de vie” (a semblance of life), contrary to the English translation, which makes it explicit by adding the determiner “my”: “The incident that becomes the driver and keeper of the rest of my life. The incident that provides the metaphor thereafter for everything in my life.” (Shree 2011: 81).

In the same two sentences, the consonance created by the three words ending with the suffix *-ak* (*cālak* ‘driver’, *pālak* ‘keeper’, and *rūpak* ‘allegory’) has been reproduced in French with an assonance based on the words *conduit*, *nourrit*, and *allégorie*. Even if this results in a change of category for the first two terms (two verbs instead of two agent nouns), I preferred to use a verbal form, lighter and more explosive, and therefore closer to the Hindi, than the French equivalent suffix *-eur* (*conducteur*, *protecteur*), too heavy in this case. These words (*conduit*, *nourrit*) also allowed me to keep the double syllable of the Hindi words.

Furthermore, the very idea of repetition is highlighted in three complementary ways in the second clause of this paragraph:

- (a) by the explicit presence of the verb *dohrānā* (to repeat);
- (b) by the verb collocation with the adverbial phrase *bār bār* (again and again); and
- (c) by the shifting of *dohrānā* to the end of the sentence, with the stress implied by this clause-final position.

Repetition in this paragraph is again stressed by the iterative presence of the emphatic pronoun *vahī* (that very), which is followed by the triple presence of the phrase *usse kam* (less than that). In the second part of this sentence, each clause reveals a slight change in meaning due only to

¹³ So popular in fact that it was the main song in the movie *Mairī cup rahūṅī* (1962), sung by Lata Mangeshkar.

the postposition *kā* (of), which appears in the second clause hereafter and changes position in the third: *usse kam kuch nahīm honā, usse kam kuch kā nahīm honā, usse kam kuch nahīm kā honā*, which becomes in French, “moins que cela c’est n’être rien, moins que cela c’est ne pas être, moins que cela c’est n’être rien qui soit!”

(iv) The fourth and last paragraph of this excerpt contains essentially plosive consonants; note too the recurrence of the word *ṭukṛe* (pieces, fragments), containing the retroflex flap /ṛ/. All these explosive sounds thus perfectly echo the repetition of the word *ṭukṛe* and the idea of explosion that it connotes. In the translation, it was essential to reproduce this “sound picture”, which emphasizes the idea of explosion and fragmentation, underlined by the nature of the phonemes, as well as by the brevity, repetition, and meaning of the word *ṭukṛe*. As a result, I favoured the adjectival pair “brisé cassé” (broken broken) instead of the corresponding nouns “morceaux” and “fragments”, less expressive and less explosive. In the second part of this sentence (*ṭūṭ gae unke ṭukṛom ke āpas ke tār*), I also tried to reproduce the succession of brief Hindi words by equally short words and alliterations in French: “brisés aussi les liens qui liaient ses parts à lui”.

3.2. Excerpt II: chapter 72

In this chapter, the narrator examines the question of potential versus concrete achievements of a life, depending on the way one looks at it, namely either from the perspective of the past – in this case when the boy was eighteen years old and everything still seemed possible – or from the perspective of the present – once the tragic events described in the book have taken place. The whole purpose of this chapter is to compare the potentialities of the past, the ‘then’, *tab* in Hindi (*alors* in French), with the results – either concrete or left latent – of the present, the ‘now’, *ab* in Hindi (*maintenant* in French). An analogy is also made with the potentialities of the English language in a postcolonial context and what can be gained from it.

Āzmāyā tariqā hai islie batā rahā hūm iskī diqqatein. Ek, fel hone kā cāns hai. Dūsre, sāms phūlne kā. Fel end phūl. To kis lāyāq ?

Dūsre tariqā behtar hai ki samajh lo ek chor hai, ek hor hai ! Kahānī kā, jīvan kā, aṅgrezī kā. Is chor se kahoge to ab kahoge, hor chor se kahoge to tab kahoge. Tab kaho to sab honevālā hai, ab kaho to sab ho cukā hai. Tab pañkh aur uṛān, ab bād-e-tūfān ! (Shree 2010a : 200)

C'est une méthode éprouvée, c'est pourquoi je peux parler de ses problèmes. Primo, il y a des chances que ça échoue. Deusio, qu'on se retrouve essoufflé. Échouer et s'essouffler. À quoi bon alors ?

L'autre méthode est meilleure, celle de considérer qu'il y a deux bouts, deux buts. Dans une histoire, dans la vie, en anglais. Parle de ce bout-ci et tu diras « maintenant », « dès lors », mais parle de ce bout-là et tu diras « alors ». Dis « alors » et tout est à venir, dis « dès lors » et tout est accompli. « Alors » a des ailes et s'envole, « dès lors » a des airs de tempête et s'époumone ! (Shree 2018: 229–230)

In the first paragraph, there is a nice double echo between two pairs of words: first, between *cāns* (from the English 'chance') and *sāms* (breath); secondly, between *fel hone* (from the English 'to fail') and *phūlne* (to swell, or to gasp, to be breathless, when joined to *sāms*), a pair that is repeated in the next sentence (*Fel end phul*). I have tried to reproduce this double echo by playing on the repetition of the fricatives /ch/ (ʃ) and /s/ on the one hand, and on the repetition of the French phoneme /ou/ (u) on the other hand: "Primo, il y a des chances que ça échoue. Deusio, qu'on se retrouve essoufflé. Échouer et s'essouffler."

In the second paragraph, Geetanjali Shree introduces a new play on words with the terms *chor* (end, extremity, edge, border) and *hor*, of Punjabi origin, meaning 'more, other'.¹⁴ Literally, the Hindi sentence *samajh lo ek chor hai, ek hor hai!* means 'considers that there is one end, and one more'. An English translation could have played with the words 'one shore and one more'.¹⁵ For the French version, it was more difficult. How was I going to reproduce the original play on words in order to keep *both* its sound and sense effects? After many attempts, I eventually chose to replace the assonance /o/ in *chor* and *hor* with the alliteration /b/ in *bouts* (end) and *buts* (aim): "L'autre méthode est meilleure, celle de considérer qu'il y a deux bouts, deux buts."

The text, however, introduces a second play on words in this paragraph. This time it plays on the alternation between the two temporal notions of the past and the present, thanks to the echo of the corresponding Hindi words: *tab* (then) and *ab* (now). Such a play had to find an equivalent solution in French by playing on the sound similarity of the two words, but also, if possible, on their brevity. After several attempts and hesitations (especially for the second term), I came to the solution of *alors* (for *tab*) and *dès lors* (for *ab*). I am aware that *dès lors* (from

¹⁴ It can also be a poetic form of *or* (direction, side, end); one finds in particular the collocation *or-chor* for 'one end and the other' or 'beginning and end'. However, the author confirmed with me that she had the Punjabi word in mind.

¹⁵ The published English translation preferred not to follow this path and chose the more literal translation: "understand that there is one end and then one more" (Shree 2011: 193).

then on) is not exactly equivalent to ‘now’; this is why I found it necessary to add in juxtaposition, where the first occurrence of *dès lors* appears in the paragraph, the word *maintenant* (now). In an earlier version, I had opted for the adverb *ores*, which is semantically close to *ab*, but which seemed too archaic for this text – and whose meaning I doubted would be easily understood by each and every reader.

The last two sentences of the paragraph each reproduce the same echo process with an almost identical number of syllables in each of their two clauses and with the strong presence of rhymes in Hindi. As these two sentences are perfect examples of the particular rhythm and musicality of this text, I had to recreate something similar in the French, something that would sound a bit like a jingle: “Dis ‘alors’ et tout est à venir, dis ‘dès lors’ et tout est accompli. ‘Alors’ a des ailes et s’envole, ‘dès lors’ a des airs de tempête et s’époumone !”

The English version provides in this context another fine example of a perfectly relevant translation, but one that clearly favours the semantic point of view – including some additions to clarify the meaning of the last sentence – rather than the phonetic aspects of the text: “Say it then, and it is yet to be; say it now and it has been already. *Then* has wings and flight and hope, *now* lies crushed in the aftermath of the storm!” (Shree 2011: 193).

3.3. Excerpt III: chapter 13

In chapter 13, the narrator wonders what his place is in this house, and whether he even has a life of his own, independent of the life of “the other”, the dead son. The first paragraph is striking for its density and is characterized by the following three aspects:

- (a) all sentences are interrogative – even if there is no question mark at the end of the first one; it is therefore essential to keep the questioning tone of this passage and the uncertainty that characterizes it, all the more since the last word of this paragraph is the marker of interrogation *kyā* (what?);
- (b) structurally, three short sentences, one line each in the original text, are followed by a fourth and final sentence that covers five lines; there is thus a strong difference to be respected between the first three sentences and the last; and
- (c) the final sentence, although very long, is marked by a dynamic – and jerky too – tempo; it is the result of a double iterative effect, achieved by the succession of very short, often monosyllabic words, and by the repeated use of closed vowels (*i*, *ī*, *īm*, *e*, and *em*).

To ghar merā yā uskā aur main aur merā jīvan yā vah aur uskā. Bāt uljhāne kā śauq nahīm hai par aur kahūn to kaise kahūn ? Marzī bhī mānūn to kyā cunūn—apne tīn bars yā uske aṭṭhārah ? Bas vahīm kahīm bīc merī calīm merī sāmserī aur mān aur bāp kī aur uskī to nahīm phir bhī sārī usī kī aur sarak phisal sambhal jā mar merī kaun jāne main tīn kā huā yā aṭṭhārah kā aur yah to pakke taur par nahīm patā ki jis dīn bam phūṭā aur ham donon chīṭke main sābut vah parkhace vah dīn uskā janamdīn hai yā mṛtyutithi aur merī bhī kyā ? (Shree 2010a: 39)

Alors cette maison la mienne ou la sienne et s'agit-il de moi et de ma vie ou de lui et de sa vie ? Je n'aime pas compliquer les choses, mais comment dire cela autrement ? Même si je pouvais choisir, que choisirais-je : mes trois ans ou ses dix-huit ? Bon c'est quelque part ici que je vis et Maman et Papa aussi mais pas lui bien sûr et pourtant tout vient de lui et dans ce rampement glissement redressement anéantissement qui sait si j'avais trois ans ou dix-huit et impossible de savoir pour sûr si le jour où la bombe a explosé et qu'on a été dispersé moi entier lui en pièces c'est l'anniversaire de sa naissance ou de sa mort et pour moi quid ? (Shree 2018: 44)

The aim here was, first, to respect as much as possible the respective proportion in length of the sentences (respectively, fourteen, twelve, and twelve words for the first three sentences, and seventy words for the fourth), and secondly, to reproduce one of the effects of the last sentence, that of a feeling of dizziness, because of the many questions and words following one another at a very sustained pace.

Since there is no punctuation in the last sentence, except for the final question mark, the repeated presence of coordinating conjunctions – particularly *aur* (and) – plays a key role in instilling this frenetic rhythm. Out of the seventy words of this sentence, there are seven *aur* and two *yā* (or) – already in the first sentence of this paragraph, out of the fourteen words there are three *aur* and two *yā*. Even if the comma is much less used in Hindi than in French, its total absence in this very long sentence – a structure that is found several times in the book – must be respected in the French too; the risk being that it would otherwise lose this repetitive, whirling effect.

Within the paragraph, consonances and assonances especially also play an important role in the melody and rhythm of the text, as in *aur uskī to nahīm phir bhī sārī usī kī aur sarak phisal sambhal jā mar merī*, which becomes “mais pas lui bien sûr et pourtant tout vient de lui et dans ce rampement glissement redressement anéantissement”.

In this case, contrary to the other excerpts, the English exercises quite a bit of freedom on several points and unfortunately misses the hypnotic and frenetic rhythm of the Hindi text. This

results from the addition of commas, and especially from the splitting into two sentences of the last and long Hindi sentence – and even by the eviction of a part of the Hindi version!

Somewhere amongst it all beats my pulse and my parents’ and not his of course, but the throb of each pulse is his, really. And no one knows for sure about the day the bomb exploded and the two of us were scattered, I whole and he in pieces, whether that day was my birthday or his deathday. (Shree 2011: 29)

3.4. Excerpt IV: chapter 37

In this chapter the narrator tries to banish the past and live in the present. However, the “ghost” of the other son still haunts both his room and the house. In the following excerpt, like in the previous one, what strikes us first is the presence of a very long sentence (nine lines in the original text). The rhythm, however, is different. In this excerpt, what dominates is the stream of consciousness that gives to the paragraph its specificity. The sentence is only slightly interrupted by the repeated presence of the conjunction *aur* (and), which gives to this stream of consciousness a particular rhythm and breathing.

Nīr̄nd merī khāl utār detī hai. Maim̄ bhūle se sone lagtā hūm̄ jab am̄dhiyār mere kamre ko gaṭak jātā hai aur pās kā saṃsār mar jātā hai aur dūr gāriyom̄ kī āvāz aur kuttom̄ kā kikiyānā dhartī ke bhītar gahrī gahrī marmar sī karāte haim̄ aur maim̄ bhī usī meṃ dafan hotā jā rahā hūm̄ aur tab nikaltā hai kuch yā kō cīr̄ṅṅiyom̄ ko mulamme kī tarah or̄he aur phir vahī khurc khurc merī soī khāl chīlne lagtī hai aur merī sām̄sem̄ aṭakne lagtī haim̄ aur lagtā hai mujhe maim̄ kisī sandūqce meṃ band hūm̄ aur zarā zarā zarrā zarrā bikhar gayā hūm̄. Sūt sūt cīr̄ṅṅiyām̄ mujhe maṭiyāmeṭ kare ḍāl rahī haim̄ aur dhaṛ dhaṛ dhaṛ dhaṛ dhaṛ maim̄ uḥtā hūm̄ sannāṭī rātom̄ meṃ. (Shree 2010a: 105–106)

Le sommeil m’écorce. Si par mégarde je m’endors quand l’obscurité engloutit ma chambre et que le monde environnant meurt et que de loin me parviennent le bruit des voitures et le hurlement des chiens comme un grondement émanant des tréfonds de la terre où je sombre à mon tour alors elle apparaît la chose couverte de fourmis comme d’une cape et là recommence le scratch scratch scratch qui se met à peler ma peau endormie et mon souffle s’arrête et l’impression me vient d’être enfermé dans une boîte et de me disperser en de toutes petites et minuscules particules. Fil après fil les fourmis me désagrègent et mon cœur cogne boum boum boum boum je me lève en sursaut dans le silence de mort de ces nuits. (Shree 2018: 120–121)

The essential feature of the long intermediate sentence is its lack of punctuation. However, the repeated presence of the conjunction *aur* gives the impression, while reading the text, of an obsessive, heady, almost bewitching rhythm. In this respect, it seemed essential to keep this conjunction and to reproduce its effect, despite the great aversion in the French language to this kind of repetition.

Due to this reluctance in French to repeat the conjunction *et* (and), I had initially opted for the use of the semicolon, thinking that this would also make a better distinction between the different images mentioned in the paragraph. However, the rhythm of thought and images that jostle in the narrator's head seemed more important to me than the strict rules of the French language and the clarity of the description. Therefore, I chose finally to use the conjunction *et* in order to respect this stream of consciousness and the slight breathlessness that follows.

I have also tried to reproduce the consonance of the phoneme /r/, made especially prominent by the onomatopoeic *khurc khurc* (which expresses scratching, itching), both by the sound and by the mental image created when reading it. The repeated use of the alveolar /r/ also makes it possible to concretize the noise – in this case, frightening – of the street, of cars, of dogs barking: “de loin me parviennent le bruit des voitures et le hurlement des chiens comme un grondement émanant des tréfonds de la terre”. Of course, plays on words and alliterations, for instance, cannot systematically be reproduced identically in French. Sometimes I had to choose other sounds to show the presence of an alliteration, for example at the end of the intermediate sentence, where the Hindi has *zarā zarā zarrā zarrā bikhar gayā hūm*, literally “a little a little atom atom I have been scattered”. To reproduce the notions of tininess and scattered things, while retaining the repetition of identical sounds, I replaced the alliteration with similar endings, playing with the echo of the words *minuscules* (tiny) and *particules* (particle), emphasized also by the phrase *toutes petites* which precedes: “me disperser en de toutes petites et minuscules particules”.

4. Conclusion

A translation that focuses first and foremost on the semantic content of the text would certainly have been able to convey its general meaning – this is what the English version has done successfully. However, giving special attention to the word sequences, to the rhythm of the sentences, and to their distinctive sonority, was essential if I was to translate the poetic, extra-semantic, and almost sensory nature of the Hindi text. Thus, it is only when I started to pay

careful attention to every aspect of the rhythm of the text, to the way things are said – and “sung” – in it, to consider both the meaning and effect of the words, and not only the grammar, that I felt I was able to reach an additional, deeper layer of meaning. It was when I was able to feel the textured surface of the text, with its protuberances and troughs, relief and depth, that I was able to give the French translation a particular texture, capable of evoking the unique light of the Hindi text.

This is not to say that the result of the first version of my translation, primarily based on the semantic content, betrayed the message of the text or contained serious mistakes. But it was, as it were, a different novel that I had translated. To understand the difference between the two versions, one can use an analogy with the paintings of the famous French artist Pierre Soulages. My first translation corresponded more or less to a photocopy of a painting by Soulages, whereas the aim – in his case in particular, but with any painting and text too – was to make a three-dimensional, material reproduction of the original work. In the work both of Soulages and Geetanjali Shree, texture is an integral part of the creative process, and must therefore be recreated and made visible – audible too, since Geetanjali Shree’s novel benefits significantly from being read aloud.

Let me conclude with two short quotations, sharing each in its own way this idea of the importance of texture in a text and its translation. The first is borrowed from Marie Nadia Karsky’s introduction to her edited book *Traduire le rythme* (2014: 23), where she writes (in French) that any translation “should make it possible to push back the boundaries of what is considered ‘possible’ in a language, so that it can accommodate traces of the source language”. The second quotation brings us back to the author of KhJ, who wrote in her paper “Writing Is Translating Is Writing Is Translating Is...”:

Literature is always more than its content. It is structure, it is texture, it is cadence, it is rhythm, it is cultural codes and bondings that form a community, it is a text pulsating with and in its context. (Shree 2010b: 275)

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Hindu Joint Family e pluralismo giuridico

nel contesto indiano

Mara Bisi

This article analyses a few aspects of the Hindu Joint Family, aiming to highlight similarities and differences between the models prevailing in northern India and some variants in southern India, with particular reference to the Nayars. The analysis considers this type of asset segregation institution in its objectives and social assumptions, aiming to underline the pluralism within the Indian legal tradition as a prerequisite for a comparative study encompassing other models of asset segregation created in different legal traditions. The ultimate goal of this project is to define which characteristics are shared by the different asset segregation instruments and what their evolutionary potentialities may actually be in an international scenario.

The interest is mainly focused on the study of the forms of asset segregation in the Hindu tradition before the British colonization phase, among which the Hindu Joint Family and its evolution in history.

From an analysis of the two different systems of HJF in northern and southern India, it appears that, despite their differences, there are also many similarities: we can, e.g., find a property belonging to a single person, who also has the right to administer such a property and who generally identifies with the older man within the family group. Moreover, in both cases the property is administered and redistributed on the basis of the choices made by the same person, who can therefore be identified as the manager of the family property and the land property. Finally, in both systems the family property must be well managed in the interest of other people, who often are the family members, relatives and descendants of the property administrator.

1. Introduzione

Il presente lavoro si propone di descrivere la disciplina tradizionale delle *Hindu Joint Family* (d'ora innanzi, per brevità, anche HJF) nel subcontinente indiano, con l'obiettivo di analizzare l'evoluzione di questo istituto giuridico e di evidenziare l'applicazione differenziata che ha avuto in diverse zone dell'India. Nonostante l'importanza dell'istituto, sia sul piano storico che su quello teorico, gli studi in materia non sono sviluppati come ci si potrebbe attendere. Ciò dipende in parte dal fatto che gli specialisti di diritto hindu si sono dedicati principalmente agli aspetti non patrimoniali del matrimonio e in parte alle difficoltà legate alla comprensione dell'istituto per il non giurista.

In questo articolo la prospettiva giuridica è accompagnata da quella sociologica al fine di evidenziare le ragioni sociali che sono alla base della formazione di questo istituto. L'analisi che qui si propone si inserisce infatti all'interno di una ricerca di più ampio respiro sulle forme di segregazione patrimoniale utilizzate in India, considerandole anche nella loro evoluzione, al fine di identificare somiglianze e differenze sia all'interno della tradizione giuridica indiana sia in prospettiva nel confronto con istituti simili sviluppati in altre tradizioni, fra i quali in particolare il *trust* e il *waqf*. Pur in questa più ampia prospettiva comparativa, è importante non sottovalutare la non unitarietà dell'istituto nella stessa tradizione giuridica indiana, che include aree e comunità molto diverse tra di loro. Questo articolo è quindi dedicato allo studio di alcune variazioni interne allo stesso diritto indiano.

Allo scopo di poter meglio comprendere somiglianze e differenze di disciplina con riferimento alla tradizione delle HJF in India, a livello sia di struttura che di funzionalità degli istituti, in questo articolo verranno analizzate le principali differenze tra le HJF prevalenti nel nord dell'India e le forme di *joint property units* che hanno fatto parte della tradizione del sud dell'India, che considereremo con riferimento alla casta hindu dei Nayar in Kerala.

L'articolo si concentra sulle regole tradizionali e sull'impatto del periodo coloniale. L'argomento non ha però importanza solo storica e teorica, essendo le HJF ancora parte del diritto hindu, per quanto nell'India indipendente si sia avviata una revisione. Sotto questo aspetto, si può osservare che la discussione attuale in merito alle HJF è incentrata sull'opportunità della loro abolizione, così come è stato fatto proprio in Kerala con il *Kerala Hindu Joint Family System (Abolition) Act 1975*; ciò in quanto il sistema delle HJF in tempi moderni ha sollevato diverse perplessità per quanto concerne la loro posizione privilegiata in materia fiscale e per ciò che riguarda l'immobilizzazione della ricchezza (Divekar 1999).

La HJF è quindi una forma di segregazione patrimoniale che trova le sue radici nella tradizione ma rappresenta una delle strutture familiari tradizionali hindu che tutt'ora assume rilevanza in materia di proprietà e diritto successorio. Al fine di meglio individuare i suoi tratti essenziali nell'India contemporanea è dapprima necessario delineare la struttura della HJF e la sua evoluzione.

Si deve altresì rilevare che nella realtà indiana, nonostante il lungo periodo coloniale, si riscontra una notevole resistenza delle tradizioni e dei diritti cosiddetti 'personali', legati all'appartenenza culturale e religiosa; ciò ha permesso la trasmissione fino ai giorni nostri di molte strutture di antichissima origine, che hanno conosciuto un'evoluzione autonoma anche nel quadro del sistema giuridico coloniale (Francavilla 2010). Ciononostante, è necessario tenere presente che, durante il periodo di colonizzazione britannica, alcuni istituti hanno subito un'evoluzione anche permeata dalle

regole ed interpretazioni elaborate dalle Corti coloniali, che hanno così dato origine a nuovi strumenti e discipline (Derrett 1977).

2. La *Hindu Joint Family*: caratteri fondamentali ed evoluzione

La struttura della *joint family* è da sempre presente in India, o quantomeno fin da quando vi è traccia della cultura hindu tradizionale (Denault 2009), e si ritiene che fosse maggiormente diffusa nella tradizione Indoaria nel nord dell'India, in particolare in Uttar Pradesh¹ (Denault 2009).

A seguito dell'incontro con le strutture coloniali britanniche, come si accennava sopra, sembrava vi fosse una lenta erosione dell'istituto della *joint family* quando, al contrario, veniva data una nuova forma allo strumento giuridico in questione. In particolare, parzialmente anche per la scarsa conoscenza dell'istituto da parte dei colonizzatori, spesso vi è stata la tendenza da parte delle corti ad unificare la disciplina della *joint family*, cercando di uniformare il modello sulla base di quello elaborato dalla scuola *Mitākṣarā*².

Al fine di meglio comprendere questa evoluzione, però, si devono ora delineare i tratti essenziali della *joint family* tradizionale maggiormente diffusa nel nord dell'India³.

La HJF rappresenta una entità giuridica (è dibattuta la qualità di persona giuridica in senso tecnico [Sontheimer 1977]) la quale è costituita da una massa patrimoniale asservita allo scopo precipuo di sostenere la famiglia e definire un sistema successorio.

Come affermato da Sontheimer:

The essence of joint Hindu family may be found in the concept that a man's property serves family purposes and that a father and son own the property rather as a kind of trust for many others besides themselves (Sontheimer 1977: xx).

¹ Si ritiene che i riferimenti vi siano già nei testi del Veda.

² Sul tema, anche in riferimento all'interpretazione delle corti delle norme sulle taravad, è interessante la lettura di Thomas (2000-2001). In riferimento alla scuola *Mitākṣarā* si consiglia la lettura di Joshi (2005).

³ Come si avrà modo di vedere nel prosieguo, gli elementi qui delineati afferiscono alla struttura che viene individuata nei due principali *nibhanda*, commentari ai *Dharmaśāstra Yajnavalkya Smṛti*: il *Mitākṣarā*, scritto da Vijñaneshwara, e il *Dāyabhāga*, scritto da Jīmūtavāhana, i quali hanno dato origine a due diverse scuole. La scuola *Dāyabhāga* prevale ora nel Bengala, Assam and Punjab, per tutto il resto del subcontinente la scuola prevalente è quella *Mitākṣarā*. Per quanto riguarda invece la tradizione del sud dell'India, che ci interesserà più avanti, è maggiormente complicato, in quanto la disciplina giuridica della *joint family* al sud è stata racchiusa in epoca successiva nel testo del *Shankarasmiṛti*, elaborato appositamente per il Kerala e la tradizione del diritto di famiglia ivi prevalente, come eccezione rispetto a quella ormai largamente prevalente in India della scuola *Mitākṣarā*.

In origine, pertanto, la HJF rappresentava una struttura giuridica finalizzata da un lato a tutelare la figura paterna durante l'invecchiamento e, dall'altro, a sostenere economicamente i membri più stretti della famiglia, al fine di garantire loro i relativi diritti successori e l'integrità del patrimonio (*infra* sulle regole della *partition*)⁴.

Secondo la disciplina originaria della HJF, il padre e i membri della famiglia facenti parte della HJF usavano altresì vivere presso un medesimo *household* e gestivano la proprietà della HJF con maggiore efficienza, ma questo aspetto ha gradualmente perso d'importanza e, al giorno d'oggi, la HJF non ha necessariamente una comune residenza (Sontheimer 1977).

Per comprendere meglio la disciplina applicabile, occorre ora elencare i membri che possono appartenere alla HJF e, successivamente, analizzare le diverse relazioni tra i medesimi:

- i *coparcener* cioè discendenti uomini di un unico ascendente fino al 4 grado che sono titolari della proprietà della HJF;
- le loro madri o matrigne;
- le mogli, anche se separate per accordo o decreto;
- le figlie non sposate;
- le vedove e le figlie non sposate dei *coparcener* che sono deceduti in uno stato di co-proprietà con almeno un altro *coparcener*;
- i figli illegittimi di concubine permanenti;
- coloro che hanno ottenuto il consenso dei *coparcener*;
- i mariti delle figlie sposate che per usanza di casta prendono la residenza a casa degli affini (Sontheimer 1977).

Normalmente tre generazioni vivevano assieme secondo le regole di una società patrilineare; dette tre generazioni erano costituite da due sposi, i loro figli maschi e le figlie non sposate, nonché infine i figli dei primi figli maschi.

Considerando i rapporti all'interno della HJF, al fine di dare maggiori informazioni in merito al funzionamento di questa struttura, è utile evidenziare l'esistenza dei rapporti *Sapinda*. Il concetto di *Sapinda* è molto complesso ed ha forti connotazioni rituali. Per quel che riguarda più direttamente il tema di questo articolo si possono evidenziare alcuni punti fondamentali. Innanzitutto, i *Sapinda* hanno diritto a una quota della massa patrimoniale che costituisce la HJF, e sono soggetti titolari di diritti successori con riferimento alla predetta massa.

⁴ Per approfondimenti in merito si veda Mitra (1897).

In particolare, coloro che hanno rapporti di *Sapinda* hanno un diritto di prelazione nell'acquisizione dell'eredità della proprietà della famiglia; tale diritto di prelazione opera nello specifico rispetto ai soggetti che vengono chiamati *Sakulya*, vale a dire gli ascendenti, i fratelli uterini, il figlio della moglie di una stessa casta, il nipote e pronipote (Sanyal 1995).

Si può inoltre osservare che in base al grado di parentela, da valutarsi secondo i legami di *Sapinda*, veniva distribuita la ricchezza presente nella HJF; a titolo esemplificativo, il parente più prossimo era intitolato a ricevere la proprietà immobiliare (Sontheimer 1977).

La disciplina dei rapporti successori all'interno della HJF, però, concerne maggiormente le regole inerenti alla *partition* della massa patrimoniale tra i figli maschi del padre di famiglia (detti *coparceners*), titolare della *joint property* e dei relativi poteri di gestione (Mitra 1897).

Come osserva Sontheimer, la HJF può essere considerata “as a property-acquiring, managing and – enjoying unit centering around the relationship between father and son according to traditional law” (Sontheimer 1977: xx).

Secondo la prospettiva tradizionale, la massa patrimoniale della HJF era destinata a rimanere intatta, affinché la stessa potesse essere trasmessa alle generazioni successive, mantenendo unita la proprietà e diminuendo il rischio di dispersione della ricchezza.

Tale unità della proprietà della HJF, però, sottostava a diverse regole per quanto concerne la divisione della massa patrimoniale e, in particolare, la *partition* della proprietà tra i *coparcener*.

In tema di diritto di proprietà familiare, vi sono due termini che possono considerarsi fondamentali per la comprensione del concetto sottostante: il termine *riktha*, il quale letteralmente significa ‘ciò che viene lasciato’, ed il termine *daya*, il quale identifica la proprietà del padre che viene divisa per atto *inter-vivos*⁵. In particolare, la *daya* poteva significare anche ‘ricompensa’ per il lavoro svolto per la famiglia; ciò è emblematico del riconoscimento del diritto tradizionale della possibilità di scelta e dell'estensione dei poteri gestori del padre nella distribuzione della ricchezza familiare (Mitra 1897).

Vi sono state diverse interpretazioni nella dottrina hindu in riferimento alla *partition* e, nello specifico, a ciò che inerisce alla divisione della proprietà prima del decesso del padre di famiglia; in particolare, occorre analizzare la disciplina elaborata dalla scuola *Mitākṣarā*, largamente prevalente nel subcontinente indiano rispetto alla scuola *Dāyabhāga*⁶. Come abbiamo osservato poc'anzi, le due scuole

⁵ Si veda *infra*. In tema di *partition* è possibile consultare anche Desai (2004) e Maine (2005).

⁶ Per approfondimenti riguardanti le differenze intercorrenti tra le due scuole si veda anche Joshi (2005) e Kishwar (1994).

di pensiero traggono origine dall'interpretazione di due studiosi della *Yajnavalkya Smṛti*⁷: Vijnaneshwara, che ha dato origine alla scuola *Mitākṣarā*, e Jīmūtavāhana, che è invece stato il fondatore della scuola *Dāyabhāga*. La principale differenza inerente alle due scuole di pensiero riguarda proprio la divisione delle quote tra i diversi *coparcener* e, in particolare, il diritto di proprietà sulla *ancestral property* del figlio o dei figli nati all'interno della *joint family*⁸ (Divekar 1999).

Si ritiene che già nel periodo vedico fosse prevista la possibilità di una *partition* anticipata tra fratelli in caso di padre anziano e ritirato dall'attività lavorativa. Secondo questa ricostruzione, la relativa disciplina faceva espresso riferimento alla volontà del padre titolare della massa patrimoniale; egli poteva, in altri termini, scegliere se effettuare la *partition*, ovvero impedire la predetta divisione e ritardarla fino al momento della propria morte (Desai 2004).

La finalità specifica di questa disciplina era quindi quella di garantire al padre la possibilità di scelta, la quale veniva effettuata anche con riferimento alla possibilità di mantenimento a carico della massa patrimoniale dello stesso e della consorte (Sontheimer 1977). La *partition* poteva pertanto essere effettuata altresì per atto *inter-vivos*⁹ (Maine 2005).

In ogni caso, di regola, la *partition* avveniva a seguito della morte del padre (Mitra 1897).

Un aspetto interessante riguarda poi la gestione di eventuali conflitti tra fratelli nella divisione della proprietà familiare; la disciplina in questi casi si trova nei *Dharmaśāstra*¹⁰. In generale, è prevista una propensione ad attribuire maggiore rilievo alla figura del fratello maggiore in caso di dissidi; la *Manusmṛti*, quindi, propone addirittura di prevedere la successione diretta nelle mani del fratello maggiore al momento della morte del padre (Sontheimer 1977). Ciò ha creato anche diversi problemi interpretativi a livello di diritto giurisprudenziale al fine di adattare la disciplina tradizionale di diritto hindu ai nuovi principi introdotti nella Costituzione Indiana, quali quelli dell'uguaglianza e di non discriminazione (Denault 2009).

⁷ In riferimento alla struttura delle fonti tradizionali del diritto hindu e, in particolare, al ruolo della *smṛti* vedere Francavilla (2010).

⁸ In sintesi, secondo la scuola *Dāyabhāga* il figlio non avrebbe alcun diritto sulla proprietà familiare prima della morte del padre; diversamente, la scuola *Mitākṣarā* opta per un diritto naturale alla nascita alla proprietà familiare e ogni figlio avrebbe diritto ad una quota ideale della proprietà familiare, anche se non anzitempo divisa.

⁹ In particolare, secondo quanto ivi riportato, il padre godeva di ampi poteri per ciò che concerne la *partition* della proprietà in comune: egli poteva dividere la massa patrimoniale, propria o familiare, senza il consenso dei propri figli. Ciò poteva avvenire anche nei confronti dei nipoti in caso di premorienza dei figli.

¹⁰ In riferimento ai *dharmaśāstra* e alla loro collocazione nel sistema delle fonti del diritto vedere Francavilla (2010) e Lingat (1967).

Si osservi però che la donna, secondo la disciplina tradizionale, non partecipava alla divisione della massa patrimoniale della HJF (Sontheimer 1977).

La *partition* non costituiva l'unica soluzione al fine di disciplinare la successione dei beni conferiti nella HJF, bensì si apriva un'ulteriore possibilità, cioè la scelta di mantenere la proprietà *joint*¹¹, unita, al fine di acquisire a livello familiare un maggior potere (Mitra 1897).

Sulla base di queste premesse, il concetto di HJF e la sua disciplina hanno conosciuto una propria evoluzione.

Alcuni studiosi, tra i quali Maine (Maine in Säävälä 2014), avevano identificato le HJF come tipo di famiglia prevalente durante il XIX secolo in India e come famiglia improntata all'attività agraria e alla coltivazione della terra; su questa interpretazione si è basata l'amministrazione coloniale (Säävälä 2014). Secondo la prospettiva della predetta dottrina, la HJF rappresentava un'evoluzione della famiglia romana, la quale riconosceva un potere assoluto ed indiscusso al *pater familias*¹² (Säävälä 2014).

Tale tipo di ricostruzione storica portava con sé alcune critiche e perplessità nei confronti del sistema tradizionale indiano: in particolare, Maine evidenziò che l'esistenza di una massa patrimoniale in capo alla HJF fosse altresì causa del malfunzionamento dell'economia del subcontinente. Ciò in quanto l'immobilismo della massa patrimoniale, destinata ai bisogni della famiglia, poteva limitare l'iniziativa individuale e la mobilità della ricchezza (Maine in Säävälä 2014).

Considerando questa lettura effettuata durante il XIX secolo dall'amministrazione britannica, è stato evidenziato come gli inglesi vedessero la HJF come un difetto nella tradizione giuridica indiana e come quindi ritenessero che essa fosse destinata ad essere soppiantata dalla diversa e più moderna *nuclear family* (Sanyal 1995).

Diversamente, gli studi di Saavala hanno portato a sostenere l'esistenza di un superamento della visione tradizionale occidentale della HJF verso una lettura maggiormente riflessiva negli anni 50/60 del secolo scorso (Säävälä 2014).

Al giorno d'oggi si evidenzia che la *joint family* può essere definita come l'unione di almeno due fratelli con le rispettive mogli ed i rispettivi figli, possibilmente comprensiva altresì dei genitori, delle sorelle non sposate che condividono la stessa dimora (Säävälä 2014).

¹¹ La disciplina della *partition* e la distribuzione delle quote tra i vari *coparceners* all'interno della famiglia non può essere qui approfondita e si rimanda a Bhalla (2002).

¹² Secondo quanto riportato in Säävälä (2014) la HJF ha preservato la forma di '*paternal family*' del diritto romano antico, la quale è stata trasmessa tramite le comunità di piccoli villaggi indipendenti rimaste estranee agli equilibri politici e di potere della storia.

La HJF può ritenersi tutt'altro che desueta; piuttosto è possibile sostenere che durante il periodo di amministrazione coloniale britannica la HJF abbia conosciuto una propria ed autonoma evoluzione e, secondo alcuni, è destinata a rimanere quale struttura e categoria socio-giuridica che può servire a mediare tra la proprietà individuale e lo Stato (Denault 2009).

Il contatto con l'amministrazione coloniale, in altri termini, ha contribuito a far crescere ed evolvere la struttura delle *joint family* in un'ottica maggiormente permeata dai principi importati dal colonizzatore (Denault 2009).

La famiglia hindu veniva considerata come basata maggiormente sul concetto di proprietà e comunione nella medesima, diversamente da quanto di norma asserito per quanto riguarda la famiglia di stampo europeo basata sull'affetto familiare (Denault 2009).

Lo stesso modello tradizionale di HJF ha conosciuto un proprio processo di diversificazione che è passato altresì dalla giurisprudenza delle corti coloniali introdotte dal colonizzatore britannico, il quale in tal modo ha contribuito in realtà a mantenere viva, seppur con alcune modificazioni, la struttura della HJF. Alla fine del XIX secolo, infatti, la disciplina delle HJF era contenuta anche nel *Anglo-indian case law* (Denault 2009).

In particolar modo, il *case law* si è principalmente occupato delle regole riguardanti la *partition*, cioè la divisione della proprietà in comune in quote individuali (Maine 2005), che maggiormente potevano dare adito a controversie tra i membri delle HJF. In alcuni casi, in particolare, si potevano riscontrare determinate difficoltà in quanto spesso la *partition* riguardava anche i differenti contratti di *tenancy* inerenti alla terra o alle abitazioni; altre difficoltà ancora si potevano riscontrare nel fatto che alcune famiglie avevano l'abitudine di intestare determinate proprietà a titolo di *benami*¹³ alle mogli, creando diverse difficoltà nella disciplina della *partition* (Denault 2009).

In ogni caso, appare evidente che l'amministratore coloniale sia entrata in contatto con la realtà tradizionale delle HJF e che la medesima realtà abbia conosciuto, nell'incontro con l'amministrazione coloniale, un'evoluzione di stampo maggiormente giuridico nelle nuove strutture istituzionali del diritto coloniale. Infine, come affermato da Denault, alla fine del XIX secolo era comunque ritenuto normale ed usuale tenere la proprietà della famiglia *joint* e tutt'ora questo istituto ha una sua diffusione.

¹³ Le cosiddette *benami transaction* sono transazioni tramite le quali la proprietà di un determinato bene viene trasferita a un soggetto ma il prezzo della vendita viene corrisposto da un altro soggetto. per approfondimenti in merito è interessante la disamina delle differenze tra il titolare apparente ed il soggetto trasferitario di una transazione *benami* in Patil (2012).

3. La *taravad* dei Nayar del sud dell'India

Nel Sud dell'India vi è una tradizione giuridica parzialmente diversa per ciò che concerne la *joint family* e la disciplina giuridica ad essa collegata.

In particolare, è interessante ai fini del presente articolo soffermarsi sulla tradizione matrilineare della *joint family* in uso in Kerala, che si distingue dal resto dell'India e che esprime un diritto e delle regole peculiari in confronto a quelle delle scuole *Mitākṣarā* e *Dāyabhāga* (vedere *supra*).

In Kerala, come si avrà modo di approfondire in seguito, esiste anche, e in passato era prevalente, un sistema familiare di tipo matrilineare in contrapposizione alle altre zone del subcontinente indiano; ciò è risaputo, ma sulle origini storiche di questo istituto non vi sono fonti certe che possano certificare con esattezza come il sistema matrilineare si sia diffuso proprio in quella zona e come questo sia stato successivamente disciplinato (Jeffrey 1992).

Secondo una prima opinione, comunque, pare che la disciplina applicabile al sistema matrilineare in Kerala sia stata raccolta nella *Śāṅkarasmṛti* (nota anche come *Laghudharmaprakāśikā*) nel basso medioevo indiano all'epoca di Śāṅkarācārya (VIII secolo d.c.¹⁴) e che tale testo sia stato da egli scritto con la precipua finalità di raccogliere le regole applicabili e in uso tra le popolazioni in Kerala, con la predisposizione di un testo giuridico a ciò dedicato. Secondo l'opinione di altri, invece, il testo in questione sarebbe stato scritto in epoca successiva¹⁵.

In Kerala, peraltro, vi sono diverse caste e popolazioni che hanno una struttura familiare matrilineare e che rispettano le regole del *marumakkattayam*¹⁶. La casta più nota e più studiata con riferimento al diritto familiare tradizionale hindu del Kerala, proprio in conseguenza della peculiarità del sistema matrilineare di *marumakkattayam*, è la casta dei Nayar (Janaki 2017).

Al fine di approfondire la questione inerente alla disciplina familiare applicabile alla casta dei Nayar, si può allora evidenziare come la Gough abbia definito loro come “a Hindu caste of land-holders with matrilineal kinship system” (Gough 1952: 71).

Si tratta di casta di nobile stirpe che si caratterizza per alcune peculiarità sociali e giuridiche.

¹⁴ Non vi sono certezze in riferimento alle date né sull'esattezza del nome. Questi riferimenti sono di Diwan and Diwan (1992).

¹⁵ Purtroppo non si rende possibile in questa sede approfondire la questione legata alla diversità di disciplina giuridica vigente in Kerala. Si suggerisce la lettura dei seguenti testi ai fini dell'approfondimento del conflitto dottrinario in materia di fonti del diritto e della loro storia in Kerala: Davis (2004) e Unni (2003).

¹⁶ Sistema tradizionale familiare del Kerala come disciplinato nel testo della *Śāṅkarasmṛti*. Vi è ambiguità sul suo significato letterale (vedere *infra*).

In particolare, ai presenti fini, è interessante evidenziare la tipologia di famiglia tradizionale dei Nayar e, conseguentemente, la struttura della medesima famiglia che condivideva una *joint property* e le differenze riscontrabili con la tradizionale HJF.

La prima peculiarità che si può notare nel mondo dei Nayar, come anticipato, è che il sistema di parentela è un sistema matrilineare, che dà rilievo alla figura femminile anche per ciò che concerne la discendenza (Gough 1959).

Il ruolo della donna e del sistema matrilineare dei Nayar è tutt'oggi dibattuto per quanto riguarda le sue origini e la sua evoluzione.

Come evidenziato dalla Gough, i Nayar sono una casta hindu con struttura familiare matrilineare e, all'interno della medesima casta, vi è un'ulteriore divisione in due sotto-caste a seconda dei ruoli svolti dai differenti soggetti: da un lato vi erano i capi del distretto, dall'altro i capi del villaggio. In altri termini, secondo la presente ricostruzione, il ruolo della famiglia e l'equilibrio dei poteri tra le stesse avevano altresì una componente legata al potere politico ed economico sul territorio (Gough 1959).

Le famiglie Nayar erano da considerarsi quali *joint property units* che vivevano in gruppi; in particolare, di norma la famiglia Nayar rappresentava un segmento del lignaggio ed era composta, diversamente da quanto visto nel precedente paragrafo, da 5 a 7 generazioni in un unico *household*, per un totale di circa 15/35 soggetti appartenenti all'unità. Nell'eventualità in cui detto gruppo dovesse crescere nel numero, allora la disciplina tradizionale applicabile prevedeva la *partition* volontaria del patrimonio familiare in due separate unità, che vivevano in due separati *household* (Gough 1955). Questo aspetto differenzia la disciplina da quella applicabile alla HJF del nord, sotto il profilo della *partition*.

Il gruppo di soggetti che appartenevano alla unità familiare allargata in *joint property* veniva chiamato *taravad*, il cui capo era identificato nel maschio più anziano, detto *karanavan*; egli aveva autorità giuridicamente riconosciuta sui suoi membri e sui beni che erano di titolarità della *taravad* (Gough 1952).

La *taravad* era composta principalmente da una donna, i suoi figli, i figli delle figlie e i figli delle nipoti femmine, i fratelli, i discendenti sulla linea delle sorelle (Mencher 1962).

Una struttura tradizionale della *taravad* prevedeva quindi che ci fosse un gruppo proprietario di stampo, appunto, esclusivamente matrilineare, rappresentato poi dall'uomo più anziano, *ergo* il *karanavan* (Nakane 1962).

Il *karanavan* faceva altresì parte dell'assemblea delle sotto-caste, all'interno del quale venivano pertanto rappresentati i capi dei villaggi e dei distretti (Gough 1952).

Per quanto concerne le relazioni familiari nella tradizione dei Nayar, assumevano particolare rilevanza anche altri tipi di legami tra i soggetti della comunità; detti tipi di rapporti venivano definiti quali relazioni di *enangar*.

Secondo quanto riportato da Trautmann,

theenangar relationship is a kind of affinity that defines the relations between matrilineages, whether it is reciprocal [...] or asymmetrical, more exactly hypergamous (among aristocrats) (Trautmann 1981: 62).

In altre parole, i Nayar di ogni villaggio venivano divisi in 4 o 5 gruppi in base ai legami di parentela matrilineare; tra i lignaggi dello stesso gruppo sotto-casta locale esistevano determinate relazioni che vengono definite dalla Gough quale *ceremonial neighbourliness and ritual cooperation* (Gough 1952).

In base a dette relazioni ereditarie, ogni lignaggio era collegato a due o più lignaggi del gruppo stesso, i quali venivano pertanto definiti i suoi *enangar* (Gough 1952).

Un esempio dell'importanza delle relazioni di *enangar* sulla base della tradizione Nayar era la cerimonia rituale che ogni 12 anni veniva effettuata per dare in sposa le giovani donne del villaggio con gli uomini con i quali avevano una relazione di *enangar* (Gough 1952).

Come riportato dalla Gough:

Each lineage was linked in this way to two or more other lineage of the group, which were called itsenangar. [...] At intervals of about twelve years, a festival was held at which all the immature girls of one exogamous lineage were ritually "married" on the same day by men ofenangar lineages, who represented the remainder of the local sub-caste group to the lineage (Gough 1952: 73).

Questa cerimonia non consisteva però in un vero e proprio matrimonio monogamico che univa due soggetti al fine di costituire una famiglia. Al contrario si trattava di un matrimonio con forti connotazioni rituali e simboliche, senza alcun obbligo, né per l'uomo né per la donna, di mantenere detta relazione.

Al contrario, non appena cresciute ed in età da matrimonio, le donne del gruppo che si erano sottoposte alla cerimonia rituale potevano avere diverse altre unioni con altri uomini che facevano parte della stessa sotto-casta; la casta dei Nayar era infatti altresì poliandrica (Gough 1952).

I maschi Nayar potevano visitare la donna e lo facevano di norma di notte dopo cena e abbandonavano il tetto prima della colazione; prima di entrare nella casa della donna lasciavano fuori le loro spade, al fine di segnalare ad eventuali altri visitatori la loro presenza.

Se la donna intratteneva relazioni con più uomini, il primo uomo ad arrivare presso la sua abitazione poteva godere della sua compagnia, mentre il secondo si soffermava a dormire in veranda.

Secondo la disciplina tradizionale dei Nayar, le donne in tal modo potevano avere fino a 12 relazioni con uomini diversi allo stesso tempo. Ciò comportava che gli uomini non potessero avere una relazione giuridica di genitorialità con il figlio, in quanto spesso vi era incertezza sulla paternità dello stesso.

Per questa ragione, e per diverse altre che analizzeremo più avanti, la società dei Nayar era strutturata su base matrilineare e non viceversa (Gough 1952).

Per quanto riguarda invece la tradizione dei Nayar dal punto di vista non già dei legami, bensì del diritto di proprietà, è opportuno analizzare in primo luogo la gestione del territorio e, in seconda battuta, la struttura militarizzata della società che, secondo la tesi della Gough, ha contribuito, anche non essendone l'unica causa, a costituire una società di tipo matrilineare.

Secondo la ricostruzione della Gough, infatti, esisteva nella società dei Nayar il *tenant kanam*, che era considerato di regola il capo di un gruppo proprietario della terra ed era tenuto secondo diritto a versare nelle mani dello *jenmi*, cioè colui che aveva il potere sul terreno del villaggio e veniva definito quale proprietario terriero, una rendita annuale in natura. Detto istituto giuridico dava origine a due tipi di diritti: lo *janmam* (Blackshield 1966), quale diritto del proprietario ad incassare la rendita, e il *kanakkaran*, il diritto di occupare il territorio (Gough 1952).

Secondo quanto riporta ancora la Gough, i predetti diritti potevano essere ceduti ma, al fine di fare ciò, era necessario ottenere l'approvazione dell'assemblea locale dei Nayar costituita come sopra riportato (Gough 1952).

La *taravad* occupava il territorio sulla base delle appena menzionate disposizioni e il suo capo gruppo si occupava della gestione della proprietà.

La struttura della *taravad*, e in particolar modo il sistema di parentela, era basato principalmente sulla coltivazione della terra che dava da vivere alla famiglia tradizionale ma le stesse sono state influenzate altresì dalla loro occupazione del territorio non solo come gruppo proprietario, bensì anche come milizia specializzata. Sebbene non vi sia spazio per approfondire qui la questione, è sufficiente osservare che la stessa organizzazione territoriale, secondo il lavoro della Gough, era legata anche al sistema militare e presentava collegamenti con il sistema di parentela matrilineare principalmente per un motivo: l'uomo doveva prestare servizio militare e aveva poca stabilità sul territorio, pertanto non poteva stringere stretti legami con la famiglia, la quale rimaneva collegata alla donna capostipite della discendenza.

La Gough ha identificato questo collegamento considerando come in un momento successivo, sotto il regime britannico verso i primi anni del XIX secolo, la poliandria si è via via persa a fronte anche della demilitarizzazione e il matrimonio ha assunto la forma del matrimonio monogamico (Gough 1952). Secondo altri studiosi, vi sarebbero anche altre ragioni che hanno portato a questa evoluzione della *taravad* (Thomas 1999).

Tra questi, la Moore presenta una ricostruzione diversa dal punto di vista dell'approccio allo studio della famiglia tradizionale dei Nayar. Secondo Moore, è necessario superare l'impostazione tradizionale che analizza la struttura della *taravad* non dal punto di vista della genealogia ma dal punto di vista della proprietà e dei diritti inerenti alla medesima (Moore 1985).

In altri termini, per quanto ella non ritenga ancora soddisfacente detta visione, si renderebbe opportuno approfondire l'idea di *taravad* quale *land-owning corporation* e non meramente come sistema familiare, nonostante "The corporate, property-group model corresponds precisely to a definition imposed by British law and Western ideology that supplemented the original, indigenous definition during nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Moore 1985: 525).

La *taravad*, sempre secondo la ricostruzione della Moore, non rappresentava soltanto un'espressione della famiglia tradizionale dei Nayar e del sistema matrilineare; infatti, nel medioevo (più precisamente nel decimo secolo) sono stati individuati alcuni reperti secondo i quali era possibile, all'interno della famiglia, modificare il sistema patrilineare in matrilineare, così implicando che esistesse in altra epoca un sistema familiare Nayar patrilineare¹⁷. Inoltre, gli eventi quali i funerali e gli anniversari di morte venivano fatti indifferentemente per ogni tipo di antenato, senza preferenza per quelli di genere femminile o maschile; la più grande differenza è che includevano anche le donne in detti rituali (Moore 1985). Sarebbe pertanto impossibile identificare la *taravad* meramente con il sistema matrilineare come effettuato dalla Gough (Moore 1985).

A supporto della sua tesi, Moore riporta un argomento anche linguistico: in Malayalam, la lingua parlata dai Nayar, i termini *marumakkattayam* e *taravad* vengono rispettivamente tradotti di norma con matrilineaggio. La Gough ad esempio lo riporta come 'discendenza tramite i figli delle sorelle'. In realtà, il Malayalam non conoscerebbe, sempre secondo il lavoro della Moore, le implicazioni legate alla discendenza in questi termini, che si riferirebbero in realtà maggiormente al concetto di proprietà, nel

¹⁷ Come già rilevato in apertura del presente paragrafo, la storia della nascita del sistema matrilineare in Kerala non è corroborata da fonti certe in materia e tutt'ora sussistono dubbi sull'epoca in cui tale sistema matrilineare si è diffuso e come è stato disciplinato, nonché sulla paternità stessa del testo che contiene le regole del *marumakkattayam*. Diverse opinioni, come rilevato in nota n. 15, pongono i primi reperti in epoca medievale.

senso di proprietà abitativa e terriera e le relative relazioni che si formano tra le persone attraverso la condivisione della proprietà.

Un'interpretazione diversa dei predetti termini in tal senso potrebbe portare a ritenere che in realtà prevalga maggiormente l'aspetto successorio e proprietario e non quello familiare e genealogico improntato meramente sul sistema matrilineare.

Inoltre, molto spesso il termine *taravad* non veniva utilizzato per identificare la famiglia, bensì un luogo.

Moore ammette che esiste in ogni caso un'innegabile connessione tra la proprietà, il 'posto', e le persone che popolano detto posto, ma ritiene che prevalga la componente *house and land unit* e non quella genealogica familiare (Moore 1985).

In altri termini, la *taravad* non può considerarsi meramente un'entità economica, in quanto effettivamente la *house and land unit* non riguardava il mercato ma un'entità all'interno della quale vivevano determinati membri di un nucleo familiare. Allo stesso tempo, però, è forse maggiormente opportuno identificare la *taravad* come un regno di cui il *karanavan* è il re, e non come mero sistema basato sulla parentela; a sostegno di tale tesi conclusiva, Moore asserisce che secondo la disciplina tradizionale il *karanavan* non poteva, per affetto, favorire i propri parenti più prossimi, bensì era tenuto a distribuire la ricchezza in modo tale da preservare l'equilibrio del luogo (Moore 1985).

4. Conclusioni

In conclusione, si può evidenziare che all'interno del subcontinente indiano tra le famiglie hindu esisteva e tutt'ora esiste una tradizione legata al diritto familiare che prevede una struttura di proprietà unita, la joint property, legata al territorio e agli affetti familiari, a capo della quale vi era l'uomo anziano, che si occupava della gestione della comune ricchezza a beneficio dei componenti della famiglia.

Facendo leva su tale assunto, abbiamo sviluppato questa analisi al fine di sottolineare le differenze intercorrenti tra le diverse tradizioni hindu e, in particolare, tra i diversi istituti che hanno avuto origine e si sono evoluti all'interno del subcontinente indiano, si è scelto di analizzare in questa sede la struttura tradizionale delle HJF, sia dal punto di vista del diritto di famiglia hindu sia dal punto di vista dei diritti di proprietà insistenti sul patrimonio segregato e destinato, in questo caso, al benessere della famiglia ed alla soddisfazione dei diritti successori dei suoi componenti.

Si può rilevare in primo luogo che tale struttura di proprietà in comune ha trovato spazio in diversi assetti familiari.

Nel subcontinente indiano, infatti, sono presenti strutture familiari diverse anche sulla base del sistema di parentela e, nello specifico, oltre a quelle patrilineari prevalenti, esistono strutture matrilineari, come nel caso dei Nayar.

Ciò ci porta a considerare che la necessità di mantenimento della solidità del patrimonio familiare, e la gestione dello stesso in ottica successoria, non pare essere strettamente condizionata nel presente contesto dai rapporti di parentela, bensì da fattori esogeni quali le attività necessarie per la sopravvivenza del nucleo familiare e le operazioni volte alla protezione della ricchezza della famiglia.

Nonostante ciò, in ogni caso, non può essere dimenticato che le differenze dal punto di vista della struttura tradizionale influiscono altresì sulla disciplina giuridica della stessa.

Infatti, nella disciplina tradizionale applicabile, si riscontra una differenza in merito al regime della *partition*, la quale poteva essere fatta tra i Nayar e, anzi, doveva essere fatta, anche prima della morte dell'uomo, al momento del raggiungimento del limite massimo di componenti della famiglia.

Diversamente avveniva per la HJF tradizionale, all'interno della quale, di regola, la *partition* avveniva a seguito del decesso del *pater familias*.

Inoltre, la differenza più rilevante pare essere la considerazione dei legami di parentela e la diversa gestione della ricchezza in tal senso: secondo quanto previsto per la disciplina tradizionale delle HJF, la ricchezza di norma veniva affidata al momento della *partition* al fratello maggiore, ovvero in ogni caso ai parenti più prossimi. Diversamente, nella tradizione dei Nayar, non era prevista una differenziazione tra i familiari in quanto la proprietà doveva essere divisa tra tutti i partecipanti alla *taravad*.

Nonostante ciò, pare evidente che vi siano moltissime somiglianze tra le due fattispecie: *in primis*, ad esempio, si ritrova una massa patrimoniale che fa capo ad un soggetto unico, titolare del relativo diritto di gestione, che si identifica con l'uomo più anziano all'interno del gruppo familiare. Detta massa veniva in entrambi i casi amministrata e ridistribuita sulla base delle scelte effettuate dal medesimo soggetto, che è quindi possibile identificare quale gestore dei beni familiari e della proprietà terriera. Infine, il patrimonio familiare deve essere ben amministrato nell'interesse di altri soggetti, che spesso si riconoscono nei familiari, parenti e discendenti, del soggetto amministratore dei beni.

La presente analisi rappresenta una parte di un lavoro più ampio che è dedicato alle strutture di segregazione patrimoniale. In particolare, lo studio degli strumenti di segregazione patrimoniale assume un particolare interesse in India, laddove si ravvisa la compresenza di più tradizioni giuridiche e discipline che possono essere studiate al fine di evidenziare la possibile regolamentazione di plurimi istituti, provenienti da tradizioni diverse, in maniera simile.

L'obiettivo finale del lavoro è quello di ipotizzare, mettendo in luce le difficoltà e i possibili pregi di questa operazione, la definizione di una disciplina dei sistemi di segregazione patrimoniale che trascenda i confini territoriali e che possa accomunare più tradizioni giuridiche diverse.

Per effettuare tale ricerca, il contesto indiano, come anticipato, rappresenta uno scenario peculiare, in quanto le Corti indiane e la legislazione si sono già scontrate con questo tema e hanno trovato molteplici soluzioni, spesso diverse a seconda del contesto, ma che in ogni caso convergono verso una maggiore unità di disciplina delle diverse forme di segregazione patrimoniale.

Uno strumento tipico della tradizione hindu di segregazione patrimoniale è quello della HJF, la quale rientra all'interno delle tipologie di segregazione patrimoniale mosse dalla necessità di sostentamento della famiglia e mantenimento della ricchezza. Ciò posto, lo studio del sistema di titolarità del patrimonio segregato nelle HJF, e la gestione del medesimo, rappresenta un punto di partenza al fine di verificare se la disciplina applicabile, anche elaborata dalla giurisprudenza, è in qualche modo estesa oppure assimilata a quella che viene utilizzata per il *trust* e per il *waqf* di diritto islamico, nonché per le altre strutture di segregazione patrimoniale presenti in India.

Al fine di tirare le fila del presente discorso, ad esempio, è opportuno segnalare che non manca chi ha paragonato il soggetto titolare del potere della gestione della ricchezza familiare al *trustee* di un trust di matrice britannica (Rajendra 2004), il quale in effetti è un soggetto che fiduciarmente ottiene la titolarità della massa patrimoniale conferita in trust dal *settlor of the trust* ed è tenuto a gestirla al massimo delle proprie possibilità al fine di ridistribuire la ricchezza conferita ai soggetti che vengono identificati quali *beneficiaries* (Gambaro e Sacco 2018). Così come, anche a seguito dell'intervento statale, i gestori dei beni delle HJF sono stati accomunati ai gestori dei patrimoni conferiti in *waqf*, soprattutto dal punto di vista del ruolo di amministratore di un patrimonio segregato (Shah 1964).

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Il mito dell'isocronia moraica in giapponese: un'analisi quantitativa basata su corpora orali

Giuseppe Pappalardo

Pike (1945) classified the world languages into two types of rhythmic/prosodic patterns: stress-timed and syllable-timed. According to this classification, stress-timed languages, like English and German, tend to have isochronous interstress intervals, while syllable-timed languages, like Italian and Spanish, tend to have equal syllable duration. Ladefoged (1975) added the mora-timed type, in which isochrony is maintained at the level of the mora, a sub-syllabic constituent that includes either onset and nucleus, or a coda. Japanese is often referred to as a mora-timed language (Otake 2015): the mora is the psychological prosodic unit in spoken language, and the metric unit of traditional poetry (Bloch 1950). The syllabaries, in which each grapheme corresponds to a mora, make this prosodic segmentation clear. However, previous experimental studies have claimed that the mora is not a perfect isochronous unit (Warner and Arai 2001).

The aim of this paper is to present the rhythm-prosodic system of the Japanese language giving a precise description of its prosodic units -- the mora and the syllable--, and to provide empirical quantitative data on the duration of mora in spontaneous Japanese. The dataset used in the present study is a portion of the Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese called *Core*, consisting of about 45 hours of extensively annotated speech. The variation of the average duration of the mora has been analysed on the basis of linguistic parameters, such as the typology of mora and the phonotactic structure of the word in which it is included, and of extra-linguistic parameters, such as the typology of speech.

1. Introduzione

Pike (1945) classifica le lingue del mondo in base alla loro organizzazione ritmo-prosodica in lingue a isocronia sillabica, in cui ogni sillaba ha la tendenza ad avere una medesima durata, e lingue a isocronia accentuale, in cui sono i piedi, gli intervalli tra le sillabe accentate, ad avere una durata pressoché invariata. Ladefoged (1975) introduce una terza categoria, quella delle lingue a isocronia moraica, in cui è la mora, un'unità sub-sillabica, ad avere la stessa durata. Gli studiosi fanno rientrare il giapponese¹ in quest'ultima categoria e i parlanti nativi hanno una chiara percezione della mora come unità

¹ Con "giapponese" si fa qui riferimento alla sola varietà di Tokyo.

prosodica. Gli alfabeti sillabici (o meglio, moraici), dove ogni grafema corrisponde a una mora,² rendono tangibile questa segmentazione prosodica. La mora è altresì l'unità metrica della poesia giapponese. Tuttavia, non tutti gli studi di tipo sperimentale condotti finora (Warner and Arai 2001) sono riusciti a dimostrare l'isocronia della mora. Questo contributo si propone di presentare l'organizzazione ritmo-prosodica della lingua giapponese, dando una chiara definizione alle unità prosodiche che la costituiscono, le sillabe e le more, e approfondendo il loro rapporto con l'accento tonale. Inoltre, saranno forniti dati quantitativi sulla durata media delle more nel parlato spontaneo, interrogando un estratto del *Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese* (un corpus orale con etichette fonetiche e sub-fonemiche della durata di circa 45 ore). La variazione della durata media delle more sarà analizzata secondo parametri linguistici, come la tipologia di mora e la struttura fonotattica della parola in cui è inserita, e parametri extralinguistici come la tipologia di parlato.³ I risultati di questa indagine forniranno nuovi elementi per sfatare il mito dell'isocronia moraica, concetto che tuttora ricorre nella letteratura specialistica, e permetteranno di tracciare le tendenze che regolano la variazione ritmo-prosodica nel giapponese spontaneo.

2. Unità prosodiche della lingua giapponese

La mora, chiamata in giapponese 音節 *onsetsu*⁴ (Arisaka 1940), 拍 *haku* (Kindaichi 1967) o モーラ *mōra* (Hattori 1960), costituisce l'unità ritmica e prosodica della lingua giapponese, l'unica ad essere ampiamente riconosciuta nella riflessione metalinguistica autoctona.⁵ Le more del giapponese vengono tradizionalmente classificate in due macrogruppi: le more indipendenti e le more speciali, in giapponese rispettivamente *jiritsu haku* 自立拍 e *tokushu haku* 特殊拍. Al primo gruppo appartengono le more "semplici" costituite da una consonante e da una vocale (CV), come per esempio /ka/, /no/, /ru/, da una consonante palatalizzata seguita da vocale (CyV), come /kya/, /nyo/, /ryu/, oppure da un'unica vocale, come /a/, /o/, /u/. Le more speciali corrispondono, nell'analisi fonemica tradizionale, alla nasale moraica /N/, al fonema della geminazione consonantica /Q/ e alla seconda parte di una

² Fatta eccezione per i grafemi che indicano la palatalizzazione delle consonanti, come in きゃ, きょ, きゅ.

³ Le tipologie di parlato incluse nel *Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese* sono monologo, dialogo e parlato riprodotto.

⁴ Nell'odierno linguaggio specialistico i linguisti giapponesi usano il termine 音節 *onsetsu* per riferirsi alla sillaba. Tuttavia, nel linguaggio comune lo stesso termine viene utilizzato per indicare la mora.

⁵ Hattori (1960) riconosce l'esistenza della sillaba (音節), precisando però che si tratta di una mera unità fonetica che coesiste accanto alla mora (モーラ), la quale costituisce l'unità fonologica reale.

vocale lunga /R/.⁶ Ogni mora viene rappresentata da un unico grafema negli alfabeti sillabici *kana* e funziona come unità ritmica nei componimenti poetici tradizionali come il *waka* o lo *haiku*. Per esempio, le parole けっこん *kekkon* ‘matrimonio’, っこう *kūkō* ‘aeroporto’ e まいにち *mainichi* ‘ogni giorno’ hanno quattro more e vengono scritte usando quattro grafemi *kana*. Risulta chiaro quindi che il concetto di mora diverge da quello di sillaba, a cui noi siamo abituati. In una scomposizione sillabica, le prime due parole citate sarebbero composte da due sole sillabe mentre la terza ne avrebbe tre. Per capire da cosa ha origine questo peculiare sistema ritmico-prosodico bisogna interrogarsi sull’origine delle more speciali e sul loro rapporto con il sistema di scrittura.

La struttura prosodica del giapponese antico (712-794) era estremamente semplice. Tutte le sillabe erano aperte e brevi, terminavano cioè con una vocale breve, e non c’erano dunque dubbi sulla posizione del confine sillabico o sul numero di unità ritmiche di una parola. La struttura fonotattica della sillaba del giapponese antico è pertanto la seguente: (C)(G)V. Tutte le sillabe sono cioè costituite da una vocale breve, nella maggior parte dei casi preceduta da una consonante (le sillabe costituite da un’unica vocale occupano generalmente solo la prima posizione in una parola), più o meno palatalizzata o labializzata.⁷ L’arrivo della massiccia ondata di lessico cinese ha probabilmente innescato, o almeno accelerato, a partire dal X secolo i mutamenti fonologici conosciuti sotto il nome di *onbin* 音便 che hanno alterato notevolmente la semplice struttura prosodica del periodo precedente (Frellesvig 1995). Molti di questi prestiti derivano da parole cinesi che avevano sillabe terminanti con le consonanti nasali /m, n, ŋ/. Dalle consonanti di fine sillaba /m/ e /n/ ha avuto origine la nasale moraica /N/, mentre /ŋ/ è stata sostituita dalle vocali chiuse /i/ e /u/ dando dittonghi che in alcuni casi hanno generato, fondendosi, vocali lunghe. Possiamo osservare gli effetti del mutamento fonologico *onbin* anche in parole autoctone, in particolare nella forma gerundiva dei verbi: nel passaggio dal giapponese antico a quello tardo antico il morfema flessionale di alcuni verbi si trasforma a seconda dei casi in uno dei fonemi (o arcifonemi)⁸ che costituiscono le more speciali nella struttura ritmo-prosodica della lingua giapponese moderna. Per esempio, le forme gerundive del giapponese

⁶ Per comodità indicheremo la seconda parte di una sequenza di vocali identiche /VV/ con il simbolo dell’arcifonema /R/ proposto da Kindaichi (1967). Non entreremo tuttavia in merito alla plausibilità di questa interpretazione fonologica.

⁷ La struttura fonotattica della sillaba qui presentata si basa sulla teoria secondo la quale la differenza tra le sillabe *kō* e *otsu* del giapponese antico veniva garantita dalla presenza/assenza di un’approssimante palatale o labiale tra consonante e vocale. Per ulteriori informazioni su questa teoria si veda Pappalardo (2012).

⁸ Le more speciali del giapponese sono spesso interpretate fonologicamente come degli arcifonemi, perché in assenza di una precisa forma sottostante si manifestano attraverso numerose realizzazioni fonetiche in base al contesto fonologico in cui si trovano.

antico /yomite/ 'leggere', /matite/ 'aspettare' subiscono questo mutamento diventando rispettivamente /yoNde/ e /maQte/. Un'altra tipologia di *onbin* porta all'indebolimento e alla successiva perdita di alcune consonanti intervocaliche e al conseguente sviluppo delle vocali lunghe nel lessico autoctono. Un classico esempio è la perdita della consonante /k/ nelle forme verbali gerundive e nelle forme attributive degli aggettivi: /kikite/ > /kiite/ 'ascoltare'; /kanasiki/ > /kanasii/ 'triste'. Anche le mutazioni della consonante tenue /p/ all'interno di parola, resa allofonicamente sonora [b ~ β]⁹ in giapponese antico, contribuiscono all'aumento di sequenze vocaliche lunghe nel giapponese tardo antico e medio (Frellesvig 2010).¹⁰ A causa del progressivo indebolimento dell'occlusione, la resa sonora [b] della consonante intervocalica /p/ muta dapprima in fricativa sonora [β], per poi trasformarsi in un'approssimante [w].¹¹ A partire dal XI secolo il nuovo fonema /w/ sparirà davanti a tutte le vocali a eccezione della vocale /a/¹² generando quindi varie sequenze vocaliche. La parola del giapponese moderno 氷 *koori* 'ghiaccio', composta da tre more ko-o-ri, era infatti *kopori* in giapponese antico. Di questa antica pronuncia rimane traccia nel *rekishiteki kanazukai* 歴史的仮名遣い 'uso dei kana storico', convenzione ortografica in uso dal periodo Heian fino al 1946, dove la parola viene scritta こほり e non こおり come nell'ortografia in uso oggi (*gendai kanazukai* 現代仮名遣い 'uso dei kana moderno'). I mutamenti descritti hanno dunque prodotto numerose sequenze vocaliche /VV/ con vocale identica, generando quindi una vocale lunga. Tuttavia, le vocali lunghe presenti nel giapponese moderno sono nella maggior parte dei casi l'esito di una monottongazione di sequenze di vocali diverse sia in parole autoctone che in parole sino-giapponesi: **kepu* > **keu* > *kyoo* 'oggi' (parola autoctona); **kyau* > **kyoo* > *kyoo* 'sutra' (parola sino-giapponese). Questi mutamenti fonologici hanno determinato uno stravolgimento nella semplice struttura fonologica e fonotattica del giapponese antico generando un sistema ritmico-prosodico che sarà strettamente legato alle suddivisioni presenti in un sistema di scrittura che riflette uno stadio linguistico più antico.

⁹ Frellesvig (2010: 37) ipotizza che la realizzazione sonora del fonema /p/ possa prevedere anche la variante libera [β] in un parlato trascurato. La fricativizzazione del fonema /p/ e il conseguente indebolimento della sillaba giustificerebbero i mutamenti fonologici *onbin*.

¹⁰ Sulla classificazione delle consonanti del giapponese antico in tenui e medie si veda Frellesvig (2010).

¹¹ Il mutamento /p/ > /w/ all'interno di parola ha luogo davanti a tutte le vocali tranne la /u/. In quel caso il fonema /p/ sparisce già a partire dal X secolo (**kepu* > **keu* 'oggi'). Anche questo mutamento genera una sequenza vocalica che subirà una monottongazione nei periodi successivi (**keu* > *kyoo* 'oggi').

¹² In giapponese moderno troviamo infatti il fonema /w/ (<*p) davanti alla vocale /a/ in parole come *kawa* 'fiume' (**kapa* > [**kaba* ~ **kaβa*] > *kawa*).

Quando gli studiosi occidentali introdussero il concetto di sillaba nel periodo Meiji, parole come すっぽん *suppon* ‘*Pelodiscus sinensis*’ e とうきょう *tōkyō* ‘Tokyo’ venivano scomposte in due sillabe (*suppon*; *tō-kyō*). Kindaichi Kyōsuke (1882-1971) fu il primo ad affermare che la scomposizione in sillabe non poteva essere applicata al giapponese secondo metodi occidentali perché nessun giapponese avrebbe mai pensato di dividere per esempio una parola come *kekkon* けっこん ‘matrimonio’ in due sillabe (Vance 1987). Arisaka (1940: 106-107) pensava che fosse possibile una scomposizione in sillabe all’occidentale, ma affermava allo stesso tempo che era necessario fare una distinzione tra parlato veloce e parlato accurato: in un parlato lento ed elaborato il fonema /Q/ poteva essere considerato, secondo Arisaka, una sillaba anche in assenza di realizzazione acustica. Kindaichi Haruhiko (1967: 58-77) riprende la teoria del padre e utilizza il termine proprio della musica 拍 *haku* ‘battuta’ per indicare le “sillabe giapponesi” facendo quindi una netta distinzione rispetto all’unità ritmica generalmente chiamata *onsetsu*. I fonemi /N/ e /Q/, nonché la seconda parte della sequenza vocalica /VV/ (/R/), vengono da lui considerate unità ritmiche indipendenti come le sillabe /CV/. Questo viene giustificato dal fatto che essi rappresentano unità ritmiche indipendenti nella poesia tradizionale giapponese. A mo’ di esempio possiamo citare uno *haiku* di Matsuo Bashō in cui il fonema dell’allungamento vocalico /R/ deve essere computato come singola unità per rispettare la tradizionale metrica di 5-7-5 “sillabe”:

冬の日や馬上に氷る影法師

fuyu no hiya bajō ni kōru kagebōshi

/fu-yu-no-hi-ya/ (5) /ba-jo-R-ni-ko-o-ru/ (7) /ka-ge-bo-R-shi/ (5)

“Sotto il fioco sole d’inverno, a dorso del cavallo mi si gela il profilo”¹³

Le unità ritmico-prosodiche individuate da Kindaichi vengono riconosciute anche da Hattori (1960) il quale preferisce però la denominazione *mōra* in luogo di *haku*. In aggiunta a queste, ammette l’esistenza delle cosiddette sillabe fonologiche: la parola *kekkon* けっこん ‘matrimonio’ sarebbe composta, secondo Hattori, da quattro more (ke-Q-ko-N) e due sillabe fonologiche (*kek-kon*). Tutte le sillabe giapponesi, a eccezione delle rare sillabe lunghissime,¹⁴ avranno dunque la seguente struttura fonotattica:

¹³ Testo e traduzione tratti da Muramatsu (1996: 38-39).

¹⁴ Per sillaba lunghissima si intende una sillaba che contiene tre more, una mora indipendente e due more speciali. Un esempio è la prima sillaba della forma passata del verbo 通る *tooru* ‘passare’ che è 通った *tootta*, che ha quattro more /to-R-Q-ta/ e due sillabe *toot-ta*.

(C)(y)V({N, Q, R})¹⁵

Le sillabe fonologiche introdotte da Hattori possono essere brevi, se sono costituite da una sola mora o lunghe se ne hanno due (o tre). In effetti Hattori non è chiaro sul motivo per il quale sia necessario scomporre il giapponese sia in sillabe che in more e per questo sarà criticato da Kindaichi, il quale crede che la sillaba fonologica non sia in realtà un'unità ritmo-prosodica pertinente nella lingua giapponese. Tuttavia, se osserviamo con attenzione il funzionamento dell'accento tonale, scopriremo che dal punto di vista prosodico bisogna necessariamente considerare due tipologie di unità soprasegmentali, le sillabe e le more.

In molte varietà della lingua giapponese le parole possono avere una caduta dell'altezza tonale tra due more. Per esempio, nella varietà di Tokyo la parola monosillabica 印 *in* 'timbro' ha l'accento sulla prima mora [ī↑ŋ̄] con una caduta dell'altezza tonale tra la prima e la seconda mora.¹⁶ Nella parola 韻 *in* 'rima' l'altezza tonale sale invece tra la prima e la seconda mora [ī↑ŋ̄]. Nella varietà di Tokyo, le parole atone, che non prevedono cioè la caduta dell'accento, hanno sempre la prima mora, e non sillaba, con tono basso. È chiaro quindi che i principi che regolano la variazione della configurazione tonale delle parole si basano sulle more come unità di distanza fonologica. McCawley (1968) dice, per esempio, che nelle parole senza significato e nei prestiti di recente importazione l'accento tende a posizionarsi, e quindi a cadere, tra la terzultima e la penultima mora (Vance 1987: 65):

/kakikúkeko/ (sequenza di un alfabetico sillabico)

/pád̄zama/ 'pigiamà'

/pairóQto/ 'pilota'

/hoRmúraN/ 'fuoricampo (baseball)'.

Tuttavia, anche la sillaba gioca un importante ruolo nei fenomeni accentuali. In una parola con un numero *n* di sillabe brevi (cioè di more) saranno possibili, nella varietà di Tokyo, *n* + 1 configurazioni

¹⁵ Tutte le sillabe saranno cioè costituite da una vocale eventualmente preceduta da una consonante, più o meno palatalizzata, ed eventualmente seguita da una consonante nasale, un'occlusione glottidale o un allungamento della vocale stessa. In realtà Hattori non considera opzionale la consonante iniziale, in quanto attribuisce alle more costituite da una sola vocale breve il fonema dell'occlusione glottidale che precede la vocale stessa.

¹⁶ In una parola giapponese l'ultima mora con l'accento alto viene considerata quella accentata. Per ulteriori informazioni sul funzionamento dell'accento tonale nella varietà di Tokyo si veda Pappalardo (2018a).

tonali: l'accento tonale può cadere dopo ogni sillaba breve (mora) o non cadere affatto, come nel seguente esempio:

箸 /hási/ 'bacchette'

橋 /hasí/ 'ponte'

端 /hasi/ 'bordo'

La differenza tra la seconda e terza parola può essere resa evidente solo se alla parola segue una particella di caso come quella che marca il soggetto *ga* が: nel caso di 橋 /hasí/ 'ponte' la particella avrà un tono basso [hasi⁺ŋa], nel caso di 端 /hasi/ 'bordo' invece non ci sarà una caduta dell'accento [haciŋa]. Consideriamo adesso una parola con un numero *n* di sillabe lunghe (composte cioè da due more). Saranno possibili solo *n* + 1 configurazioni tonali, e non *2n* + 1, come nel seguente esempio:

三世 /sáNsei/ 'terza generazione di immigrati'

先生 /seNséi/ 'insegnante'

賛成 /saNsei/ 'approvazione'

In altre parole, solo la prima mora di una sillaba lunga può essere quella accentata. Ciò significa che la sillaba fonologica individuata da Hattori è l'unità prosodica del giapponese, cioè l'unità che può essere portatrice di un accento. Tornando all'esempio di McCawley, se la terzultima mora di una parola è la seconda mora di una sillaba lunga, l'accento tenderà a cadere tra la quartultima e la terzultima mora, cioè tra la terzultima e la penultima sillaba, come nel seguente esempio (Vance 1987):

カレンダー /karéNdaR/ 'calendario'

エスカレーター /esukaréRtaR/ 'scale mobili'

Riassumendo, la mora accentata di una parola non potrà essere quindi una mora speciale (/N/, /Q/, /R/). Possono esistere forme come 料理 /ryóRri/ 'cucina' ma non sono possibili configurazioni tonali come /ryoŕri/, con un accento sulla seconda mora della prima sillaba. Se la mora fosse stata l'unica unità accentuale non ci sarebbe sicuramente stata una restrizione di questo tipo, e pertanto risulta evidente che per le regole che riguardano l'accento e le configurazioni tonali bisogna fare riferimento sia alle sillabe che alle more.

Sebbene, come abbiamo visto, non si possa prescindere dal considerare la sillaba un'importante unità prosodica,¹⁷ la nozione di mora risulta fondamentale per qualunque analisi segmentale e soprasedimentale della varietà di Tokyo.¹⁸ Vance (1987: 66-67) elenca tre tipi di giustificazioni che proverebbero l'esistenza della mora come unità ritmo-prosodica. Innanzitutto esiste una "giustificazione interna" che dipende dalla struttura del sistema prosodico, in cui ogni mora svolge un ruolo importante nell'assegnazione dell'accento. La seconda è una "giustificazione fonetica", basata sul principio dell'isocronia moraica, che prevede che ogni mora, indipendente o speciale, abbia la tendenza ad avere una medesima durata. Come vedremo in seguito questa teoria non è del tutto corretta, almeno per quanto riguarda il giapponese spontaneo. Probabilmente la più importante è la "giustificazione psicologica", la percezione dei parlanti nativi che si riflette nella metrica poetica, a sua volta influenzata dal sistema di scrittura in cui c'è una corrispondenza tra mora e grafema degli alfabeti sillabici. Tutte le more speciali, che rappresentano fonemi o arcifonemi indipendenti nell'analisi fonemica tradizionale, sono rappresentate da un singolo carattere del sistema di scrittura perché derivate da sillabe o more indipendenti del giapponese antico. Possiamo pensare che i numerosi mutamenti fonetici e fonologici non abbiano alterato il sistema ritmico-prosodico originale. Anche nelle canzoni l'unità ritmica è senza dubbio la mora, more speciali comprese. Sarebbe legittimo chiedersi: è la fonologia che ha condizionato il sistema di scrittura o è stata la scrittura che ha condizionato la fonologia e la prosodia della lingua giapponese? A questo proposito Labrune (2006) cita un aneddoto di Kindaichi Haruhiko per sottolineare che anche tra i bambini non ancora scolarizzati la segmentazione prosodica opera sulle more e non sulle sillabe: Kindaichi racconta che un giorno il figlio, che non sapeva ancora né leggere né scrivere, cercò di insegnare al proprio cane la maniera di abbaiare che in giapponese viene rappresentata con l'ideofono **わんわん** *wanwan* (in italiano *baubau*); il piccolo insegnante si applicò ad articolare l'espressione in quattro tempi (*wa-n-wa-n*), ciascuno corrispondente a una mora, affinché il cane comprendesse la lezione. Nessun dubbio, quindi, sull'esistenza della mora come segmento nell'andamento ritmico-prosodico della lingua giapponese, almeno dal punto di vista percettivo e psicolinguistico. Tuttavia, rimane ancora molto da dire sulla "giustificazione fonetica"

¹⁷ Si veda Vance (2017) per ulteriori prove empiriche sull'esistenza della sillaba come unità prosodica in giapponese.

¹⁸ Non tutti i dialetti giapponesi hanno sia unità sillabiche che moraiche. In alcuni dialetti del Tōhoku e del Kyūshū meridionale parole come **マッチ** *matchi* 'match' e **本屋** *honya* 'libreria' non sono scomponibili in tre more, ma solo in due unità, *mat-chi* e *hon-ya*. Anche le sillabe con vocali lunghe rappresentano un'unica unità. In questi dialetti la sillaba è altresì l'unico parametro per l'assegnazione dell'accento. Poiché si tratta di varietà parlate nelle zone più periferiche dell'arcipelago giapponese, è stato ipotizzato che i "dialetti moraici", che includono la varietà di Tokyo, si siano sviluppati a partire dai più antichi "dialetti sillabici" (Shibatani 1990: 160).

addotta da Vance, che riguarda appunto il mito dell'isocronia moraica, secondo il quale tutte le more di un enunciato tendono ad avere la stessa durata.

La lingua giapponese viene spesso ancora descritta come *mora-timed* (Soriano 2006; Giannini 2010), a differenza di inglese e italiano che sono rispettivamente *stress-timed* e *syllable-timed*. Secondo questa nota ma controversa classificazione in ogni tipologia linguistica l'unità ritmica dovrebbe risultare isocrona, cioè le sillabe in italiano o le more in giapponese dovrebbero avere la stessa durata (Pike 1945; Ladefoged 1975). Tuttavia, come dimostrato da recenti studi nessuna di queste tipologie prosodiche ha unità strettamente isocrone e l'isocronia è da intendersi come un atteggiamento meramente tendenziale (Nespor 1990: 160-161). Sono tre i fattori che influenzano la durata della sillaba o della mora. Innanzitutto esistono differenze inerenti alla durata del segmento: le vocali alte ([i] e [u]) sono universalmente più brevi rispetto alle vocali basse, la monovibrante [r] per le sue caratteristiche articolatorie è piuttosto breve mentre una fricativa come l'alveolare [s] è tendenzialmente più lunga. Pertanto, in assenza di compensazione la sequenza /ri/ sarà molto probabilmente più breve di /sa/, a prescindere dall'unità ritmica della lingua. Come detto in precedenza, in giapponese ci sono vari tipi di more, quelle costituite da una singola vocale /V/, quelle formate da una consonante e una vocale /C(y)V/ e le cosiddette more speciali /N/, /Q/ e /R/, le quali senza un effetto di compensazione avrebbero una naturale differenza nella durata. Le ricerche finora condotte per verificare la presenza di isocronia moraica si sono concentrate sull'effetto della compensazione e sulla durata delle more speciali.

Bloch (1950) fu il primo studioso a parlare di isocronia moraica in giapponese affermando che ogni mora¹⁹ viene prodotta e percepita con la stessa durata:

The most striking general feature of Japanese pronunciation is its staccato rhythm. The auditory impression of any phrase is of a rapid pattering succession of more-or-less sharply defined fractions all of about the same length. In any one utterance, or indeed in any one conversation or style of discourse, the perceived relative duration of successive phrases can be adequately compared in terms of these fractions: two phrases containing twice or three times as many fractions as another is heard as lasting just twice or three times as long (Bloch 1950: 90-91).

Enfatizza inoltre che le parole con lo stesso numero di more sono percepite come se avessero la stessa durata indipendentemente dalla composizione segmentale delle more e dalla eventuale presenza di

¹⁹ Bloch (1950) usa il termine *syllables* (oltre che *fractions*) ma risulta chiaro che la sua definizione fa riferimento alle more e non alle sillabe fonologiche di cui parlerà Hattori (1960).

more speciali. Non facendo riferimento a nessun tipo di durata fisica la sua descrizione del ritmo del giapponese si limita all'aspetto percettivo. Han (1962) ha condotto un'indagine sperimentale e ha calcolato il rapporto della durata di vari segmenti o porzioni di parola per verificare se all'isocronia percepita dai parlanti corrispondesse effettivamente un'isocronia sul piano fisico. Scopre per esempio che la durata del fonema della geminazione consonantica /Q/ rispetto a una semplice consonante ha un rapporto di durata di 2,6:1, in alcuni casi 3:1. Conclude dicendo che "each onsetsu [fa riferimento alla mora] is functionally a quantum of duration. The actual duration of each onsetsu is approximately the same". Ladefoged (1975) aggiunge alle due tipologie prosodiche introdotte da Pike (1945: 25), *stress-timed* e *syllable-timed*, la categoria delle lingue *mora-timed* di cui fa parte il giapponese, dicendo chiaramente che ogni mora "takes about the same length of time to say".²⁰ Homma (1981) conferma la teoria dell'isocronia moraica dimostrando che il rapporto di durata tra una parola di tipo /CVQCV/ (tre more) e una parola di tipo /CVCV/ (due more) è approssimativamente di 3:2. Tuttavia, Warner and Arai (2001) fanno notare che i dati utilizzati per l'indagine di Homma includono parole con geminate sonore che non sono rappresentative del lessico del giapponese. Hoquist (1983) calcola il rapporto di durata tra le sillabe /CVN/ (due more) e /CV/ (una mora) ottenendo il risultato di 1,8:1: è più basso del risultato previsto (2:1) ma risulta comunque più alto rispetto a quello calcolato per una lingua a isocronia sillabica come lo spagnolo. Conclude dicendo che l'isocronia non è il metodo migliore per descrivere le differenze ritmico-prosodiche tra le lingue. Warner and Arai (2001) affermano che l'uso dei rapporti di durata per verificare l'isocronia in giapponese enfatizza solo i potenziali effetti delle more speciali e non mettono in luce eventuali fenomeni di compensazione che potrebbero attenuare le differenze inerenti alla natura articolatoria dei segmenti e rendere gli intervalli più regolari. Presentano inoltre i risultati di varie indagini condotte in anni più recenti che dimostrano che la mora svolge in giapponese un ruolo importante e influenza la durata solo indirettamente piuttosto che essere una vera e propria unità ritmica. Non a caso il concetto di isocronia moraica cominciò con la percezione che le more avessero la stessa durata e Bloch (1950) circoscrive la sua descrizione all'ambito percettivo piuttosto che a quello della durata fisica. La classificazione tipologica delle lingue basata sull'isocronia sembra essere superata dopo lo studio di Ramus *et al.* (1999) in cui vengono usati come parametri la proporzione di intervalli vocalici e la deviazione standard della durata degli intervalli vocalici e consonantici. Usando materiale linguistico di otto lingue, vengono forniti risultati che confermano i raggruppamenti della classificazione in tre tipologie ritmico-prosodiche (*stress-timed*, *syllable-timed* e *mora-timed*) basate sulla presunta isocronia. Il giapponese rappresenta un gruppo a sé in quanto presenta una percentuale

²⁰ Ladefoged (1975: 251).

di intervalli vocalici %V nettamente superiore ad altre lingue (53,1% in giapponese, 45,2% in italiano, 40,1% in inglese) e un valore di deviazione standard degli intervalli consonantici ΔC piuttosto basso, il che indica che la durata degli intervalli consonantici non presenta grosse variazioni. Rispetto alle lingue a isocronia sillabica e a isocronia accentuale usate nell'indagine, la fonotassi giapponese non prevede, a esclusione di /NC/ e /QC/, sequenze di più consonanti. In altre parole, dal punto di vista prosodico il giapponese si distingue per avere lunghe sequenze vocaliche intervallate da sequenze consonantiche che tendono ad avere una durata pressoché invariata.

3. Analisi quantitativa basata sul Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese

Gli studiosi che svolgono ricerche sperimentali con lo scopo di misurare la durata media delle more e verificare la presenza di isocronia fanno generalmente uso di dati linguistici piuttosto limitati e raccolti ad hoc per l'indagine da condurre. Inoltre, i campioni linguistici vengono spesso raccolti facendo leggere a un numero esiguo di informatori alcune frasi per essere poi analizzate attraverso gli strumenti della fonetica acustica. Si tratta quindi di un parlato elicitato che non è dunque sempre rappresentativo della lingua usata spontaneamente. In questo contributo si cercherà di completare la panoramica offerta sugli studi relativi alle caratteristiche fonetiche della mora in giapponese offrendo dati quantitativi sulla durata media delle more e sul fenomeno della compensazione in un parlato spontaneo. Il database utilizzato per questa indagine è il *Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese* (d'ora innanzi CSJ), un corpus di giapponese spontaneo realizzato nel 2004 e sviluppato dal *National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics* (NINJAL) in collaborazione con il *Communications Research Laboratory* (CRL) e il *Tokyo Institute of Technology* (TiTech). Contiene circa 660 ore di parlato spontaneo che corrispondono a più di 7 milioni di parole. Per la nostra indagine interrogheremo un estratto del CSJ chiamato *Core* che è stato oggetto di una annotazione estremamente precisa e dettagliata e che comprende circa 45 ore di parlato, corrispondenti a circa 500000 parole, di cui è stato trascritto ogni più piccolo segmento secondo un sistema di trascrizione sub-fonemica. Tutte le informazioni relative al *CSJ-Core*, che includono la durata di ciascun segmento (foni, fonemi, more, ecc.), sono state organizzate in un *Relational Database* (RDB) composto da tabelle che possono essere messe in relazione utilizzando il sistema di *query SQLite* (Maekawa 2015).

Per illustrare il metodo di interrogazione del corpus, mostreremo qui una semplice *query* in cui si chiede la durata media delle more indipendenti (/V/, /CV/ e /CyV/) e delle more speciali (/N/, /Q/, /R/). Nelle tabelle che compongono il corpus non è espressa la durata dei singoli segmenti e quindi

bisogna scrivere la *query* indicando la differenza tra il momento di termine e quello d'inizio (Tabella 1).²¹

```
SELECT CASE
WHEN t0.MoraEntity IN (“ン”, “ッ”, “ー”) THEN
“More speciali” ELSE “More indipendenti”
END AS Tipologia di mora, Avg(t0.EndTime-
t0.StartTime) AS “Durata media”
FROM segMora AS t0
JOIN relMora2Bunsetsu AS t1
ON t0.TalkID = t1.TalkID
AND t0.MoraID = t1.MoraID
JOIN segBunsetsu AS t2
ON t1.TalkID = t2.TalkID
AND t1.BunsetsuID = t2.BunsetsuID
WHERE t2.Text NOT LIKE “(F %)”
GROUP BY “Tipologia di Mora”
```

Tabella 1. Esempio di *query* SQL al CSJ-Core

Il sistema analizza in pochi secondi i dati di circa un milione di more presenti nel CSJ-Core e ne calcola la durata media. I risultati (Tabella 2) mostrano che esiste un rapporto di 0,52:1 tra more speciali e more indipendenti. Apparentemente basterebbe questo dato per sfatare il mito dell'isocronia moraica ma bisogna considerare altri parametri come la tipologia di parlato, la diversa struttura delle more indipendenti ed eventuali effetti di compensazione.

Tipologia di mora	Durata media (in secondi)
More speciali (/N/, /Q/, /R/)	0,0639
More indipendenti	0,1225

Tabella 2. Durata media delle more

Innanzitutto possiamo verificare se il rapporto di 0,52:1, tra la durata media di una mora speciale e una mora indipendente, abbia una variazione significativa in base alle tipologie di parlato incluse nel CSJ:

²¹ Nel calcolare la durata media delle more sono state escluse tutte le more appartenenti alle pause non silenti in cui la durata dei singoli foni tende a variare notevolmente in base a parametri extralinguistici. Per questo motivo nella *query* è stato utilizzato il comando *JOIN* che permette di collegare le informazioni contenute nella tabella *segMora* con quelle contenute nella tabella *segBunsetsu*, in cui le pause non silenti hanno una particolare etichetta. L'esclusione delle pause non silenti sarà utilizzata anche nelle successive *query*.

monologo, dialogo e parlato riprodotto.²² I dati riportati in Tabella 3 non ci segnalano, tuttavia, una variazione diafasica degna di nota: il rapporto tra mora speciale e mora indipendente è di 0,52:1 nei monologhi, 0,51:1 nei dialoghi, 0,54:1 nel parlato riprodotto.

Monologo		Dialogo		Parlato riprodotto	
More speciali	More indipendenti	More speciali	More indipendenti	More speciali	More indipendenti
0,0634	0,1214	0,0698	0,1364	0,07	0,1296

Tabella 3. Durata media delle more per tipologia di parlato

Come detto in precedenza la durata della mora può dipendere anche dalle caratteristiche articolatorie dei fonemi che la compongono. In Tabella 4 sono riportati i valori relativi alla durata media in secondi di alcune more: le more indipendenti costituite da vocali alte /i/ e /u/ hanno una durata media piuttosto breve, molto simile a quella delle more speciali /R/, /Q/ e /N/, in ordine di durata. Come era prevedibile le more indipendenti con vocali alte hanno una durata media inferiore rispetto a quelle con vocali basse, e le more con le fricative [ç] e [s] hanno una durata media superiore alle more con la monovibrante [r]. Il rapporto tra la durata media delle more /ri/ e /sa/ è di 0,6:1 e quello tra le more /i/ e /sa/ è di 0,39:1, valori assai lontani da qualsiasi tipologia di isocronia.

Mora	/R/	/i/	/Q/	/u/	/N/	/a/	/e/	/o/	/ri/	/si/ [çi]	/ra/	/sa/
Media	0,0604	0,0606	0,0611	0,067	0,0699	0,0815	0,0825	0,0840	0,0935	0,11	0,1183	0,155

Tabella 4. Durate media di alcune more nel CSJ-Core

Un altro fattore che potrebbe incidere sulla variazione della durata media della mora è la desonorizzazione vocalica che coinvolge soprattutto le vocali alte /i/ e /u/.²³ In Tabella 5 vediamo come le more con vocale desonorizzata abbiano una durata media proporzionalmente inferiore. La desonorizzazione vocalica risulta dunque essere un fattore che determina un abbassamento della durata media delle more indipendenti.

²² Per parlato riprodotto (*Reproduction Speech*) si intende la lettura ad alta voce della trascrizione del monologo da parte dello stesso parlante.

²³ In realtà anche le vocali basse possono essere desonorizzate in alcuni contesti. Per approfondimenti sulla variazione della desonorizzazione vocalica in contesti tipici e atipici si veda Pappalardo (2018b).

/ki/		/ku/		/si/ [ei]		/su/	
Sonora	Sorda	Sonora	Sorda	Sonora	Sorda	Sonora	Sorda
0,1254	0,0973	0,1253	0,0913	0,1226	0,0846	0,1325	0,1158

Tabella 5. Durata medie delle more con vocale più o meno desonorizzata

Non si può tuttavia escludere che la durata della mora possa variare in base alla struttura della parola in cui si trova per creare grazie al meccanismo della compensazione un effetto di isocronia. A questo proposito possiamo calcolare la durata media delle more /ta/ e /sa/ seguite rispettivamente dalla mora costituita dalla sola da vocale [i] (/V/), dalle more speciali /N/ e /Q/ e dalle more indipendenti con struttura /CV/.

Mora	/ta/				/sa/			
Media	0,1522	0,1508	0,1488	0,1324	0,1646	0,174	0,1569	0,1412
Mora seguente	/V/ [i]	/N/	/Q/	/CV/	/V/ [i]	/N/	/Q/	/CV/

Tabella 6. Durata media delle more /ta/ e /sa/ per mora seguente

Come possiamo notare osservando la Tabella 6, quando le more /ta/ e /sa/ sono seguite da una mora speciale o da una mora vocalica la loro durata è comparativamente maggiore rispetto a quando sono seguite da more indipendenti. Si potrebbe interpretare questo fenomeno come un effetto di compensazione che ha luogo in presenza di una mora con durata inferiore. Tuttavia, la maggiore durata della prima mora non è sufficiente da compensare tutto il tempo di produzione della mora successiva. In Tabella 7 possiamo osservare la durata media di sequenze di due more, di cui la prima è /ta/ o /sa/ e la seconda è /V/ ([i]), /N/, /Q/ o /CV/.²⁴

Prima mora	/ta/				/sa/			
Sequenza	/CVV _i /	/CVN/	/CVQ/	/CVCV/	/CVV _i /	/CVN/	/CVQ/	/CVCV/
Media	0,2059	0,2258	0,2355	0,2547	0,2174	0,2447	0,2297	0,2585

Tabella 7. Durata media di sequenze moraiche la cui prima mora è /ta/ o /sa/

Sebbene la durata delle sequenze /CVCV/ sia maggiore rispetto alle altre il rapporto supera in tutti i casi lo 0,8:1. Tra /saN/ e /saCV/ il rapporto è addirittura pari a 0,94:1. Nel giapponese spontaneo le more speciali e le more costituite da una sola vocale non sono, come abbiamo visto, unità isocrone

²⁴ Per questa query sono state considerate solo sequenze di more appartenenti allo stesso *bunsetsu*.

rispetto a sillabe /CV/, ma i meccanismi di compensazione che si attivano cercano di attenuare questa disomogeneità e rendere uniforme la durata di sequenze con lo stesso numero di more.

4. Conclusione

Se il giapponese della lettura ad alta voce di una poesia si avvicina molto al concetto di isocronia moraicata trattato in questo contributo, come è stato dimostrato attraverso i risultati della nostra indagine, risulta piuttosto difficile individuare unità isocrone nel parlato spontaneo. Tuttavia, come già descritto in Warner and Arai (2001), sono stati individuati meccanismi di compensazione che tendono a uniformare la durata delle parole con lo stesso numero di more. La mora rimane in ogni caso un'unità indivisibile nella percezione del giapponese parlato, permette a chi ascolta di situare i confini e di analizzare così il segnale ricevuto. Il sistema di scrittura gioca un ruolo fondamentale e influenza senz'altro i parlanti che tendono quindi a pensare alla lingua in base a unità che corrispondono ai singoli grafemi. Per una comprensione più profonda di questo fenomeno sarebbe necessario condurre ulteriori indagini sulla relazione tra gli aspetti fonetici e psicolinguistici per chiarire cosa rende il sistema ritmico-prosodico del giapponese così unico tra le lingue del mondo.

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Aizuchi and *ma* (pause) in online interactions of
distance learning classes of Japanese:
an empirical study

Tiziana Carpi

In recent years, classes and project works that involve online communication between foreign language learners of Japanese and Japanese native speakers have increasingly taken place. In a video call, in order to have a fluent conversation it is necessary to be able to use appropriate *aizuchi* and to take pauses accordingly. Considering that the ability to communicate remotely in foreign language learning will be increasingly important in the future, this is a valuable attempt to convey the cultural context of the local learner in a global environment. It is well known that *aizuchi* tends to be used more frequently in modern Japanese than in other languages during conversation. Non-monotone *aizuchi* used with high frequency leads to good communication, and its frequency of use by learners has been considered, by previous research, a way to measure language proficiency. In this study, I analyze the use of *aizuchi* and pause/interval *ma* in remote conversations between Italian learners of Japanese language and Japanese native speakers in Japan. This kind of research on remote communication between foreign language learners and native speakers provides important suggestions to ease distance language learning in the future.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, many language practitioners are incorporating intercultural communication as a goal and practice of language teaching (Byram 1997, Kramsch 1993). Telecollaboration (TC), terminology used in reference to virtual exchanges, can facilitate such intercultural exchange. TC has been defined as institutionalized, electronically mediated intercultural communication under the guidance of a language expert (i.e. teacher) for the purpose of FL learning, including the improvement of language skills, intercultural communicative competence and digital literacies (Belz 2003, Guth and Helm 2010). In recent years, project works in which learners of the Japanese language interact directly with Japanese native speakers (NSs) in Japan using the Internet have become quite frequent and are considered valuable attempts to directly convey the local learner's cultural background in a global environment. The ability to remotely communicate in a foreign language will become increasingly

important in the future. However, in virtual exchanges it is necessary to take appropriate pauses in order to facilitate the conversation.

Several problems can arise when using the Internet to talk to someone. In case of video calls where there is a fixed camera (i.e. a pc monitor, etc.) between two persons, it usually happens that if the speaker's gaze, which has the important role to signal the timing for turn taking, is (technically) hard to catch, the interaction may not proceed smoothly, and linguistic signals become most important.

In this study, I analyze the use of *aizuchi* and pause *ma* in remote conversations between Italian learners of the Japanese language and NSs in Japan in an Internet-based project work (Hayashi, Kunimura, Carpi 2019), with a focus on the learners.

2. Literature review

In spontaneous conversation, a listener can take turns by asking and answering to questions, elaborating or confirming the speaker's statements, or causing a topic shift. Alternatively, he/she may support the speaker in continuing the conversation. This can be achieved by non-verbal means, such as eye and head movement, or even silence, or short phrases (White 1986). These supportive behaviors are called *aizuchi* (Mizutani 1988), backchannels responses (Yngve 1970), or continuer and assessment (Schegloff 1982). More specifically, *aizuchi* is a Japanese word that refers to listeners' short responses used to indicate their listenership (Maynard 1986). Previous studies on Japanese linguistics reveal that *aizuchi* appear in a variety of forms and serve multiple functions; moreover, a number of social factors affect the way *aizuchi* is used. Although NSs of Japanese seem to use this highly complex pragmatic feature with ease, there is a great deal of individual variation, which results in a varied impression of individuals as good or poor listeners (Ohama 2006). This naturally leads to the question of how well L2 learners acquire and use *aizuchi* in Japanese conversation.

Whereas Japanese NSs have the reputation for using *aizuchi* to demonstrate active listenership, they are also known for using silence to achieve communicative goals. While silence may be seen an apparently passive act of conversation, it can signal various social functions such as difficulties in articulating a thought, technical problems, etc. In addition, previous studies have found that Japanese NSs use silence both as a negative politeness strategies, when it functions as a distancing tactic, and as a positive politeness strategy, when it functions as a sign of solidarity and rapport (Sifianou 1997, Nakane 2006). Sifianou (1997: 73) also claims that while silence has a positive value in avoiding imposition, it can also be "the least polite" form because it "places high inferential demands on the addressee." In her analysis of politeness in intercultural communication, Sifianou (1992: 216) argues

that communication problems are more likely to occur among participants from different socio-cultural backgrounds, due to gaps in “the tacit agreement among native speakers as to which forms are conventionalized, which forms carry what degree and what kind of politeness.”

Together with *aizuchi*, one of the most salient characteristics of Japanese spoken dialogues are the so-called sentence-final particles such as *ne* and *yo* (Katagiri 2007), closely related to the use of *aizuchi* (Kita and Ide 2007). They are extremely frequent in spoken utterances, even mandatory in some cases to produce natural conversational utterances, but never appear in formal written discourse. The final particles can be typically attached to the end of a postpositional phrase, in the middle of an utterance, or attached to an adverb, or a clause. Japanese linguists have provided a classification of sentence-final particles in terms of the types of information they convey and the communicative functions they serve besides the propositional contents of the sentences to which they are attached. These communicative functions include assertion, question, confirmation, assent, inhibition and exclamation (Katagiri 2007). One of their functions, especially for the particle *ne*, is to elicit *aizuchi* from the listener, but they can also be used independently as an *aizuchi* utterance (Kita and Ide 2007). Thus, final particles and *aizuchi* together shape the interaction between the turn-holder and the listener in the way characteristic of Japanese conversation.

2.1. Japanese *aizuchi* and *ma* in FL learning

It has been found that NSs of Japanese transfer the pragmatic features of their Japanese listening-behaviors into English and therefore these are interpreted as frequent interruptions of the speakers' speech rather than supportive behavior (Maynard 1993). Conversely, researchers also found that FL learners of Japanese transfer their first language (L1) listening strategies into Japanese (Nagata 2004, Watanabe 1994, Yang 2001).

Another noteworthy difference between FL learners and NSs is that learners tend to misinterpret the functions of *aizuchi* and use them in a restricted manner (Hatasa 2007). Previous studies on *aizuchi* use demonstrate that learners acquire *aizuchi* rather slowly, and they may not achieve a native-like competence in the use of this feature.

However, what is mostly relevant to this study is that FL learners have very limited opportunities to interact with Japanese NSs or to be exposed to *aizuchi* outside the classroom. This means that FL learners' acquisition may be affected not only by the learners' L1, but also by the input they receive in the FL classroom.

Regardless of the virtual exchange, previous research has emphasized that appropriate *aizuchi* and *ma* are important for smoother conversation. According to Yang (1997: 117) *aizuchi* play an

important role in the progress of conversation in Japanese, but it will hardly be easy for learners to learn them. Even in the case of foreign learners who have studied Japanese for many years and who have mastered the language, this does not necessarily imply that they can always make good use of *aizuchi*.

As it has been pointed out in many previous studies, *aizuchi* tend to be used more frequently in Japanese than in other languages (Mizutani 1988, Maynard 1993, Clancy et al. 1996), and are regarded as "caring" behavior (Maynard 1993). A simple extension of this idea is that "high-frequency, non-monotonic variants lead to good communication (at least in Japanese):" in fact, *aizuchi* is often considered a way to measure learners' proficiency in Japanese (Yang 1997, Sasaki 2002, etc.).

According to the literature, *ma* (pauses) tend to be longer in Japanese than in other languages, and their length changes according to the utterance speed of the other party. In addition, learners' pauses are often very short: this is related to the learner's abilities in the Japanese language. It is said in fact that "Japanese proficiency" has a high correlation with "how to take pauses." Furthermore, *ma* is also used as one of the evaluation criteria for the objective evaluation of Japanese oral proficiency interviews (ACTFL-OPI). Despite this, how to take pause in a conversation with a Japanese speaker is usually not included in the syllabus of a Japanese language course.

In order to understand a conversation, it is necessary to interpret not only the actions of the parties involved, but also the situations in which those actions are performed; if not, the situation is harder to grasp due to the lack of contextual information. In research on spoken speech, it may seem that the interval/pause can be perceived simply as a "time zone without speech," but recognizing *ma* is not so easy (Shukuri, Vaage *et al.* 2018).

As the literature suggests, dealing with different turn-taking conventions that are shaped by cultures, status and power may result in intercultural tensions, resulting in participants judge their interlocutor negatively. Moreover, what makes virtual exchanges even more difficult is the mediation of technology. Past research has shown that regulating turns in a video-mediated context often results in more pauses and interruption than face-to-face interaction (Bitti & Garotti 2011). This is because managing speakership/listenership poses more challenges when participants do not have the affordances of physical co-presence such as the direction of gaze, gestures and body movement (Jenks 2014, Jenks and Brandt 2013). For instance, because of the fixed position of the webcam at the top of the screen, previous research claims that real eye-contact does not exist online (Kern 2014). It has also been reported that transmission delays impact perceived communication difficulties and participants' emotions (Parkinson & Lea 2011) and that the timing when a pause starts to be perceived as troublesome depends on the modes of communication (Kozar 2016).

Potential issues may further arise when interlocutors lack familiarity with such Japanese listenership conventions. It should be noted that communication breakdowns can also occur due to differences in language proficiency (Hatasa 2007).

3. Outline and purpose of the research

This research was born out of a collaborative study between three countries (Japan, France and Italy) that gathered under a wider, unprecedented large-scale project called 「面白い話」で世界をつなぐ ‘*Omoshiroi hanashi*’ *de sekai o tsunagu* (Connecting through funny stories) represented by Sadanobu Toshiyuki (University of Kyoto) and funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPC) and part of the Global Network for Japanese Language Education (GN), with the specific aim to connect learners of Japanese language around the world.¹

This specific group of research represented by Kōbe University, University of Rennes and University of Milan, whose aim is to promote intercultural understanding and Japanese communicative skills, involved five Italian and nine French students studying Japanese language in bachelor and master degree courses, paired with twelve Japanese students in small teams of 1on1 or 1on2. They were assigned the task to co-produce a video about the theme “My funny stories”, one of the topics from the large-scale project mentioned above. The participants exchanged opinions on “What are funny stories to me?” communicating through e-mails, SNS, Skype or Google Hangouts and sharing video materials, and eventually collaborating to the realization of a video with which they had to explain what they considered “funny” (e.g. their final task).

The aim of the current study was to observe and analyze the use of *aizuchi* and *ma* in natural conversation among learners of Japanese language and Japanese NSs. The analysis was restricted only to the dyads (four) from which the researchers could collect full data. The four pairs were made up of four Italian learners of Japanese and four Japanese NSs. Learners' Japanese language proficiency ranged from A2 to B2 (Council of Europe 2011). The task required that both sides searched online for interesting videos displaying the concept of “funny” as conceived according to their own culture, and shared them and discussed about it through several sessions of virtual exchange.

¹ For further details about the project see <http://www.speech-data.jp/chotto/gn.html> (30.4.2020). Audio and video and materials collected through this project can be used as online teaching materials to improve learners' oral communication skills, as well as Japanese and learners' native language speech styles. They can also be used as comparative research data on humor and laughter.

A corpus of 13 dialogues, about three or four dialogues for each pair, of about 60 minutes length each, was analyzed. For the analysis two types of data were collected:

1. Conversation data of four dyads by Japanese and Italian learners co-producing a video on the topic "funny stories"

→ discussion through SNS and Google Hangouts with a peer about “what is interesting to me”, sharing videos about the topic and eventually creating a video explaining their views on the topic.

2. Video-recorded data of the conversations on Google Hangouts, carried out during non-class hours

→ focus on the presence of *aizuchi* and *ma*, as well as the misunderstandings or breakdowns due to the lack of them that, consequently, hindered communication smoothness

3.1. Data

Due to space limits, this paragraph presents three different excerpts that may be looked at as representative of three different patterns observed in the corpus. They are taken from the virtual exchanges by two of the four dyads, and they are characterized by several episodes of miscommunication or stagnation of the conversation. The selection of the excerpts has been made to put in evidence how the use, in virtual exchanges, of *aizuchi* and *ma* by learners of the Japanese language may impact comprehension and conversation flow with NSs.

Dyad 1 was formed, on one side, by an Italian (male) NS speaker (IM1) with elementary level of Japanese proficiency (A2) and no prior stay in Japan. and by a Japanese (female) NS (JF1) who had previous study experience in Italy and could speak some Italian.

Dyad 2 was composed by an Italian (female) NS (IF2) with upper intermediate level of Japanese proficiency (B2) and previous two months study experience in Japan, and, by a Japanese (female) NS with no knowledge of Italian language.

Participants to the projects were allowed to use whatever language they preferred during the exchange as far as they could convey what they needed to carry out the task.

3.1.1. Excerpt 1 from dyad 1

The following script is an excerpt from a video conversation between IM1 and JF1 (Figure 1).

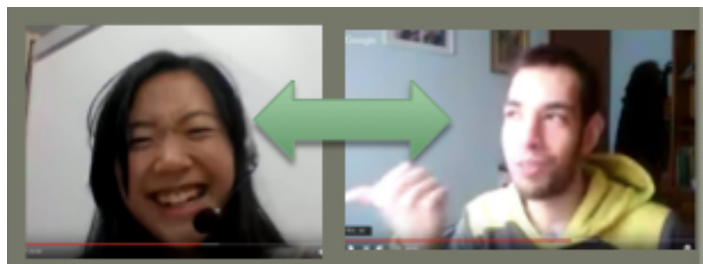


Figure 1: Dyad 1 (JF1 and IM1, respectively S and M)

Line	Student S (JF1)	Student M (IM1)
1	私の気づいたことを言ってもいいですか? <i>watashi no ki zuita koto o itte mo iidesuka?</i> ("May I tell you what I realized?")	
2		Mmmh... sì OK ("Hmm... yes ok") [M doesn't look as if he understood]
3	Posso dirti cosa penso in italiano? ("May I tell you what I think in Italian?")	
4		あー、 Sì、 はい <i>āa, sì, hai</i> ("Uh, yes, yes") [shrugging, as if he does not care much about the translation]
5	えーっと、イタリア人がー、パロラッチャ <i>ē-tto, itarijin ga - paroraccha</i> ("Hmm, Italians ... [swear word]") [It. "parolaccia" is translated with 罵りことば <i>namari kotoba</i> ("swear words") in Japanese]	
6		ん n ("Hmm") [laughs and looks amused and puzzled by the fact that his partner knows that word in Italian]
7	わらう、笑うのはー、その <i>warau, warau no ha - sono</i> ("(They) laugh, (their) laughing... that")	
8		はい <i>hai</i> ("Yes")
9	わかりーわかりやすくてー面白いから、、、でしょ? <i>wakari -- wakari yasukutte - omoshiroi kara ... deshō?</i>	

	(“It’s easy.... easy to understand ... since they ² are funny, right?”) [laughs]	
10		そう思います <i>sō omoimasu</i> (“I think so”)
11	うんうんうん <i>un un un</i> (“Hmm hmm hmm”)	
12	その、日本人が一、なんだろう、あの、ダンスとかの一、変なダンス、変な踊りで笑うのとかも一 <i>sono, nihonjin ga --, nan darō, ano, dansu toka no--, henna dansu, henna odori de warau no toka mo -</i> (“Well, those Japanese... I wonder, well, also the fact that they laugh for a dance, a funny dance, a strange dance...”)	
13		はい、わかった、わかった <i>hai, wakatta, wakatta</i> (“Yes, I got it, I got it”) [looks amused but misunderstands what his partner is talking about, thinking that “strange dance” is the topic]
14	ん一、すごいわかりやすくて一、なんだろう、見ただけとか、聞いただけで、なんてか、面白いって感じる分かりやすい笑いだからかな一って <i>n - sugoi wakariyasukute - nan darō, mita dake ka, kīta dake de nan teka, omoshiroi tte kanjiru wakariyasui warai da kara kana - tte</i> (“Hmmm... well maybe because it’s really easy to understand, I guess, just by watching it, just by listening to it, somehow, you laugh because you feel it’s funny and easy to understand...”)	
15		大丈夫、大丈夫 <i>daijōbu, daijōbu</i> (“Alright, alright”) [meaning “I see, I see”]
16	うん <i>un</i> (“Hmm”)	
17		... [proceeds to talk in Italian about dance comedy, <i>manzai</i>]

Table 1: IM1 and JF1 in dyad 1 (first exchange)

² It refers to “swear words.”

In the exchange above, the participants are talking about what makes them laugh when watching TV and JF1 has just shared a video about *manzai*.³ Table 1 shows how JF1, in order to explain what she wants to convey to his peer, slowly separates and partially rephrases sentences, using a variety of fillers (highlighted words). JF1 is explaining some features of *manzai* but IM1, does not understand that she is still talking about the same subject (*manzai*) and not a “strange dance” (line 12 変なダンス *henna dansu*) instead. She continues her talk as he utters two different types of *aizuchi*: “ ah, yes” (line 4 あー、 Sì、 はい *ā, sì, hai*), “yes” (line 8 はい *hai*) and “yes, I have understood, understood” (line 13 はい、 わかった、 わかった *hai, wakatta, wakatta*), “ok, it’s fine” (lines 15 大丈夫、 大丈夫 *daijōbu, daijōbu*) that sounds as if he has understood.

This excerpt represents a case in which a learner, with limited language competences, interact with a NS using monotone *aizuchi*, thus (unconsciously?) displaying understanding and allowing the interlocutor to proceed with her talk even if his understanding of the content may be limited.

3.1.2. Excerpt 2 from dyad 1

The following script is the second excerpt from a video conversation between IM1 and JF1.

Line	Student S (JF2)	Student M (IM2)
1	M が言いたかったことはー? <i>M ga itakatta koto ha?</i> (“What did you want to say?”)	
2		ん? n? (“Uh?”) [doesn’t understand]
3	M が言いたかったことはー? <i>M ga itakatta koto ha -?</i> (“What did you want to say?”)	
4		言いたかったことはー、えー、 <i>itakatta koto ha - ē...</i> (“What I wanted to say ... hmm...”)
5	芸人、芸人は、えーっとー <i>geinin, geinin ha, ē-tto-</i> (“Entertainers, entertainers, well hmm...”)	
6		あ、イタリア語で「comico」だ <i>a, itariago de “comico” da</i> (“Ah, in Italian is ‘comico’”)
7	うん、そうそうそう、OK <i>un, sō sō sō, OK</i>	

³ *Manzai* (漫才) is a traditional style in Japanese culture similar to double act comedy or stand-up comedy. *Manzai* usually involves two performers – a straight man (*tsukkomi*) and a funny man (*boke*) – trading jokes at great speed. Most of the jokes revolve around mutual misunderstandings, double-talk, puns and other verbal gags.

	(“Yes, it’s like that, like that, ok”) [while saying OK she makes the Italian gesture for ‘OK’, meaning ‘got it’]	
8	芸人が一、えーと、政治の一、、、あの、政治家のまねをするってことね <i>geinin ga - ēto, seiji no - ... ano, seijika no mane o suru -tte koto ne</i> (“Entertainers... well, they imitate politics... well, politicians, don’t they?”)	
9		、、、えー、 ... ē-- .. (... Uh...)
10	うーん <i>u - n</i> (“Hmm”) [looks as if she understood]	
11		えーと、政治一、政治ひと一の <i>ēto, seiji - seiji hito - no</i> (“Well, politics... political people...”)
12	うんうんうんうん <i>un un un un</i> (“Hmm hmm hmm”)	
13		のように、 <i>come si dice</i> <i>no yōni, come si dice</i> (“Just like” how do you say it?)
14	うん <i>un</i> (“Hmm”)	
15		<i>può darsi... うーん、ぶ、べつにー</i> <i>può darsi... ūn, bu, betsuni --</i> (Maybe... hmm, especially...)
16	政治家の言うことを <i>seijika no iu koto o</i> (“The things that politicians say”)	
17		はい・・・はい <i>hai... hai</i> (“Yes, yes”)
18	うんうんうん <i>un un un</i> (“Hmm hmm hmm”)	
19		そうです <i>sō desu</i> (“I think so”)
20	[nodding]	
21		たとえば一、うん一、、、げ、芸人、、、 <i>politico ように一行く一、ます一、えー</i> <i>tatoeba - un - ... ge, geinin... politico yōni - iku - masu- ē</i> (“For example... hmm entert ... just like a politician ... go...es, hmm...”)

22	[nodding] うんうんうん un un un (Hmm Hmm Hmm)	
23		あー、変な一声を一しま、してるーだろ う、だろ、 <i>ā-- , henna koe o - shima, shiteru - darō, darō,</i> (Ehmm... I suppose, I suppose, they ma... make... a funny voice,...) [tries to explain how Italian comedians make fun of politicians]
24	うんうんうん un un un (“Hmm hmm hmm”)	
25		ま、えー、だ(け)どー、まあ <i>ma, ē - da(ke) do-- , maa</i> (“But, hmm... but... well”)
26	[nodding]	
27		で、こんどーきみにおく <i>de, kondo - kimi ni oku</i> (Next time I will sen- you) [He means that he will send her a video about some Italian entertainer making fun of politicians]
28	あ、ありがとう <i>a, arigatō</i> (“Ah, thank you”)	
29		きみにーきみに送る <i>kimi ni - kimi ni okuru</i> (“I will send you”)
30	ありがとう <i>arigatō</i> (“Thank you”)	
31		えー 本当有名ー、えー、政治、政治のげ んきんはー「ベニーニ」だ。「ベニーニ」 知ってますか? <i>ē hontō yūmei -ē , seiji, seiji no genkin ha -“Benīni”</i> <i>da. “Benīni” shitte imasuka?</i> (“Eh, he is really popular... eh, politics, cash ⁴ of politics (<i>sigh</i>)... is ‘Benigni.’ Do you know ‘Benigni’?”)
32	ベニーニ? <i>Benīni?</i> (“Beniini?”)	
33		げんきんだ。ベニーニ、はい、えー <i>genkin da. Benīni, hai, ē</i> (“He is a cash. Benigni, yes, eh”)
34	[shakes her head to say no]	

⁴ IM2 pronounces wrongly the word “entertainer/comedian” (*geinin*) in Japanese, and uses the word for “cash” (*genkin*) instead.

35		はい、いた、イタリアーげんきんだ <i>hai, ita, itaria—genkin da</i> ("Yes, Ital... Italian cash")
36	げんきん? <i>genkin?</i> ("Cash?")	
37		んん、 <i>nn.. "comico"</i> (hmm... "comedian")
38	あー、芸人? <i>ā, geinin?</i> ("Ah, entertainer/comedian?")	
39		芸人、 <i>sì</i> 、このことば、はい、芸人 <i>geinin, sì, kono kotoba, hai, geinin</i> ("Comedian, yes, that word, yes, comedian")
40	はあはあはあはあ <i>ha a ha a ha a ha a</i> (Aah aah aah aah) [nodding]	
41		えー <i>ē</i> (Uh)
42	ベリーニは、あー、ベニーニ? <i>Berīni⁵ ha, ā, Benīni?</i> ("Beriini is, ah, Beniini?") [misunderstands the name of the Italian comedian and then repeats it in the correct way changing (rising) the tone of her voice]	
43		あ、はい <i>a, hai</i> ("Ah, yes")
44	あ、ベニーニは芸人、芸人で <i>a, Benīni ha geinin, geinin de</i> ("Ah, Beniini is a comedian, a comedian")	
45		あー、「ベニーニ」聞こえましたか? うーん <i>ā, "Benīni" kikoemashitaka? Ūn</i> ("Ah! Did you hear "Benigni"? Hmm") [indicates his own ears with fingers, wishing to convey 'have you ever heard this name?']
46	うん、ベニーニ、うん聞こえた <i>un, Benīni, un kikoeta</i> ("Hmm, I heard 'Beniini'") [waves hands]	
47		はい、じゃ、聞こえた、はい <i>hai, ja, kikoeta, hai</i> ("Yes, well, you heard him, yes")

⁵ JF2 pronounces wrongly the name of the Italian comedian ("Beniini", instead of "Benigni" [be'niɲi]).

		[looks happy]
48	うん、ベニーニ <i>un, Benīni</i> (“Hm, Beniini”) [waves hands]	
49		そう、ベニーニは、本当、有名だ <i>Sō, Benīni ha hontō, yūmei da</i> (Well, Benigni must be REALLY popular) [looks extremely happy and excited, believing his partner heard about Benigni before and that the comedian is famous in Japan]
50	ふーん、でも初めて知りました <i>fū--n, demo hajimete shirimashita</i> (Hmm, but it’s the first time I hear (about him)) [due to a slight overlapping with IM1’s sentence, her partner does not hear this utterance]	
51		日本で人が、、、知ったらー、本当有名だ <i>nihonjin ga... shittara--, hontō yūmei</i> (If Japanese know him, he must be REALLY popular) [wants to convey ‘if Japanese know him then he must be really popular there in Japan’]
52	ふん、、、ほー、へー <i>fun hō--, hē-</i> (Hmm... ahh... eeh...) [looking a bit concerned, realizing that probably communication did not get through correctly, as she actually meant, in contrast with what IM1 understood, that is, she did not know the comedian]	

Table 2: IM1 and JF1 in Dyad 1 (second exchange)

In this excerpt, participants are talking about comedians. IM1 tries to explain to his partner that Italian comedians often makes fun of politicians since that is part of mainstream Italian comedy style. IM1 has lots of difficulty in conveying his message due to lack of vocabulary and low language skills, but he gets support by JF1, who also understands his Italian utterance, and shows to be very cooperative through several strategies (rephrasing, asking for confirmation, etc.). In lines 31-51 IT1 misunderstands what JF1 replies when he asks whether she knows a popular Italian comedian called “Benigni,” thinking that she knows him. IT1 displays enthusiasm about that and proceeds with his conviction without noticing that JF1 says “Mh, but it’s the first time I hear about him” (line 50).

When IT1 asks JF1, “Did you hear Benigni?” (line 45: あー、「ベニーニ」聞こえましたか？
ā, “*Benīni*” *kikoemashitaka? ūn*, he intends to ask: “Have you ever heard the name ‘Benigni?’” (「ベニーニ」という名前を聞いたことがありますか? “*Benīni*” *to iu namae o kīta koto ga arimasuka?*) and does not realize his mistake. As a consequence, IT1 gets very excited (lines 49 and 51) by erroneously believing JF1 has previously heard about the comedian. Here, together with grammatical and lexical errors, almost absence of sentence-final particles and a very poor use of *aizuchi* and *ma*, where they would be most required, has led to generate a big misunderstanding. For example, on one hand *aizuchi* would have helped IM1 get his thoughts through in lines 33, 37, 45 and 49. Here (line 49) IM1, consciously or not, uses *aizuchi* (そう *sō*) but his tone and the way he utters do not sound appropriate to the circumstance and fails to be of any help to their communication. As for *ma*, on the other hand, total absence in lines 23 (here there is almost an overlapping of utterance instead), 45, 47, 49 and 51, where a pause would have helped, contributed to generate confusion.

This excerpt represents a case where the NS frequently uses *aizuchi* while the learner ignores them because he (probably) does not recognize most of them. Misunderstanding occurs due to the speaker (IM1) relying only on his peer’s voice tone and gesture, not paying attention to (or recognizing) *aizuchi* and other supporting language features. Furthermore, the learner does not make use of requests for confirmation as a communicative strategy that would help ease speech comprehension.

3.1.3. Excerpt 3 from dyad 2

The following script is the second excerpt from a video conversation between IF2 and JF2 (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Dyad 2 (JF2 and IF2, respectively Y and A)

Line	Student A (IF2)	Student Y (JF2)
1	えーと、ゆかの趣味は？ <i>ēto, Yuka no shumi ha?</i> (“Well, what’s your hobby?”)	

2		私は、なんだろう、ハンドボール、を、 高校生有的时候に、ハンドボールしてたの ね、うん <i>watashi ha, nan darō, handobōru .. o, kōkōsei no toki ni, handobōru shiteta no ne, un</i> ("I, well, I wonder what, handball, I used ... when I was a highschool student, to play handball...")
3	バレーボールじゃないよ <i>barēbōru janai yo</i> (Not volleyball) [laughing while asking confirmation that her partner is not talking about handball]	
4		ふふふ、バレーボールじゃない <i>fufufu, barēbōru janai</i> (Hmm, not volleyball)
5	えーと、探してきます <i>ēto, sagashitekimasu</i> (Ehmm, I'll look up) [looks up on her dictionary the word 'handball']	
6		ふふふふ <i>fufufufu</i> (Uh uh uh)
7	[pause]	[pause]
8	あ <i>a</i> (Aah)	
9		あ、フットサルのコートでやるやつ <i>a, futtosaru no kōto de yaru yatsu</i> (Aah, what you do at the futsal court)
10	こんな感じ? <i>konna kanji?</i> ("Something like this?") [shares a picture through the chat to ask for confirmation]	
11		そんな感じ <i>sonna kanji</i> ("Like that")
12	わかった <i>wakatta</i> ("Got it")	
13		それをやって、クラブをやってて、ハンド ボールの試合とか見るの好きだし、結構ス ポーツの試合みるの好きだし、あと、漫画 読むのも好きだし <i>sore o yatte, kurabu o yattete, handobōru no shiai toka miru no suki da shi, kekkō supōtsu no shiai</i>

		<i>miru no suki da shi, ato, manga yomu no mo suki da shi</i> (“I did that, I did club, I like watching handball matches, I quite like watching sport matches, and then I also like reading manga...”)
14	漫画、私も <i>manga, watashi mo</i> (“Manga, me too”) [laughs]	
15	[pause]	[pause]
16		うふふ、、、あと何が好きかなー、食べる ことがすき <i>u fufu... ato nani ga suki kanā, taberu koto ga suki</i> (Hmm uh..., then I wonder what I like, I like eating)
17	[laughs]	
18		あはは <i>a ha ha</i> (Aaa ah ah)
19	[pause]	[pause]
20		今日はスーパーへ行ったとき、たくさんの 甘いものを買いました <i>kyō ha sūpā e itta toki, takusan no amai mono o</i> <i>kaimashita</i> (Today when I went to the supermarket, I bought lots of sweets) [laughs]
21	あはは、、、何買ったんだろう? <i>a ha ha .. nani katta n darō?</i> (Aah ah, ah.. I wonder that did you buy...?)	
22		たくさんの <i>takusan no</i> (“A lot”) [laughs]
23	[pause]	[pause]
24		えっと <i>etto</i> (“Well”)

Table 3: IF2 and JF2 in dyad 2 (first exchange)

In this short excerpt, the participants are talking about personal interests, trying to get to know each other better before discussing about what makes them laugh and what they consider “funny.”

IF2 asks JF2 what are her hobbies and JF2 gives a few examples. The excerpt shows that, beside the absence of *aizuchi* in both’s utterances, silence between the two partners are frequent, with long pauses (lines 7, 15, 19, 23) which lead the conversation to stagnate. JF2 did not speak much, did not show either involvement or cooperation in communicating with her peer. The Italian student (IF2), who had difficulties in standing moments of silence, tried to keep the conversation ongoing. However, whatever JF2 said, IF2 did not use *aizuchi* thus contributing to end each small conversation. In this situation, since it seems that they did not know how to use *aizuchi* effectively, how to make pauses and how to face

silence during conversation, they both tried to find the next topic and maintain a fun atmosphere by laughing. As for what pertains to *aizuchi* use, it is also worth recalling that, as claimed by Iwasaki (1997), in a conversation between two Japanese NSs it is likely that even as the listener frequently expresses active support for the speakerhood of the turn-holder, the turn-holder also seeks *aizuchi* from the listener in various ways. For example, the turn-holder can add an *aizuchi* at the end of her utterance which elicits an *aizuchi* from the listener (Kita & Ide 2007). The function of *aizuchi* to trigger further *aizuchi* can lead to what Iwasaki (1997) called a “loop sequence” of *aizuchi* when none of the participants develop the content of conversation.

It should also be pointed out that a very limited use of final particles both by the Italian learners (most probably because she could not use them) and by the Japanese NS (maybe because she was not induced to do so by her interlocutor – considering the “loop sequence” function of *aizuchi* that is strictly connected to sentence-final particles) may have contributed to a less smooth dialogue.

This fact may thus be accounted for the lack of *aizuchi* on the NS side, being her interlocutor not sufficiently competent to use *aizuchi*.

4. Results and findings

4.1. Excerpt 1

According to conversation data, the Italian student made a very restricted use of *aizuchi*, which did not help keep the communication smooth and eventually resulted in a tendency to get stuck or to misunderstand (and consequently be misunderstood) during conversation.

In addition, it is relevant to note that, in the current study, in those cases in which Japanese NSs, in their natural conversation, would use various combinations of *aizuchi*, such as “hē” (へー *hē*), “I see” (そうなんだー, ふーん *sō nan da -- hūn*), “great” (すごーい *sugoi*), “I didn't know” (知らなかったー *shiranakatta*), the Italian learner only used a very few variations such as “yes” (はい *hai*), “I see” (うん *un*) and “ok” (大丈夫 *daijōbu*). This caused the misunderstanding to go on as he expressed that he was understanding his peer.

Here, transfer from first language (L1) can also be taken into account for the misuse or lack of use of *aizuchi*. Conversation in Italian language, in fact, does not make such a consistent use of supportive behaviors as it happens in Japanese communication. Despite the exposure to *aizuchi* through formal instruction, the lack of opportunities for Japanese language learners to talk with NSs does not allow them to experience the variety of forms and the multiple functions that *aizuchi* cover.

4.2. Excerpt 2

During a video call, it is difficult to catch the gaze of one's interlocutor, and we can also assume that there are many moments when the listener looks away from the monitor. Therefore, in this excerpt misunderstandings often occurred when one of the participants was reading ~~her~~/his peer's facial expression and heard an utterance only in the moment in which he/~~she~~ looked at the monitor without considering the context and other features. Relying more on facial expressions than utterances, thus not recognizing *aizuchi*, such as in line 46 by JF2: うん、ベニーニ、うん聞こえた *un, Benīni, un kikoeta*, to which IM2 replied (line 47) はい、じゃ、聞こえた、はい *hai, ja, kikoeta, hai*), and in line 50, when JF2 says ふーん、でも初めて知りました *fū--n, demo hajimete shirimashita*, and lack of vocabulary due to low language proficiency, such as in line 45 by IM2: あー、「ベニーニ」聞こえましたか? うーん *ā, "Benīni" kikoemashitaka? Ūn*) can be considered the main reasons for communication failure in this excerpt.

4.3. Excerpt 3

According to previous studies, Italian speakers tend to “speak for the purpose of speaking” and “cannot stand silence” (Kori 2006), this depending also on the speaker's conversation style. This is exemplified in this excerpt. In Italy, it is common see people trying to overcome silence in natural conversation by changing (sometimes even abruptly) topic in order to fill the space. Can this be accounted for the shortage of *aizuchi* used by Italian learners in our study?

Furthermore, the timing and the pause frequently present in Japanese language may indicate a variety of meanings, such as “agreement, “neutrality” or “disagreement,” depending on the length of the pause (Xi 2016). It seems that the misunderstanding caused by inappropriate timing shown in this excerpt is not only related to the timing of the conversation, but also to the length of this interval (pause) that in some cases was long.

It is very important for FL learners participating in virtual exchanges – in which delay in timing is frequent – to be fully aware of the risks of misunderstanding due to inappropriate (length of the) pauses.

5. Conclusions

This study has presented the analysis of three excerpts taken from conversation data by four pairs of Japanese NSs and Italian learners of Japanese language working on the co-production of a video titled “My funny stories,” a project that involved institutions in Japan, France and Italy. The analysis here focuses mainly on the learners' use of *aizuchi* and *ma*.

The three excerpts can be regarded as three representative patterns found in most of the dialogues during the virtual exchanges. It was observed that unnatural responses caused misunderstanding and hindered smoothness throughout the conversations in the whole corpus.

The first excerpt represents the cases in which the learners only use monotone *aizuchi* (for instance only “yes, yes”) thus allowing one’s peers to go on with their talk, regardless of the learners’ understanding. The second excerpt presents the case in which the learners rely more on facial expressions than utterances and almost do not either recognize or use *aizuchi*. The third one represents those cases in which long “pauses” are taken before replying to the interlocutor, conversation gets stuck and misunderstanding occurs. In most of the dialogues of this corpus sentence-final particles are rarely used.

According to previous research (Luo 2016), since the timing of *aizuchi* conveying “incomprehension/not understanding” of Japanese is usually longer than the one expressing “approval” or/and “neutrality”, in video conversations where delay in timing occurs, and in which misunderstanding frequently takes place due to non appropriate “pause,” it is necessary that the speaker is careful not to delay too much the timing of *aizuchi*.

Despite what reported above, as previous research has pointed out, the impact of the use of a technological devices such as a video camera connected to the Internet, which may at times report transmission delays, should be taken into account when conducting this kind of experiments and analysis. The timing when a pause starts to be perceived as troublesome depends on the modes of communication (Kozar 2016), and this is why it is hard to draw general conclusions.

According to the results of the analysis of the whole corpus, even learners who had studied in Japan and therefore had more chances to be exposed to spontaneous conversation with NSs and natural use of *aizuchi*, did not employ much *aizuchi* during conversation causing what could be considered unnatural responses.

To summarize, we have seen a very limited use of *aizuchi*, a strong reliance on the speaker’s gaze instead of utterance especially in those cases where the learner’s Japanese language proficiency was low, and the impact of timing in conversation and of the length of pause.

The current research on remote communication between learners and NSs provides some issues to reflect on for educators who wish to help ease communication and overcome misunderstandings among peers in virtual exchanges. For what concerns Japanese language learning, it should be pointed out that not being aware of the complex relationship between *aizuchi* and silence/pause as two sides of the same coin of Japanese listenership may create intercultural tensions and misunderstandings. Despite learners’ previous short or long stay in Japan, this study has shown that language exposure

does not seem a sufficient condition to be able to use *aizuchi* efficiently. This implies that educators may need to focus more on *aizuchi* (and sentence-final particles as well) use in their teaching. It can be argued that the lack or insufficient time dedicated, in formal instruction, to them, may hinder not just learners' acquisition of these highly complex pragmatic features, but especially learners' awareness in recognizing their existence and importance.

This study also emphasizes what previous research has claimed: the understanding of *aizuchi* in Japanese conversation is not complete without the understanding of final particles, and vice versa.

Regardless of the differences on Japanese language proficiency and in terms of previous experience in Japan, the study shows a generalized tendency, emerged in this corpus, in both lack of use of *aizuchi* and difficulty in handling silence/pauses: at what extent may this be accounted for by socio-cultural factors and consequently by the influence of the speaker's L1? This is an issue that need to be further considered in future research on this topic.

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Reviews

Elizabeth Frood and Angela McDonald (eds.). 2013. *Decorum and Experience, Essays in ancient culture for John Baines*. Oxford: Griffith Institute, XVIII + 304, ISBN 978-0-900416-92-7

In this review, the Festschrift for the Egyptologist John Baines is examined in some detail. The contents is as follows:

James P. Allen (“Like cats and cows,” 3-5) searches for etymologically based word plays. In CT 335 a connection should exist between *miw* “hangover“ and *miwi* “to be similar” (4). The “Book of the Heaven Cow” allegedly has a closeness between the interjection *mi mi* “what now...” and the mooing of the cow-shaped goddess Nut (4). This seems to the present author quite farfetched.

Hussein Bassir (“The self-presentation of Payeftjauemawyneith on a naophorus statue BM EA 83,” 6-13) approaches the self-portrayal of *P;ii=f-t;w-(m)-(wi)-nt* on the Naophor BM EA 83. The age of the piece can be dated to the late Saitic period, while there is evidence that Heliopolis is its provenance (6). The biographical text is composed of titles, epithets, wisdom, narrative and funerary elements and the call to the living (8). The moral virtues of *P;ii=f-t;w-(m)-(wi)-nt* shall benefit – according to his own statement – the entire society (10-11).

Mark Collier (“Late Egyptian counterfactual conditionals and counterfactual reasoning,” 14-20) puts the late Egyptian “counterfactual conditional” in the spotlight. The introduction of the conditional structures by *h-n* is illustrated by several examples (14-17). When the *ir*-introduction comes up it stresses a forward-looking perspective (17-19). The introduction by *inn* is also duly considered (19-20).

Roland Enmarch (“The traces of the main inscription on the Abgig monument of Senwosret I,” 21-25) deals with the main inscription of the Abgig-monument of Senusret I. The now largely lost inscription had originally 14 columns on the front of the object (21). The monument, made of rose granite, may have belonged to a place of sun cult (21). The sparse remains of the text are interpreted as possibly a part of a short story about the king (23).

Andrés Diego Espinel (“A newly identified Old Kingdom execration text”, 26-33) presents a new execration text from the Old Kingdom. The text document with a Hieratic inscription on the recto is now kept in the *Museu Egipci de Barcelona* (inv. No. E 619). The piece has in shape, contents, and palaeography similarities with the large figures from Giza Straße G 7200 and the mastaba Neferi, which date to the early reign of Pepi II. (27). The syllable *mṯ* in the proper name *mṯni.t* is connected to proto-Meroitic *mte* “young“ (27). In the execration text, two Nubian women are prominent as target persons (29). The red colour was used for magical purposes (29).

Marjorie Fisher (“A block statue of the second prophet of Amun, Ahmose,” 34-42) studies a statue block of the second prophet of Amon, Ahmose, from the time of Thutmosis III. The inscription is evaluated philologically and the author tries to integrate the missing parts by using parallels. The owner of the statue is identical to the owner of TT 121 (36).

Erhart Graefe (“*mkꜣ* “aufmerksam sein, erkennen” und der ramessidische Gebetsanruf *mkꜣ.tw ḥft śdm.tw*,” 43-46) tries to corroborate the meaning “to be attentive“ to *mkꜣ*. The Ramessidic prayer call *mkꜣ.tw ḥft śdm.tw* is associated with the construction of the temple of Amon-Re-Harachte *śdm nḥ.t* “who hears the petitions“ in the eastern part of Karnak by Ramses II. (45). The possibility of a connection of *mkꜣ* with *kꜣ(i)* “to think“ or *kꜣ.t* “thought“ is considered (45) – which seems rather questionable – while *mkꜣ* survives perhaps in Demotic *mkmk* and Coptic *mokmk* (45).

Piotr Laskowski (“Language and existence,” 47-53) ventures daring speculations about Egyptian and non-Egyptian ideas. The destruction by water and fire in the “Shipwrecked Sailor” and Plato’s Timaios are seen as vague parallels (48), which clearly overinterprets the findings. The dance, as seen by Nietzsche, should have a forerunner in the “Words of Khakheperresoneb” (51), which seems abundantly forced.

Gerald Moers (“Ptahhotep on communication and Sinuhe’s invisibility,” 54-59) correlates the passage Sinuhe R 22-B2 with the 23. Maxim of the “Teaching of Ptahhotep”. The “Teaching of Ptahhotep“ and Sinuhe are settled in the same spiritual world (56). The verb *mꜣꜣ* in the “13. Maxim of Ptahhotep” is interpreted as an indication of the mutual perception of people as active partners in communication (57). Still, the material does not justify such a far-reaching analysis.

R. S. Simpson (“Early evidence bearing on two puzzles in hieroglyphic writing,” 60-65) evaluates early writings of *ś.t* “seat” and *nś.t* “throne.” The writing *ś.t* could appear between the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period without the Gardiner Sign list O 1 or the determinative of an elaborate chair (60). The vast majority of the evidence was realized without determinatives (60). The word *nś.t* was never given the determinative Sign list O1 before the Middle Kingdom (61). In the 18th dynasty, Sign list O 1 was used as logogram for *ś.t*. The *nḥ*-sign before royal names is explained as decorative element without linguistic value (62, for the non-pronunciation of *nḥ* in later times cf. Fecht 1960: 99-100)

Mark Smith (“History and orthography: reinterpreting the demotic evidence for Antiochos IV’s expulsion from Egypt in 168 BCE,” 66-71) analyzes the Demotic evidence for the expulsion of Antiochos IV. from Egypt in the year 168 BC. In the archive of Hor, the event was designated by the expression *šm (r) bnr* (67). The earlier reading of the adverbial phrase (*n*) *sgr* “by sailing” in oHor 2 is debunked as faulty and corrected in *n sgr* “peacefully” (66-71).

John Tait (“On the singularity of Wenamun”, 72-76) offers new thoughts on the New Egyptian story of “Wenamun”. Emotional reactions are rarely found in “Wenamun” (74). The phrase *iw=i dwn m t3i dw*; “and I got up that morning“ in Wenamun 1/12 is compared with the Demotic expression *twn(w)-s NN* “NN got up” at the beginning of new sections (74). The frequent use of causative *rdi* in Wenamun coincides with the findings in Demotic stories (74).

Alexandra Verbovsek and Burkhard Backes (““Ich hatte viele Freunde unter allen Leuten meiner Stadt...”: Zur Bedeutung von Freundschaft im Alten Ägypten,” 77-85) reflects on the concept of friendship in ancient Egypt. The remarks on the special meaning “friend“ of the word *hnmś* versus the much rarer *hnm* (78) are completely outlandish (for the writing *hnm* for *hnmś* cf. Caminos 1977: 39; for the *ś*-suffix cf. Lacau 1970: 52/79 and Peust 1999: 163 n. 21). Furthermore, the authors’ thoughts on the intensity of friendship and the position of the represented person in respect to the stele owner depicted on the monuments (82) do not find much factual support.

Willeke Wendrich (“Organizing the world: classification, typology, and taxonomy in the past, present, and future,” 86-92) makes general cultural-historical considerations. The colour theories are played through and adapted for the Egyptian language (86-89). The remarks make a rather mixed impression.

Christiane Zivie-Coche (“Les goûts littéraires d’un dignitaire mendésien,” 93-100) makes public the statue sockle Stockholm NME 77 from Mendes. The palaeography and script plays suggest a dating to the Ptolemaic period (93).

Zainab Bahrani (“On the status and purposes of ancient art,” 103-108) thinks about the backgrounds of ancient art. The salvage of the Sumerian Gudea-statues in a Hellenistic palace in Tello indicates an antiquarian interest in antiquity (105). Egyptian art was closely interlinked with the social elite, while in Mesopotamia even lower population shifts had access to the medium (106-107).

Christopher Eyre (“Women and prayer in pharaonic Egypt,” 109-116) traces the female prayer culture, which has revolved mainly around fecundity and family. Women were referred to in the tombs often as bringing offering, but seldom as performers of ritual (111). In their prayers women often call on the dead or saints as mediators (114).

Paul John Frandsen (“A bird’s eye view on perspective,” 117-118) deals with the bird’s eye view in the ancient Near East. The phenomenon can be observed in the Akkadian Etana-myth with the flight of the king on the wings of the eagle (117). Bird’s eye view is used effectively in a mine expedition report in the temple of Kanais from the New Kingdom (117).

José M. Galán (“Nut on the ceiling of the burial chamber of Djehuty (TT 11),” 119-126) looks at the Nut representation on the ceiling of the tomb chamber of Djehuti (TT 11), which falls within the joint

reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. The accompanying texts with requests for the protection by the goddess come from coffin inscriptions, known for example from the 11th/12th dynasty (120). The labelled yellow bands of the tomb ceilings of the early 18th dynasty may refer to sun rays or imitations of wooden sarcophagi (124).

Katja Goebis (“Egyptian mythos as logos: an attempt at a redefinition of “mythical thinking”,” 127-134) designs a scenario about myth and logos, but the actual topic is only touched on marginally. The supposed caricature of the mythical characters is emphasized too strongly (130).

Fayza Haikal (“The impact of religious initiation and restricted knowledge on daily life in ancient Egypt: an ethno-Egyptological perspective,” 135-140) deals with the connection of religious imitation in ancient Egypt. The postulated oral transmission of texts to children based on the Islamic model (136) is an unproven assumption. The comparison between the participation in the Egyptian sacrifice and Christian communion (137) lags. The god-like status of bearers of the title *ḥri ššṯ* (137) is likely to be questionable.

Jochem Kahl (“Proportionen und Stile in den assyutischen Nomarchengräbern der Ersten Zwischenzeit und des Mittleren Reiches,” 141-146) discusses proportions and styles in the tombs of nomarchs in Assiut from the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom. In the tomb of Djefai-Hapi I (Grab I; P 10.1) remains of the square net are preserved on the east wall of the large hall, whose proportions match the two-dimensional canon of the early 12th dynasty (141). The example is one of the earliest cases for the square net as tool for the representation of male standing figures (142). The orientation of the vertical proportions at Iti-ib (Grab III) and Chety II (Grab IV) on the model of the Old Kingdom indicates the access of the Assiutic nobility to the Memphitic tradition of art and crafts (145). The narrow tail of the nomarchs in the reliefs may be seen as regional phenomenon (145). The influence of the Theban art in Assiut can be demonstrated even before the country’s reunification (145).

Martina Minas-Nerpel (“Ptah-Pataikos, Harpokrates, and Khepri,” 147-150) makes the dwarf statuette *Ägyptisches Museum Bonn Inv. no L 157* public. The steatite statuette can be dated to the Late Period (147) and has a three-dimensional scarab on its head, while two falcons sit on the shoulders (147). The scarab could signal the character of the *paetaek* as creator and solar deity (148).

Elsa Rickal (“Etreinte maternelle pour un garçon boucher: la stèle Louvre AF 11681,” 151-155) comments on the *Stèle Louvre AF 11681*. The left side of the fragment shows the butcher Merire as owner and his mother Mut. The object is dated in the first half of the 18th dynasty based on the wigs and robes (154). The title *šḥt* “butcher” is here attested for the first time in connection with the domain of Re (154). The provenance of the piece may be the city of Heliopolis (154).

Christina Riggs (“Mourning women and decorum in ancient Egyptian art,” 156-162) reveals details from the world of mourning women. In the reproduction of mourning women, social and age differences were sometimes eliminated (158). The exclusive proportion of women among the mourners may be related to their role as nurses (158).

Alison Roberts (“Invisible Hathor: rising dawn in the Book of Day,” 163-169) focuses on a special motive in the Egyptian *Book of the Day*. In the illustration of the 1st hour a frontally kneeling woman can be found, holding a sun disc in front of her with a child in the middle. The person may be identified with the goddess Hathor (164). The frontal representation is associated with the *šhm*-power (166). The sun disc may be connected with pregnancy and Re’s stay in the womb (165-166).

Gay Robins (“The decorative program in single-roomed pre-Amarna 18th dynasty Theban tomb chapels,” 170-173) goes into the decoration program in one-room tomb chapels from Thebes of the pre-amarna time. The decoration can consist of the tomb owner sitting in front of the offerings, banquette scenes, tomb processions, ritual “Opening of the Mouth” and agricultural scenes (170-171).

John Ruffle (“The alternative to growing turnips: Myrtle Broome in Egypt 1927-1937,” 174-179) traces the stations during the stay of Myrtle Broom’s in Egypt between 1927 and 1937 (174-179).

Helen Whitehouse (“The fish-offerer in Florence,” 180-184) comments on the fish offerer Florence, Museo Egizio inv. no. 543. The statue shows a standing young man, holding the gifts of the Nile in form of fishes, water fowls, and lotus in front of him. The lower part up to the hip is original, while the upper part was supplemented in the 17th century (181). The statue was purchased after 1650 by Leonardo Agostini for his collection (181). The Red Lotus, unknown in Egypt before the Persian era, could speak for a date in the Ptolemaic or Roman time (182-183).

Ghislaine Widmer (“A propos de quelques dédicases sur lin de l’époque romain: une pratique votive méconnue?” 185-192) follows the dedication formulas on the Roman time Bandelette démotique IPEL 1 and Bandelette démotique IPEL 2. The formulas are written in two parallel horizontal lines on the linen. The scheme adheres on the same guidelines, as can be seen from the elements *m-b;h*+deity, *n dr.t*+founder and the end *š d.t* “forever” (188). The formula is not directed at Osiris/Osiris-Sokar as usual, but at the gods *t-rpii.t*, *wsir-wr*, and *hr-wr* (188).

Robert Bagley (“Was China an Egyptian colony?” 195-204) stands up in favor of the autonomous emergence of the Chinese high culture. The civilizational achievements like writing, metallurgy, domestication of plants and animals can do without appeal to Western influence. The bronze processing in China overshadowed that in all other ancient cultures, while the use of stone and the production of statues are lacking (201).

Susanne Bickel (“Men in the temple: world-order, prestige, and piety,” 205-213) treats the representation of non-royal persons in the temple. In the temple reliefs of the New Kingdom, larger amounts of people appear in connection with processions or feasts, with the addition of names in the 18th dynasty being observed very rarely (206). In the reliefs of the Hebsed feast from the sun temple of Niuserre and the gate in Bubastis, nameless officials are presented only with titles (208). The depiction of people is particularly common in buildings related to the royal cult (211).

Marcelo Campagno (“Coercion, creation, intervention: three capacities of the early Egyptian state,” 214-219) highlights “coercion,” “creation,” and “intervention” as basic factors of the early Egyptian state. The wall painting in tomb 100 at Hieraconpolis with the fighting and defeating of wild animals as well as the destruction of enemies is identified as the earliest pictorial representations of violence exercised by state-like polities (215). The compound Hieraconpolis Locality HK29A with a 40m long temple from the Middle Nagade-time can serve as an example for the early state’s ability to build large structures (216).

Tom Hare (“How to figure animal fables: animals at play in P. Turin 55001 and Choju giga,” 220-225) compares between the animals on the Egyptian pTurin 55001 and Comic Rolls from medieval Japan. The Japanese rolls show, among other things, the shooting with bow and arrows between a rabbit and frog, the real-life example of which is the *noriyumi*-court ceremony (221). The Satiric Papyrus brings a mouse king in a wagon who attacks a fortress held by cats (222).

Stephen Houston and David Stuart (“Hastily but carelessly torn”: Maya glyphs from Palenque in Montrose, Scotland,” 226-231) presents Maya hieroglyphs on a stucco relief from Palenque in Montrose, Scotland. The hieroglyphs are made up of two antithetical squares of approximately the same size and a smaller structure (227). The smaller hieroglyph can be read *kaloomte’*, which is a title of a regent of Palenque (228). The large hieroglyph on the left side can be understood as emblem glyph of Santa Elena/Tabasto (228). The other hieroglyph can be deciphered as *SIH-ya Pat-li*, the birth hieroglyph standing out due to its unusual writing (229).

Mpay Kemboly (“The idea of chaos in ancient Greece and Egypt: from hiatus to disorder and to order,” 232-237) evaluates the chaos in Greece and Egypt in a comparative way. The state before the emergence of the world could be understood in Greece as space or empty room (232). The chaos is featured prominently in the Theogony of Hesiod, the spread of which is due, among other things, to the Metamorphoses of Ovid (232-233). The Egyptian conception of the time before creation is based on calm, dark water (234). The idea of a primary egg is also present in the Egyptian sources (235).

Mario Liverani (“Under northern eyes: Egyptian art and ceremony as received by Babylonians, Hurrians, and Hittites,” 238-242) checks the Babylonian, Hurrian and Hittite perspective on Egyptian

art and ceremonies. The Amarna Letters tell of the Babylonian king's preference for decorated ivory from Egypt (238). The Mittani king had expressed interest in golden vessels, statues and raw gold from the country on the Nile (239). The Hittites gave silver and lapis lazuli in exchange for golden statues (239). The undifferentiated Egyptian display of tributes was heavily criticized by the Babylonian side (240).

Henrietta McCall ("Sphinx Hill, Oxfordshire: a work in progress," 244-249) provides information about the Egyptian-style building Sphinx Hill/Oxfordshire on the banks of the River Thames. The responsible management was in the hands of the architect John Outram. The three-part copper roof imitates the roofs of the sacral buildings in the Djoser compound (245). The house was started 1998 and completed 1999 (245).

Lynn Meskell ("Animality, masculinity, and phallic culture in the Anatolian Neolithic," 250-257) deals with animality, masculinity, and phallic culture in the Anatolian Neolithic. The sculptures from Göbekli Tepe and Nevalı Cori of the 10th millennium BC fall back on fantasy figures and wild animals (250). The previous interpretation of the finds from Catalhöyük with fecundity and matriarchy must be given up in favour of animality and phallic culture (250). The models on the walls traditionally analyzed as women probably represent animal figures (251). The masculinity in Catalhöyük was symbolized, among other things, by horns of bulls, sheeps, and rams (252). The feminine human side in Catalhöyük was emphasized to strongly in the past (252). The t-shaped pillars in Göbekli Tepe can be understood as stylized anthropomorphic creatures (252). The connection between the objects from Yeni Mahalle and Adiyaman-Kilisik on the one side and the ithyphallic Min-statues of pre-dynastic Egypt on the other should not be pulled too tight (254).

Juan Carlos Moreno García ("Conflicting interests over the possession and transfer of institutional land: individual versus family strategies," 258-263) turns to land ownership and transfer. The land donations by rulers to medieval monasteries had no spiritual, but rather a material purpose (258). In Egypt, high dignitaries received land from the king and passed it on to the temples themselves (258). The Egyptian donation stele experienced a dramatic increase from the 22nd dynasty onwards, predominately in Lower Egypt and the Fayyum (261).

Hans-Hubertus Münch ("Warum Pharao immer siegt: Bemerkungen zum Ikon des „Erschlagens der Feinde“ aus wissenssoziologischer Perspektive," 264-268) is devoted to the Egyptian motif of killing enemies from a sociological perspective. The icon is not understood as a representative of historical reality, but rather as an interpretation of reality at that time (265).

David o'Connor ("Sabef and Merika: an Early Dynastic conundrum," 269-276) reports about the funerary stele of Sabef from the early dynastic royal cemetery of Umm el Qa'ab at Abydos and of Merika

from the area of a *mastaba* of the 1st dynasty at Sakkara. The stele of Sabef surpasses many non-royal stele from the 1st dynasty at Abydos in size, text program, and decoration (270). The stele of Merika reaches the size of the royal stele of Qa'a from Abydos (270). The role of Sabef as a human sacrifice for the death cult of Qa'a is held possible (275).

Janet Richards and Stuart Kirsch ("The myths of Osiris and Kamberap in cross-cultural comparison," 277-284) draw alleged parallels between the Osiris myth and myth of the Kamberap-sacrifice of the Yonggom people from southern New Guinea. The myth of the Kamberap-sacrifice represents the central story of the initiation ceremony of this ethnicity (277). The sacrifice of Kamberap should solve the problem of his incestuous relationship with his married sister (278). The myth is accompanied like the Osiris myth by ritual re-enactments (282).

R. Gareth Roberts ("Hyksos self-presentation and "culture"," 285-290) approaches the self-presentation of the Hyksos kings. The usual title in connection with the first name of the Hyksos was *nšw.t-bi.ti* instead of *ntr nfr*, which could indicate the recognition of the kingdom of Thebes (286).

David Wengrow ("Fleshpots of Egypt": rethinking temple economy in the ancient Near East," 291-298) studies the temple economy in the ancient Near East, with the main emphasis on the importance of meat. Neolithic meat preparation shows a striking difference in the use of ceramics and solid ovens between Southwest Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (292). The Bronze Age temples could function as "closed housekeeping,, which revolved around the ritual supply of the cult statue (296).

Norman Yoffee ("The earliest cities and the evolution of history," 299-304) discusses the development of the earliest cities. The cities stretched from almost 100 hectares to a size of over 30km² and could have a population between 10000 and 100000 inhabitants (300). In the latter part of the 4th milenium BC, Mesopotamian cities grew in size as they decreased in number (300). In northern China, the cities Erlitou, Zheng-zhou, and Anyang prospered in the 2nd millennium BC (301). The Mexican Teotihuacan equals the size of Rome around 300 BC with an expansion of 20km² and a population of at least 100,000 inhabitants (301).

The following general assessment can be given: at least a part of the contributions are superficial and in general the necessary scientific quality is not always guaranteed, while too often the authors dwell on marginalities.

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Monika Browarczyk. 2019. *Narrating Lives, Narrating Selves. Women's Autobiographies in Hindi*. Krakow: Ksiegarnia Akademicka. 298 pages. ISBN 978-83-8138-079-9.

In recent years, more and more scholarly attention has been given to the physical appearance of the book, with authors, editors, publishers and graphic designers working in tandem to come up with a packaging that would not only attract the prospective reader but also visually embody the concepts put forward in the text. The cover of Monika Browarczyk's book, *Narrating Lives, Narrating Selves. Women's Autobiographies in Hindi*, likewise provides a visual, shorthand image of how the author views a woman authored piece of life writing in general and the Hindi one in particular: a palimpsest of co-existing multiple texts peeping from under each other, simultaneously revealing and obscuring the woman-author busy penning it, all in an attempt to present a coherent, self-acceptable portrait of the self.

I have been working with the author of this book for some years, as we are both part of the only existing research network on South Asian autobiography. Therefore, I have seen the research process that is behind this volume, and I can state that *Narrating Lives, Narrating Selves* is based on a solid methodological ground and it is the result of an ongoing rich and fruitful debate between the author and the best scholars in the field. Browarczyk's book is probably the very first book in any language, including Hindi and English, that comprehensively analyses the contemporary life-writings by women writing in Hindi. The four authors who are the focus of this study, namely Kausalya Baisantri, Maitreyi Pushpa, Prabaha Khaitan and Chandrakiran Sonarexa, have published their autobiographies in the 1990's (which seems to have seen a sudden spur in the growth of the genre in Hindi) and hence Browarczyk, in four chapters devoted to their selected autobiographical texts, devotes maximum space to discussing them and their work. To this end she uses a number of methods, with the greatest emphasis on the concept of the self-in-performance and the making of the 'narrative self.'

However, the autobiographies in question serve only as a starting point to a wider analysis, which is reflected in the structure of the main body of the book. Following the short "Acknowledgements" and "A Note on Transcription, Title Annotation, and Quotations" there is an extensive, over 60 pages long introduction, "Critical Mass of Womanhood. Theory of Autobiography and Practice of Autobiographical Narratives in South Asia" (13-78), which provides the reader with a historical background to the study and practice of autobiography, both in the Western as well as South Asian context, placing Hindi autobiographical writings in a larger frame of reference. This is followed by four chapters, each addressing the selected texts of one specific writer, and placing the text/s and the writer

in the attendant social and literary milieu. The conclusions are given in a short section titled “Womanbeingness is Foreignness” (267-270). The book is appended by an extensive bibliography under two general headings, Primary Sources and Secondary Sources (271-294), with the latter further subdivided as “Life Writings by Women in Hindi,” “Life Writings from South Asia,” and “General References;” it closes with an Index (295-298). Further, there are copious footnotes for the dedicated scholar, including transcriptions from the Hindi originals quoted in the text in English translation, which are of greatest interest to a student of Hindi literature.

The four writers shortlisted for the detailed scrutiny are an interesting lot. Kausalya Baisantri, the protagonist of the first chapter, “A Double Curse. A Tale of a Dalit Woman by Kausalya Baisantri” (79-130), is a Marathi-speaking Dalit woman from a Mahar community, a conscientious and self-aware follower of Ambedkar, and a one-time writer – her autobiography is the only literary text published by her, with Hindi being her language of choice. The narrative is presented in a simple language and follows chronological time frame. The self-professed aim here is to give witness to a Dalit life which allows Browarczyk to introduce the subject of Dalit social disfranchisement and the attempt of Dalit life writing to provide a voice for the community. The second chapter, “Mrs Sharma Turns Writer. Maitreyi Pushpa’s ‘Novelised’ Autobiography vs. ‘Classical Autobiography’” (131-167), on the other hand, has as its main character a prolific Hindi writer, incidentally a Brahmin - and thus on the other end of the social spectrum than Baisantri - whose two volumes of autobiography take a novelistic approach in presenting her life. This provides Browarczyk with an opportunity to discuss different genres of life writings setting a novelized account of life against a straightforward autobiography. Prabha Khaitan, whose writings are the subject of the subsequent chapter, “A Woman Called Prabha Khaitan. An Autobiography of the Self as the Other” (169-221), is, to start with, a Marwari girl from a traditional background who followed her university education with a PhD in philosophy where she studied the French existentialists; a feminist writer with many books to her credit; a woman who made unorthodox life choices and spoke of them in her writings, which take the reader into the by-lanes of the feminist writing in Hindi and make inroads into the bastions of patriarchy and the male writing. As Khaitan’s autobiography *Anyā se Ananya*, has been translated into English as *A Life Apart*, albeit in a much abridged form, Browarczyk takes a look at the politics of translation and publishing practices where the length of the book and its striping of the overtly exotic/Oriental/Indian flourishes (for example, the narrative style with its invocation of Goddess/s etc.) is deemed necessary to make the reading easier for a general/non-Indian anglophone reader. The last chapter, “A Caged Mynah in Search of a Room of Her Own. Chandrakiran Sonarexa’s Autobiographic Epic of Every Day” (223-266),

presents yet another Brahmin writer, whose working life at local radio station and literary career were greatly circumscribed by her husband's opposition to her creative activities.

The analyses of the autobiographical outputs of the four writers, set against social circumstances in which these writers lived and worked, provide a sample and a template for further examinations of life writings in South Asian context, both those that have appeared prior to this period, as well as following it, including the most recent. Browarczyk, highlighting the liminal positioning of women, including women writers, in Indian society, and the intersectionality of the subjectivity thus produced, created a seminal study that would be of interest not only to scholars of South Asia, but to all those who are interested in life writings authored by women, gender studies, and literary criticism.

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Furukura Keiko:

Konbini-Woman or Heroin of a Monstrified Japan? The Thousand Truths

Review article of:

Murata Sayaka 村田沙耶香. 2016. *Konbini ningen* コンビニ人間. Tōkyō 東京: Bungeishunjū 文藝春秋. 151 pages. ISBN 9784163906188. Price: 1,300 YEN.

Reading Murata Sayaka's *Konbini ningen* (*Convenience Store Woman*: 2018)¹ poses different challenges, due to the fact that every perspective of life as well as every view on facts developing under the eyes of the reader can open up confused horizons. The successful writer acquired international fame with her 2003 novel *Ju'nyū*² (*Breastfeeding*), followed by *Konbini ningen* in 2016. Translated into Italian by the flourishing pen of Gianluca Coci,³ this novel unveils the manifold truths that appear to flutter around men and women in the Twenty-First Century. In the event that truth does really exist, the novel invites not to drive it into a labyrinth of habits and norms. An effort that Furukura Keiko takes all along the plot. Norms and rules put such high a pressure in a hugely hierarchical society like the Japan described by Murata Sayaka that no room for complacency is allowed for weak people. Each individual goes his path to survive. Keiko is an adult striving to do her own way abiding by her values and what she holds for dear. Thus, she has hardly something to share with a gentrified society, whose members all behave in a robotic way. All of their actions have conformed with widespread standards. All but Keiko, whose doing is halfway between an inveterate outsider and a robotic girl, who is fine about carrying out the same actions in the same order and does not intend to change the way her life has been shaped for around eighteen years. Because of this, Keiko earns fame of a misanthrope bound to a destiny of self-isolation. Those who dare to escape the pressure of a profit-driven society with well-identified social standards are exposed to scorn, pushed aside by a humongous set of mass-directed individuals.

¹ For the English edition see: Murata Sayaka. 2018. *Convenience Store Woman*. London: Faber and Faber (translation by Gimmy Tapley Takamori).

² Murata Sayaka. 2015. 授乳 (*Ju'nyū*). Tōkyō: Kōdansha.

³ The Italian translator Gianluca Coci, who has been recently awarded the 'Appiani Prize for Literary Translation,' has contributed to spread knowledge about the Japanese culture over the past twenty years. With his translations of Japanese contemporary writers, from Ōe Kenzaburō to Kirino Natsuo, from Abe Kōbō to Murata Sayaka, that constantly rank among the best-sold books in Italy, Coci has opened up a different view on Japan, away from stereotypes and clichés surrounding this culture in the 20th century. For the Italian edition see: Murata Sayaka. 2018. *La ragazza del convenience store*. Roma: Edizioni e/o (translation by Gianluca Coci).

In a society underscoring differences, and where peculiar traits do not make up added values, Keiko is just an awkward 36-year-old woman who has nothing to say, no merit at all and nothing special to convey. Keiko sits at the other side of the fence, in a pathological condition denounced by her fellows. Apparently, Keiko has been able to build her own barrier seeking to stem the Other and those dogmas anyone else is used to sticking to. Albeit she has no interest for truth, at least the one invoked by people surrounding her, Keiko ends up doing exactly what the Other expects. But who is the Other? A mass of conformist men and women from the Japanese middle-class lined up against eccentricity and 'diversity.' In keeping track of what people tell and think about her, Keiko is forced to enter a fourth-dimensional space. In a society that still needs a scapegoat for a social failure due to the steep economic and demographic downturn, Furukura becomes the ideal target. Furthermore, someone who can freely express her or his ideas disregarding the Japanese morality is perceived as a threat against social balance and a homogenous mass-driven society. This society has traditionally acted and played the script told by the Up.

Furukura is a loose cannon, as cannons are the characters set on stage by the Italian naturalized film director Ferzan Özpetek (1959)⁴ in his *Loose Cannons* (2010). If Furukura broke out, the seemingly perfect balance kept in store for centuries with just as much dignity and moral compass would abruptly fade away. And what if the balance really broke down? The answer unveils a truth: a deep social crisis is ongoing, squeezing an insecure society unable to shape its own future. The breakdown would cast light on the many cracks and divisions lying inside the society for centuries, the huge gap between upper and lower classes, the downfall of family and the shrinking traditions and social values taken over by capitalistic patterns.

The direct consequence of a society going through a vertical change is the sense of discontent and 'alienation,' something the post-modernism era had both experienced and given voice to. A loose cannon has a domino-effect, causing to trigger a chain of shattering events as well as to release the profound unease gripping the white souls of a former world powerhouse. This all takes place in a Japan that is 'monstrified,' beset by monsters reflecting a community unable to recognize itself in the image projected by the mirror.

A Japanese monster is well off the Latin *monstrum*, as the sociologist Toshio Miyake (2011) puts it in his essay, where it stands for something exceptional. This dualism, according to which human beings

⁴ The film revolves around the choices Tommaso, an aspiring writer aged 30, is expected to make: giving up his life, his dream of becoming a writer or sticking to his people and his family's expectations.

are genuine and impaired by a tentacular society jeopardizing whatever it gets in its apparatus, whilst the society is governed by dark powers, is both a witty expedient for readers, and an excuse for turning a blind eye to the mounting outrage caused by inequalities, gender and social gaps. As said, the truth can change according to the field angle. Furukura Keiko's conduct can be seen as conspirational, too, except that she is not acting on a level playing field. She is accomplice to a tainted society, where homologation and degradation are the rule. A different field angle projects a Furukura who is seemingly accomplice to the society. She is doing exactly what people expect her doing, so as the judgement on her is not impaired. She is playing by the social norms and is not acting against the tide, while at the same time seeking to remain connected with the real world: the one where people play a given role, laugh or cry in a similar way, nod their head with the same movement, emulate gestures and a drawl that sounds trendy. Acting like that, Furukura changes her habits according to social requirements: she rejects self-isolation, gets closer to her family and a sister overcome by a troubling 36-year-old girl with no spouse by her side. In doing so, Furukura is perfectly playing the script, so much so that she speaks and acts akin to robots. She gets into a character: a nice fashionable girl, whose ambition is to inspire trust and be self-inspired. When lights are off, Furukura's life appears in its real dimension: a pantomime where she stands in the middle, and all she is doing is a pretense. In the end, her path is just a conundrum, she conducts a life that is preposterous and targeted to nothing. The more Furukura insists on playing by her rules, the more her life worsens: she ends up more isolated, her family is troubled by her abrupt changing behavior. Why is that? Furukura's strategies to get along with mass-directed individuals impact on a social tissue pervaded by a dualism inherent to the Japanese society: individuals that should make an integral part of the community are called to perform a subsidiary role.

In a society where, as Ōe Kenzaburō puts it, people are not prone to real integration and fictitiously act as a well-rooted group with authentic values shared within the community, the risk is for them to be weaved in a mosaic of obligations and social conventions. To quote Ōe, once captured, there is no way for 'sheep-men' to escape the net. Likewise, those who stand outside the net will find it utterly hard or truly impossible to get in. This is how Ōe (1969) describes the fight between centripetal and centrifugal forces in his *Warera no kyōki o ikinobiru michi o oshieyo*, four short novels revolving around the difficulty to match present and past as well as to let in something which is culturally too distant from the Japanese set of values.

If in Ōe's pamphlets against the establishment the focus is on how to let democracy in and how to reduce social gaps, some fifty years later Furukura shows how topical – and subtle – the fight still is. In practical terms, this draw-away from reality impacts on how people perceive themselves. Furukura is just a case in point, but there are thousands of Furukura unable to unfold their personality, being victims forced to cling to norms and obligations nobody really dares questioning. Akin to a set of characters set on stage in contemporary Japanese literature – the 19-year-old boy with split personality in Sakumoto Yōsuke (2015) or the psychotic Haruo obsessed by crested ibis in Abe Kazushige (2001), to name just a few – Furukura hears the echo of a national super-ego, imposing norms of conduct, in order for people not to shake the pillars of power. If this is the only way people can go, they will hold it for dear. Furukura is left with a dilemma: paving the way to a future of endless self-isolation or reaching a compromise with the net. At a first glance, she surrenders to consolidated social norms and the power exercised by an authority nobody sees or experiences first-hand, but still an authority constantly keeping a close watch on each Furukura. The 36-year-old has to lay down her personal weapons, allowing a man to enter her life, searching for a more rewarding and socially acceptable job, accomplishing what the society expects her doing. Keiko can easily imagine that if she goes that way, people will stop taking her for a monster: a grotesque woman nobody would let in among ordinary human beings, but still a monstrum capable of expressing her own views and lead an independent life.

Furukura is also a dangerous presence in contemporary Japan, reflecting a distorted ego open to emulation. An ego that might start circulating and lurk before claiming other victims. Furukura might conceal a soundness that mass-directed individuals have lost for quite some time. Thus, she can drive both her insanity and people's morbidity out. Starting from her insanity, Furukura is offering herself as a sacrificial lamb: her life fully unfolds playing the same script, which is tantamount to doing the same job, the same actions in an hypnotical dependency on the events and phases of a day in a convenience store. Furukura plays the same script to the extent that she dehumanizes herself and ends up lacking any sense of solidarity towards anyone, not to mention the lack of any sexual instinct and lust for life. The only thing Furukura can keep unchanged is her sense of duty carved in the long-standing dichotomy between the pedantic sense of duty and the desire for leading a life free from the middle-class. That dichotomy was originally expressed by Thomas Mann (1875-1955) back in 1903 in *Tonio Kröger* (Mann 1903).

In a society crossed by moral principles, personal freedom is repressed. Repressed by whom? This obvious question arises. Compared to a time where people's thoughts were repressed by either fascism or authoritarian regimes, these times nobody is really forcing into a life hard living. So, why is Furukura burning the candle, taking on a creepy mask instead of living her own life? Not only does she lack a

well-defined personality, but she has no interests for leisure. Everything is restricted to working and performing activities people can take profit from. Vital functions such as sleeping and eating food help to be well-performing during the exhausting shifts at the convenience store. Then, Furukura finds a way to skip social events: she keeps saying she is so sick that she cannot afford staying outside and enjoying free time. The same applies to the failure to find a different job. These tricks shield Furukura from a lifestyle and a set of values she has no interest for. So, does Furukura put on a mask? Definitely, she does. One need only think of another giant of contemporary Japanese literature, Mishima Yukio (1925-1970), to experience how people have completely changed their attitude following the capitalistic surge, with its schemes targeting profits, not people. The levers of power have replaced 'humanism' with 'robotism', upturning all existing coordinates. The authentic 'ningen' invoked by Ōe in his post-war novels, the one who was bound to leave his mark in a self-developing society, has faded away without unlocking his full potential or even before starting doing so. The 'new man' invoked by Susan Sontag seems to have failed. In his place a plethora of mass-directed individuals, whereas the mystery lies in catching who is really controlling them: is it solely due to a Japanese morality prescribing elevation from poor standards and basic life principles or is it due to an overall decay involving ordinary men and women? Are they really aware of the path they are going or do they ignore where both the start and the finishing line of their life is? This question clearly arises in Murata Sayaka's novel, too. If it is so, Furukura has no chance but surrendering, unless she wants to exactly turn herself into one of the 'walking' masks she has rejected all her life.

In this monstrified Japan, Keiko is not the only case in point. One need only think of *Seishun robotto* by Sakumoto Yōsuke. Tezaki Rei, the main character, is Furukura's alter ego. In order to survive in a society lacking order as well as love and solidarity towards human beings, the young boy pretends to be a robot to give people what they need the most: considerate attention to their feelings. In addition to it, the young boy acknowledges that the only way for a clever mind to find his own way is pretending to be crazy. At the end of the novel, Tezaki Rei cannot but abide by the order and start living by the rules everybody is subject to. In spite of the original mission, he turns into something prosaic with a earthly aim: being productive and concretely help the society. If this is so, another truth is emerging: the sense of estrangement these weak heroes are bound to is well in line with a long-standing Japanese mythology enhancing frailty, as opposed to Western legends of men holding the power and destined to a glorious life, encompassing victory over the weak and eternal success. In spite of their failure, these heroes prove their strength in helping outcasts and showing the Japanese society what authentic inclusiveness does mean.

Men and women who apparently can least afford showing others the way, are chosen to reinforce national identity, transforming their misery into a sign of election. Literature as well as other media have contributed a lot, setting on stage a plethora of sad heroes, grappling with their awkwardness. The majority of them strive hard to combat their sadness, caused by being orphans face to face with their loneliness, and all of their efforts are intended to restore global order away from hatred and wars. ケンシロウ (Kenshirō)⁵ is just another example.

The storytelling in the late 20th century is rich in characters, mostly men, that readers may also conceive of as self-centered players; indeed, they are relentlessly judging and giving themselves a tongue lashing for not being able to accomplish their mission. These characters are engaged in hunting down the evil, driving it out of the bowels of the earth. Over the past few years heroins created by the pen of novelists such as Kirino Natsuo or Ogawa Ito have swollen the ranks of characters facing thousand truths: unfair treatment, gender inequality, violence and abuse of rights. As a result, these characters are also struggling to stand out in a society spearheaded by men, with their rules, moral deception and tawdriness. These women have decided to disobey and leave room for an alternative life pattern based on solidarity. They set out on a voyage even hard to imagine in a society pervaded by sexism and governed by patriarchal patterns. In spite of their passionate struggle to reaffirm authentic values such as love, solidarity and peace, their mission is bound to failure. So, what remains is solely an attempt by those writers to denounce a society drifting toward nihilism, whose foundations are heavily put in question by both men and women. This leads to one more truth: a generation gap has resulted in a clash between founding fathers on the one side, the offspring on the other side. This clash has only apparently been settled. As a consequence, the society the offspring could not shape is a society they feel unease at. Because fathers have failed, the world ruled by the superior power they believed in has faded away, too. This default has turned in a short circuit where people have started to skip responsibilities and social values they conceive of as unable to co-exist with their condition of 'moratorium ningen.' The majority of them have found it hard to get out of this limbo. This truth highlights how weakened and close to crumbling the Japanese society really is. In spite of their efforts, people cannot rise up and get out of the crisis. This weakness should not be mistaken and be labeled as 'heroism.' Those who do not even try to swim against the tide cannot be taken for heroes, most of

⁵ Kenshirō is the name of a fictional character and the protagonist of a manga series created by Hara Tetsuo and Buronson appearing on TV since 1983.

whom live marginalized, and yet keep standing up for people's rights. In a word, the sincere (wo)man engaged in a fight against prejudice and a social system rejecting diversification is destined to remain in the darkness.

After all, Murata Sayaka tells the story of ordinary people who undertake a shy battle with few and powerless weapons, and translates it into the language of the 21st century. Furukura is not striving for moral superiority nor she is casting about it. She leaves herself vulnerable to criticism, and yet she goes on. By so doing, Furukura adopts the principles of grotesque realism, showing Japan what it really needs: looking at itself and reflect on both its strengths and weaknesses. If Japan and its people can be themselves, they can deserve the attention they need and gain more trust and authority. Furukura provides a cross section of a society asking to live free from stringent obligations and stifling rules. Outside Furukura's *konbini*, there might be thousands of people asking to live their own way, regardless of whether the society approves of their conduct. Like Furukura, people want to decide on their future, on whether they are fit for living a life as a couple, as spouses and so forth. Despite her shy personality, Furukura, like many others, is a little rebel able to turn the clock back to a time and to a pre-3D dimension where people simply took care of their nest, and had no special interest for moral judgment. Yet, theirs was a balanced life.

The ultimate goal of Murata Sayaka's novel is to show how the 'low-cost' society pervaded by principles such as profit and progress at all costs, has left no trace of humanity, changing Ōe's authentic (wo)men into victims of their own uncertainty and apathy. The truth is that the story told by Murata Sayaka has nothing extraordinary in it. It is just the report, in a fresh and vivid language, of human degradation: a condition people living in robotized societies sooner or later will have to face up to. Backed into a corner, pushed by an inquiry into her/himself, every (wo)man is put down as both individual and worker. So, they can survive by resorting to their own truth, the one that is deliberately and carefully planned. This truth is weaved by them on a daily basis, as far as they negotiate an acceptable compromise. If this generally prevents people from wearing themselves out, in Murata Sayaka's novel even this line has been crossed. Again, one truth, thousand truths.

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