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Sāmoa at large: The Sacred Circle and Travelling *fale* and *measina*[1]

Introduction to the Special Section

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In the essay 'Our sea of islands', Epeli Hau'ofa (1994:151–3) influentially argued for 'what may be called "world enlargement" carried out by tens of thousands of ordinary Pacific Islanders right across the ocean.' Hau'ofa further stressed that 'there is a world of difference between viewing the Pacific as "islands in a far sea" and as "a sea of islands"'. 'The second,' he concluded, 'is a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships.' This special section takes up 'things' in their material sense. Their travels have amounted to hundreds of thousands of journeys over centuries beyond Oceania and on a global scale.[2] *Fale* (Sāmoan houses) have been (re)erected in a range of exhibition formats, from the colonial *Völkerschauen* (human zoos or ethnic shows) (Balme 2008, Thode-Arora 2014) to contemporary art biennials, as well as on university campuses and in tourism resorts. Similarly, *measina* (Sāmoan material treasures) can be found in museum collections from anthropology via art to natural history, as well as in commercial centres and political institutions. This mobile artif-

1 Note on the articles of this Special Section: When using the general category of Indigenous, we use uppercase, on par with other conventional markers such as Western, and observe the use of capitals in reference to specific Indigenous people, such as Sāmoan. To avoid Othering Indigenous languages, we italicize Indigenous words and concepts only on first use. We follow the conventions of using macrons or fa'amamafa for Sāmoan words to indicate a double vowel, and of using the glottal stop or koma liliu in Sāmoan. However, in the titles of books, organizations, and in historical archival sources and texts these words have been left in their original form. Although the country remains formally New Zealand, we use the double appellation Aotearoa New Zealand where appropriate to reflect the increasing formal use of this term.

2 Following Hau'ofa (1994) and others, we use 'Oceania' instead of 'Pacific.'

actuality has carried its own cosmological foundations with it, such as the underpinning sacred circle, genealogical inscriptions and cultural meanings, thus embodying a kind of reality that allows for the (re)activation of experiences of Sāmoanness, at home and/or abroad, for example, through architectural interventions, curatorial practices and virtual exhibiting.

This special section follows the ways in which what might be called *Sāmoa at large*, as a specific manifestation of Oceanic 'world enlargement', comes to be constituted through the mobile relations between travelling material things, narratives, such as those of memory, genealogy and (re)imagination, and human practices of meaning- and knowledge-making across multiple localities, including their virtual appearances. The sacred Sāmoan circle, which is often manifested in fale settings and enacted through measina exchanges, places consensus at the centre, a practice that remains unchanged in the face of new political situations and is continuously negotiated on different but overlapping scales with reference to family, village, district, national and transnational genealogies. Sāmoan fale and measina have been travelling to various locations for centuries, from universities in Aotearoa New Zealand to museums in Germany. What happens when they are on the move? The articles collected here present perspectives from across the spectrum of material disciplines—anthropology, architecture, and museology—with a focus on the sacred circle and travelling fale and measina, as well as the associated human world-making practices that expand and shape *Sāmoa at large*.

Contemporary Sāmoa is divided politically between American Sāmoa and independent (or Western) Sāmoa. At first sight, then, there exist two Sāmoas. Yet, both political entities have grown out of and continue to be organized through the relations between multiple islands and their genealogically inscribed districts and affiliations. Genealogically, Manono, located in 'Sāmoa', can be considered as a topographical fragment of Fiji and a member of the Sāmoan district 'Āiga i le Tai' (family by the sea). Manuʻa, situated in 'American Sāmoa', was governed by the chiefly title of Tui Manuʻa, which can be traced back to Tagaloa, the creator of the universe. In ancient times, this island group was politically independent from Savaiʻi and Upolu (in today's 'Sāmoa') (Krämer 1902, 1903; Meleiseā, and Schoeffel Meleiseā 1987; Suaalii-Sauni et al. 2018; Turner 1884; Williams 1873). Furthermore, what is now independent Sāmoa has been marked by German colonial rule (1900–14) and the subsequent administration by New Zealand (1914–62), while to this date American Sāmoa remains a so-called unincorporated and unorganised territory of the United States. In the twenty-first century, Sāmoan diasporic populations are found in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Hawaiʻi, the west coast of the United States, the United Kingdom and beyond (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009; Macpherson and Macpherson 2009). What could be considered as one—Sāmoa—has been characterized by internal and external multiplicities.[3]

3 See our related project on 'Sāmoan multiplicities' (https://www.indigen.eu/projects/core-projects/samoan-multiplicities), which gave rise to this special section, as part of the ERC research group devoted to 'Indigeneities in the 21st century' (www.indigen.eu).

This special section builds on the premise that such Sāmoan multiplicities—the ways anybody or anything could be identified as Sāmoan—and the resulting Sāmoanness, as an experience of collective identity and sense of self (Henderson 2016; Mageo 1998), can be *expanded* through the sacred circle in relation to travelling fale and measina beyond territorial definitions and confinements (such as independent Sāmoa versus American Sāmoa). The resulting *Sāmoa at large* is *spatially embedded* (for example, in landscapes, journeys and diverse localities), *materially enacted* (as through architectural and curatorial interventions, as well as material entities), and *temporally negotiated* (through memories, genealogies and other narrative frames and modalities); it unfolds across the homeland and the diaspora, being performed in the present by reaching back to the past and forward into the future. This process of (re)constitution proceeds through the dialectics between continuity and change, solidity and flexibility. In this special section, the authors are particularly concerned with the *material dimension* without, however, losing sight of the interrelated spatial and temporal dimensions by zooming in on the interplay between spatial settings, material entities and human actors. In doing so, the authors offer novel insights into why and how Sāmoanness remains a valid marker of identity underpinned by a set of core values despite ongoing transformations: being reshaped but not ruptured, and maintaining its integrity within flexible boundaries.

The anthropological and related literature provides a significant corpus of work devoted to material culture in motion (Thomas 1991; Marcus and Myers 1995; Clifford 1997; Harrison et al. 2013; Bell and Hasinoff 2015; Joyce and Gillespie 2015; Bennett et al. 2016; Basu 2017; Driver et al. 2021; Jallo 2023). 'Things' keep on being reapproached and reconceptualized (Henare et al. 2007; Bennett 2009; Miller 2010; Bogost 2012; Shaviro 2014; Atzmon and Boradkar 2017), while a particular thread has turned the emphasis from the 'social life of things' (Appadurai 1986) to the 'social life of materials' (Drazin and Küchler 2015; see also Ingold 2007, 2012). The notion of materiality pursued here refers neither exclusively to the attributes of 'something' nor to the properties of its materials as such, but instead to the forces and potentialities that underlie, constitute and mobilise material entities (Saxer and Schorch 2020; see also Schorch et al. 2020, Chapters 1 and 5). Much of the Oceanic literature on 'material things' has drawn on the multiple relationships and ongoing connections (human and other-than-human) that are bound to and activated through materiality. In the case of Sāmoan material culture, this has largely been framed in terms of ethnology since Augustin Krämer's work in the early 20th century (1902; 1903), followed by Te Rangi Híroa (Peter Buck) (1930) and, decades later, Roger Neich (1985). Sean Mallon's (2002) more recent anthropological focus on Sāmoan measina has extended the lens on materially grounded and enacted human and other-than-human connectivity into the 21st century.

More specifically, the literature offers illuminating cases that shed light on the significance of mats, especially *'ie toga* (fine mats), in Sāmoan affairs from the ancient past to the (post)modern present (Schoeffel 1999; Tcherkézoff 2002), as specific material

things that gain their potency through practices of exchange and trajectories of circulation. Those travelling measina posed a seemingly untameable problem to the German colonial administration of 'German Samoa' (1900-1914), which struggled to distinguish, on the one hand, between ʻie toga or *ʻie o le* mālō—fine or heirloom mats—and *lagaga* (common mats), and on the other, between the monetary values assigned to them. As a result, the colonial government set up an office staffed by Germans and Sāmoans to determine the precise value of each mat and mark it with a stamp. This intervention aimed at turning ambiguous Sāmoan customs into manageable procedures defined according to the value system of capitalist commerce and trade, a process that prevented Sāmoans from mixing monetary and sacred systems of value in ways that were incomprehensible to Germans (see Schorch et al. 2020: chapter 6). Such mats have continued to be exchanged, but they have also been made malleable to newly evolving value regimes.

On December 20, 2022, the new 'Samoa Arts and Culture Centre' was opened in a high-profile ceremony involving Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mataʻafa, the prime minister of Sāmoa, and H.E Chao Xiaoliang, the ambassador of the People's Republic of China, which financed the large complex. Right at the front entrance, impossible to miss, any visitor encounters a large display of a "Ie Samoa', a masterpiece woven by Mrs Saumalama Fomaʻi from the village of Aufaga, next to a certificate verifying that the "Ie Samoa, fine mat and its cultural value' were inscribed on the 'Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage' by UNESCO on December 12, 2019. One could assume that this mat's journey, physically and conceptually, would now have found its final destination. However, Sāmoan mats do need to keep on circulating. Remarkably, in the 1970s, the evolving Joan P. Haydon Museum in Pago Pago on Tutuila (American Sāmoa) set out to develop a collection policy that would enable mats housed in the museum to do precisely that: to keep on circulating.[4] This particular policy has not been put into practice as yet, but Sāmoan measina such as mats have shown that material entities keep on travelling both physically and conceptually, provoking interactions and exchanges that are navigated through and entangled with their material presences.

Corresponding to the framework laid out in this introduction, the authors of this special section zoom in on a specific spatial setting, *alofi sā,* the sacred circle underpinning *faʻasāmoa* (the Sāmoan way) (Serge Tcherkézoff), as well as travelling material things, such as fale (Albert L. Refiti and Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul) and measina (Stephanie Walda-Mandel, Mitiana Arbon and Taʻiao Matiu Matavai Tautunu). Through the alofi sā, Tcherkézoff presents a holistic and integrative frame of reference through which the fa'asāmoa is able to withstand and incorporate influences and changes. Tcherkézoff demonstrates the political formation of a new national apparatus, initiated during the road to independence culminating in 1962, in which conflicting views have been considered through processes of peaceful dialogue nationally. Such examples continue to

4 This policy is kept in the archives in Pago Pago, American Sāmoa.

exist, as in the case of the election, in 2021, of Sāmoa's current government led by its first female Prime Minister, Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mataʻafa, to whom we alluded above. The markers of these forums are integrated into the relational space where the sacred circle, when interrogated, can expand and contract accordingly. Similarly, Refiti and Engels-Schwarzpaul introduce the Sāmoan fale as an activating emblem and a validating pillar for Sāmoan identities and experiences of Sāmoanness. The fale is both a structured and an open space; it is itself a performative agent within its contextual framings. The power of its architectural inscriptions is embedded in the conceptual references that travelling fale offer in the 21st century. The alofi sā, which underpins the circular setup of the fale, adds complex meanings of the invisible and tangible articulations of Sāmoanness, which hold and nurture the relationality between people alongside their ancestors. In their article, Walda-Mandel, Arbon and Tautunu delve into the mobile artifactuality of measina, presenting a call to action through which Pacific peoples become centred in museological partnership models. Connecting with measina and partnering with communities requires care and a project set-up that translates the decolonization of museums from the conceptual plane of discussion into the operational level of practice. This case study challenges museums to extend their realm of activities beyond consultation and move towards building new communities, here around physical and virtual measina. Taken together, and in many different ways, these articles showcase *Sāmoa at large*: connected islands across vast oceans, navigated and (re)established through the alofi sā and travelling fale and measina.

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Glossary of Terms

‘Āiga i le Tai’ (family by the sea)
alofi sā, the sacred circle
‘ie toga (fine mats)
‘ie o le mālō—fine or heirloom mats
Fa‘asamoa (the Sāmoan way)
Fale (Sāmoan houses)
Lagaga (common mats)
Measina (Sāmoan material treasures)
Völkerschauen (human zoos or ethnic shows)

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Faʻasāmoa Forever – The Sacred Circle. The Politics of Encompassment and Consensus

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Abstract: This article examines the remarkable permanence of *faʻasāmoa*, Sāmoan custom, throughout the upheavals of history. The strength of this permanence lies in a particular configuration of what brings the community together at meetings when an important decision has to be taken: an equality of positions in the community circle where everyone faces one another, in the sense that everyone is seated at the same level. But this equality is maintained by a bond of higher value, sometimes called the 'country', 'custom' or even 'God'. This is what the Sāmoans call the 'sacred circle'. Each time, this hierarchy of references makes it possible to find a way not to ignore but to position the conflict at an 'encompassed' level, leaving the community value at the 'encompassing' level. The article describes how this works through historical examples, from German colonization via the construction of independence in the 1960s to the latest national elections in 2021, which saw fierce competition between two political parties, as well as considering the way in which consensus is favoured over majority voting.
[Sāmoa, politics, consensus, custom, holism]

Introduction

Within the multiplicities of the *faʻasāmoa* (the Sāmoan Way) are various socio-cultural configurations of value that we can see at work today and can trace historically for some 150 years. This article focuses on an unchanging value: the ability to encompass rivalries, conflicts and individualistic strategies within the faʻasāmoa through the politics of encompassment and the prevalence of consensus over majority voting. It examines a question along the lines offered by our co-convenors: 'why and how does Sāmoanness remain intact (or rather has meaningful value), despite ongoing transformations? How is it being reshaped but not ruptured, thereby maintaining its integrity within flexible boundaries?'. Part of the answer is a central social tool: the 'sacred circle' (*alofi sā*).

The concept of 'Sāmoanness' held by Sāmoans – whether they live in the islands or overseas, and whether they agree or sharply oppose each other in political debates – is termed faʻasāmoa, or 'how to be Sāmoan'. The phrase spans both language and social structure: faʻasāmoa translates both 'do you speak faʻasāmoa?' and 'do you do/act faʻasāmoa?' Reflecting this concept is one of the most popular songs in Sāmoa, which glorifies the idea of being Sāmoan, with words in English and Sāmoan. The song, entitled *We are Sāmoa*, defines 'we' as being *uso* (men as 'brothers', women as 'sisters') and expresses the sentiment that all Sāmoans are under 'the guidance of God'.

We are Sāmoa
And our heritage lives on […]
We are Sāmoa
And we trust in Thee
Sāmoa […]
O sasae ma sisifo e tasi [from west to east all together] *[…]*
Aiga ma nuu taitasi [clans and villages all together] *[…]*
Ta pepese faatasi [let us sing in unison]
Uso Sāmoa [siblings of Sāmoa] *[…]*
Sāmoa mo oe [Sāmoa for you]
Sāmoa mo Le Atua [Sāmoa for God]

Specifics of the Sacred Circle: Hierarchy and Equality

People who are mutually uso (same-sex siblings) in a metaphorical sense meet in the fa'asāmoa way, whether within a family or at the higher level of the village or district where are the *usoali'i* (chiefs as brothers). The spatial arrangement is a circle where everyone faces one another, all sitting at the same level, and a prayer to God opens and closes the meeting. This applies to very traditional occasions when people meet up as well as very modern occasions. One such modern occasion happened in 2021, at the installation of all the newly elected Members of Parliament sitting under a tent erected in haste as a temporary shelter. This was because the proper Parliament building had been locked by the previous government, which did not want to recognize its electoral defeat). Another example was the 2017 foundational meeting of the transgender community, where for the first time transgender MtF and FtM groups came together as one (Luamanu 2017, Tcherkézoff 2022a: Ch. 9).

But the sameness as uso is specific: God's presence 'up there' introduces a subtle but strong hierarchy of ranks within the circle of sameness. It is this interaction between equality and hierarchy, embedded within one and the same common language, that imbues the Sāmoan alofi sā with its ability to be adapted. This adaptability allows it to inform most radical social transformations and to be largely able to encompass conflict and prevent the eruption of generalized violence.

Let me recall two methodological suggestions that I put forward a long time ago. One, directly inspired by the work of Louis Dumont in his anthropology of Indian society, concerns the need to differentiate between 'holistic' and 'stratified' social distinctions, that is, between hierarchy, understood solely in the holistic sense, and social stratification in the classical sense of twentieth-century British social anthropology (Tcherkézoff 1987, 1993a, 1994a, 1995). I used this first proposal in my ethnographic analyses of Sāmoa (published in French, too numerous to be referenced here; see https://www.serge-tcherkezoff.fr/-Publications-) and some in English (1993b, 1994b,

1998, 2008, 2011, 2019), which allowed a dialogue with the all too few researchers who were sensitive to the presence of this form of hierarchy in Sāmoa (Schoeffel 1978, 1979, 1987, 1995); Meleisea 1987; Meleisea and Schoeffel 2016).

The other proposal is that a hierarchical social structure (in the holistic sense) makes it possible to confront the event, the unforeseen change, the history, through the integration of the novelty 'at a certain level', an integration by means of an 'encompassment' (in the holistic sense), instead of a confrontation in terms of all or nothing, and thus also a peaceful integration instead of a violent confrontation. Here again, Sāmoa was for me a remarkable example, both during colonization and after achieving its independence (Tcherkézoff 1997a & b, 1998, 2000a & b, 2005, 2008, 2020).

Hierarchy and Consensus

In the Pacific, one of the values promoted by the 'Pacific Way', a reference to a well-known phrase of Sir Ratu Mara dating from 1970), is decision-making through consensus, as opposed to a decision made through simple majority voting. Consensus has been and is practised in all Sāmoan meetings in all contexts at the family, village and district levels as far back as our information goes, but it is *not* practised in the parliamentary elections that have been held since independence.

Consensus does not mean that everyone thinks the same way. In a majority vote, the voters come out on opposing sides. However, reaching a consensus involves allowing time for discussion, as long as is needed, until one side begins to feel that they are beginning to persuade a majority of those present, while the other side gives up the hope of persuading everybody else. Once this feeling is strongly established, people agree to share a common drink (the well-known *kava*), from the same bowl or *tanoa*, with the same cup or *ipu* going around. The first cup is raised 'to God' and thus fixes the seal of a superior order, which encompasses the divisions and testifies to the solidity of the consensus. Then people can come out of the meeting as one.

Of course, this does not prevent the side which de facto did not win the discussion from trying at the next available opportunity to persuade the assembly again. However, the participants come out of the meeting all together, after having shared into the same sacred drink, having sat together in the sacred circle or alofi sā. This prevents the crowd from being divided into a 'winning side' or *itu mālō* and a 'losing side' or *itu vaivai*.

Hierarchy in the Vocabulary of 'Respect'

Another example is the so-called vocabulary of 'respect' or *fa'aaloalo*, which is entirely different from what foreign observers had thought they had discovered in these socie-

ties of Western Polynesia. The latter divided this vocabulary into the 'chief's language' and the 'commoner's language', based on a misunderstanding. They thought that the *matai* (chiefs) used certain words between themselves – the lexicon of 'nobility', they called it – while commoners used other words. In fact, the system works very differently: when a person of inferior rank is addressing a superior, they abstain from using so-called 'ordinary' words and use different ones. This is done because it is *tapu* (roughly akin to 'taboo', more commonly called *sa* in Sāmoan) to 'touch' a superior, whether physically or using ordinary words. 'Is the sickness of your wife better?', the inferior asks the superior, using a non-ordinary word for sickness *(gasegase* instead of *maʻi*) and a non-ordinary word for wife *(masiofo, faletua* or *tausi* instead of *toʻalua).* However, the matai in his answer will use the ordinary words in response. In this way, the matai encompasses and integrates the commoner, using the same register that this 'commoner' uses with other people of the same status.

The Path to Sāmoan Independence and to an Encompassing Citizenship[1]

Another remarkable example of holistic integration successfully carried out by and in the faʻasāmoa is the way in which the opposition created by colonial references to 'race' was encompassed within a new national unity during the twentieth century.

The German Period

At the end of the nineteenth century, Apia was a trading post and home to dozens of Sāmoan villages. It had a foreign or mixed population (unions of foreign men with Sāmoan women), more or less organized into a system of 'consuls' representing the main nationalities (English, German, American) and a 'municipal' council. In 1899, following the major colonial divisions decided in western capitals, the western part of the archipelago became German. This colonization ended when, at the outbreak of the First World War, Germany lost all its overseas possessions. Deutsche Sāmoa was then administered by New Zealand under the name of Western Sāmoa.

During the German and New Zealand periods, the Sāmoan 'race' was said to be one of the last 'pure Polynesian races' left; it was therefore felt necessary to preserve it from mixing with others. Regardless of the German terminology (*Eingeborener* / *Fremd* etc.; see Winter 2017: 6), communication with the local community was mainly in English. The Germans therefore made a sharp distinction between 'natives' and 'aliens'

1 For a more detailed analysis and bibliographical references, see Tcherkézoff (in press). On the history of the 'racial' issue, the initial and main study is Salesa (2000, 2011).

among the local population, as well as between 'natives' and people of mixed origin. The subsequent New Zealand administration did not change this distinction.

I will use the word 'Métis', with a capital letter, to keep a sense of distance from the overused and unpleasant term 'half-caste'. The Germans spoke of *Halbblut* and *Mischlings*, but in English of *halfcaste* (as in the whole British Empire), a term that became official under the New Zealand administration and was incorporated by the Sāmoans into their own language as *afakasi*.

The Germans had made their distinctions along the lines defined by the local 'consuls' of the second half of the nineteenth century. Mixed-race children from a duly recognized marriage (the vast majority were cases of a foreign man marrying a Sāmoan woman) were given the status of their father if their father had been able to register his marriage at a consulate. Decades later, however, the proof of registration may have been discarded or lost, and various Sāmoans descended from 'European Métis' could not obtain a passport recognizing their status as citizens of their father's or forefather's country of origin because they did not have sufficient official proof. They then became 'residents with foreign status', known as 'European Métis', a reference to their fathers. But Métis children from an illegitimate marriage that had not been registered at a consulate, so were lacking in papers, could not inherit their father's status. Since they could not be 'foreigners', they were necessarily 'Indigenous'. Thus, in the end, two categories were created: 'Métis European' and 'Métis indigenous'. In 1947, the word 'indigenous' was systematically replaced by 'Sāmoan' in New Zealand government documents.

In addition to the internal classification imposed on the Métis, the *de facto* distinction between the Métis in general and both the Europeans and the Sāmoans in particular must be stressed. The officials of the German colony, including the prominent businessmen who arrived, especially from the 1870-1880s (sent by companies already existing in Europe or elsewhere in the Pacific), together with the 'consuls' (positions that began to exist in the 1840s and 1850s), not to mention the Protestant missionaries present since 1836, were all European men who had come to Sāmoa with their European wives, unlike the adventurers and small settler-merchants who had come alone since the 1820s and continuing throughout the nineteenth century. The Europeans had a two-fold contempt for the Métis. On the one hand, these Europeans officials considered that the European admixture endangered the 'purity of the Sāmoan race'. On the other hand, they considered that a European who married a Sāmoan woman was 'indulging himself in savagery', and even becoming a 'savage'.

The Germans called this *verkanakern*, 'to become a Kanak', a term used for the indigenous people of New Caledonia which had become a trans-Pacific colonial and racist term. This was a sad irony of history when one considers that the term was originally used by Polynesian crews on European trading ships to mean simply 'men [are in sight]' (*tagata*, *kanaka*). However, it was interpreted and used by European captains as a derogatory term for the 'savages of the place', giving rise to the term 'Canaques' in French. This lasted until the reversal of value by Jean Marie Tjibaou in the 1970s, under a slogan expressing the pride of being 'Kanak').

The New Zealand Administration

After a small New Zealand contingent took possession of Sāmoa in 1914 on behalf of Britain, the post-war League of Nations gave New Zealand an administrative 'mandate' to run the territory. Things did not change with the establishment of this administration in the 1920s and 1930s: the idea remained that 'half-castes are responsible for the greatest social problems in the country'. This was also the time when the Sāmoan word afakasi became dominant. The word 'half-caste' could be parsed into Sāmoan as *totolua*, meaning 'two bloods', but it was the word afakas*i*, a transcription of the English, that became dominant in the early New Zealand period. This notion does not so much indicate the degree of mixing ('half' or not) as the associated fall in social status, the exit from the 'pure' category in which one should have remained.

The respective preoccupations with social class and 'race' interacted with one another. The missionaries and consuls arrived 'in Polynesia', and therefore in societies 'with chieftaincy or kingship', according to what they had read. They therefore sought to deal with the 'great chiefs' of the country systematically, and they even constantly tried, from 1860 to 1899, to bring about a single 'royalty'. All of this created a superior statutory relationship between some Sāmoans and some Europeans, a relationship that at first did not include intermarriage between them. As a result of this relationship, both sides had a certain contempt for the Métis, who were mostly small-scale adventurer-traders.

At the end of the Second World War, the UN's decolonization programme came together with the wishes of the New Zealand Labour government to rapidly set in motion a process of reflecting on the future independence of Western Sāmoa. Some of the Métis, who were classified as 'Europeans', were reluctant to merge with the other Sāmoans. However, the division created since the German period between the 'European Métis' and the 'Indigenous Métis' prevented the formation of a united Métis opposition. On the other hand, not even the 'European Métis' group was united: the differences in wealth and lifestyles were just too great. Also, they suffered from having been systematically side-lined politically and economically by the German and then New Zealand administrations, which had imposed the status of 'resident alien' on them. Hence, a good number of Métis acquired a certain aspiration for national independence that would allow them to play a role.

It was this combination of factors that made the march to independence relatively easy. The majority of the Métis eventually accepted that they could be united with the Sāmoans in a single status of 'Sāmoan citizens' of the future state. In turn, this acceptance of a 'Sāmoan' national unity at an *encompassing* level, both conceptually and politically, allowed for the perpetuation of certain strong differences at *secondary* levels of value. Three contexts were at issue: keeping hold of another nationality as well, differentiation in land rights, and differentiation in political representation through the electoral system.

The Question of Nationality

This issue was resolved by a joint Working Committee that included both Métis and non-Métis Sāmoans, accompanied by two 'advisers' who were academics: J.W. Davidson, known for his knowledge of regional colonial history (Pacific, British Empire); and a jurist, C. Aikman, known for his expertise in constitutional law.

Although we have only Davidson's (1967: 362–3) very brief account, it is nevertheless illuminating. Davidson tells us that the Sāmoans (he does not mention the views of the 'European' members of the Committee) tended to see the problem in terms of the rule or rights of blood, and that he and Aikman promoted another view, in terms of the rights of the soil. The Sāmoans would have liked any individual of Sāmoan descent to have the opportunity to acquire citizenship if they so desired, which immediately raised the issue of Sāmoans in American Sāmoa (the smaller eastern part of the archipelago). Some would have liked to see only those of Sāmoan descent who were living according to the principles of classification as 'Sāmoan' to be given this opportunity, but this would have rendered stateless the many 'Europeans' in Sāmoa who did not have a passport from the country of their European ancestor, and some would never have been able to obtain one because they did not have the necessary papers. Sāmoans would also have liked to see anyone who already held another nationality prevented from becoming a Sāmoan citizen. This posed the problem of various members of the local 'European' community who had been born in Sāmoa but had been able to retain the nationality of their European ancestors and whose whole lives were rooted there.

In response to these arguments, Davidson and Aikman 'explained that citizenship relates to a person's place of birth (and to that of his father), not to ethnic origin' (*ibid*.). They also stated that consideration could be given to the strictest possible conditions for obtaining Sāmoan citizenship for those who had another nationality, but that Sāmoa had no control over the status a person might have in another country. In short, one could exclude someone from membership of the future state, but one could not force that person to give up the status they had elsewhere. Finally, special arrangements could be made for individuals from American Sāmoa who wished to migrate to Western Sāmoa, without defining such access in racial terms. The result was to define a single citizenship status, with all the rights and duties that go with it, without racial exclusion, but accepting that some 'Europeans' might have dual nationality while making it clear that this other nationality did not have any additional rights within Sāmoa.

The text was drafted and accepted by everyone. Henceforth Sāmoan 'citizen' was a person who was born on Sāmoan soil or whose father is a citizen by birth (or the mother if the child's parents are not married). A foreigner who has been a permanent resident for more than five years may also apply for naturalization. Finally, it was clarified that a Sāmoan citizen who took another nationality would not automatically lose his Sāmoan nationality. Thus, today many Sāmoans who have settled in New Zealand or were even born there, and who are residents or even citizens of that country, are also Sāmoan citizens. The 1959 Ordinance and the Constitutional text only included the notion of

'citizen'. The 1972 Act clarified what had become obvious: the terminological distinction 'Sāmoan' / 'European' in the 1921 and 1944 Acts no longer had any legal existence.

The Question of Land Tenure

The fundamental point here is that land tenure was subordinated to the question of citizenship. It was declared that only a Sāmoan citizen could hold, and therefore buy and sell, land under private law. The long-standing fear of land-grabbing by foreigners was thus allayed at the same time as the *de facto* situation created in the nineteenth century was recognized. The land that had been recognized as being under the 'ownership' of a 'European' settler at that time remained under the 'private property' land regime; anyone could own it, regardless of origin, but on the express condition that they were a Sāmoan citizen. I shall come back to the question of land tenure in the context of the recent political events in 2021.

The Question of the Electoral System

The 1959 UN Mission, after stressing the importance of defining a single citizenship, indicated that it was necessary to recognize the Sāmoans' attachment to the matai or 'chief' system, but also to recognize 'the different way of life of many persons in the public service, in commerce and in other employments'. This was a reference to the professional background of the 'Europeans', though they were no longer named as such.

This was a call to subordinate differences to national unity and only to characterize differences that did not rely on racial, territorial or national vocabulary, in order to limit oneself to the prevailing form of sociality. The differentiated group, this time not by origins but by the social mode of interacting, were the following. 1) On the one hand are those who are within the 'tradition' of faʻasāmoa, and therefore within the matai system and the *faʻamatai*, according to which each individual is above all a member of a clan (an extended family or *aiga*) and thus a 'supporter' of his matai, who is therefore meant to represent the members of this aiga in all circumstances. 2) On the other hand are those who are 'outside' this tradition and thus legitimately wish to make their individual voices heard.

The Mission realized, with great regret, that it would not succeed in establishing a system of universal suffrage for parliamentary elections because of the strength of the Sāmoan demand that every Sāmoan be represented by his matai, or head of extended household. Consequently they suggested that this difference in sociality could be expressed in the electoral system. On the one hand, this meant seats for voting by extended families represented by their matai, and on the other hand, seats for a register of 'individual voters', in proportion to the number of individuals who identify with one or the other system respectively.

The outcome was as follows. The future parliament would have 45 seats 'in the Sāmoan tradition' or faʻasāmoa, to which would be added five 'European' seats elected

by the universal suffrage of those who opted for this logic of 'individual vote'. For the fa'asāmoa seats, the electoral method would 'for the moment' be the following. In each district, only the matai or chiefs could vote and choose among themselves who will sit in the parliament, on the condition that they provide a list showing a majority of signatures in favour of each name; in the case of disagreement, there would be a secret ballot among the matai at that district level. The distinction between 'Sāmoans' and 'Europeans' thus continued at a secondary level, in a limited way, being transferred and restricted to the electoral level only.

The country became independent under this system. The constitution specified the existence of two electoral arrangements. The 45 territorial constituencies would each elect their own MPs: 'One member elected for each of forty-five territorial constituencies'. There are 41 constituencies to be exact; four of these had two seats. There were also five 'European' seats under the system decided in 1957. In subsequent years, it was decided to give two MPs to two other large constituencies.; other MPs would be elected by 'persons whose names appear on the individual voters' roll' (WS Constitution §44). This roll was opened everywhere, and some individuals could register and thus vote directly, in their own name, instead of delegating their vote to a matai leader. After one year, and every five years thereafter, the officer in charge of the electoral registers would have to calculate the number of seats 'to be elected by the persons whose names appear on the register of individual voters'. The officer was expected to do this by maintaining a proportion between the number of inhabitants related to this 'individual' election and the seats to be filled, comparable to the proportion between the overall population and the 45 seats 'to be elected by territorial constituencies'. The only constitutional requirement for being an MP was to 'be a citizen'. Independence was then declared in 1962.

The Samoan Status Act of 1963 specified that, in order to hold the title of matai and thus have rights to so-called 'customary' land, one had to be not only a citizen but also to have a share of Sāmoan blood. This partial return to the right of blood may be surprising. It must be understood in the context of the constant concern to protect land rights. It was a way of prohibiting a foreigner who had come to settle in Sāmoa, become naturalized and then eventually obtained the title of matai from his Sāmoan wife's family from eventually exercising authority over a portion of the territory. The problem was that in the Sāmoan tradition, each extended family can choose to give a title, a secondary or even the main title, to a non-consanguine if this person is married into the extended family. Here again one can see in this an attempt to restrict a contradiction to the main value within a secondary level. The effort of the councillors was to remove from the Constitution the prevalence of the right of blood to create a notion of universal 'Samoan' citizenship regardless of one's possibly 'mixed blood' history. This was ultimately fully embraced and supported by Sāmoans. But once this principle had been established at the main level (the Constitution), it was then possible for Sāmoans to reintroduce the right of blood in the limited context of access to a matai title by a simple legislative act.

The foregoing history shows that the spirit of consensus, so central in the ideology of the 'Pacific Way', can go quite far if and when it is desired to promote it. When it came to thinking about the appointment of the Head of State of this new state, Western Sāmoa, historical evidence and contemporary status pointed to the heads of the two great extended families (aiga) who had dominated local history in the nineteenth century and had also dominated interaction with the Europeans and the conduct of the first consultative territorial assembly. Everyone told the UN commissioners that there must be no risk of reviving old rivalries, irreconcilable for a century, nor any question of risking a return to the wars of the distant past. Thus, they told the UN Commissioners that the country would become independent on condition that it could have 'two Heads of State' simultaneously and with equal authority (the main 'chief' of each of the two great aiga). Then when one died the other would continue until his death. Only then would the new Constitution be followed and the election of the Head of State by Parliament be introduced.

Again, as with the question of limited suffrage restricted to matai chiefs for Parliamentary seats, the UN Commission had to accept this exception (unique in the world, it seems), knowing that it would only last for one generation. It so happened that one of the two chiefs-cum-heads of state died of an illness a few years later, and the other remained the now sole head of state of Western Sāmoa for almost half a century until his passing in 2007, after which the constitutionally mandated system came into effect.

A Changing Political Landscape and the Law of the Land

That is the logic of holistic hierarchy, as opposed to stratification: in political terms, the latter is in congruence with a majority voting process (as opposed to a consensus). Let us cross decades from the years of independence in the 1960s to the last national election in 2021.

It would have made things easier if the National Parliamentary elections in Sāmoa had been based on consensus. In fact, the very first election after independence in 1962 followed the consensus model, which did not allow multiple candidates in one and the same district. However, at the next election in 1965, the knowledge and experience of the prestige and benefits gained from being an MP became better known, and of course there were multiple candidates.

Then, shortly afterwards, the beginnings of 'party politics' emerged in Parliament. This became crucial, as the party which had a majority after the elections would be the one designating the Prime Minister, naturally the leader of that party. Through various strategies, one party became dominant in the mid-to-late 1980s: the HRPP (Human Rights Protection Party). Very astutely, the early leaders had chosen a name that would evoke the main values of all Western democracies. Then, in the early 1990s, the HRPP engaged in a manoeuvre to change the constitution by enlarging the voting base (from

matai only to universal suffrage over 21, but keeping candidacies for matai only) and to extend one legislative period from three years to five years. Being now in power; they wanted to stay longer (Tcherkézoff 1998).

The majority voting system had a subtle additional requirement that every individual should register on the voting rolls and have a professional picture on their individual electoral identity cards. This all increased the influential weight of the urban and peri-urban parts of the country, which were expanding every year to the detriment of the rural zone, soon to be called in Sāmoan the '*tuaback'* ('back zone') villages. Thus, the HRPP had a strong majority, which grew with every consecutive election. Then they took one large misstep regarding the law of the land.

The party thought they could also, even only partly, change the law of the land and bring land tenure closer to a *fa'apapālagi* system: the so-called 'Torrens system' as it is commonly called in juridical debates, from the name of a former colonial administrator (for the Sāmoan case, see Ye 2009, Meleisea and Schoeffel 2015, Iati 2016, Tcherkézoff 2022b). This system strongly individualizes the definition of ownership, even if land remains 'customary' and cannot be brought onto the private market of buying and selling (a market that covers only a small part of the total area of the country). The debate on land tenure quickly became very virulent locally (Iati 2022, Meleisea and Schoeffel 2022).[2]

At that point, some key members of the HRPP decided to leave the party and create one of their own, called FAST.[3] They did not just wait for the next election: they began to tour the country, and to deliberate with all the matai and families of each of its villages. These discussions were held in the old 'consensus' way.

We know the outcome. The national elections of April 2021 and their aftermath were in the international news for weeks. For some it seemed like the first time in many respects, but it could also be read as being so uniquely 'Sāmoan', at least when looking at the attitudes of all the political opponents. There were many reasons to fear an eruption of violence, but all we saw on our screens (TV, Facebook) were people holding the Bible and singing church songs, at the same time that crucial transformations were on their way, including an attempt to dismiss a government that had been established for forty years. There were accusations of grave corruption, but also an unexpected debate on the extent of political rights 'for women', used by both sides, but in diametrically opposed ways. There were 'road shows' by both parties to try and gain support from

2 For the context before 2021, see also https://devnet.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/IatiIati 'Controversial Land Legislation in Sāmoa: It's not just about the land'. For a recent debate, see also https://Sāmoaglobalnews.com/ltc-amendment-bill- removes-court-assessors11/;
https://Sāmoaglobalnews.com/sls-bills-fundamentally-technically-defective/;
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/Sāmoa-s-constitutional-crisis-undermining- rule-law
and the debate spread internationally (see the June 2020 position papers of the International Bar Association (https://www.ibanet.org).

3 *Fa'atuatua i le Atua Sāmoa ua Tasi*. ('Sāmoa as one under God's guidance'), often translated too briefly as 'Sāmoa united in Faith'.

villages and districts, and sometimes there was the fear that one side would violently block the marching of the other, though this did not happen.

At the last national elections in April 2021, the HRPP – up to then uncontested, and with a vast majority – suffered a shock. The result was 25/25 + 1 'independent', then 26/25 when this one independent MP took sides with the new opposition. This is when the losing party (the HRPP) refused to recognize its defeat, locked the parliament building and refused to vacate the offices. There was real anxiety in the country that violence could erupt.

Significantly, the new majority party – the FAST – abstained from forcing the gates of the Parliament building and officially opened Parliament in a tent in front of the building, thanking God and sitting as a sacred circle or *alofi s*ā in the explicit presence of God. Weeks went by, but in the end the strength of this peaceful and respectful new authority was successful, and a new *mālō* or government was recognized. The losing party agreed to vacate the government offices and to Parliament opened properly.

Seats for Women

During that final episode, another remarkable consequence of the majority voting system versus the consensus system created a dilemma that will remain in the annals of all specialists in constitutional law.

Right after the April results turned out to be 26/25, a margin, albeit narrow, that seemed to seal the defeat of the incumbent HRPP, the judicial advisers of the losing side came up with a new idea. The Sāmoan Constitution, amended in 2013, stipulated that at least 10 per cent of the seats in Parliament must be held by women (Meleisea et al. 2015). At that time, the country was divided into 49 districts, meaning that five seats needed to be held by women. In April 2021, it happened that five districts had actually been won by women, so there seemed to be no need of any further action. However, everyone, including the judicial advisers of the Prime Minister facing the loss of the election, knew that two years earlier the Electoral Commission and government had decided to create two more districts in the most densely populated part of the country. They suddenly realized the consequence of this change. The number of districts had increased to 51, 10 per cent of which is 5.1. On an arithmetical basis, 5.1 is closer to 5 than 6, meaning that the 5 seats already held by women would be sufficient. But in a real-world applications, 0.1 of a human could be considered illogical, so 5.1 human beings should be rounded up to 6, giving women an extra seat.

The HRPP, facing a loss but acting as if it were still the established government, argued that indeed it should be 6 seats now, and not 5, and designated an additional female candidate who had gained many votes in her district without actually winning it. Of course, the candidate in question was a member of the HRPP, which applied a 'majority' logic to the system established in the revised 2013 Constitution: if the general

election results in fewer than 10 per cent of seats being won by women, additional seats go to the highest-placed women candidates who did not secure seats. The total number of seats in such a Parliament then grows accordingly, up to at least 5 (or at least 6, if the logic of 5.1 equating to 6 prevails). Somehow a constitutional question remained pending: whether the 'highest' placed woman candidate was the one with the highest number of total valid votes gathered by a woman candidate throughout the country, or whether she had obtained the highest percentage share of the votes, in any district, of the women candidates who did not win in the general election. The former situation did *not* apply to the woman designated by the HRPP, but the latter did.

It would take a book-length analysis to describe the ensuing arguments that were debated at the various levels of the judicial system. In the end, the arithmetic logic of six seats for women prevailed, as did the second interpretation of appointing the 'highest-placed woman'. As a result, the losing HRPP was about to find itself with a 26-strong majority again. However, a number of by-elections took place in districts where the results had been rejected after various complaints and checks. The HRPP ultimately lost by a much larger margin than only one seat, thus overriding the debates mentioned above.[4]

The episode of the seats for women, and the resulting constitutional debate, is a further example of the difficulties created by having a majority voting system rather than a consensus. The technicalities and the dozens of pages of argument regarding various interpretations of the Constitution and of recent court decisions took up an immense amount of time, along with a feeling of unfairness shared by all sides. These outcomes would have been avoided if the issue had been debated with a view to arriving at a fa'asāmoa consensus. Those who felt that their point of view was not supported would still be able to come out of a 'consensual' meeting together with their opponents (and share the same kava bowl). They could then still look forward to the next meeting and discussion, planning how to advance their arguments better and organize a de facto majority next time. By contrast, challenging court decisions by means of hundreds of arguments is a whole different approach, which only specialised law practitioners can handle, all the while benefitting from the exercise.

Conclusion

A last smile is permitted to us when looking towards the future. Now that the Prime Minister is Fiamē Mata'afa, a *tama'ita'i pālemia* (a woman prime minister), there is a chance that the voices of women in politics may be heard more clearly. There is nothing to prevent Sāmoa from extending the rule of 10 per cent for women seats, engaging

4 Aficionados of juridical subtleties will enjoy the dozen of pages of High Court debates of the months up to early May 2022, which can be found at: https://Sāmoaglobalnews.com/supreme-court-decision-on-constitution-art-44-women-members-of-parliament1/

in all the well-known corollary discussions. One such discussion is around whether attitudes can be made to evolve by enforcing affirmative legal actions, or whether to try other, more consensus-based means of system change. In systems where consensus has totally given way to majority voting, however, it may well be that affirmative actions are the only pathway towards equality.

Glossary of Terms

alofi sā (sacred circle)
afakasi (transliteration of English term half-caste, or of mixed race)
ʻaiga (a member of an extended family)
faʻaaloalo (respect)
faʻapapālagi (European way)
faʻasāmoa (Samoan custom)
gasegase (illness, formal term)
ipu (cup)
itu mālō (winning side)
itu vaivai (losing side)
kava (drink)
maʻi (sickness, informal term)
Mālō (government)
masiofo, faletua, tausi (wife, formal term)
matai (chiefs)
toʻalua (wife, informal term)
tanoa (bowl)
tapu (roughly akin to 'taboo', more commonly called sa in Samoan)
tagata, kanaka (a person)
totolua (meaning 'two bloods', referring to a half-caste person or afakasi)
tuaback ('back zone' villages)
Tamaʻitaʻi pālemia (female prime minister)
uso (same-sex siblings)
usoaliʻi (chiefs as brothers)
Verkanakern (to become a Kanak)

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Tofiga: Place and Belonging in Samoan Architecture

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Abstract: The Samoan world opens with the notion of *nu'u tofi*, in which every person is assigned a place or position that resonates with culture, polity, citizenship and governance. *Tofi* (or *tofiga*) places Samoans according to their ancestral connections within the order of the Samoan world, as 'the reference point of political action and motivation' (Tui Atua) – for instance, *matai* (chiefs) sitting in front of the *pou* (posts) of the *fale* (house). Connecting people and land, tofi creates belonging through *fa'asinomaga* (placement) and *tulagavae* (demarcation of places) at the centre of the *nu'u* (political unit). This positionality, codified in the fale pou (house posts) and the bodies on the *malae* (an open space in the centre of a settlement), is carried anywhere, irrespective of location. If 'Samoanness', at home and abroad, has connections with artifactuality and spatiality, it would be in the house, both real and imaginary. This article explores the role of tofiga, as materialized in Auckland Pacific communities' fale since the 1980s.
[fa'a Sāmoa, fale Sāmoa, Samoan architecture, locality and place, mobility and belonging]

Introduction: 'Ava Ceremony at Fale Pasifika with Tui Atua

In preparation for an *'Ava a le Tupu* ('*ava* for a paramount leader) to open the New Horizons in the Samoan History Symposium in November 2016, an *alofi sā* (sacred circle) was set out in front of the Fale Pasifika malae (ceremonial court) at the University of Auckland (Refiti 2017).[1] Tui Atua, one of the highest ranked Samoan *Tama-a-'aiga* (maximal lineage titleholder) and Samoan Head of State at the time, sat with his back to the fale on a soft couch that was covered with *'ie toga* (fine mats) decorated with red feathers on top of a large tapa cloth. Seated to his right were the titled hosts, including Maualaivao Albert Wendt, Muli'aga Vavao Fetaui and Toeolesulusulu Damon Salesa. On the left, in the front row, was a group of Samoan titled guests, including Leasiolagi Mālama Meleiseā and one of the authors, Leali'ifano Albert Refiti. At the roadside along the malae sat the *'aumaga* (group preparing the 'ava), including the *taupou* (ceremonial hostess). The ceremony began when the Tui Atua arrived and took up his throne on the steps of the Fale Pasifika, an act that allowed him to 'claim' the

1 The 'ava ceremony we describe here is not the conventional one held in a village setting but an 'Ava o Tupu. A good description of a conventional 'ava ceremony is provided in Muaiava (2022:138ff.).

Fig. 1 Couch in front of Fale Pasifika to seat Tui Atua during the ʻava ceremony at Fale Pasifika, University of Auckland, November 2016

Fig. 2 Pouring of ʻava for Tui Atua, Fale Pasifika, November 2016

position of the ultimate host according to Samoan custom, and through which the house turned into an image of a halo behind and above his throne.

Tradition dictates that the ceremony was then handed over to the ʻaumaga, who prepared the ʻava in the *tānoa* (wooden ʻava bowl), which the taupou stirred and strained in ceremonial fashion. The taupou's symbolic position in the ceremony is determined by *feagaiga* (a sacred brother-sister covenant), which makes her the *tapuaʻi* (consecrated) appellant to Tui Atua's *mana* and *paʻia* (supreme power). Accordingly, she sat behind the tānoa with the blessed ʻava liquid, directly opposite Tui Atua and, in their *vā* (relationship), the mana of high-ranked persons and their shining paʻia provided *paolo* (shelter) to those they faced in the *alofi sā*.

When the *tufa ʻava* (ʻava distributor) seated near her called out for the Tui Atua's cup to be brought forward, a young man of the ʻaumaga walked across the malae and sat down directly in front and below Tui Atua, holding a cup above and in front of his eyes, with head bowed. Another young man stood up, scooped ʻava from the tānoa, walked forward to Tui Atua's cup-holder (Fig. 2) and poured ʻava into Tui Atua's cup. This action was repeated ten times, after which the cup-holder stood up, walked backwards the full length of the malae facing Tui Atua, stopped, and then walked towards him to present the full cup. Before drinking, Tui Atua poured a little liquid on the ground, paused, and said, *ʻava lenei o le Atua, ia viʻia le tatou aso'* ('this ʻava is to God, let this be a blessed day'). (The word 'aso', which denotes the day and the occasion, also means 'sacrifice' in this context).[2] Then the ʻava was distributed to the matai (chiefs) sitting around the malae according to their rank (see diagram, Fig. 3).

Each matai took turns in the ritual libation of ʻava on the ground. Then, while the matai called out *'Ia Manuia le Atua'* (good fortune to Atua, God), the ʻava participants replied *'Soifua'* (to life).

This was the third ʻava ceremony that I, Albert Refiti, have attended at the Fale Pasifika with the Tui Atua as the highest ranked chief present, and they all followed the same protocol. It seems remarkable that, in 2016, and in a metropolitan setting like Auckland, a ceremony based on a diagram of relationships that is hundreds of years old should be performed.[3] However, the ʻava ceremony on the malae conjures up past, present and future *vā* (relationships) and enables Samoans to dwell in a home away from home – in this case, a malae located next to the Waipapa Taumata Rau Marae at the University of Auckland.

Like the malae, sacred houses allow Samoans to orient themselves as Samoans in the world. Their surrounding posts embody ancestors and arrange bodies to face a central openness, a space that seizes and holds one's attention. One cannot get any closer to the centre of being, the place where the ancestors are, than when one is sitting in the

2 See Pratt (1893).

3 This diagram is found in the circular layout of the *fale tele* (big houses) and their arrangement around the *malae* (village meeting ground). The first European accounts of the 'circular' form of Samoan villages and houses were written during the Lapérouse expedition in 1787 (Tcherkézoff 2008a; 2008b: 46 fn 22).

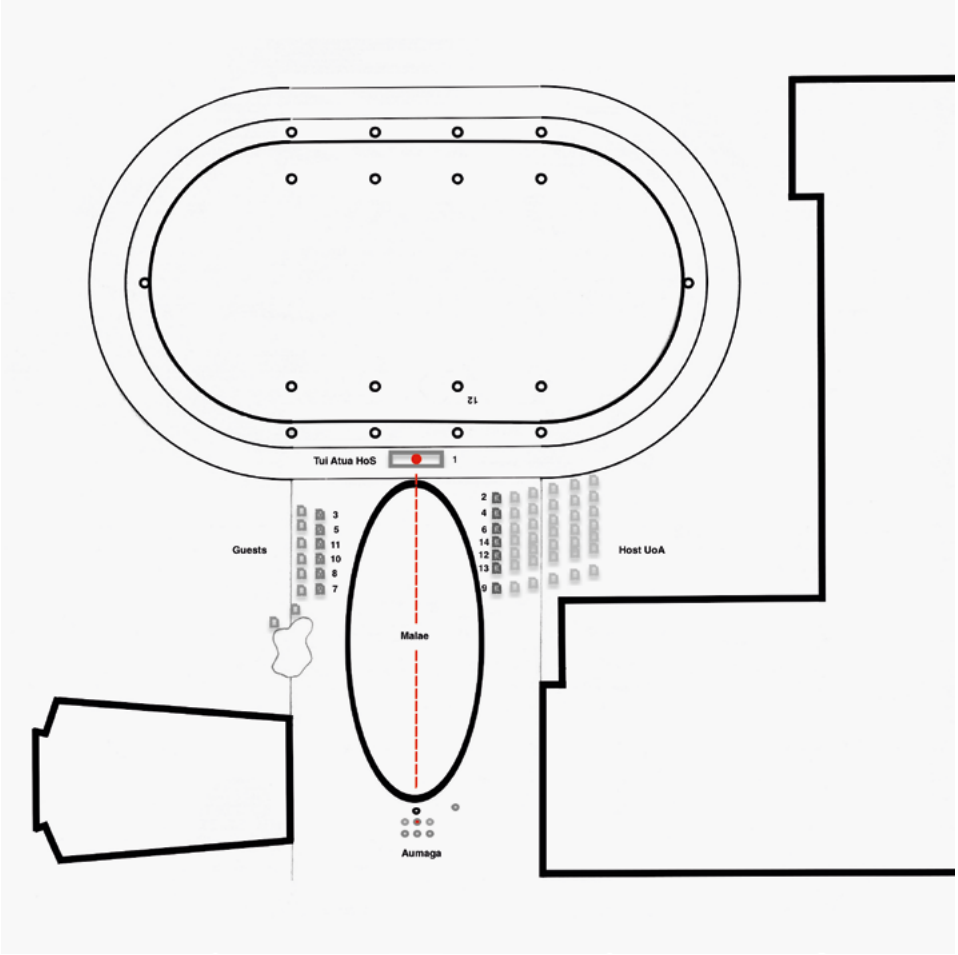

Fig. 3 Diagram of 'ava ceremony at Fale Pasifika, November 2016

faletele in a group. One's *tua* (back) must rest against a post, the ancestor, so that it is concealed or, to put it another way, 'one's back is taken'. With one's back taken, one is now opened up and made into a face – made to face other faces in the circle. That face is one's *tofi*, a placeholder, and one becomes an exact location on a ring that resonates and grinds with other rings.

In this article, we explore what constitutes changing yet consistent forms of Samoan-ness, as the experience of collective identity and sense of self. This occurs partly in performance linked to houses – both in the homelands and overseas. Houses, in our context, are inextricably woven into the fabric of the cosmos and materialise human relationships with each other and with the world. These relationships were set up in an original tofiga, which placed Samoans within the order of the Samoan world according

to their ancestral connections; tofiga is therefore 'the reference point of political action and motivation' (Tui Atua) and a crucial concept in the Samoan understanding of cosmological and social genesis. It ultimately also materializes in the position of the matai in front of the pou of the faletele, when they meet in council or host guests. A fale is thus intimately interwoven with notions of *fanua* (land as something much more than what the modern European term might suggest), locality (as a specific site or position in space or time), or place (in the sense of that spatially bounded web of multi-dimensional relationality that is at the core of anthropological interest). Every cut of these co-constitutive strands, in the interest of the lineal order required by an academic piece of writing, comes with a loss. Accordingly, we trace the connections as much as possible – by weaving in and out of particular nodes – which may at times become confusing, though we have done our best to structure and signpost directions.

This paper is based on and grounded in our individual and collaborative work on Pacific buildings and concepts of space dating back approximately twenty years (e.g., Engels-Schwarzpaul 2006; Engels-Schwarzpaul and Refiti 2018; Refiti 2002). The most coherent long-term project specifically about Samoan architecture came together in Albert's PhD thesis of 2015: *Mavae and Tofiga: Spatial Exposition of the Samoan Cosmogony and Architecture*, for which Tina served as the supervisor. The data were gathered between 2001 and 2023 in various projects funded by our University and by external agencies, through *talanoa* (discussions), interviews, site visits and archival research, as well as through immersion and informal participant observation in Sāmoa, Aotearoa New Zealand and Germany. For Albert, who spent his first thirteen years in Sāmoa, this occurred from the position of an insider and native speaker. For Tina, the observations are based on visits to Sāmoa and many years of regular collaboration and friendships with Samoans in Aotearoa.

In the following section, we will discuss tofiga, as the initiating moment of locality and place that becomes visible in the layout and placement of fale. The subsequent section more specifically explores the role of imaginary and real-life aspects of the fale – both as an organizing principle and as an artefact – in the founding and maintenance of communities and in the way in which it exemplifies aspects of living together in relationships that include, but far exceed, architectural concerns. Finally, we will conclude by discussing the role fale Sāmoa fulfil in a world that includes the Samoan homelands, the Aotearoa diaspora and the globalized world beyond.

Tofiga and the Question of Mobilized Locality and Place

Orientation in the world does not primarily happen through words. The associations with culture, society, polity, citizenship and governance that resonate with tofi are performed rather than discussed. Bodies, spatial configurations and materiality, as much as the meaning of the post one is assigned to, interplay to (re)enact Samoan modes of being-in-place.

At this point, it is important to remember that, in most research contexts, many or even most established concepts in the Anglophone literatures predominant in the Pacific derive from settler languages. Space, place and land are English terms that only partially render, for instance, *whenua/fanua, wāhi* or *takiwā* (the same applies to the space/time binary).[4] A probably widely accepted distinction in anthropology, geography and other disciplines is that space is 'location, physical space and physical geography', while place gives space 'meaning, "personality" and a connection to a cultural or personal identity'. Thus, it is 'the culturally ascribed meaning given to a space. It is the "vibe" that you get from a certain space, and it exists for a reason.'[5] Language models reality – and there is always a danger of 'sliding from the model of reality to the reality of the model', as Pierre Bourdieu has shown (1990:39). Here, we use the term 'space' (following prevailing Anglophone conventions) to designate the boundless, three-dimensionally extended realm in which things and events take place and occupy relative positions and directions. We use 'place' to refer to the meanings and practices people collectively assign to a particular space.

A fale and a malae occupy space, and in turn they create a space for something to take place, something particular to its locality (in, say, Sāmoa or Aotearoa). Place is made up of a web of locality, people, fanua, spirituality, culture, history, … it is a realm in which distinct narratives co-exist as products of social relations. It is a specific articulation of such relationships, 'including local relations "within" the place and those many connections which stretch way beyond it' into layered history (Massey 1999:41).[6] Places are open, porous realms whose specificity depends on the mix of influences co-existing in them, co-created by the encounters of human and non-human histories, relationships and practices (Tuck and McKenzie 2014:43). Places are never fully established but 'operate through constant and reiterative practice' (Cresswell 2004:38, quoted in Tuck and McKenzie 2014:43). But from Indigenous perspectives, space (which is commonly regarded as abstract in Anglophone discourses) is also utterly relational.

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4 Conventional definitions in English are: *Place*: 'a specific area or region' https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/place; *space*: 'a boundless, three-dimensional extent in which objects and events occur and have relative position and direction.' https://www.britannica.com/science/space-physics-and-metaphysics.

5 https://theculturalcourier.home.blog/2019/02/22/everyday-anthropology-space-vs-place/

6 This layering of distinct narratives is evident, for example, in different understandings of time that are operative in Samoan contexts. One of our reviewers observed that our paper 'makes an interesting argument which at times points specifically to modern contexts but in others to a re-imagined Samoa that is timeless and ahistorical.' They would have liked to see more 'historical contexts'. This observation (of a combination of specifically modern contexts with others that seem 'ahistorical'), while at first straightforward, applies only within a European-derived concept of history based on the notion of a universal 'arrow of time'. The hegemony of this temporal framework is contested in Moana Oceania (Salmond 2012: 126). What may seem 'timeless' and 'ahistorical' from one perspective can be conceived of as recursive and genealogical from another. – In Sāmoa, *taeao* (mornings, dawns) are a structuring device of ancestral history (Duranti 1983:6f): 'Samoa's timing indicator, the taeao […] brings the past into the present, brings the future to the now, and makes us living histories' (Steffany 2011:170).

Notions of space, place and subjectivities are first produced in the Samoan cosmogeny, Solo o le Vā. They arise during the formation of the world through an alternating process of *mavae* (growth, expansion) and *tofiga* (aggregation and combination, ordering) (Refiti 2015:76). In the emerging order, tofiga both aggregate and divide to create a world and, together with periods of *mavaega* (regeneration), refold, redistribute, and recombine what exists (Refiti 2015:90). Mavae and tofiga – both polysemic terms – structure lines that unfold along pathways through time and space. As an agglomeration of lines, a person first connects to a family, then to a place, which then extends to encompass the world and the cosmos. Implicit in this structuring is people's potential to mavae and thus extend their sphere of influence through connections everywhere. They can accumulate and fortify relationships by tofiga (identifying themselves) with particular places, applying spatial concepts such as residence and dwelling (Refiti 2015:122). Tofiga also means the irreversible appointment of duties and roles.

The proverb, 'E tala tau Toga ae tala tofi Sāmoa' ('Tongan stories [traditions] are those of war, whereas those of Sāmoa are about divisions') suggests that power within the Samoan polity is distributed amongst *ali'i* (paramount chiefs) and *tulāfale* (orators), rather than held by a single ruler, as is the case with the Tu'i Tonga. The *tofi* (division) calling people into place and to their roles were, according to Mālama Meleiseā (1994: 29), usually initiated in the appointments of dying paramount chiefs to reward their families, villages or even districts for services rendered. In a more general sense, tofi or tofiga is the proper placing of a Samoan person, who always has a position through the connection with an ancestor whose land, as *tofi* (heritage/legacy), 'defines the reference point of political action and motivation' (Tui Atua 2009:33).[7] Tofi thus designates bodies and places within the order of the Samoan world, demarcating places as *tulagavae* (footholds) through *fa'asinomaga* (placement and appointing people to land, identity or personhood) at the centre of the *nu'u* (political unit, settlement) and, by connecting people and land, creating a sense of belonging to place. The tofi that places a person in the world and in a circle is carried everywhere once a descendent, or a person otherwise connected to the nu'u, has taken up that positionality, irrespective of where they might go. It becomes part of their *fa'asinomaga,* a word that significantly derives from 'trace' or 'trait': *sino* means to point (with your finger); *fa'asino* denotes a directive towards an allocation. In that pointing, things are given their names, which carry their original positionality. Hence, the most powerful positions are titles born of a place and conferring a continuum on descendants.

The tulagavae arising from the connection between people and land, for example, is materialized in the *paepae* (platform) of a fale, which 'places the person within the proper context of an *'aiga* (extended family) and *fanau* (descendants). As a result, he or

7 Tui Atua suggests that life begins with tofi as the 'designation' that emerges from the body (*o le mea e to mai tino*) (Refiti 2015:95). The new born human's umbilicus is divided and taken to be buried in the mother's land, which gives rise to the meaning of *tulagavae* as 'the place where ones umbilicus belongs' (Tui Atua 2012).

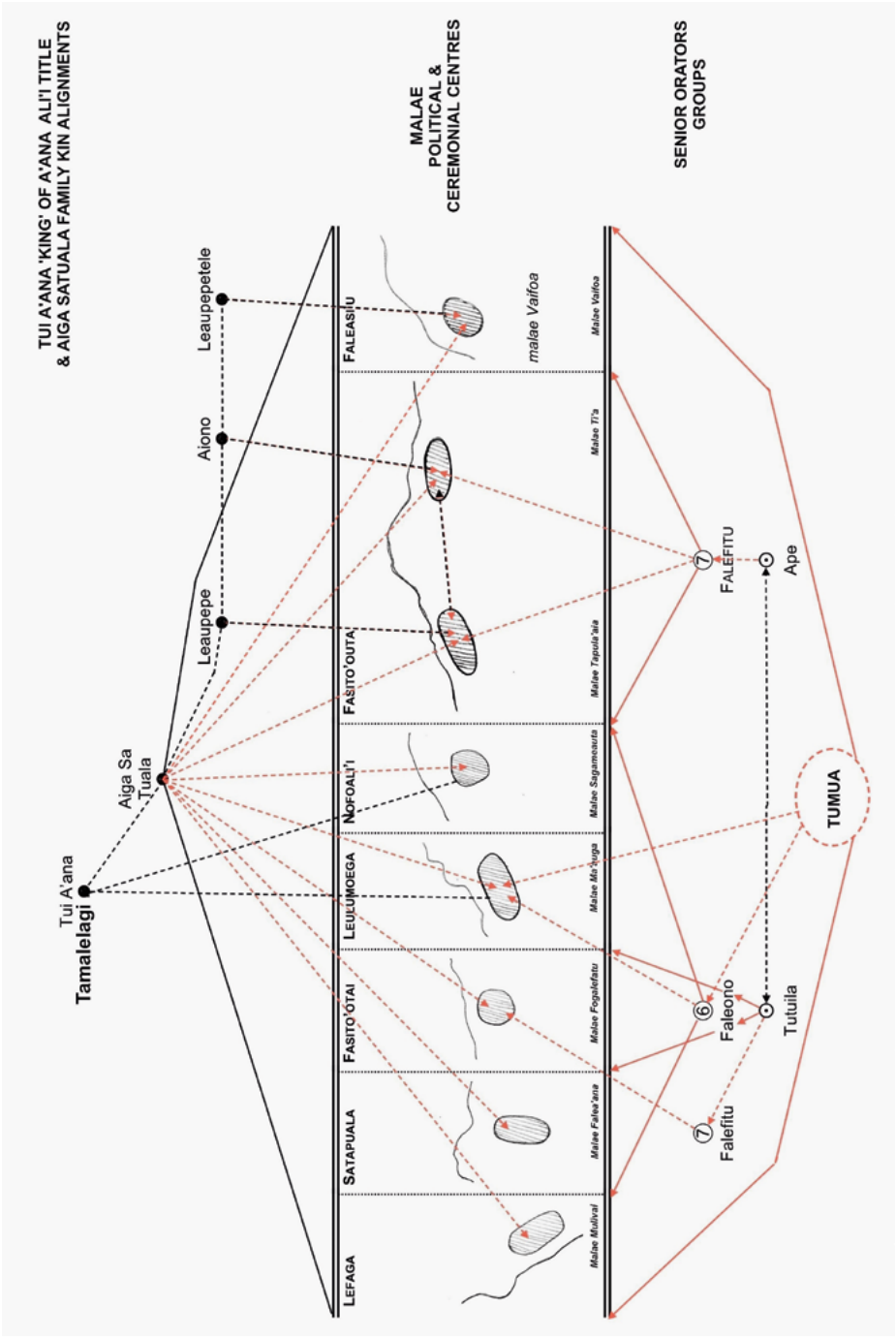

Fig. 4 District lines of Satuala aiga, A'ana district (from Refiti, 2015: 135)

she becomes another loop in a web of being that constitutes an ecology of connected beings' (Refiti 2015:96).[8] Tofi then places matai in front of a particular pou in the fale, assigning him or her a position within the circle of matai. From that specific place on the paepae, *alaga* (lines of connections, pathways) connect each loop with the ʻaiga, the nuʻu, the *itūmalo* (district) and the *malō* (nation, government) beyond, as well as with overseas communities further beyond. The resulting positionality, codified materially in the pou of the fale and the bodies on the malae, is carried anywhere, irrespective of geographical location. As long as people act within the relational network they carry with them, they (and their position) remain connected to a particular configuration, even after drastic changes of place.

The diagram in Figure 4 (adapted from Keesing and Keesing, 1956) shows the alignments of titles and kin groups with important malae and ceremonial centres in the district of Aʻana on three planes of socio-political dimensions: local communities or nuʻu, traditional district structures or itūmālo, and national Samoan structures or mālo. The titles Leaupepe and Aiono in Fasitoʻouta, for example, show how lines and pathways find routes beyond their local unit, via the paramount lines of descent instituted in major aliʻi titles. Their connection to the itūmalo of Aʻana comes about through the Aiga Sātuala, whose members trace their ancestry to Tui Aʻana Tamalelagi, the fourteenth-century king of Aʻana. The Aiga Sātuala line is positioned on the top plane of the hierarchical Samoan system of aliʻi of divine descent from Tagaloa-a-lagi. The second plane shows locations of malae and *fono* matai for each nuʻu relating to the Aiga Sātuala line. The third plane shows the tulāfale groups responsible for the main circulation of influence within the system, in which they also broker the movement of alliances and valuable goods. The diagram illustrates how extensive these lines of connections and relationship within the Samoan system of belonging are.

Whenever Samoans gather in places with which they have no ancestral connections, these connective principles become extended. When, for instance, Albert Wendt took up his post as Professor of English at the University of Auckland in 1987, he approached Māori colleagues like Ranginui Walker and Patu Hohepa.[9] In the lead-up to the instigation of the Fale Pasifika in the early 2000s, he consulted with them about the most appropriate way to house a Pacific centre at the university. The unanimous advice was that Pacific Studies should build their own complex alongside Waipapa Marae (Fig. 5). The campus of the University of Auckland, including Waipapa Marae and the

8 The Samoan notion of belonging begins with one's *tulagavae* (place one belongs to), which is marked by the burial of one's *fanua* (umbilicus) under the stones that form the paepae of the extended family's house.

9 Ranginui Walker (Whakatōhea) was one of the most influential *rangatira* (leaders) and an outspoken advocate for Māori rights and social justice. Having founded the urban Māori organization, Ngā Tamatoa, in the 1970s, he became an academic and was appointed Associate Professor in Māori Studies in 1986. Walker went on to full Professorship in 1993, and later served as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Māori from 1996 to 1997. Patu Hohepa (Ngāpuhi) was a language scholar and Māori Language Commissioner, and the first outspoken advocate of a marae at the University of Auckland.

Fig. 5 Fale Pasifika bordering on Waipapa marae. Photo: Ngahuia Harrison, 2016

future location of the Fale Pasifika, occupies land given to the settler government in 1840 by Apihai Te Kawau, the *rangatira* (leader) of Ngāti Whatua, the people holding *mana whenua* (power from the land) in that area. Māori *tangata whenua* (people of the land) and British settlers had very different understandings of what 'giving' meant at that time. Māori had an established practice of giving land to outsiders, *tuku rangatira* (use rights), which implied the establishment of mutually beneficial relationships based on overlapping and interwoven territorial rights and roles.[10]

The allocation of the land on which the fale was eventually built was thus a very different tofiga from those that were common in Sāmoa, defining novel and unforeseen reference points for political action and motivation.

Misatauveve Melani Anae,[11] Director of Pacific Studies when the Fale was planned and built, stressed the primary importance of 'respect for tangata whenua', followed by the awareness of 'those who went before – we were standing on [the shoulders of

10 Not the alienation of land through sale, as was the case in British societies. However, the British Crown subsequently assumed the right to define the Māori-Pākehā relationship and unilaterally alienated the land given to them for a specific purpose.

11 Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae joined the Polynesian Panthers in 1971 and served initially at the Department of Māori and Pacific Island Affairs as a Housing Officer. She also raised three children before becoming an Associate Professor and Director of Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland

our ancestors]' (Anae and Engels-Schwarzpaul 2017). The prior connections between people and land that had to be considered in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) followed different configurations of alaga than in the homelands, and new relationships had to be established on the layers of the past. For Anae, as for her fellow Polynesian Panthers in the 1970s,[12] the support of and solidarity with tangata whenua was a starting point for politics, which led to her participation in the 1975 *hīkoi* (land march) to Wellington and the 1977-78 Takaparawhā/Bastion Point occupation, for example (Anae 2020).[13] In the Aoteaora New Zealand diaspora, then, tofiga has become a way of grounding new identities in negotiation with tangata whenua (see also Hau'ofa 1994: 156), giving rise to a new configuration of vā in Aotearoa. A complex two-fold nature of relationality emerged, one that continues to be connected to a Samoan vā, the other connecting to a more recent configuration.

The vā fealoaloa'i – the system of social relationships based on mutual respect by which Samoans relate to each other in Sāmoa – includes the extended *fa'alupega* (kinship) connecting all chiefly lines through which every Samoan relates in Sāmoa. On the move, as it were, emerging vā formations must deal with completely new exterior conditions under which to engage relationality with an ancestry that is not of Samoan origins – or, at least, not directly. However, tofiga cannot take place unless Samoans can orient themselves towards a new condition of belonging to place. The actions taken during the Fale Pasifika's early planning stages, such as the advice and permission sought from Māori colleagues and academics connected to the university, already mark the architecture with a Samoan identity internally, analogous to the way in which *tofi* are inherent in the configuration of spaces and the designation of places to those who will sit at the posts of the house.

An important development of the vā arising from the co-mingling of different fa'alupega (honorifics) in the Samoan diaspora is the introduction of new honorifics which then mark meeting places like the Fale Pasifika. The Fale not only has to accommodate gatherings of the Samoan, Fijian or Tongan polities (Ancestral Polynesian Societies)[14] with their different systems of relations: a Fijian *kava* setting, for instance,

(2002-2007). Along with Wendt, and supported by Walker and Hohepa, she was an early and outspoken advocate of a Fale Pasifika.

12 The Polynesian Panthers formed a movement in 1971 to resist racist policies and practices discriminating against Māori and Pacific Island people in Tāmaki Makaurau. These were particularly evident during the Dawn Raids (1973-1979) in which suspected Pacific Islands overstayers were arrested and deported in the early hours. The Panthers organized peaceful protests and education but also legal aid and social resources such as language programmes and community support. Explicitly influenced by the American Black Panther Party, they followed a policy of global Black unity and intercommunalism policies and galvanized widespread support. Their movement contributed significantly to the development of pan-Pacific and Pasifika identities in Aotearoa.

13 On the marches, see Keane (2020).

14 Ancestral Polynesian Societies or APS is a term introduced by Patrick Kirch and Roger Green (2001) as the cultural system pertaining in the societies that Eastern Polynesians call Hawaiki. We have appro-

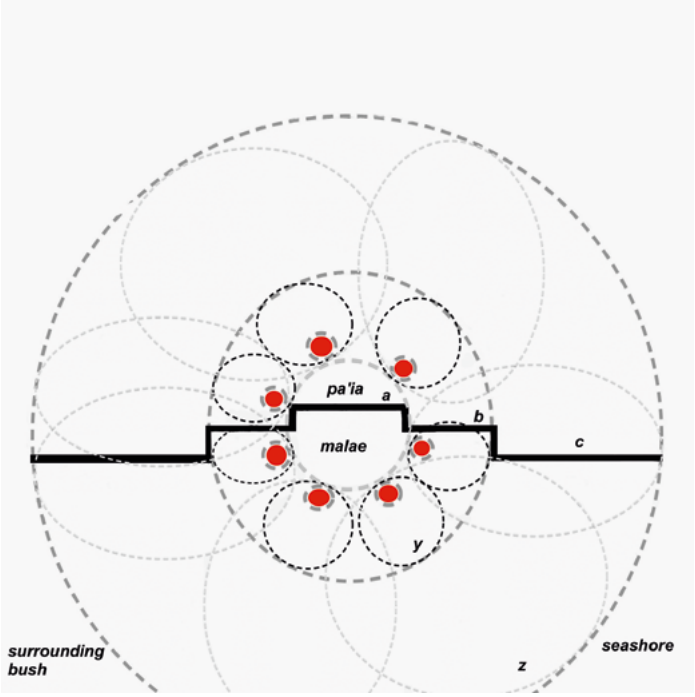

Fig. 6 Diagram of Samoan village showing the spheres of influence (from Refiti, 2015:86)

is made to reflect a configuration of sitting positions that is quite different from a Tongan or a Samoan ʻava setting. Importantly, the Fale must also now acknowledge faʻalupega from other parts of Moana Oceania. In all of this, mavae and tofiga are important in designating personhood and structuring, maintaining and holding together the Samoan polity, from the *fuaʻiala* (hamlet) and nuʻu to the malō (government) in Sāmoa to communities and institutions overseas. Involved in these quite different configurations (at home and abroad) are always spatial and material elements, which are sometimes physical and real and at other times aspirational and imagined. In the coming section, we will discuss how tofiga occur specifically in connection with real and imagined fale.

Fale – Real and Imagined

The emergence of Samoan notions of space, place and subjectivity is marked by the first *fono* (council, a formal meeting in a circle), held by the progenitor Tagaloaalagi

priated the term for our current research project on *Artefacts of Relation: Building in the Pacific* (www.vamoana.org/artefacts-of-relation).

at Malae Toto'a (tranquil meeting place) on the ninth Lagi (heaven). Already here, the final tofiga was made in front of the sacred house Fale'ula, a faletele the first *tufuga* (builders) had built as the blueprint for Samoan meeting houses (Refiti 2015:72). All subsequent houses follow this blueprint, including those built by diasporic communities. In a faletele, the power distributed amongst ali'i and tulāfale cascades outward from their *nofoaga* (sitting together). The divinity at the centre in an empty space (ring a in Figure 6 on p. 36, below) is sacred, devoid of a body, but with an intensive force that Samoans acknowledge, and to which they attend. From this invisible emanation, the ali'i acquires *mamalu* (dignity) in a chain reaction that echoes throughout the village (Refiti 2015:85).

Historically, Samoan villages have a similarly emanating or cascading structure of distributing power: as at the first meeting of the ancestors in Lagi, they cluster around a malae (ring a in Fig. 6), which is bounded by faletele. Family dwellings are located within a secondary ring (b); on a third (c), houses for cooking and ablution huts form a boundary towards the edges of the bush or the seashore.[15]

Physically, a faletele has a short *itū* (middle section), with one to three fully load-bearing *poutu* (central post or posts) connected to the ground and extending up to the *'au'au* (ridgebeam). Samoans still consider the faletele to be the original *fale fono* (meeting house) but, with the advent of more orators at the meetings, the *faleafolau* became the preferred form of *fale fono*, as its middle section is significantly longer and can therefore accommodate more people. Its central poutu do not connect the roof to the ground directly but are cut off above eyelevel, where their load is distributed through *utu poto* (cross beams) that pass the load to the ground close to the edges of the roof. In this way, a better view is preserved across the centre.

Apart from this horizontal movement of physical forces, there is also a vertical movement of spiritual forces in the fale fono that circulates up (towards Lagi, sky), around, then down and up again. The movement is symbolically manifest in the fale's physical construction. Thus, the positions of the ancestors, the outer posts, designate the sitters' positions, facing inwards towards the poutu, which rise(s) up from Papa (the earth) to meet the *'au'au* (ridgebeam, pertaining to Lagi), from which the roof is hung. The roof's curved shape, following the arc of the sky, is maintained by *so'a* (tie beams) propping outwards. This image projects the fale as the covering and enveloping structure of the Samoan world that shelters (*mamalu*) the work of creation and all relations. During fono, the participating matai face each other in a circle, along the edges of the house positioned in relation to the empty space of the malae.

The Maota o Lilomaiava, for example, is a faleafolau still standing in Salelologa in Savai'i. It was built by the prominent tufuga, Tataufaiga Faiga from Saipipi, between 1970 and 1972. The village was named after the orator class Sālelologa (aiga of Lologa),

15 Today, most villages have a linear roadside layout. For an extensive discussion of village layouts, see Bradd Shore (1996).

who govern Salelologa village and district.[16] The Maota o Lilomaiava reflects the eminence of the aiga's *faleupolu* (retinue of orators) in the extra-long middle section of the house and its considerable overall length: it has a line of sixteen internal columns, eight on either side of the central space. The faleupolu's importance is also rendered visible in the concrete columns' fluting and *sumu* (diamond) ornamentation. The fale's *tala* (rounded roof ends over the apse of a fale Sāmoa) are reserved for the two paramount chiefs, Luamanuvae and Muagututi'a, who seem to be pushed away from the centre of the house, signalling their almost silent function in it: their mana is routed through the matai sitting in the front of the middle section of the house, who do most of the talking and decision-making in the village.[17]

The fale re-enacts the connection and separation of Papa and Lagi. Separation (and connection) are materialized in the floating roof (signifying a world slightly removed from the present) and the paepae – forms floating on the malae like a rock drifting on the ocean. Foregrounded is Papa, who first appears in the cosmogony as a stratum growing from Tagaloa's feet, the foundational origin of *tagata* (humans). When the descendants take up their places in front of the *poulalo* (outer, perimeter posts) facing the poutu, they re-enact the first fono in Lagi, supported from below and elevated above the ground by a paepae that positions the cosmos within the domain of Papa. Ultimately, the house conforms and performs to a particular understanding of space and identity: that all of Sāmoa has been settled and allocated its places (Samoa ua 'uma ona tofi).

As Serge Tcherkézoff observes,

> Every Samoan thus belongs to a sacred circle at every level. Outside the circle, he ceases to exist. The individual does not exist if he has no 'family' (the literal translation of 'aiga potopoto) to belong to. The family (his place of origin) does not exist if it is not inscribed at the territorial level in a village circle (nuu, nuu o matai). If this kind of belonging is not in place, the individual cannot sit down in a house because every house materializes a circle of belonging; in this event, he is without a house, which is inconceivable in the Samoan culture; one must be able to sit down, and know what post to lean against when his family meets, the two being synonymous: when a person 'belongs,' he knows at what 'place' in the circle he belongs. The same is true at the village level: the matai of a family could not sit down with other matai; he would not know what post to sit against when the circle of the matai (nuu o matai) met to decide village affairs. (Tcherkézoff, 2009: 259)

16 Sā, the prefix, denotes the sacred orator class, and Lelologa records the ancestor of the village whose deed of saving the King of A'ana from being killed in an ambush is known throughout Sāmoa (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2004:94).

17 The faletele next door belongs to the paramount chief Muagututi'a. It has a much shorter middle section and a prominent tala, which makes the roof look like a dome or halo in which mana is bestowed upon those who sit under it.

Even relatively recent building projects in Sāmoa (and certainly many overseas, like the Fale Pasifika in Auckland) persist in the iconic deployment of the ceremonial circle. This circle, where everyone faces each other at the same level, was emphatically enacted in 2021, after the election of a new Government. The present *maota fono* (government administration building) in Mulinuʻu, which is built in a circular form,[18] was locked up by the defeated government, forcing the newly elected parliament to meet in a marquee on the lawn in front of it (see Tcherkézoff, this issue). This highly charged and intensely public event demonstrated that iconicity not only relies on similarity but is inherently performative (Ljungberg 2018: 66).[19] Likewise, the six-story Fale o le Malo in Apia is crowned by a tiny fale on the top floor. At its Papaigalagala campus, the National University of Sāmoa sports the largest faleafolau in the world – originally designed by Fonoti Leilua Likisone in 1997, opened in 1998, demolished in 2011, and in 2012 replaced with a new faleafolau by the same tufuga. The question is, why is this iconic form repeated in Sāmoa and the Samoan diaspora when builders and architects are evidently quite capable of building other shapes?

One explanation could be the connective function of a fale fono: beyond it, *ala* (pathways, or personal traits) flow on to encompass ʻaiga, nuʻu, itūmalō and malō branches and, together, weave a system of belonging that is particular to the Samoan social system. Ala create vā relationships between nuʻu, and with places beyond, by connecting them along multiple pathways; they also connect a person socially and provide that person with identity. When Samoans leave their nuʻu, they take with them their original positionality, established in tofiga and codified in the matai title they carry in relationship to the pou of the faletele and the bodies on their malae. The ala connecting them beyond their village are imagined as a diagram of relations that allows Samoans to connect beyond the homelands, into their diasporic communities overseas. Whenever they then build houses in their new communities, they also bring with them the founding rituals to establish order in a new territory. The form of the fale fono, re-enacting the connection and separation of Papa and Lagi, may not be attainable at first, but the seating arrangements can be re-enacted even without pou.

In the 1970s, for example, Samoans living in South Auckland often created a large open space for fono in their garages, around which the matai took their seats on the best available mats. The 'order of precedence' determining the seating positions was sometimes invoked by 'people jokingly direct[ing] each new arrival to an imaginary post' (MacPherson 1997:166). Cluny McPherson, who is familiar with Samoan village events, remembered that it was 'easy to shut one's eyes and listen to the speeches and conversations and imagine being in the village on the island, forgetting that the maota o le nuʻu is in fact a garage ten meters square in suburban Auckland. When the

18 The current maota fono was opened in 2018, replacing an earlier version with the same shape that had opened in 2010.

19 On iconicity and iconic power in general, see Alexander (2020:397), and in Pacific neo- and postcolonial building and design practice, see Engels-Schwarzpaul (2007, 2017, 2020).

'ava ceremony [was] incorporated in these meetings the illusion [was] complete' (MacPherson 1997:166-7). MacPherson's description of Samoan immigrants in the 1970s, materializing through the circular arrangement of their bodies in the fono in this typical spatio-relational constellation in their South Auckland garages, demonstrates how these places can be set up to serve as malae in the absence of formal facilities. Outwardly, there was little, if anything, that was reminiscent of the wide-open space of a Samoan malae or of a faletele, but the constellation of seating in their imagined *maota o le nu'u* (village meeting house) placed people according to their ancestral connections to become a 'reference point of political action and motivation' (Tui Atua 2009: 33).

During an initial period, in which churches 'took on the role of villages, and provided a platform for strong Samoan identity' (Anae 2005) in Aotearoa, large meetings took place in community halls or existing church buildings that looked nothing like Samoan. However, soon the communities began to deploy iconic features in purpose-built or adapted existing buildings to bring to presence the circle of belonging instantiated in the faletele in Sāmoa.[20] The first significant building in Auckland to borrow the form of the faleafolau for its architecture was the Maota Sāmoa Banquet Room in Karangahape Road in 1978. It was built by the Samoan government to function much like the government-built faleafolau structures that were commonplace in Apia and beyond, like Sāmoa College, Apia; Vaiola School, Savai'i; and the Samoan Tourism Authority, Apia. The large open volume of the faleafolau structure naturally allows a variety of settings: weddings, twenty-first birthdays, funeral wakes, and other formal rituals were all carried out in this space. The Maota Sāmoa Banquet Room's architect, Ivan Mercep, had slept in a Meleiseā aiga faleafolau in the village of Poutasi and wanted to emulate its internal post and beam structure. This led to the use of cumbersome supporting brackets to connect the main horizontal and vertical joints, which the architect later dispensed with in his design for the Fale Pasifika in 2003. The building, with a single access point, is oriented towards the interior, without any exterior openings. This differs markedly from the faleafolau's openness in all directions, a feature that Mercep later successfully implemented in the Fale Pasifika. The intensely internal and dark space of the hall has the air of a modern-day tiki bar or cabaret club – which is what it became known for in the 1980s and 1990s.

Many years later, Toeolesulusulu Damon Salesa called a (hypothetical) Fale Pasifika at the University of Auckland, if it were unconnected to the Centre for Pacific Studies and the affiliated communities, 'essentially a very fancy garage' (in Students and Graduates of The University of Auckland 2013), notwithstanding its iconic appearance.[21] What prevented the Fale Pasifika from becoming a fancy garage were the outwardly

20 For an account of churches, in Sāmoa and the New Zealand diaspora, see Refiti (2002).

21 Toeolesulusulu Damon Salesa was Associate Professor of History at the University of Michigan before he returned to Auckland to co-lead Te Wānanga o Waipapa (School of Māori Studies and Pacific Studies), subsequently to become Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Pacific) at the University of Auckland and Professor and Vice-Chancellor of Auckland University of Technology in 2021.

oriented activities of students and staff in creating a space for relationships, a vā that could serve as an important 'touch-point between the University and Pacific communities', a common ground on which Pacific issues can be brought 'into the heart of the University's affairs' (ibid.). In the meeting of these communities, bodies, people, houses, objects, *measina* (treasured possessions), gifts, knowledge, memories, and much else enter into relation with one another. The relational space arising in these encounters does not rely primarily on physical characteristics, but iconicity with its 'performative fusion of surface and depth' (Bartmanski 2015:17), and with its 'residues of complex intentionalities' (Gell 1996: 37), does help. Icons represent their objects mainly by means of a sensory similarity (Peirce 1998:273), which is often visual. Seen from outside, the fale Samoa's roof form and openness have, indeed, frequently been called iconic. However, icons can also be diagrams that do not 'resemble their objects […] at all in looks' – instead, their likeness consists in 'the relations of their parts' (Bartmanski 2015:13). The central function of Samoan fale tele, namely to shelter and perform relationships, is diagrammatically manifest in their layout: specific pou re-presenting descent lines and enacting connections between them are allocated to particular 'aiga. The combination of visual and diagrammatic iconicity, in a 'felicitous performative arrangement of visually arresting phenomenon and socially potent meanings and their references' (Bartmanski 2015:3), involves material, appearance and performance to anchor meaning and memories, thoughts and feelings. So, while iconic power crucially concerns materiality – wood, stone, thatch and sennit in the case of fale – icons are bundles of material/aesthetic surface and immaterial/spiritual, moral or intellectual depth. Visual appearance and structural organization form an indispensable interface across which meaning, engagement and value converge with 'often visceral collective feelings' (Bartmanski 2015:27).[22]

In faletele and faleafolau, immediately recognizable features (at least to the initiated) are the tala, indicative of the typical fale Sāmoa roof shape. Not surprisingly, the shape appears in many buildings in the diaspora. Thus, in the late 1980s, a tala was added to the otherwise modernist EFKS church building in 56 Sussex Street, Grey Lynn, Auckland. The characteristic roof shape persisted also in the EFKS in Newtown, Wellington, in the Fale Pasifika at the University of Auckland, and in the Fale Sāmoa at the Sāmoa Consulate-General in Māngere, Auckland (opened 2016).[23] Recently, it was foregrounded in the conceptual model for the Fale Malae in downtown Wellington. Adrian Orr, Governor of the Reserve Bank, remarked: 'The Fale Malae will be an iconic focal point for all those with Pacific heritage to gather, learn and celebrate their arts,

22 Hence the important role icons can play, particularly in diasporic situations, in creating constellations in which collective feelings can consolidate and 'become conscious of themselves' (Durkheim 1995:421; see also Engels-Schwarzpaul 2017).

23 An exception is the Lesieli Tonga Auditorium (Favona, Mangere), which is, however, located next to a church with a barrel-shaped roof and a tala-like addition to the front façade.

Fig. 7 Lupe. Faletele built at Unitec, Auckland, by Togia'i Kaeitano Smith. Photo: M. Austin

cultures, histories and futures,' alongside contextual factors, such as 'Pacific peoples' engagement with higher education, commerce, and political institutions.'[24]

Because of a Samoan tufuga's involvement in its production, the Samoan fale construction at Unitec is a special case in Aotearoa. Built in 2003 as part of the Pacific Architecture elective paper developed by Jeremy Treadwell, it was based on the faletele that had been built in Sāmoa by the *tufuga-faufale* (master house-builder) Sao Taito in 1939 and erected at the 1940 Centennial Exhibition in Wellington, New Zealand. In 2001, tufuga-faufale Togiaʻi Kaeitano Smith from Porirua, Wellington, was commissioned to build the house on the grounds of the Unitec School of Architecture. Although the fale was to an extent predetermined by CAD drawings prepared by Treadwell, the tufuga still had room to bring his own stylistic repertoire to bear: this included painted poulalo connections to the ring beam and the *soʻa* (struts) that span the front and back of the itū. Especially notable is the forked poutu that Smith painted with patterns of a Sāmoan *malu* (woman's tattoo), so that the forked branches reaching upwards appeared like the legs of a woman and the trunk reaching into the foundation the body. The painted motifs in green, red, white and black reached back to the style

24 'Proposed Fale near Parliament aims to celebrate Pacific people's contribution to NZ'. tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/proposed-fale-near-parliament-aims-celebrate-pacific-people-s-contribution-nz. Jun 14, 2020.

of his father, with whom Smith trained in Safotu, Savai'i, in the late 1960s and 1970s. The fale was lashed with sennit from Fiji and Sāmoa and thatched with dried coconut leaf from Sāmoa, while the river stones for the paepae gave the building the appearance of an 'authentic' Samoan fale. Lupe has all the elements that signify the proper places for matai in the Samoan polity – orators at the front itū and the paramount and high ranked matai in the tala. For the fale's dedication in the summer of 2003, an 'ava ceremony was held, with then New Zealand prime minister, Helen Clark taking up a position, as paramount chief of the visiting matai, at the tala next to the main road. The Samoan Prime Minister, Tuila'epa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi took up a position under the inland tala, which signified his status as the paramount matai and main host. Inside the fale, the tofiga of seating according to Samoan vā was enacted. From the outside, this fale Sāmoa was perhaps best imagined like the TARDIS in the BBC television series, Doctor Who: irrespective of its location in the world/universe, the interior logic of the fale retains the consistent reality of the Samoan cosmos.

Fale Sāmoa, at Home and Abroad

Another way of comparing internal and external perspectives leads to the proposition that vā has, in the diaspora, an inside that references the politics of placemaking for Samoans in Sāmoa, and an outside based on a politics of difference in the creation of new sites to belong to for Samoans on the move. On the inside, fale in the diaspora materialize tofiga in their coherent and relatively unchanging form. The persistence of this shape, based on the original Fale'ula that housed the first fono in Lagi, is partially due to its performative iconicity. Even in large contemporary buildings, the house form (as a gigantic materialization of the ceremonial circle) evokes a place within the circle and thereby manifests belonging; its material organization is 'invested with imagination and enlivened by performativity' (Alexander 2020:381). The roof, which provides *mamalu* (spiritual cover), combines with the poulalo that mark the original places of belonging for most Samoans connected with a *gafa* (lineage). Fale, like Māori *whare* (houses) travelling the world, with their 'ability to stand in both worlds' of *noa* (unrestricted/common) and *tapu* (restricted/sacred) (Wineera 2000:25), provide connections between people and place.

From the outside, fale Sāmoa become coded as 'Samoan-ness'. This can simply mean that they 'look Samoan', but in 'looking Samoan' they also provide some resistance to the dominant architecture in their location – which, as the architecture of the ruling has always done, contributes 'to maintaining, legitimating, consolidating and stabilising a given social order' (Tarazona-Vento 2022:84). In this sense, 'Samoan-ness' can contribute to social change: political activity can transform bodies and places into something different from what the prevailing order intended, and iconic sites can become important sites of protest when they symbolize alternative uses and changing

types of images, thus associating the sites with different narratives (Tarazona-Vento 2022:95).

However, a house only becomes fully aligned with its status as a fale, and thereby more powerfully represents 'Samoan-ness' to Samoans themselves, when the interior activation of the house through ritual and ceremony goes along with the engagement of its outside, the world beyond, while acknowledging its place and the relationships that pertain within it. In Sāmoa, tofiga extends outwards to encompass the malae space, and from there the nu'u, itūmalo and malo. In the diaspora, tofiga will, first of all, engage the people of the land (*mana whenua* in Aotearoa) and the wider, usually metropolitan environment. In the often precarious conditions of the diaspora, alliances and well-functioning relational networks are vital. Samoan and Tongan interpellations like *'ia teu le vā'* (tend to the vā) or *'tauhi vā'* (nurture the vā) imply discord or danger in the homelands – disturbed or disrupted relations in need of tending and healing, or even a state that is inherently culturally dangerous. But how does one tauhi or teu le vā in radically different environments in which vā relationships are difficult to enact? Most European building types, for instance, are organized according to principles that do not lend themselves to meetings in which people can 'sit according to their status and rank at different posts' (Van der Ryn 2012:139). That is one reason why buildings like the Fale Pasifika at the University of Auckland play such an important role in community development: forces operating in vā relationships find material expression in their design and construction. The Fale Pasifika is physically anchored in land (first given by Māori, then appropriated by the colonial administration, and later symbolically given again thanks to the support of Māori academics), and therefore unable to move like the fale tele of old in Sāmoa, when they were given, for instance, as dowry.[25] Nevertheless, like mats, it retains the quality of gifts to instigate and nurture relationships.

Another important element in the being and function of the houses discussed in this article is that all have been named. This allows them to exist, in their own right, as gathering places for people associated with their name – in Sāmoa, this name would refer to an ancestor. Even without that connection, the Fale Pasifika is still referred to by Pacific people who connect to the University of Auckland as 'their house', especially by staff. Similarly, Lupe, the fale Sāmoa at Unitec, which was recently shifted to a new location, still has strong connections to its institutional community. Fale are, in that sense, much like the *'ie o le malō* (main fine mats of prominent families) that carry with them the name and the mana of each family. The case in point here is Le ageagea o Tumua, a fine mat of the Tui Atua aiga. It was gifted to the New Zealand Government by Tui Atua in 2002 to commemorate the apology extended by the then Prime Minister, Helen Clark to the Samoan people, on behalf of Aotearoa New Zealand, for events that took place during New Zealand's administration of Sāmoa (1914-1962). Le

25 See Tcherkézoff (2008a:299 note 84).

ageagea o Tumua, now housed at Te Papa, provides the potential to *ao* (gather into its being) all the hurt and trauma caused by the New Zealand colonial administration in Sāmoa during that time, and thus to allow for new vā to emerge.

The Fale Pasifika, like other fale in Aotearoa, operates similarly: it gathers people and provides mamalu, thus allowing the distant past from other lands to find tofiga and place in the diaspora.

Glossary

S=Samoan, M=Māori (note: singular and plural are not formally distinguished in Māori or Samoan)

ʻaiga	S	extended family
ʻau'au	S	ridgebeam
ʻaumaga	S	ritual ʻava chewers/producers
ʻAva a le Tupu	S	kava ceremony for a paramount leader
ʻie o le malō	S	main fine mats of prominent families
ʻie toga	S	fine mats
alaga	S	lines of connections, pathways, personal traits
aliʻi	S	paramount chief
alofi sā	S	sacred circle
ao	S	gather into its being
faʻalupega	S	kinship, system of honorifics
faʻasinomaga	S	placement, a person's identity
faleʻula	S	red/first house
faleafolau	S	longhouse
faletele	S	great house
fanau	S	family, descendants
fanua	S	placenta, land (but something much more than the modern European term evokes)
feagaiga	S	sacred brother-sister covenant
fono	S	council, a formal meeting in a circle
fuaʻiala	S	hamlet
gafa	S	genealogy, lineage
ia teu le vā	S	tend to the vā!

itū	S	middle section
itūmalo	S	district
lagi	S	heaven
lauga		oratory
malae	S	originally, open space central to a > nuʻu; today, the free space in an institution in Aotearoa that is governed by Pacific values and protocols, similar to an institutional Māori > marae
malō	S	nation, government
malu	S	woman's tattoo
mamalu	S	dignity, shelter, to shelter, spiritual cover
mana	M/S	power, prestige, authority, control
mana whenua	M	power from the land
maota o le nuʻu	S	village meeting house
matai	S	chief
mavae	S	growth, expansion; grow, expand
mavaega	S	regeneration
measina		treasured possession
noa	M/S	unrestricted/common
nofoaga	S	sitting together, place, residence
nuʻu	S	village, settlement
nuʻu tofi	S	assignment of place
paʻia	S	supreme power
paepae	M/S	house platform
paolo	S	shelter
poulalo	S	outer, perimeter post
poutu	S	central post
rangatira	M	leader
soʻa	S	tie beam, strut
taeao		morning, dawn, tomorrow, historic event
tagata	S	human
takiwā	M	district, area, territory, time, period, season
tala	S	rounded roof ends over the apse of a fale
tama-a-ʻaiga	S	maximal lineage titleholder
tangata whenua	M	people of the land
tānoa	S	wooden ʻava bowl
tapu	M/S	restricted, sacred

tapuaʻi	S	consecrated, prayer
tauhi vā	T/S	to nurture the vā
taupou	S	village maiden, ceremonial hostess
tofi	S	to assign, appoint; heritage, birthright
tofiga	S	appointment, designation, (re-) allocation or division of position, land, space; aggregation and combination, ordering
tua	S	back
tufuga	S	expert builder
tuku rangatira	M	use right
tulāfale	S	orator
tulagavae	S	demarcation of place
utu poto	S	crossbeam
vā	S	relationship, relational space
vā fealoaloaʻi	S	Samoan system of social relationships based on mutual respect
wāhi	M	place, location
whare	M	house
whenua	M	land, see also > fanua

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From Objects to *Measina*: Reanimating the Sāmoan Collection at the Übersee-Museum Bremen in Cooperation with the National University of Samoa

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Abstract: The last few years have seen increasing calls for German institutions to change their approach to collections from colonial contexts. Concomitantly, pressure has been put on museums to digitize and open up collections to new audiences, which has been further exacerbated by access issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This article addresses developments at the Übersee-Museum Bremen as it seeks to re-examine, reorganize and reconnect its Oceanic (in particular Sāmoan) collection in partnership with the National University of Samoa (NUS). Through a collaborative approach that involves a curator and an academic intern of Sāmoan descent working in the museum in Bremen, the Übersee-Museum is revamping its museological practices and interpretation as it develops its first digital project on Oceania. Through workshops with partners in Sāmoa, the team develops topics and plans content informed by Sāmoan perspectives. Working across disciplinary boundaries, the exhibition highlights novel insights into fluid configurations of cultural practices and environmental cosmologies based on the interplay of material collections. This article examines some examples of the ways in which interpretative authority on the part of the curators in Bremen is relinquished and shifted towards Sāmoan perspectives on *measina* (treasures) within museum spaces, both physical and virtual.
[ethnographic Museums, exhibitions, Decolonization, Samoa, collaboration, Cultural Heritage, scientific exchange]

*E talalasi Sāmoa (*big/many tellings of/for Sāmoa)
Sāmoan proverb

Introduction

A well-known *alagaupu* (proverb) is *e talalasi Sāmoa* (big/many tellings of/for Sāmoa), emphasizing and acknowledging the multiplicities of perspectives and interpretations

that are engendered within a Sāmoan world view. In this article, we invoke it as a guiding value underpinning the Oceania Digital Project at the Übersee-Museum Bremen, which seeks to create and acknowledge new perspectives, discovered across and enacted through its historical Sāmoan collections. As the museum re-examines, reorganizes and reconnects its Oceania collection – in particular Sāmoan measina (treasures/heritage) – in partnership with cultural and scientific departments at the National University of Samoa, here we highlight the importance and lessons of this pilot project in reapproaching colonial collections and opening up the many tellings of/for Sāmoa.

In particular, we emphasize the centrality of including Sāmoan voices and of critical engagement with them in museum spaces as fundamental to the task of decolonizing the museum through the re-centring of multiple Sāmoan perspectives, often been sidelined in Eurocentric curatorial visions. In doing so, this article sketches the reshaping of the cultural landscape in Germany in relationship to Oceanic collections, with particular interest in the presence of Sāmoan ideas. This is followed by an outline of the Übersee-Museum's collection from Sāmoa, the ongoing challenge in articulating Sāmoan identities and values within the museum and the ongoing work of staff and colleagues to bridge and decolonize these spaces through the Oceania Digital Project. In particular, we highlight the ongoing work of the *Measina Show and Tell* project as an experimental space for a cultural dialogue that bridges museum collections and Sāmoan cultural knowledge in an online format.

German Museums: Colonial Collections and Changing Oceanic Contexts

The last decade has seen significant shifts across European museum landscapes, as debates on cultural restitution to former European colonies attest. While the scope of the Oceania Digital Project addressed in this article does not delve into questions of restitution, these ongoing discussions continue to set the tone of engagement by and the anxiety of cultural institutions in the twenty-first century, as German museums continue to develop new strategies to grapple with their colonial collections. As Rainer Buschman (2018:223) estimates, the scale of this colonial 'grappling' for German museums is astronomical, with well over 250,000 artefacts having been removed from former German colonies in Oceania prior to World War I. These statistics pale in comparison to the innumerable research papers, documents, photographs, scientific specimens and undocumented private collections that have accumulated in the wake of German colonial entanglements.

On 8 February 2022, the Übersee-Museum repatriated Hawaiian *iwi kūpuna* (ancestral human remains) to native Hawaiian representatives of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. This reflects the ongoing efforts needed to address the vast collections of ances-

tral human remains from Oceania that remain within many German institutions (see Winkelmann 2020:41). Since 2018, the Deutscher Museumsbund has attempted to grapple holistically with the heritage sector's difficult legacies through its *Guidelines for the Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts* published in German, English and French. Revised three times since its initial publication, the guidelines 'hope to encourage all museums to enter into a transparent and constructive dialogue about colonial inheritance – on both the national and the international level,' by providing an initial framework for practical support through case studies and international perspectives on cultural significance and decolonial opportunities in the management of related collections (Deutscher Museumsbund 2021:5).

While the quantity of artefacts from Papua New Guinea dominates Oceanic collections in Germany (Buschman 2018), the last two decades have seen a renewed interest in exploring German colonial legacies with Sāmoa. As Tobias Sperlich (2008) has emphasized, the exhibition *Talofa! Samoa, Südsee* (1998) at the Museum der Weltkulturen in Frankfurt was arguably the first major special exhibition to be focused on Sāmoan material culture in Germany since colonial times. This was followed by several other Sāmoan special exhibitions, including *Samoa 1904: People, Landscape and Culture in the South Pacific One Hundred Years Ago* (2004) at the Bochum Museum, and most recently Hilke ThodeArora's 2014 exhibition *From Samoa with Love? Samoa-Völkerschauen im Deutschen Kaiserreich: eine Spurensuche* at the Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich. Tackling the sensitive fact that two-thirds of Munich's Sāmoan artefacts originate from colonial Völkerschauen (human zoos), Thode-Arora's exhibition was a first step in moving towards newly engaged and community-oriented curation incorporating Sāmoan viewpoints and sensitivities around genealogies, rank and oral traditions (see Thode-Arora 2018:62–63). Since then, the presence and visibility of Sāmoan artists and their practice in Germany has grown exponentially, with several high profile Sāmoan artists, such as Michael Tuffery, Yuki Kihara, Rosanna Raymond and Raymond Sagapolutele, represented across major German public art and museum collections. Visitors to the recently opened Humboldt Forum in Berlin will find art such as Greg Semu's biblically inspired tableaux *Auto Portrait with 12 Disciples* on permanent display opposite measina from the German colonial period.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize the explicit and deeper genealogical entanglements of the German colonial period for many Sāmoans. These extend beyond the materiality of the museum and are part of a more active and community-constructed understanding of Sāmoan cultural identity and colonial legacies. As noted by Misa Telefoni Retzlaff, a Sāmoan politician and writer of German ancestry, 'The German legacy in Samoa is an enduring legacy. It is both historical and contemporary because it is a story that continues and still has no end in sight' (quoted in Schorch et al. 2020:136). Ongoing institutional changes in Germany to include contemporary Sāmoan cultural input and creative perspectives represent a milestone. Yet, as this article suggests, much more is needed to address the deeper structural issues affecting the overall interpretation, conservation and care of German colonial collections from

Sāmoa. This includes the need for a greater effort by museums to continually explore and loosen interpretative sovereignty over historical collections, and to address the vastly asymmetrical access of Sāmoans to their globally dispersed measina.

The Sāmoan Collection at the Übersee-Museum Bremen

As Safua Akeli Amaama (2021:130) has emphasized, the emergence of European colonial projects in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulted in the expansive movements of cultural objects from communities across Oceania. Today, the vast majority of Sāmoa's material culture created before the mid-twentieth century is found in collections and institutions overseas, compounding the relatively limited opportunities to engage with Sāmoan artistic and material heritage within Sāmoa itself (Mallon 2003:9). Bridging these knowledge divides is being slowly addressed through the ongoing collaborations of the Oceania Digital Project by means of workshopping, and the presence and embodied learning of the Sāmoan curator and academic intern. Attempting to understand the collection and its potential value is central to the desire of Sāmoans to be able to access their displaced historical material heritage. For the Übersee-Museum, this also addresses one of the existential challenges in justifying tangible public outcomes to funders. Of immediate significance is the reorganization and refinement of the collection's metadata by the Sāmoan curator. In particular, this involves the use of Sāmoan language terms to describe relationships within the material, such as *lalaga* (woven cultural items) for well-known genres of mats, or the (re)identification of items of significance in the collection in relation to cultural structures such as the *fa'amatai* (chiefly political system). Throughout this project, the identification of measina names in Sāmoan is one of the contributions made by Sāmoan staff in the Übersee-Museum to reconnect and culturally re-evaluate the collections' metadata.

Totalling over 1,080 items, the Übersee-Museum's historic ethnographic collection from Sāmoa is formed around a core collection of approximately 500 measina purchased from the German colonial scientist Otto Tetens. Founder of what is today the Mulinu'u Weather Observatory, Tetens acquired and assembled this collection between 1902 and 1906 through his relationships with high-ranking Sāmoans (see Sperlich 2014) and his scientific travels across Sāmoa. Subsequent additions to the collection were also made through donations by individuals and families associated with German colonial interests, including several pieces from the first Governor of German Samoa, Wilhelm Solf, and from Wilhelm Souchon, a later life-resident of the city of Bremen and former admiral in the German Imperial Navy.

Due to the historic breadth and scope of the Übersee-Museum's interests, the collection reveals an unusual glimpse into diverse historical practices. The core collection has material ranging from vernacular items such as '*umete* (cooking bowls), coconut leaf plates, and *pola* (coconut leaf blinds), to measina associated with the *fa'amatai* and

cultural prestige, such as several types of *tanoa fai'ava* (kava bowls) and *ipu tau'ava* (kava cups) used in politically important kava ceremonies. Other items include political adornments such as *fue* (fly whisks) in both *ali'i* (high chief) and *tulāfale* (orator) forms and *to'oto'o* (orator's staff), including an unusual form labelled as a *to'oto'o taule'ale'a* (staff for untitled men). Several undocumented items have also been identified by Sāmoan staff – for example, previously listed single items that in fact constitute elements of a multi-piece *tuiga* (ceremonial headdress).

Of particular interest to Sāmoan historians and cultural practitioners is the presence of a large volume of rare *lalaga* intended for use by high-ranking families, such as '*ie sina* (white shaggy mats) of several different grades, sizes and qualities (see Schoeffel 1999:126–127). While relatively widespread during Tetens' time in Sāmoa, but no longer being made, their cultural significance makes them a potential item for local revitalization work based on historical examples (Sperlich 2008:283). The presence of these *'ie sina* is further enriched by several other genres of lalaga, including *fuipani* (black shaggy rugs), sometimes referred to as '*ie uli*. In addition to these, there is a genre described as '*ie taele* (reddish-brown shaggy rugs) and two other coloured tones of 'shaggy' mats yet to be identified. These are complemented by a broader range of approximately 150 other mats, ranging from genres such as *fala moe* (sleeping mats) and *fala* (sitting mats) to '*ie toga* (fine mats). The heightened cultural interest in traditionally valuable *lalaga* can be juxtaposed with the collection's wider potential range of significance, including, for example, *mailei 'iole* (bamboo rat traps), fishing equipment, children's toy boats and even a Sāmoan *kirikiti* (cricket) bat (see Sacks 2017).

Despite not having had formal academic training in the field of ethnology, Tetens' collecting activities suggest an intriguing and typological view of Sāmoan material culture and practices. Certain items demonstrate various stages of 'making', such as incomplete 'ie toga left at various stages of weaving, along with associated bundles of material such as *lau'ie* (pandanus leaf for fine mats). Other process-related items include those used for various practices of making *siapo* (bark cloth), for example, the collection of '*upeti* leaf print and carved boards for printing *siapo 'elei* (printed siapo). Also included are several 'paintbrushes' of pandanus seeds used for *siapo mamanu* (freehand drawn bark cloth), various pounders and boards for different grades of beating, and coconut shell containers with residual black ink for the designs. The typological thinking underpinning Tetens' collecting might suggest a strong reading, if not the direct influence, of Augustin Krämer's (1903; 1902) contemporaneous monograph on Sāmoan material culture. No such extensive and comprehensive study of Samoan culture, life and material culture existed at this point. This view is supported by Sperlich (2014:299–300), who noted that Tetens had met Krämer briefly before his departure to Sāmoa and may have been introduced to collecting through his uncle, Alfred Tetens, an employee of the Sāmoan-centred and Hamburg-based Godeffroy und Sohn trading company. The range of measina might suggest a premeditated intention on Tetens' part to sell the collection to an ethnographic museum on his return to Germany. However, this aim does not undermine the collections cultural value as Sāmoan.

Rather, the diverse range of items represented provides a strong basis in the project for the temporal re-evaluation of Sāmoan practices, thus providing a basis for suggested development, by the National University of Samoa, of a course on historical material cultures that are no longer accessible to local Sāmoans.

Complementing the ethnographic collection is a vast supporting archive of primary source materials, such as letters, diaries and historical photographs. Consisting of over 250 photographs, prints, plates, and postcards, the Sāmoan historical photographic collection is drawn primarily from the prolific and well-known commercial studios of the Burton Brothers – Alfred Tattersall and Thomas Andrews – in popular circulation during German colonial rule of Sāmoa (Sperlich 2014:296). Several images found in the collection have raised interest from heritage practitioners in Sāmoa as previously unseen examples from the colonial period. This includes two of the only known photos of the old Vaimea prison taken post-construction. Mislabelled in the Übersee-Museum collection as a 'European house', they were recently re-identified by Dionne Fonoti, an academic interlocutor at the Centre for Samoan Studies (CSS) at NUS. The significance of the original building is amplified by its connection to Mau Movement independence activists during the New Zealand colonial administration (see Ah Tong 2022). Its re-identification has led to its inclusion in ongoing heritage assessments, as Sāmoa grapples to manage its deteriorating sites of colonial heritage, instigated by the 2020 demolition of the nationally significant Apia Courthouse (see World Monuments Fund 2020).

Other representative materials include, for example, extensive research ephemera, notes and correspondence, including extensive diary and research notations related to Otto Tetens' collection and time in Sāmoa. These include previously untranslated handwritten documents in English, German and Sāmoan covering topics from geography to traditional mythology in Sāmoa. These materials complement the Übersee-Museum's unpublished holdings of natural history specimens from Sāmoa, including plants and animal specimens preserved in alcohol and acquired in the early 1900s from the Godeffroy Museum of Hamburg (see Buschmann 2018:200–201).

'The *fale* is backwards': Sāmoan Perspectives within the Übersee-Museum Bremen

When entering the Oceania exhibition at the Übersee-Museum, it was almost impossible to miss the permanent Sāmoan display that was taken down in 2022 to make way for the new permanent exhibition. Opened in 2003, this particular section was cleverly constructed within the space of a semi-abstracted *fale tele* (meeting house), with related measina displayed and arranged in the style of a *fono* (meeting). The orientation of the space was reorganized to include appropriate floor seating through beanbag seating for

visitors. In the centre of the space, the *tanoa 'ava* was set up in front of the corresponding *pou* (pillar) for the *kava* servers. This pillar is labelled in German and Sāmoan with *Zeremonialjungfrau/taupou* (ceremonial hostess), denoting the ceremonial server seated in front of the *tanoa 'ava*. Around the fale tele, each of the pillars corresponded with the correct associated rank and titles of the *matai* (chiefs) in hypothetical attendance, such as high chief/ali'i and orator/tulafale. While the effect in its totality showed a level of detail and spatial awareness by the German curator that is not often seen in European museums, it unfortunately missed the embodied reality of such spaces as enacted relationally by Sāmoan users.

When showing the exhibition in late 2021 to the recently arrived academic intern from the CSS, a *taupou* (ceremonial hostess) herself, she exclaimed loudly, 'Oh, but it's backwards'. That is, the fale tele fell short of manifesting the broader arrangement of space relationally required for the completion of the ceremony – in particular the spatial element of the host-guest dichotomy – with the back of the taupou placed towards the Übersee-Museum's main atrium and entrance. This distinction is an important orientation for the taupou, with the host's delegation facing the arriving party – implied spatially to be the central museum entrance and hall, which acts symbolically in the exhibit as a corresponding *malae* (open area for ceremonial events) facing the main thoroughfare of a village. Such understandings of front and back are central for Sāmoans in a kava ceremony, as they organize the host–visitor relationship and the flow of the ceremony (see Van der Ryn 2016:122).

While the above subtleties are lost to most German visitors, they hint at the deeper missed potential that source-community perspectives can bring to enrich museum experiences. Now that the permanent Oceania exhibition is to be renewed, this fale will not be rebuilt in the new exhibition. Instead the importance of Sāmoan bodies in the museum should be seen as the starting point or first step in turning the perspective around. To turn the *fale* around means recognizing the 'front-facing' and 'back-facing' of Sāmoan culture. The 'front-facing' is the German public's view and understanding of the performative and visible parts of Sāmoan culture; the 'back-facing' represents the reality of the hosts, the messiness of the organization, and the preparations required by the host family for an event to be culturally appropriate.

In the remainder of this article, we delve a little into this 'back-facing' dimension and explore the cultural 'clutter' and tensions that come from collaboration projects where Sāmoan and German staff work together in European museums. In the project, these Sāmoan staff take on not just the role of publicly sharing Sāmoan culture and making it accessible to German audiences through exhibitions; they also become responsible to their communities in sifting through the cultural 'clutter' of the collection in '[…] order to gain appropriate focus, perspective and direction in terms of making sense of our indigenous knowledges and history for the contemporary present' (Tui Atua 2005:61).

The Oceania Digital Project: A Collaboration with the National University of Samoa

The Oceania Digital Project *The Blue Continent – A Platform for Dialogue, Perspectives, and Insights from the Pacific Islands*[1] was created from the collaboration of the NUS and the Übersee-Museum Bremen. It was set out to create a virtual space in which knowledge was jointly created and made available to people in the Pacific and all over the world as a new form of engagement. It was meant to bring stories from the Pacific region to life. Funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany in Berlin, the project commenced in April 2021 and was running for three years and included several components. The first was the three-year curatorial residency for a Sāmoan scholar and an academic internship, both held at the Übersee-Museum. These positions were filled from April 2021 to December 2023 by Mitiana Arbon and from October 2021 to April 2023 by Aigauasoosooaumaimalouamaua Niualuga to share their expertise and knowledge with the other members of the project team. A second component was a collaboration between the Übersee-Museum and the NUS, and workshops with NUS staff from the Environmental Science Department, its CSS and members of the Übersee-Museum. In these workshops, scholars from Bremen and Apia discussed the topics of the Oceania Digital Project, and presented individual research projects focusing for example on soil and climate change, monitoring freshwater quality in the Vaisigano River or siapo (Sāmoan tapa cloth). This aspect was particularly important in terms of capacity-building, as emerging Sāmoan researchers, who were at the beginning of their careers, were given the opportunity to present their work. In this context, the goal was collective learning to develop lasting skills on both sides (see also Antweiler 2020).

The project was designed to involve partners from different disciplines on both sides, the Übersee-Museum and the NUS. All of the above components were building blocks that lead to the larger goal of creating different platforms for dialogue with communities in the Pacific through which knowledge and interpretations of objects and themes could be shared. The thought behind it was to facilitate various layers of online communication and storytelling, rather than using one central web stage for a larger outreach. The various ideas for the Oceania Digital Project were being developed jointly between the partners to make different knowledge systems visible and accessible. As a first step towards creating a dialogue with Sāmoan communities besides the staff of the NUS, a Facebook page – 'Oceanic Collection Voyages'[2] – was launched by the Sāmoan staff at the Übersee-Museum to share historical photographs and collection material with the public to enter into a dialog. Facebook was chosen, as

1 Available at: https://blue-continent.de/, accessed 09 May 2025.

2 Available at: https://www.facebook.com/Oceania-Collection-Voyages-103916155581873/, accessed 15 March 2023.

it is the preferred platform of exchange, and information sharing among younger and older generations in the Pacific and it uses the least data.

Originally, several trips by Sāmoan scientists to Bremen and by team members of the Übersee-Museum to Sāmoa were planned in order to work together on the collections and the themes of the Oceania Digital Project. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which began at the start of the project, these trips were postponed to a later date within the project and partly transformed into online events. The project funds were partly used to create the technical conditions on the Sāmoan side so that the team could work together in regular online meetings, which were originally planned to be held in person. In these workshops, common goals and expectations were formulated, and a start was made by introducing the collections of the Übersee-Museum that originate from Sāmoa in order to work together with these material holdings.

One component of the project, and one of the reasons for receiving funding, was capacity-building and the hope that the Sāmoan academic intern and co-curator will impart their expertise, experience and knowledge back to cultural institutions and projects in Sāmoa. In parallel to the work on the Oceania Digital Project, a new permanent Oceania exhibition (*Der Blaue Kontinent – Inseln im Pazifik, The Blue Continent – Islands in the Pacific*) was being developed, which was opened in Bremen in March 2025, and which was inspired by the results of the Oceania Digital Project. This exhibition aimed to change perspectives and allow people in the Pacific region to engage with the exhibition topics. For both projects, there was an academic advisory board to advise the Oceania team, in which two people with Pacific descent participated to share their perspectives: the president of the Musée du quai Branly in Paris, Emmanuel Kasarhérou; and the Emmy Award-winning Sāmoan video journalist Maea Lenei Buhre.

Another result of the collaboration between the NUS and the Übersee-Museum was the exhibition *Atalilo: Motifs in Samoan Material Culture*, which opened in Apia, Samoa, in August 2024 showing an impressive collection of Samoan patterns. Some of the objects on display there for three years are on loan from the Übersee-Museum Bremen.

A First Step in Decolonizing the Übersee-Museum Bremen?

Like many others German museum collections, the Übersee-Museum benefited greatly from the colonial structures established in Oceania in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This also applies to the former Städtische Museum of Natural History, Ethnology and Trade (today's Übersee-Museum) and its Oceania collection, which was largely colonial in origin and whose objects came from various acquisition contexts. They may have been exchanged, donated, purchased, looted, plundered or even found their way into the Bremen collection as commissioned works. The names of those who

produced the objects were not usually noted down by the collectors of the time, as these played a subordinate role in respect of them.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the demand for natural history, archaeological and ethnographic objects in museums grew rapidly and could be satisfied in the colonial territories. In addition, numerous new museums were established, which demanded more and more illustrative material. Collections were made by travellers, members of the military and the mission, members of ship crews and museum personnel. This quickly led to a competition among the museums for the best and most impressive pieces from the colonial territories to present to an astonished public in the museums at home. In their collecting frenzy, the museum staff of the time were often dominated by the idea of 'salvage anthropology'. The idea was to collect as many objects as possible before the indigenous cultures were finally changed by the influence of colonial powers and missions and the objects were no longer considered 'authentic'. In this way, the questionable aim was to preserve material culture from Oceania in museums by taking it away from those living there.

Therefore museums and their collections are a controversial space. However, there is now a growing willingness in the German museum landscape to question museum practices and to decolonize museums in order to address and come to terms with the colonial past as described. If museums are to be decolonized, there are various ways to go about it: restitution, repatriation, permanent loans from the societies of origin to German museums, putting collections online, etc.

Another way is to implement cooperation projects with representatives of the source communities. This is one of the paths the Übersee-Museum is currently taking to decolonize its practice.

The Übersee-Museum Bremen represents a white, Western institution, and to decolonize its collections and exhibition practices is an ongoing challenge that has only just begun to be confronted: '… if we understand coloniality not as a residue of the age of imperialism, but rather an ongoing structural feature of global dynamics, the challenge faced by museums in decolonising their practice must be viewed as ongoing' (Whittington 2021:245). These repercussions of the dominant regimes are evident in the holdings and magazines of ethnographic museums in Germany (Von Poser and Baumann 2017:25) because colonialism not only resulted in the loss of land and in cultural objects ending up in the colonizers' museum collections, but it has also gone hand in hand with the loss of knowledge systems (Chilisa 2012:9). One concern of the project was therefore to exchange, share and mutually use the different knowledge systems on both the Übersee-Museum and the Sāmoan sides. Even though many objects originating in the Pacific were not transferred through direct contexts of injustice, it was the broader context of a lack of justice and of the effects of the colonial period that made the collection of such a large number of objects possible. How can curators of a Western-style museum deal with this colonial heritage? How can they make it accessible again to the people of the Pacific? Here, the digital project was viewed as a possible model of access and engagement.

Even when the majority of the Pacific collections at the Übersee-Museum stem from Melanesia (Walda-Mandel 2019:5), the museum decided to go a different way. As the museum also houses an extensive and important collection from Sāmoa, the idea of a collaboration with Sāmoan researchers and institutions was met with great interest. Consequently, the Übersee-Museum contacted the NUS in autumn 2019, and the Oceania curator Stephanie Walda-Mandel travelled to Sāmoa in November of the same year. During this trip, initial contacts were made with NUS staff, and the first concrete ideas for an exhibition on the topics of Diversity, Identity and Migration, Climate Change, Colonialism, and Collections and Resources, as well as the possibilities of joint workshops, were discussed. In particular, Safua Akeli Amaama, Director of the Centre for Samoan Studies, and Patila Amosa, Dean of the Environmental Science Department, were crucial contacts who supported the project from the beginning.

In the course of this first trip, the representatives of various Sāmoan institutions, such as museums, ministries and the university, made it clear how important the digitization of Sāmoan measina stored in German museums was for them and for dealing with their cultural heritage. According to them, the measina create a link with people and their past, and they are an element in the ongoing formation of cultural identity. Digitization enables Sāmoan scientists to deal with the measina, and cultural practitioners would also have the opportunity to take a closer look at cultural techniques through photographs and historical visual materials in order to use them for their own purposes – for example, to inform the revitalization of cultural practices and material culture. In this way, contemporary actors can reconnect with the different styles, materials and designs: 'People get the opportunity to study old designs, stories, and former artistic interpretations on the computer screen. And relatives have the possibility to view the artworks of their forefathers' (Voirol 2019:52). Akeli Amaama also emphasizes the importance of the digital repatriation of measina and the emergence of digital partnerships between the representatives of different institutions (Akeli Amaama 2021:131). Therefore, one aspect of the project was to digitize the measina of the Sāmoan collection – and hopefully also of other Pacific collections in the future – so that they can be shared with the communities and partners in the Pacific, along with the associated information.

In a digital project, the measina can also be used digitally to narrate current topics, and at the same time the collections and their collectors have their own stories that need to be told. With digital storytelling, it is possible to connect the present-day topics with the colonial history of the past. In this way, different layers can be presented and interactively referred to the measina. In addition, the space in a permanent exhibition is always limited, and the virtual space makes it possible to make numerous measina and their stories accessible without overloading the visitor. With a digital application, visitors can decide for themselves how deeply they want to seek immersion in the subject matter and the object history without over-exerting themselves. Furthermore, material objects can be coupled with film clips, historical photographs, audio recordings and other archival material, which leads to a lively contextualization. In this context,

the new director of the CSS, Matiu Matavai Tautunu, points out that Sāmoan history has been largely written down by non-Sāmoans in other languages: 'But I think we should also now write our own history in our language so that Sāmoan voices are telling Sāmoans significant stories' (in Lumepa Hald 2022). One of the aims was therefore also to sift through and digitize existing archival material on Sāmoa held at the Übersee-Museum so that it can be used by communities in Sāmoa when dealing with their own history and telling their own stories – *e talalasi Sāmoa*.

Although there is a growing awareness in German museums of the issue of decolonizing their collections and the urgently needed inclusion of representatives of the source communities, museums must approach the dissolution of existing structures cautiously. The danger of tokenism is too great (Hicks 2020:9; Whittington 2021:246). A project like this, in which an Indigenous co-curator and an Indigenous academic intern are employed for a limited period of time, carries the danger of tokenism, especially if they are used as figureheads when presenting the project to the outside world. Something similar is also suggested by Götz Aly when he refers to installations in museums that were instigated by a person of colour in order to free the museum of colonial guilt (Aly 2021:18). At the time of the project, the two colleagues with a Sāmoan background were the only people of colour among the Übersee-Museum staff. Museum practitioners need to be aware of this and be careful not to be 'captured'. It must also be clear that project staff from the source communities cannot speak for the whole of the Pacific Islands: '… source communities are not a homogenous entity, given the many different voices and agendas that shape a community. Consequently, it has to be clear who is speaking' (Voirol 2019:54).

This project shows how important it is for ethnographic museums to find new ways of exhibiting and producing non-Eurocentric narratives. It also presents the necessity to give members of the communities from which the collections originate a priority when it comes to exhibition-making and ways of storytelling. Museums need to show a stronger commitment to Indigenous agency and present Indigenous voices in virtual and on-site exhibitions. This also includes not prioritizing written records and seeking to 'reverse the attribution of value in favour of oral accounts, or at least give these equal weight' (Whittington 2021:264). The project made openness, critical self-reflection and transparency necessary in order to make colonial entanglements visible. This is particularly important in light of the fact that approximately 70 percent of the ethnographic collections in the Übersee-Museum originate in former German colonies (see also Buschmann 2018:197) because colonial expansion was coupled with growing collecting activities. One goal of the project was therefore to show how the museum profited from colonial structures and to integrate new approaches and critical questions about the collection from the Sāmoan partners. In this way, the collaboration with scientists from Sāmoa can be perceived as an example of a serious willingness to face uncomfortable truths.

Another aspect of decolonization is to discuss with the Sāmoan partners how we will present measina from the Pacific region virtually, as well as in an on-site exhibition,

without exoticizing attitudes and going beyond a Eurocentric perspective. The staff at the Übersee-Museum was also anxious to learn about Sāmoan expectations on storing, restoring and conserving measina in the future. However, this project was just the first step in answering these questions, and the team is very aware of the fact that there is still a lot more that needs to be done. In working with the Sāmoan partners, the European curators learnt to give up interpretative authority, and thus control, in order to allow multiple perspectives. In this way, they handed over representational power as an important step in the process of decolonization. Together, the team selected objects, developed narratives and discussed different perspectives. This is particularly important when Sāmoan colleagues are correcting entries on measina in the database, showing how essential it is to re-evaluate the existing collections of German museums and archival records stemming from colonial contexts.

Bridging Interpretation and Access: *Measina Show and Tell*

As the Papua New Guinean curator and artist Michael Mel has argued: 'The marginalisation of indigenous peoples, and the distortion of their stories and experiences through gatekeeping "their collections", represents a great challenge for institutions today' (Mel 2019:86). The ongoing collaboration with the NUS is an attempt to address such distortions within the collection through an active re-centring of and reconnection with Sāmoan knowledge. One such attempt is through digital online engagement with staff within the museum's storage units through the workshop series *Measina Show and Tell.* Running between September and December 2022, *Measina Show and Tell* was an online interactive experience between CSS staff and the Übersee-Museum. Consisting of six sessions, these were broken down into one introductory overview presentation and five thematic workshops focused on: Carving, Adornments, Va'a ma Faiva (Boats and Fishing), Lalaga (Weaving), and Siapo (Bark Cloth). Selected by the Sāmoan curatorial staff in Bremen in consultation with CSS staff, these thematic sections were an opportunity for historic measina in Bremen to be displayed via Zoom to invited participants, and handled on request for the duration of the session.

For each session, CSS academics and the invited audience of Sāmoan material-culture practitioners and artisans from across Sāmoa participated. Hosted in a meeting room at the NUS, Sāmoan participants were given the opportunity to ask questions to Übersee-Museum staff in Bremen on object materiality and care. To help guide each thematic session, a booklet was provided and listed related to measina, including associated metadata, diagrams and historical photos from the Übersee-Museum collection. Additional conversations with CSS staff also raised the importance of other ways of 'seeing' and communicating information, and of the relationality of the senses. This included questions, much to the surprise of German staff, as to the scent of certain fibres and the comparative textures of materials, such as the 'fineness' of an *'ie toga*. These

steps are the start of a longer process of reanimating the Sāmoan collection, as it moves from being a series of cultural objects to measina, filled with lived value, knowledge, relationships and diverse Sāmoan perspectives.

Conclusion

As Anita Herle (2003:194) notes, it is important that museums go beyond their role of preserving and documenting important cultural objects and materials to provide opportunities for cross-cultural dialog and innovative collaborations. Pilot projects like this have the potential to connect people and can be empowering for representatives of the source communities from which the collections originate. In the case of Bremen, for the first time, transparency was being created with regard to the collection holdings from the Pacific. In addition, opportunities were being created to open them up in a participatory manner: cultural knowledge was being built up, shared and constructed collectively with colleagues in Sāmoa. In this process, the museum becomes a 'contact zone' (Clifford 1997:188) where long-lasting relationships from the past will be reshaped in the present with the partners in Sāmoa, provided the Übersee-Museum staff are willing and able to listen to their narratives and include their expertise.

In the past, the relationship between the partners of a museum project often finished at the end of the project. However, this project can only be considered successful if the relationships thereby (re)established are maintained and developed beyond the end of the initiative. These relationships, as well as the participation and involvement of people from the source communities, are particularly important for Sāmoa, as the important Sāmoan collections are located outside Sāmoa (Akeli Amaama 2021:132). At the same time, one thing is already clear: the project demonstrated the importance of bringing more scientists and cultural practitioners from the Pacific, who will need to be invited and supported by cultural institutions if they are to work collaboratively. Additionally, ongoing support for further decolonial practices within cultural institutions is needed, a situation that can only be managed with financial support by the German state.

To discover the different meanings of measina, they need to be seen by people from the Pacific, by the people from the communities that produced and used them. This approach leads to new insights and, at the same time, requires patience and understanding from everyone involved, particularly when scientists from different language and cultural backgrounds are sharing their views and experiences (Antweiler 2020). This also raises the question of how the cooperation partners deal with the different working conditions, as well as structural and environmental conditions, at the respective locations of their institutions (Laely et al. 2019:2). Likewise, we need to think about the power dynamics that can resonate in such projects when one of the cooperation

partners has obtained the financial support and is the initiator of the project, and holds the material objects, even when the knowledge lies with both partners.

Curators in German museums need to detach themselves from existing knowledge structures and pose new questions in order to allow new perspectives and multi-perspectivity to (re)emerge. It is hoped that more projects of this kind will be possible in the future, actively involving people from the source communities, from the initial planning of a project to its completion. In doing so, Pacific peoples can actively contribute their expertise and input to stimulate discussions without serving as an instrument for whitewashing the museum.

Acknowledgements

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Glossary of Terms

Alagaupu (proverb)
Aliʻi (high chief)
E talalasi Sāmoa (big/many tellings of/for Sāmoa)
Faʻamatai (chiefly political system)
Fala (sitting mats)
Fala moe (sleeping mats)
Fale tele (meeting house)
Fono (meeting)
Fue (fly whisks)
Fuipani (black shaggy rugs)
ʻie sina (white shaggy mats)
ʻie toga (fine mats)
ʻie taele (reddish-brown shaggy rugs)
ʻipu tauʻava (kava cups)
Iwi kūpuna (Māori term for ancestral human remains)
Kirikiti (cricket)
Lauʻie (pandanus leaf for fine mats)
Lalaga (woven cultural items)
Mailei ʻiole (bamboo rat traps)
Malae (open area for ceremonial events)
Measina (treasures/heritage)
Pola (coconut leaf blinds)
Pou (pillar)
Siapo (bark cloth)

Siapo ʻelei (printed siapo)
Siapo mamanu (freehand drawn bark cloth)
Tānoa ʻava (kava bowls)
Tānoa faiʻava (kava bowls)
Tulāfale (orator)
Toʻotoʻo (orator's staff)
Toʻotoʻo tauleʻaleʻa (staff for untitled men)
Tuiga (ceremonial headdress)
Taupou (ceremonial hostess)
ʻUpeti (leaf print and carved boards for printing)
ʻUmete (cooking bowls)
Vaʻa ma Faiva (Boats and Fishing)
Zeremonialjungfrau/taupou (ceremonial hostess)

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Of Slumbering, Patient Objects Awaiting our Arrival (Or Maybe Return)

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Abstract: In the afterword to the collection Christine Winter contextualises collecting and museum collections within wider histories that explore the impact of Sāmoa and the Pacific on German speaking lands and Germany during the ninetennth century. She links theories of the Global South and South-North relationships with ethical considerations for museums today: holding Pacific collections these institutions are to be spaces that welcome Sāmoans and benefit from enduring relationships.
[19th century colonialism; theories of the Global South; ethical museum practises]

> Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen die da träumen fort und fort,
> und die Welt hebt an zu singen, triffst du nur das Zauberwort
>
> A song slumbers in all things that are dreaming on and on,
> and the world begins to sing, if you meet the magic word.
>
> (Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff, - 1835)

It is my honour, as a German scholar and historian of Pacific-German connections, to send the collection of insights, thoughts and hopes edited by Safua Akeli Amaama and Philipp Schorch onwards and to wish it well.[1] For a conclusion would mark the essays as finished, as artifacts of scholarly accomplishments, published and bounded. Instead, this is an invitation to engage with innovative curatorial practices that connect and invigorate museum collections, and celebrate enduring Sāmoanness that is strong at home and remains so throughout many mobilities.

In his novel *Der Nachsommer,* Adalbert Stifter (1857), a Bohemian-Austrian writer of the nineteenth century, created a house full of precious objects surrounded by a carefully nurtured garden that the hero of the novel visits time and again while growing up. And as he grows, the objects await his slowly growing recognition of them. They shape his character, bit by bit, and his sense of himself and being in the world.

1 I wrote this afterword on the unceded lands of the Kaurna people in Adelaide, Australia. It is dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues who welcomed me in Australia, especially the late Theo Saunders, Mathilda House, Kerry Arabena and Valerie Cooms.

It is by good fortune that, during a crucial period in the development of a modern sense of Germanness, German-speaking lands and later the German nation became connected to Sāmoa and the wider Pacific. And maybe decolonization is the recognition of this good fortune. Chunjie Zhang (2017), in her monograph *Transculturality and the German Discourse in the Age of European Colonialism,* traced the impact of Pacific voyages on a Germany that was coming late to nationhood, and late into formal colonialism, compared to some of its European neighbours. Germanness has been entangled with Southern Voices and experiences, though Germans were at times unable or reluctant to recognize this gift and debt.[2] Objects in museum collections are just one layer of the flotsam and jetsam of the Pacific that reached its shores.[3] Encounters with Sāmoa, Sāmoans and Sāmoanness enriched Germans, even though they were for a long time conducted with a growing sense of European superiority and colonialism, and with developing notions of modernity, race, science and otherness. The articles in this collection take into account that curatorial practices and museum cultures cannot erase this past of the formal colonial German empire and informal German colonialism that preceded and succeeded it. But, the articles suggest how power imbalances can be changed and respectful meetings can take place. And maybe Sāmoanness could do even more than inform culturally appropriate exhibitions, and for example, assist – again – a people to see that is has been connected beyond itself, and to group around a centred openness in its journey. Listening, negotiating, taking time to reach consensus and understanding will necessitate changes to a fast-paced development of exhibitions, which have to keep to deadlines and, once in place, cannot easily accommodate alterations. Whether new media and technology in the digital realm might facilitate such decolonizing practices more readily is still to be seen. But the examples recounted in this collection give rise to hope.

By invoking Epeli Hauʻofa in the introduction, the editors make it clear that the Sāmoanness explicated in this collection is not a naïve celebration in which a nostalgic turn toward the past or an unchanging essence masks a capitulation to forge a future. An enduring Sāmoanness anchored in places and objects and in the meetings of people seeks a strong home and embraces mobility. It still faces today, as Hauʻofa argued three decades ago, a multitude of political divisions, neo-colonial challenges. and scholarly distortions. Climate change threatens unforeseeable and irreversible changes to Sāmoa, the Pacific and our world as a whole. Sāmoanness, as set out in these articles, is explicated as a way to live and connect in place, around cultural ways and grounded by spirituality. Maybe you, the reader senses here that I am German, using the word *grounded*. It is a translation of the spiritual depth that my understanding produced. For

2 For the theory of Southern Voices and the Global South, see the work of Raewyn Connell (especially Connell 2007) and Warwick Anderson (especially Anderson 2003). See also Christine Winter (2019).

3 In addition to the references in this collection, see also the work of Iain McCalman on the impact of European voyages to the Pacific on Britain and Europe. For theories of the ethics of entangled and shared histories, I am indebted to Greg Dening (see, for example, Dening 2004).

the articles do not. The authors instead invoke images of weaving, orientation, porous realms and openness that lie at the core of a circle where people meet. Manifestations explicated are the complexities of the *fale* and the richness of the *measina*. Relationships have pre-given structures into which Sāmoans, at home or in the diaspora, grow. It seems here is another good fortune in that objects and impacts less visible to trace await Sāmoans along life-journeys of mobility.[4] In places such as Bremen and Munich, treasures and histories offer sites to connect with and call Sāmoanness forth. I consider the movement of objects into the colonial metropoles here as an extension of an invitation to engage, visit and be at home. It would be naïve to not recognize that some of this collecting and keeping was and is accompanied by a depletion at the place of origin, Sāmoa. The edited collection takes this into account in calls for repatriation in many forms: actual and digitized objects, and connected information and knowledges. This includes exchanges of curators and the prioritising of Sāmoan perspectives and insights. For, as one example explains, how embarrassing is it to place a house the wrong way round in a public exhibition, and yet how easy is it to avoid this.

Though cautious of metaphors, I am breaking my long-held writing habit in response to the articles edited by Safua Akeli Amaama and Philipp Schorch: may this collection, I hope, contribute to the building of a strong fale where we can meet and engage with the richness of measina, that, I wish, we will all treasure.

4 For the insight of objects removed from islands awaiting and welcoming islanders I am indebted to Katerina Teaiwa (Teaiwa 2015).

Glossary of Terms

fale (house)
measina (treasures)

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Placenames and Belonging: the Case of Kibra's Nubians, Kenya

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Abstract: Approximately 25,000 Nubians live in Kibera, Nairobi's largest slum, which they consider their ancestral home. As descendants of African soldiers in Britain's colonial armies, they have faced marginalization and de facto statelessness. Joh Sarre's dissertation examines their overlooked experiences, focusing on the negotiation of contested notions of belonging, inclusion and exclusion.
The study is structured around three interrelated perspectives: conceptual, methodological and empirical. The first major chapter explores the historical entanglements of land, ethnicity and politics in Kenya, which forms the background against which Nubian claims to belonging are negotiated. Joh Sarre examines how powerful discourses around land-ownership and ethnic identity influence Nubian (non-) belonging to Kib(e)ra and the Kenyan nation.
In three empirical chapters, Joh Sarre analyses the spatial practices through which Nubian belonging is being performed and negotiated. The first of these chapters discusses contested place names in Kibera, showing how Nubians use oral history and naming practices to assert Nubian firstcomer claims. It is this chapter that this article expands upon. The second empirical chapter in the book explores Nubian weddings and wedding processions as performative acts of belonging. The third empirical part focuses on burial practices at and negotiations around the (re)naming of the 'Kibra (Nubian) Muslim Cemetery', highlighting how religious and cultural norms determine belonging, inclusion and exclusion in death.
The final part of the dissertation synthesizes findings within the broader context of politicized ethnicity in Kenya. The study concludes that belonging is a practical negotiation of identity, and that space/place serve as key frameworks for analysing these dynamics. By exploring land, ethnicity and social practices, the study contributes to discussions on identity formation, marginalization and recognition in Kenya and beyond.

[belonging, identity, ethnicity, recognition, space/place, maps, toponyms, oral history, Nubians, Kenya]

'Some call it *slum*, we call it *home*'

When walking the streets of Kibera, an informal settlement in Kenya's capital Nairobi, as a white foreigner, it is wise to look as if you know your way around. If you absolutely have to ask for directions, knowing local place names and landmarks sets you apart from the naïve slum tourist prone to getting mugged. Having spent several months in Kibera and making a point of learning relevant place names from everyday conversations, biographical interviews and school compositions, I thought I had become fairly good at both place names and avoiding looking lost. However, I was in for a surprise when I attended a meeting about land rights in February 2014: hardly any of the

place names or landmarks mentioned by the participants, all of them members of the Nubian ethnic minority living in Kibera, sounded familiar to me.

From the roof of a water tank (one of the few structures that rose above ground-floor height), Kibera, as it was called at the time of my research (2011–2014),[1] looked to me like a densely woven blanket of corrugated-iron roofs, its mud-and-wattle huts and tin shacks covering the sloping terrain of southern Nairobi all the way down to the Nairobi river and dam.

Its beginnings lie in the first years of the twentieth century. By the end of that century, Kibera had gained notoriety as the 'biggest slum in Africa', infamous for its unsanitary living conditions, poverty and violence. Reports that it had one million inhabitants were certainly inflated, but it is safe to assume that it is home to more than 200,000 people (Desgroppes and Taupin 2011; de Smedt 2011:105f). It was this place that some of its inhabitants, calling themselves Nubians, claimed as their 'ancestral homeland', their sentiment summed up by one of them telling me: 'Some call it *slum*, we call it *home*' (JS fieldnotes 2011).

Kibera's Nubians, a minority of 10,000-15,000 people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, personal communication 2014; Balaton-Chrimes 2015:20) living in this multi-ethnic slum, trace their ancestry back to the so-called 'Sudanese Soldiers', colonial troops who had been recruited into Britain's colonial army from places all over present-day Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda etc. The soldiers and their families were stationed in many urban centres in the then colony of Kenya in the early twentieth century. The majority of Sudanese soldiers settled on a military training ground just outside the newly founded capital Nairobi, in an area that turned into a sprawling slum as the city grew outwards to engulf it over the course of the 21st century.[2] Nubians cite adherence to Islam, the use of Kinubi, an Arabic creole language, particular foodstuffs, grass-woven objects, the female attire *gurbaba* and the *dholuka* dance and music as cultural and identity markers besides their military ancestry.

With Muslim names devoid of ethnic markers, a comparatively recent arrival in Kenya and lacking a rural tribal homeland, Kenyan Nubians had long been excluded from the unofficial but frequently evoked list of *Tribes of Kenya*, effectively hindering their recognition as Kenyans (Balaton-Chrimes 2011a, 2011b, 2015). This meant difficulties obtaining identity papers, rendering many Nubians factually stateless (Open Society Justice Initiative 2011a, 2011b). At the time of my research, however, Nubians were making progress in their lengthy struggle for official recognition: the category 'Nubian' had been introduced in the 2009 census; for the 2013 elections the constituency was renamed 'Kibra' (the Nubian version of 'Kibera'); and in 2017, a 'community

1 At the time of writing, over a decade had passed since my research (2011–2014). Kib(e)ra being a vibrant place of rapid change, I use the past tense to mark my information as historical. I use 'Kibera' to refer to the place its non-Nubian inhabitants relate to and 'Kibra' for the place that Nubians have a particular relation to.

2 For an excellent and extensive account of Nubian (oral) history, see de Smedt (2011).

land title' for parts of the area was issued to them, acknowledging the Nubian presence in Kenya after more than a century.

In this article, I will examine how Nubians relate to their homeland of Kibra, and to one another. I will do so by analysing Nubian-only toponyms (place names), which differ from those used by non-Nubian Kiberans or the state.[3]

On a theoretical level, this article addresses the question of the role of space in constructing belonging, in this case via shared meanings of toponyms (place names). Methodologically, I look at toponymy as an avenue to researching belonging, an otherwise fuzzy concept to research empirically. It is the link between people and place (which in turn links them to other people) that I will examine by looking at the toponyms that the Nubian inhabitants of Kib(e)ra use for the place they call 'home'.

'Belonging' is a more recent arrival in the debate about identity, relatedness and collectivities. Belonging, I argue, is a more apt descriptor of the processes at hand, bearing in mind that belonging is not immutable once attained. Rather, these attachments and categorizations are in flux, needing constant negotiation, (re)affirmation and performative 'work'. The gerund verb form ending in *-ing* turns our attention to these situational, processual, active and performative aspects of people negotiating categories and attachments, as highlighted in the respective literature (Probyn 1996; Lovell 1998; Geddes und Favell 1999; Yuval-Davis et al. 2006; Antonsich 2010; Albiez et al. 2011; Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011; Anthias 2013).

The term 'belonging' not only describes human-to-human-attachment, it also extends 'to other people, *places*, or modes of being...' (Probyn 1996:19, my emphasis). As Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka describes it, 'people belong to spaces and sites, to natural objects, landscapes, climate, and to material possessions' (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011:206). This particular way of belonging, of the relation between people and place, is what I call 'spatial belonging' (Sarre 2022).

A large body of literature at the intersection of geography and the social sciences deals with processes of place-making. A central argument is that humans turn indeterminate space into place by filling it with meaning. One way of doing so is naming (Cresswell 2004:8). Through the act of naming and the (collective) use of a toponym, previously indeterminate space is endowed with meaning, or its meaning reified, created as a 'place' (Kostanski 2014:273). It is through the process of naming that humans negotiate their relatedness to places and to others – another aspect of spatial belonging. By the same token, the use of collectively agreed-upon, mutually understandable toponyms fosters belonging among people. It is the Kiberan Nubians' ways of relating to and through place names that I will describe and analyse in the following sections.

3 The Nubian toponyms were gathered through a series of mapping exercises, from (biographical) interviews and everyday conversations, as well as through compositions written by the pupils of a primary school in Kibera.

Nubian Toponyms: Meaning-Making, Place-Making and Spatial Belonging

Military Toponyms, Clans and the Importance of Overarching Nubiness

To most of Kibera's inhabitants, the area between *Kwa DC (*At the District Commissioner's) in the north and *Darajani* (At the bridge) further south into the settlement is known as *Makina*.[4] My Nubian interlocutors, however, knew more particular names for smaller places within that area which I did not hear in conversations with non-Nubians: *Kambi Alur(u)*, *Kambi Baka*, *Kambi Kakwa*, *Kambi Kuku*, *Kambi Lendu*, *Kambi Mundu, Kambi Te(t), Kambi Forty Forty, Kambi Ravine* and, simply, *Kambi*.[5] Only *Kambi Muru*, south of *Daranjani*, was both shown on the government advisory plan and frequently used by non-Nubian Kiberans as well.

By using *kambi*, meaning 'camp', as the impermanent structures of mobile troops were called in the colonial army (de Smedt 2011:119), these place names refer to the military past of the Nubian community. The use of this historical term runs through all generations of Nubians. Most of those who participated in collecting place names during my research (which also yielded the Kambi toponyms) belonged to the grandparent generation, though some were the sons and daughters of veterans. However, a man in the parent generation without any military experience also used the term when we could not find a quiet place to talk but instead sat down temporarily in a lively schoolyard for our conversation: 'Leo tumepiga *kambi* hapa' (Today we pitched our camp here. RB 03/12/2012, my emphasis).

When 7th graders at a nearby Primary School wrote compositions 'About my home', many mentioned *Makina*, but only few pupils used Nubian toponyms – interestingly, children with Muslim names seemed to live in *Kambi* areas of Kibera and/or use *Kambi* toponyms:

> My name is [Muslim female name]. I am a Kenyan girl. … I live in Kibera slums at *Kambi* with my aunt.' (composition 004, my emphasis)

> My name is [non-Muslim female name]. … I live in *Kambi* village its [sic] near the stage. (composition 068, my emphasis)

4 I doubt that non-Nubians were aware of the Kinubi and Arabic roots of this place name, explained to me by members of the Kenyan Nubian Council of Elders as follows: 'This centre of Kibra is called Makina, this is also Arabic. Arabic meaning *makina*, that means 'settlement', *makaan*, *makaan*!' (KENUCE 03/03/2011).

5 In Kiswahili, stress is on the second to last vowel (e.g. Kambi Múru). By contrast, Nubian pronounciation of these toponyms stressed the last syllable/vowel (*Kámbi Murú, Alúr(u)*, *Baká*, *Kakwá, Kukú*, *Lendú*, *Mundú* etc.)

> My name is called [sic] [Muslim male name]. I live at *Kambi Aluru*. (composition 104, my emphasis)

The names of the various *kambi*s are derived from ethnic groups of origin from which Nubian soldiers were recruited.[6] BA, a man from the grandparent generation, told me about the ethnic composition of Nubians' ancestry and their places of settlement: Kambi Lendu (from Kongo), Kambi Aluru (from Uganda/Congo), and Kambi Muru (from Sudan). There are different groups: Murú, Bari (people from Juba), Dinka, Fojul, Kakwa, Mundú, Abkaya, Makaraká (live in Lindi), Majiko (from Uganda/Sudan) (notes interview BA 20/12/2012). Indeed, Kakwa is an ethnic group in Uganda, Baka, Kuku, Mundu, Moru/Muru in South Sudan, and Lendu in the DRC. It seems to have been common practice under the British to settle soldiers according to their (assumed) ethnic backgrounds (de Smedt 2011:119).

At the time of my research, however, these former 'tribal' identifications were considered a thing of the past and were being reduced to clan identities under the ethnically framed shared identification as 'Nubian' or 'Wanubi'. A woman of the grandparent generation told me:

> *In Sudan, they have clans*.[7] Kambi Muru, that is a *clan*-tribe [ni kabila ya *clan*]. There is a tribe called Murú. Kambi Muru: *village* of Umuru. When you come here in between, you will hear Kambi Kakwa. *There is a clan called Kakwa*. … There are Mundu. Inside, they are here. … In their *village*.' (MH 31/12/2012)

Ethnic origins, her explanation shows, governed the settlement structure of Kibra in the early days and are preserved in the Kambi toponyms. Nowadays, these ethnic categorizations are subsumed under the umbrella label 'Nubian', as the category Sudanese (Soldiers) hindered Nubian recognition as Kenyan citizens in the post-independence period until recently (de Smedt 2011:17, 117; Balaton-Chrimes 2015:96; Sarre 2018). Distinctions according to (assumed) ethnic origin (e.g. endogamous marriages) lost significance in the 1970s and 1980s. Now these subgroups are largely unified under 'Nubians/Wanubi', exemplifying the situational malleability and simultaneity of (categories of) belonging.

Besides the Kambi toponyms, there is another place name carrying a historical reference to Kibra's origins as a military training ground, albeit unbeknownst to most

6 These narratives of ethnic origin may not have been as clear-cut as they were often presented to me, again foregrounding the processual and negotiated nature of attachments and categorizations. Douglas Johnson (2009:116) argues that in some cases, an ethnic identity may have been established only when individuals were incorporated into the 'community' of Sudanese soldiers which was structured along ethnic categorizations by the British commanders.

7 The interviews were carried out in a mixture of English and Kiswahili, interspersed with some Sheng and Kinubi and translated by JS. Statements that were made in English in the original are marked in italics.

people using it today: *Lain Shabá / Laini Saba*. Whereas my Nubian interlocutors spoke of *Lain Shabá*, the name was inscribed as *Laini Saba* on the government advisory plan, the only official representation of Kibera I was able to get hold of, representing the government's perspective of Kibera before its restructuring. Non-Nubian Kiberans I talked to also used *Laini Saba*. Asked about the meaning of *Laini sába* (*Laini* = Engl. line or Kisw. soft; *saba* = seven, 'line 7'), they wondered how it came to be, imagining that it could have been the end of a *matatu*[8] line no. 7 in former times. In the Nubian pronunciation, *Lain shabá* (*Lain* = Engl. line; *shabá* = Kinubi shoot) revealed its original meaning: it denoted the place where soldiers lined up for shooting practice, that is, the 'shooting range'. Such differences in pronunciation may seem negligible, but apart from obscuring Nubian military history, pronunciation plays a major role in the sensory aspects of spatial belonging, as Robin Kearns and Lawrence Berg argue: '[W]e consider pronunciation to be an important element of the cultural politics of place naming within post-colonial societies [moving] beyond the visual to consider a wider sensory spectrum in the constitution of place' (2002:283).

The military toponyms described here are building blocks in the construction of Nubian belonging to Kib(e)ra: They draw on their honourable military past, which is a core building block of Nubian identity. They represent overlapping webs of belonging to (formerly ethnic, now clan-based) sub-categories of Nubian identity, which also used to structure settlement patterns in Kib(e)ra. While these have been downplayed to foreground Nubian identification as ethnic, they are traceable in the Nubian *kambi* toponyms.

'Kibra means forest': Taming Nature, Claiming First-Comer Rights

Another aspect of the oral history stored in Nubian toponyms is the wilderness, untamed nature and natural phenomena that marked Nubian life in the area at the beginning of the twentieth century. As the members of the Kenyan Nubian Council of Elders explained to me, it is even how the whole area received its name:

> IAF: Nubians started *most of these urban centres*. And Kibra *is the largest of them all*, it is indeed the biggest. And the meaning of Kibra – *you noticed I don't call it 'Kibéra', I call it 'Kíbra'*!
>
> JS: That sounds like Arabic…
>
> IAF: *This is very Arabic indeed*, even in Arabic, '*kibra' means 'forest'. A thick, tropical forest in Arabic is called 'kibra'. That's why we called it 'Kibra'*.

8 *Matatu*s are (mini)buses that operate as public transport in Nairobi.

J: *So there was a forest here?*

XX: *Yes, it was.*

IAF: *Thick! All the wild animals, lions used to roam here. If you don't look after your kids, they'd be snatched by lions and leopards and hyenas*. (KENUCE 03/03/2011)

Other members of the Nubian community echoed this narrative, such as two elderly women telling me: 'This is the reason you hear "Kibra" – Kibra means *forest*. Forest. There were *wild animals*. I even heard sounds of hyenas here. So they [the Nubians] came and constructed/fixed [*wakatengeneza*] it' (MH 31/12/2012) and 'Kibra was full of trees, mere bush; many died from snakes that attack from above' (notes interview HT 20/12/2012).

Etymological explanations like 'Kibera is said to be derived from the Sudanese Arabic word for forest' (Parsons 1997:88) and Kibra meaning 'thick forest', 'bushy area' (Balaton-Chrimes 2013:338; de Smedt 2011:8) were echoed by many of my interlocutors (KENUCE 03/03/2011, 09/08/2014; MA 09/01/2013) and are cited widely. Shuichiro Nakao, in his study of Arabic creoles like Kinubi and Juba-Arabic, also gives the example of '*kibira*, forest' (Nakao 2013:97, 101). Interestingly, there is little linguistic proof to support these derivations. Neither Jonathan Owens, Professor of Arabic linguistics, nor Sudanese colleagues I asked confirmed any Juba-Arabic or Sudanese-Arabic equivalent or root of 'Kib(e)ra' as 'forest' and only pointed to *kibir* meaning 'large'. An alternative explanation might be that it stems from one of the languages of origin spoken by the Sudanese soldiers. Yet despite the unclear linguistic origins, the narrative of taming nature has taken hold in both the Nubian and the scientific community and supports the oral history that makes Nubians the first ones to settle in the area, turning the wilderness into habitable land. It was not without pride that I was told

So we did a lot for making Nairobi what it is. We are the ones who built it, so it became what it is today. … *In fact Nairobi was established in 1900, but Kibra was very much around. So, this explains* how long Nubians have been in Kibra. (KENUCE 03/03/2011)

Being the founders of Kibra is a source of pride and a fundamental building block to their call for recognition. As Samantha Balaton-Chrimes confirms, '[m]any Nubians … rest their claim to indigeneity upon being the first to develop Kibera' (Balaton-Chrimes 2015:96). One activist for Nubian land rights, who was well aware of indigenous struggles elsewhere to have land rights restored or recognized on the basis of first-comer status, told me emphatically '*We are the aborigines [sic] of Kibera*!' (fieldnotes JS 2014).

By insisting on the use of 'Kibra' instead of 'Kibera', Nubians reified their claim to taming the wilderness, making Kibra (or even Nairobi) what it is and substantiating their belonging to Kibra and Kenya. Working on similar narratives in West Africa,

Carola Lentz mentions the 'ambiguities that are typical of "traditional" land tenure in Africa, that is, land rights in a dominantly oral context, without cadastres, land surveys and written titles. It is these ambiguities that make narratives so indispensable' (Lentz 2005:158). She calls these legitimizing narratives 'first-comer narrative[s]' (ibid. 2013:109), pointing to the layered claims presented in many locations.

According to the Nubi elders, the Nubi can claim first-comer rights to many cities in Kenya. To substantiate this, the speakers invoke a widely accepted trope: the image of pre-colonial mainland East Africa as rural and of cities as colonial foundations. Situating the Nubians within this narrative legitimizes their claim to land rights and – by claiming Kibra as their ancestral homeland in line with the Kenyan narrative of ethnic homelands – citizenship rights as Kenyan citizens.

Several toponyms refer to natural features that may have been more important when Nubian families relied on subsistence farming in the early days of Kibra. Some of these toponyms have entered common use, but others, having become irrelevant to an increasingly urban life in Kibera, have largely been forgotten.

One place name used widely is *Toi (market)*. Non-Nubian interlocutors tried to explain the meaning of *Toi* by likening it to the English 'toy'. *Toi*, I was told, is the Nubian word for the clay soil found there. A glance at my gumboots after shopping for groceries in Toi market on a rainy day made this explanation very plausible.

Nubians use *Gumberedú* to refer to a part of Kibera further down towards the river, beyond the Nubian 'strongholds' of Makina and Kambi Muru. This quarter is known to non-Nubian Kibera residents as *Gatwekera* and is deemed a Luo stronghold in the ethnically subdivided informal settlement.[9] According to my interlocutors' explanations, this toponym is composed of the Kinubi expressions *yom* ('day') and *beredu* ('to wash'), 'meaning a muddy place where you have to wash yourself every day' (Notes interview BA 20/12/2012).

Other toponyms evoking an intact nature, natural features and a rural Kibra are *Shederan kubar* (in Kinubi *shederan* = trees, *kubar* = large), translated as the 'place of large trees'. At the time of this study, not a single tree had remained. A hill, which has also disappeared under dense construction, making it hardly noticeable as a landscape feature, was referred to by my Nubian conversational partners as *Galalima* and translated to me as 'Halima's Hill' (Kin. *gala* = hill, *Halima* = Muslim female name). Neither for *Shederan kubar* nor for *Galalima* were there any non-Nubian equivalents, suggesting these places play no role in the perception of the non-Nubian majority of Kibera residents. Like many Nubian toponyms, they have been subjected to what Jack Goody and Ian Watt have called the 'structural amnesia of orality' (Goody and Watt 1963:309), where new information replaces older layers of meaning which have lost relevance to the present.

9 On ethnic subdivisions and 'strongholds' in Kibera, see CIPEV 2008:31; Michelle Osborn 2008:324; Okoth Okombo and Olang' Sana 2010:22; as well as Joh Sarre 2022:66.

By using toponyms that allude to the natural features of the area, they keep alive the memories of a Kibra that was less densely settled, in which agriculture and sustenance farming were the livelihood at hand and where people would congregate under tall trees. These toponyms bear witness to the longstanding relationship between Kibra and its Nubian inhabitants. They are also remnants of a Kibra that has vanished but that lives on in the memories of its inhabitants. This bond between people and place is woven, among other things, from childhood memories and nostalgia.

Nostalgia: Longing for and Belonging to the Kibra of the Past

In contrast to others who used *Kibera*, my Nubian interlocutors used *Kibra* to refer to their place of residence, which in most cases was also their place of birth. In the biographical interviews, they told me about their childhood in Kibra. They reminisced about Kibra's past while at the same time expressing their frustration about the dire current state of the place they called 'home'. One woman of the grandparent generation told me:

> *Kibra was very clean*. You wouldn't see...now we are shocked...someone urinating on the street or doing whatever!!! You would not have seen that! *It was very clean*. ... But nowadays, we are shocked. Even the elders [wazee] who died, if they came back to life, they would not believe this is the Kibra they left. They can't. Noo, they would say, this is not Kibra, it was clean! (MH 31/12/2012)

Besides the physical changes, people lamented the decay of manners and social cohesion. A man of the parent generation explained to me how social cohesion fostered discipline in his childhood years, saying:

> Also, *discipline was of high class. The younger used to respect the older ones so much, you know*. A child did not belong to father and mother only, a child belonged to the community [mtoto alikuwa wa jamii]. *If* walking down the street, *you have to be very careful, you have to hold your manners all the time, because you don't know who is watching you*. (HL 11/01/2013)

Aided by his elder brother, who was part of the conversation, he went on to narrate how a child playing truant would be questioned by any elder and brought to attend Quranic school or to be disciplined. They went on to remind each other of the games they played and how they enjoyed swimming and hunting in the area as boys – an imagery hardly conceivable when looking at the water-streams turned into sewage and the crammed mud-and-wattle structures that now cover the area.

The narrative of high moral standards, discipline and a tight social network among Nubians in Kibra was reiterated by many of my interlocutors. Members of the Kenyan Nubian Council of Elders were also reminiscent of Kibra in the past. After a vivid description of the past Kibra, a man of the grandparent generation told me emphatically: '*Fifty years ago, you would have loved it!*' (KENUCE 09/08/2014)

A negative assessment of the present, a past that is idealized in memory, highlighting the positive aspects while downplaying or ignoring negatives: this nostalgia, from the Greek *nostos* (= return (home)) and *álgos* (= pain), originally referred to the sensation of 'homesickness' and thus has a much stronger spatial reference than the almost exclusively time-related usage of today would suggest. The longing character of the nostalgic gaze towards the past Kibra corresponds to Elzpeth Probyn's suggestion that in 'belonging' there is always an element of 'longing' (Probyn 1996:6). 'Belonging', in contrast to 'identity', captures 'the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning rather than the positing of identity as a stable state' (ibid. 1996:19).

I argue that Nubian belonging is also captured by the use of the toponym 'Kibra', which contains childhood memories and nostalgic images of a place long lost to rapid social and physical change. The Kibra of one's childhood no longer exists, yet the shared nostalgic bond to this place, though lost in time, is revived when referring to Kibra. As Laura Kostanski remarks: '[M]emories of place imbue a present-day identity on the users or inhabitants of the place. This place identity is almost the glue which holds community groups together through a shared understanding of their collective past' (Kostanski 2014:287). Consequently, when people use 'Kibra', they are reminded of the place they grew up in, which is a basis for their belonging, with the shared feelings of joyful memory and painful loss being cornerstones of Nubian belonging together and to Kib(e)ra.

Competing Toponyms, Contested Belonging(s)

In conclusion, Nubian toponyms in Kib(e)ra serve as markers of collective meaning-making, transforming unmarked spaces into places of significance, places of belonging. However, the Nubian sense of belonging to Kibra does not go uncontested. The disregard of Nubian toponyms by the majority population and the state reflected the struggles of Nubians for recognition within Kib(e)ra and the broader Kenyan nation at the time.

This goes to show that toponyms are not neutral descriptors, but tokens in processes of relating, belonging and emotional attachment, as well as exclusion. As I have shown in the opening vignette, knowing place names positioned myself as an 'insider' and helped keep me safe. In the meeting, the more exclusive flip side of toponyms became obvious, leaving those listeners clueless who weren't party to the in-group codes. This stresses that the answer to the question 'Who belongs (here)?' is a constant subject of negotiation.

Place names and the memories and oral histories they invoke are part of a larger struggle and politics of recognition, citizenship and belonging. Which place names are used by whom and recognized officially is often representative of power relations and competing hegemonic and subaltern narratives (Alderman and Inwood 2013:212). These negotiations are also situated in larger power dynamics, as can be seen in other

struggles over the naming of public places (see, for example, the 'Rhodes must fall' movement in South Africa or initiatives by 'Berlin Postkolonial' to have colonialist street names in Berlin's 'African quarter'/Afrikanisches Viertel changed).

In the Nubian case, the oral history preserved in military toponyms, the assertion of first-comer status through nature-related toponyms and the nostalgic attachment to a bygone Kibra collectively contribute to the construction of Nubian (spatial) belonging. Nubian toponyms underscore Kib(e)ra's historical depth[10] and significance for Nubian Kenyans as an 'ancestral homeland'[11]. The existence of different sets of toponyms in Kib(e)ra underscores the contested nature of Nubian (spatial) belonging in Kibra and, by default, to the Kenyan nation as well.[12]

10 By doing so, they also challenge the widespread idea of slums as transient and impermanent.

11 Given the enormous importance most Kenyans attribute to an ancestral homeland, further research could explore how non-Nubian inhabitants relate to Kibra as their place of birth and/or residence (in comparison to an ancestral homeland elsewhere), a question that lay beyond the scope of my research.

12 In my thesis, I have analyzed the momentous historical interplay of ethnic categories, ethnic homelands and citizenship in Kenya (Sarre 2022:35–72).

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The Workshop at Home. Making Sense of Craft as a Social Practice among Tuareg Artisans in Niger[1]

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Abstract: This article draws on my dissertation on Tuareg craftsmanship in Niger as a social practice, which was published under the title 'Die Unbeständigkeit der Dinge: Handwerk, Familie und Mobilität bei den Tuareg in Niger' (The Impermanence of Things: Craft, Family and Mobility among the Tuareg in Niger) (2024). It explores craft as an embodied knowledge acquired and shared within the family. First, I show how I approached handicraft methodologically from an anthropological perspective. My entry into craft was my own bodily experience in touching, treating and shaping leather, wood and silver. I understood craft as a perception of the world, of tools and things, and studied the materiality and possibilities Tuareg artisans see in them. Second, I aim to show how I made sense of craft as a social practice. Most often, Tuareg artisans work at home in the middle of everyday family life. The same way the family was involved in the workplace, clients and craft-related conversations have been part of and thus shaped family life as a matter of course. Children grow up acquiring handicraft skills just because participating in everyday family life means practicing the trade. The family informs the perception of things and merges with technical routines and innovations that arise in the workshops at home. My concern is to capture the ordinariness of craft, how craftmanship is socially made, just as the family members relate to each other in technological terms.
[craft, embodied knowledge, family, tools, research methods]

One morning, shortly after breakfast, Hali[2] came to Inna with her youngest daughter, who was about five years old, and squatted against a post of the shed under which Inna, Lolo and I were already sitting and working. While we were still greeting each other, Hali pulled a rolled-up piece of leather out of her handbag and smoothed it out on her thigh, examined it, put her palm on it, told us how her family was doing, and pulled a needle and thread out of her headscarf, which was loosely looped over her hair. She looked at me, showed me the needle, said: 'Always working, you see, always working', and continued embroidering a pattern she had started that morning at breakfast. Ufadi, who arrived a short time later, also wanted to spend the day with Inna and work. Under her arm she carried a rolled-up goatskin that she had dyed red the day before.

1 This article is based on my PhD research, which is funded by the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes and the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS). I am grateful to all the people in Niger who made this research possible by taking me in, and caring for me.
2 All the names have been changed.

She first wanted to smooth it out and make it shiny, and then cut fringes from which she wanted to make key rings. She joined us under the shed and asked for a workbench. The workbench (called *elkelib* or *elkelem* in Tamashek, the language of the Tuareg) looks like an elongated, flat stool. The slightly curved work surface is reminiscent of the back of a donkey '*eshed*', as the workbench is also called in the Tamashek dialect in northern Mali. Inna needed her workbench for herself. Hali, who lived nearby, sent her daughter to fetch hers. Ufadi was still holding the rolled-up leather in her lap, waiting for the workbench and chatting with her mother Inna and Hali. A short time later, the girl came back and handed her the workbench. She took it, placed it on her thighs, continued talking, and ran the flat of her hand over the back of the bench.[3]

Craft is a tactile and material enterprise. But craftsmanship is more than tools and techniques: it is also about a certain skilled perception of the world that is passed on within a community. I consider craft to consist of professional embodied knowledge and to involve a specific approach to the world of things, tools and materiality that is shared, acquired and developed further within a 'community of practice' (Wenger 2008[1998]). For Tuareg artisans, the 'community of practice' is the extended family. In this paper, I aim to show how in my doctoral thesis, published in 2024 under the title 'Die Unbeständigkeit der Dinge: Handwerk, Familie und Mobilität bei den Tuareg in Niger' (The Impermanence of Things: Craft, Family and Mobility among the Tuareg in Niger), I make sense of craft as embodied knowledge that is shared within the family.

Tuareg artisans form a descent-based occupational group called *inadan*. The craft of the women is to sew leather bags in various sizes, which they embroider with fine patterns, while craftsmen carve mortars, beds and also their women's workbenches. The latter also forge garden tools, knives and silver jewellery depending on specialization and demand. They specialize in the production and repair of such items for which global goods do not yet offer a cheap alternative, such as special and robust garden tools, the decorated *takoba*- sword, camel saddles, special Tuareg silver jewellery, leather pillows, and leather bags for various purposes. The carving of spoons and bowls made of wood, on the other hand, is very time-consuming, the payment is small, and often their customers prefer to use the imported cutlery and dishes made of plastic or aluminum anyway. Some couples work side by side in a shed that serves as a workshop. Sometimes women and men work in separate sheds. Sometimes the women join the men, who are not mobile with the forge fire, and may or may not move back when the blacksmiths have guests. In any case, as many Tuareg artisans in Niger work at home, whether in the city or the countryside, their children learn to forge, carve and work leather as a matter of course (Nur 2024:202; see also Casajus 1987:293). Certainly not all *inadan* work as artisans, but for those who do, the making of camel

3 This section refers to the diary entries from 14 February 2015.

saddles, the sewing of leather bags and the forging of silver jewellery, swords, axes and hoes are part of family life.

Previous studies of Tuareg artisans have mainly examined their special social status and the supernatural powers attributed to them. Susan Rasmussen, for example, analysed the role of the *inadan* as go-betweens, tricksters and magicians in several studies (1995, 1998, 2003, 2007, 2013). The *inadan* were despised and respected at the same time, as has been repeatedly noted (Bernus 1983, 1998, 2006; Casajus 1987; Gabus 1957; Lhote 1984 [1955]; Nicolaisen 1962; Nicolaisen and Nicolaisen 1997, Sáenz 1991), and some Tuareg who did not belong to the group of *inadan* also spoke like this. I was told that they had different blood and were therefore forced into a strict endogamy. In fact, the *inadan* are often described by other Tuareg as beggars, liars and as fearful, despite their also acting as intermediaries who take over certain rituals as well as confidential and intimate tasks (at weddings and naming ceremonies, as intermediaries, musicians and hairstylists, and as companions of the bride or newborn children), even though they are also accused of disloyalty. The *inadan* do indeed have an ambivalent social status, yet, their craftsmanship and practical skills, which surely distinguish them from others, have rarely been studied. In spite of the suspicion and caution with which other people approach them, the *inadan* are also regarded by the other Tuareg as skilled and knowledgeable people.

Craft was ubiquitous in the homes of those Tuareg *inadan* who worked as artisans. Materials and half-finished artefacts were scattered all around the work-place, and this was also the area where the family spends time and where guests were received. Traces of craftsmanship run through the yard: the children played with old paint pots and red, green and yellow strings, and the wind blew colourful pieces of leather across the place. The sound of hammer and axe blows and the hissing of the bellows can be heard beyond the walls of the courtyard. Traders came by and offered leather and paint to the artisans. Clients pick up finished craft objects, bring materials, negotiate, pay or promise to come back another day. Men and women at work thought about technology, the cost and quality of tools, materials and their product. In addition to family matters, these were the main topics they discussed in their daily conversations during my research. Thus, my aim was to explore the *inadan* approach to craft and to determine how they were connected to each other in technological terms in an everyday manner.

Listening

I was puzzled at first about what craft was and how I should write about it. Actually, my entire research was a search for what craft is. There are a few investigations of the artefacts made by the *inadan*. These studies focus on objects that are certainly special, valuable and specific to the Tuareg, such as the sword, the silver jewellery and fine

leather embroidery of the craftswomen (Seligman, Loughran, Bernus 2006; Zöhrer 1943, 1948, 1953). The literature does not mention the manufacture of tools and simple utensils such as files, hoes, axes and undecorated knives. There is one study that looks more closely at the *inadans'* craftsmanship. In her book 'Le style touareg ou la function sociale des techniques' (2005), Catherine Hincker provides an impressively detailed and unique study in which she describes the techniques for working iron, metals, leather and wood of *inadan* artisans in Mali and Burkina Faso, analyses the social significance of different styles and explores the political organization they express. I wanted to go more deeply into the tactile dimension of handicraft looking beyond descriptions of tools, artefacts and abstract production processes, understanding craft as an approach to the world of things, as a sensory experience and a shared family practice.

More generally, I was interested in how to understand craft and in how craft informs a specific approach to the material and human world. For although physical and material activities are considered simple, and terms taken from the crafts are even used as metaphors to explain social processes, anthropology and all the other humanities find it difficult to grasp craft. Thus, in their article on the state of research, Greiner and Pröpper (2016:201) note that, although there are single anthropological studies of crafts, there is still a lack of conceptualization and localization within the discipline.

Since I did not know any better, I observed what Lila Abu-Lughod has advised: 'The only advice I ever give is to listen. And stay a long time. And write everything down – you never know what it will all mean. There are no shortcuts' (2019:39). Actually, I did not ask many questions throughout my research, not at first, because I did not know what to ask, nor later, because I was already in conversation with the artisans, so that questioning was neither necessary nor appropriate to the situation (any more, and maybe would never have been). As a student, I often heard that we anthropologists had to annoy people with our questions. Only if we were known as the annoying questioners would we get it right. This made me very uncomfortable. I often felt it was inappropriate to come up with an 'anthropological question' and to take people out of their work or their thoughts, or so it seemed to me. The craftspeople were actually very talkative at work and happy to have company. Nevertheless, I preferred to join in the conversation or just listen.

In any case I wanted to know what was on their minds. So, I listened and wrote down everything that was going on in the workshops. My first notes often consisted of rather technical terms, names, sketches of tools and patterns. After all, it was a good way to learn Tamashek, especially the craft-related vocabulary. I noted the names of things, patterns, tools, colours, materials and techniques such as hammering, splitting, cutting, dyeing, embroidering, sewing, polishing, grinding, filing and sharpening. However, these notes no longer made sense when I read them later. I found these descriptions boring, and only later understood why. They were dull because they were meaningless. Technology has no inherent logic of its own. Pierre Lemonnier, a French scholar of material culture, speaks of 'technological choices' (2002). Tracing these choices, we can learn about the people's comprehension of things and materials, cultural values, aesthetics and social relationships. Craft is a meaningful practice.

And I stayed for a long time, 21 months altogether. I first came to Niger before my PhD in 2011, then again in 2013 and 2014/15. I started my research with *inadan* artisans in Niamey and travelled to their relatives in Maradi, Dakoro, Gadabedji and Agadez. Through the long-term research assistant of my supervisor, Gerd Spittler, I established contacts in Timia, where I met the *inadan*, whose family in turn spread across the Aïr mountains to Agadez, Zinder and Niamey. I always stayed with *inadan* families who were involved in crafts and preferably those who did not manage French and did not speak Hausa at home in order to improve my Tamashek skills. I spent my research with women, children and men at work, at home and in workshops. I compensated them for the expenses I incurred with gifts in kind and money, as well as food purchases. I also paid key informants as research assistants. I informed the respective families that I was granted a budget for the research by my graduate school and that I was not paying for it out of my own pocket. By outsourcing the money issue and not presenting myself as the donor, I allowed the recipients to accept the payment without shame. At the same time, it was also easier to maintain a friendly relationship in this way. It was not until I had spent several months with artisans at work that my memos became more comprehensive and vivid and gradually made sense.

Feeling

The remark in the diary entry in the opening paragraph about Ufadi running her hand over the workbench was not jotted down out of cluelessness. When I wrote this down, I knew already how important this touch was for the work she was about to carry out. Actually, this was the reason why I recognized this seemingly random hand gesture at all.

Craft is a specific knowledge about things, a feeling for things. In order to grasp this feeling, I had to feel my way around with my own hands. I explored how the artisans handled, touched, examined and shaped the materials and tools they worked with, what possibilities they saw, and how they dealt with materials and things. I took the knife in my hand, coloured and cut the leather and spread the sticky millet paste with my fingers. And only then did I realize, for example, why women usually used their middle finger to put the glue on, even though you get a much better feel with your index finger. However, the index finger is needed for all other activities such as holding, turning, embroidering, etc. If you spread the glue with your index finger, everything you touch afterwards will be sticky. It was this experience that allowed me to recognize subtle but crucial moments in the craftsmanship. I learned that there are different kinds of leather, wood and metals, and that not every workbench is the same, which in turn is crucial for the work.

The workbench is the work surface on which the craftswomen carry out much of the leatherwork, from cutting, colouring, smoothing and painting to punching

patterns and drawing lines. To cut short fringes, the leather is rolled up and placed on the short end of the workbench. With great effort, the women push the leather knife through the compressed leather roll. With each cut, the blade passes through the leather and into the wood, making a sound that gives these fringes their onomatopoeic name '*kareshkaresh*'. This work leaves furrowed round bulges at the end of the workbench (and pain in the joint of the hand that pushes the knife through the leather). The workbenches change over time and acquire a patina. In some places they become smooth, in others uneven. Each workbench therefore has its own surface. Ufadi ran her hand over the workbench to familiarize herself with it, to learn about the surface, the curves, furrows and dents, and figure out how she would place the leather she wanted to smoothen.

Through my engagement, I got an idea of what embodied knowledge means, or how Tuareg artisans put it: *'afus ǝyasan'* (the hand knows). I experienced for myself how my attention focused on the tip of the needle while I was sewing, as if the needle had become a part of me. This was exactly as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2010 [1945]: 173) and later Michael Polanyi (2009 [1958]: 55) had explained using the example of the white cane. The white cane becomes an extension of the body, so that the blind person 'feels' the ground with the point of the stick. I was then able to talk to the artisans in a situated and more competent manner. I raised questions that went along with the work flow. And so, my notes have changed. I now included the sensory aspects. This also taught me how fundamental routines are: I realized how clumsy my hands felt when I was doing tasks for the first time that looked so easy for the craftspeople. And then I experienced how my fingers became more skilful with practice and got used to the new movements. I experienced for myself that craftsmanship does not consist of one-off actions. Practical skills are routines that become ingrained in the body over many repetitions, which François Sigaut so aptly describes as 'forgotten knowledge' (Sigaut 1993: 106) because they are only mastered when you are no longer aware of them. However, this does not mean that the work is automatic (Hänisch 2017).[4] I now felt with my own hands that routines train sensory perception, the feeling of a surface, of materials, the palpation of the quality of a leather or a cord. It was only through this experience that I comprehended for myself how right Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2010 [1945]) and Cristina Graseni (1999, 2008) were when they wrote that our knowledge and our ability determine how we perceive our world and move through it.

This sounds abstract, but in fact it made me aware of the way *inadan* artisans organized their work. Toolmaking is a case in point. The *inadan* smiths not only sharpened their tools as they worked, they also forged new ones when they needed them (Hänisch 2018). Sometimes they would use a tool they did not need at the time: An awl became an engraver, a screwdriver an awl, a file a knife or a scraper. A look into the toolboxes of the *inadan* blacksmiths certainly does not show the entire inventory they actually

4 I published under my birth name Hänisch till 2018.

work with. In my dissertation, I argue that the never complete and ever-changing set of tools is not a sign of a lack of order or means. They did not forge the tools because the markets were too far away or too expensive. They forged their tools exactly to be most suitable for their work, just as they require them. Toolmaking is a sign of competence and certainty. It involves a certain way of organizing one's work and one's tools, and bears a particular perception of things and grip (in the truest sense of the word) on the material from which they are made. Many craftspeople all over the world are able to make their own tools and do so. Unlike consumers, craftspeople do not just see things as finished and permanent objects. Precisely because things are material, they are not durable and can be dismantled, repaired and rebuilt. It is time for anthropology to pay more attention to the manufacturing of tools. Toolmaking is a way of accessing the material world and harbours a certain way of dealing with the environment.

The Family in the Workshop

Professional craftsmanship is not an individual matter, but a shared practice. This can happen in very different ways (Beck 2009; Hänsch 2009; Marchand 2009, 2012). Among the *inadan*, craft practices are carried out within the family. In addition to Inna, Hali and Ufadi, Inna's daughter-in-law and niece Lolo was also working in the shed that morning. She was sitting in a back corner, concentrating on embroidering a large decorated travel bag for a camel (*shăkwa*), which she had made together with Inna at her husband's request for a herder in the countryside. She held the leather so close to her face that she disappeared behind it and carefully placed stitch after stitch. Her son crawled onto her lap; she continued working and put in a few stitches. The toddler was crying and wanted to pull the needle out of her hand. Lolo held the needle, focused the work piece, laughed and sent Ilias away. His grandmother Inna gave him a few words of comfort. Ilias was furious and slapped Lolo on the shoulder. She ignored him and carried on working. A short time later, she stuck the leather awl into the knothole of a tent post, high enough that Ilias could not reach it, wrapped the leather together, pushed it between the post and the mat wall, and pulled herself up the tent post. Then she wrapped her skirt tightly around her waist and walked towards the kitchen. It was Lolo's turn to cook that day.[5]

What this diary note shows is how craft, family and household merge in everyday life. This is not only true for women; men who work at home are also integrated into family life (or they integrate family life into their work). I often experienced how one blacksmith in particular kept asking his grandson to come to him. Then he would give him tools and let him play with them. One day, when he was forging an amulet, his

5 This section refers to the diary entries from 14 February 2015.

one-and-a-half-year-old grandson also hit the silver sheet lying on the anvil with a file. The child's eyelids trembled with every blow. His grandson was allowed to open all the boxes and take out the various files, pliers, tweezers, sandpaper, wires and scraps of metal. The old man kept an eye on him and made sure that everything was put back in its place and that he did not injure himself with the many sharp and pointed tools, but he let the child examine the work materials. He thought it was important that his grandson was in the workshop, and he was happy about his curiosity, as he told me (Agadez, November 18, 2013; Nur 2024:203). Another time, I made a note of how a blacksmith was looking for his file and finally found it in the kitchen, where his daughter was using it to sharpen the kitchen knife. And when I once wondered that a blacksmith asked his daughters to keep the smith's fire alive when he went to the mosque for Friday prayers – I saw women and girls in the workshops all the time, but never before working at the anvil or operating the bellows – his wife explained to me with a shrug that she had often assisted her husband with the forging. Any blacksmith's wife could sharpen a blade, she claimed confidently.

Working at home allows children to participate in craft activities from the very beginning. They approach the craft as toddlers, who still touch and put everything in their mouths. Not all the men worked at home. The father of the toddler just mentioned shared a workshop with cousins in the town centre. None of the men in Inna's yard worked in the trade. Her son-in-law worked as a broker. Her older son, who normally forges and sells silver jewellery in Algeria, had followed the gold rush and travelled to a mine at the time of my research. So had her youngest son. He had worked as a silversmith in Niamey for more than ten years; during my research he too decided to try his luck in the gold mines one day. Later, the older son set up his workshop in his mother's shed.

While I examine embodied craftsmanship in this article, artisans, for their part, want to earn a living from their work. Until the turn of the millennium, many *inadan* profited from Saharan tourism by trading souvenirs. But with the increase in terrorism since 2007, the tourists stopped coming (Scholze and Klute 2023). Since then many artisans have been increasingly seeking out professions with a regular income as teachers, doctors, soldiers or chauffeurs, or they try their luck in the gold mines, like Innas' sons. Nevertheless, their skills offer many *inadan* a way to earn a living, which is not to be underestimated in view of the high youth unemployment in Niger. However, two of Inna's relatives in the immediate neighbourhood worked as blacksmiths every day. Every family is unique, and is constantly changing: with each marriage a child moves out, or a child-in-law moves in, the sons go to the city, or work as migrant labourers, or take a casual job with another relative. So, some children learn from their parents' brothers, sisters, or their grandparents, or from another relative who is working in the neighbourhood. In any case, children barely learn only from their own parents. Some *inadan* did not learn the craft at all because it was not practised at home and they had therefore not been surrounded by the craft in their childhood. But when a trade is part of everyday family life, children grow up with it

and acquire craft skills as a matter of course. Handicrafts are not seen as a duty, but as a special skill that opens up lifelong income opportunities.

In my dissertation, I describe how the conversations with the workshop guests, the jokes and the children playing are interwoven with the manual practices. Technical operations merge seamlessly with the handling of a mobile phone or radio. Tea is boiling on the stove in which the iron is being heated at the same time. The daughter comes to sharpen the knife to cut the meat for lunch. This total intermingling of craft practices with everyday family life contributes to the fact that many *inadan* identify themselves with the craft in an essentialist way.

Endogamy as an Everyday Work Experience

It was only during my research that I realized the extent to which the family in the workshop was not just an ordinary backdrop, not just a source of disruption or entertainment, but part of the craft practice. Only gradually did I allow the family to enter my diaries, until it was as omnipresent as it was in the workshops. I have countless quotes of artisans, like: 'I came here because my mother's sister lived here; In the first big drought, I went to Kano with my cousin to make and sell camel saddles; I learnt how to make bangles from my wife's brother; When I visited my sister in the south, her husband, my cousin, forged a leather knife for me to help her, then I learnt to embroider these patterns from her.' Finally, no entry was left without a reference to a sister, a mother's brother or a cousin. Through endogamous marriages, the craft was again and again intertwined with the family from generation to generation, and it affected the participation of children as much as the everyday working life of adults and competent artisans. Endogamy is thus not only crucial once (or twice or three times) in a lifetime when choosing a partner. For the *inadan*, who live, work and learn from each other within the family, endogamy is an everyday experience that also connects them to each other by craftsmanship:

Inna and Lolo had been working on the *shăkwa*, the large camel bag, for several days. While it was Lolo's first time, Inna had sewn many such bags in her life. She left the fine embroidery work to Lolo. Firstly, her eyesight had deteriorated, making it almost impossible for her to do the fine stitches, and secondly, she no longer had the strength in her fingers. Each stitch through the leather had to be predrilled with an awl. This requires strength in the fingers and wrist. Inna had cut the leather to size and told Lolo exactly what the pattern should look like. She arranged the circles, dots, diamonds and squares, and chose the colours. Lolo followed Inna's instructions with great diligence. This is how she would learn to make a *shăkwa*, she told me. One day, Lolo was sewing a zigzag pattern with a white plastic ribbon. Shortly before noon, she put the embroidery aside and went into the kitchen. It was her turn to cook. Her aunt Hali sat with us and talked to Inna. She picked up Lolo's work, inspected the stitches

and praised Lolo. She told me that Lolo was her child, like a daughter. Then she picked up the needle and awl and continued embroidering, explaining to me the meaning of the design.[6]

My genealogical studies showed that the *inadan* in Niger actually practice a very strict endogamy. Marriage does not mean forging new ties, but rather confirming and strengthening existing relationships. With each marriage, distant relatives become direct relatives again. As the young married couples often live with one or other of their in-laws,[7] family life may also be very close in spatial terms. This is what makes endogamy an everyday experience. Just as closely as the *inadan* marry, many spend their working days together. The bonds of family are then the bonds through which knowledge and practices are passed on. The older relatives are the masters, and the children are their disciples and successors. Cousins learn together and from each other. Depending on how they marry, the young people expand their craft skills with another relative. This is especially true for the women, who, unlike the men, cannot travel so easily: Lolo, for example, learnt leatherwork as a young girl from her mother, her sister and her father's mother, who also lived on her parents' homestead in Niamey. After marrying her cousin, she moved in with his family, who lived in Agadez, and where she has been assisting her mother-in-law (the wife of her mother's brother) and learning from her ever since.

Over the course of their lives each artisan acquires their own set of skills and specializations through interaction with many relatives. Craftsmanship is not passed on as a ready-made package with a fixed body of knowledge in only one line from mother to daughter and from father to son. For the *inadan*, learning handicrafts is rather an active acquisition of knowledge and skills, a formation of one's own body, the development of an understanding of things and their materiality, and an awareness of one's own abilities, and it is always linked to social experiences.

Craft as a Social Practice

My goal is more than to provide an anthropological account of Tuareg artisans' embodied knowledge and participatory ways of learning and working. I want to make this

6 This section refers to the diary entries from 14 February 2015.

7 The Tuareg are divided into different *tiwsatin* (pl. clans, Singl. *Tawset*; see Lecocq (2010, p. 4). The Kel Ewey Tuareg, among whom I conducted research in Timia, at least prefer matrilocality. In recent years, however, more and more husbands have built a mud house in a new neighborhood, partly because there is no more room for more yards in the main town, which is located in a valley surrounded by mountains; on the other hand, the prosperity brought about by large gold discoveries is contributing to a change in house construction. In turn, many young married Kel Ferwan Tuareg couples with whom I conducted research in Gadabedji and Agadez move in with the husband's family in accordance with their virilocal residence rule.

material to speak back to assumptions on African descent-based occupational groups. In oral discourse among anthropologists, African artisans are till today casually referred to as castes. Current research on these groups is scarce (one exception is Epple 2018). The concept of caste, in turn, evokes ideas of predetermination, oppression, restriction, rigidity and inbreeding. But initially, endogamy only means that people preferably marry within a particular social category or group (Stone 2018:21, Vivelo 1995:237). As rigid as endogamy may seem, it allows a wider choice of partners than cousin marriage, which is actually what we are talking about here, and which is widely practiced in many parts of West Africa and beyond. What is special is that marriage within the group is also linked to a profession. This can happen in very different ways. However, there is never any compulsion to practice a craft, even though it is quite common for crafts to be in the hands of endogamous occupational groups. Furthermore, one's inherited status does not always go hand in hand with a despised or inferior position, which is implied in the colloquial use of caste.

Instead of thinking of endogamous knowledge transfer as restrictive and determinative, I conceive of the *inadan* as a community of practice with specialized knowledge and skills. By looking at how they practice, communicate, develop and make sense of their craft, we can learn much more about their ideas, their own capacities, self-confidence and social life. *Inadan* smiths are sometimes mocked by other Tuareg for spending the day at home like 'good wives'. The presence of the father and other male relatives, however, creates a family life that differs from that of many other families in Niger and elsewhere. It has often been described that children spend most of their time with their mothers, and only the sons are gradually introduced to the world of men from about the age of three (Lancy 2010:89f.; and for the *inadan* Tuareg: Hincker 2000:119). I have met babies in the workshops and girls who have grown up in close contact with their fathers. Rather than conceiving descent-based occupational groups as restrictive, in such contexts extraordinary relationships are possible, which may be characterized by special closeness and intimacy. A blacksmith once explained that they would all sit in a pile: women, men, brothers and sisters, cousins and in-laws (Agadez, January 1, 2015). Of course, this does not mean that all *inadan* enjoy a close and happy family life. I have also met *inadan* who avoided their homes because they were afraid of their fathers and wished they were travelling with the caravan for months on end, and for this reason did not learn the trade at all or learned it from another relative.

My aim was not to generalize. I am not drawing conclusions from single artisan families to the whole group. On the contrary, with the many ethnographic accounts close to the diaries, I aim to let individual women, men and children speak, to allow a look at the many different situations, motivations and relationships to craft and to the family. My aim is to challenge the assumption that the *inadan* are a homogeneous group. 'Each has her own hand' (*Ak iyat tila afusnet*), a mother once explained to me when I asked about her daughters' craftsmanship, so as not to make a judgment (Agadez, April 15, 2015). The craft has its own meaning for everyone, and it can also change over the course of their lives. I met a woman who, for the sake of her father-in-

law, practised the craft for some time after her marriage. At the same time, she trained as a teacher, her dream job, which she pursued for a few years. But when she became a mother, it was no longer possible to combine teaching with childcare and household duties. She stayed at home and went back to crafts. Especially in descent-based occupational groups, it is important to show the heterogeneous life paths in order to challenge stereotypes.

This is also true for practical craftsmanship. I do not give theoretical descriptions of how to make a camel saddle, precisely because everyone has their own hand and does it in their own way. Some are more skilled and find it easy, while others put a lot of effort into it, but the stitches are still uneven. Others are fast and imprecise, but want to earn more and don't care so much about quality. Yet others are so passionate about their craft that, as one blacksmith once jokingly told me, he would like to slap anyone who does a bad job. Not everyone sees it that way. Certainly not the mother who, looking at the very sloppy work of one of her daughters, told me that each has her own hand. Some are hardworking, others are limited by poor eyesight or do not have the strength in their hands to make clean holes. Access to materials also influences craftsmanship and motivation. An abstract description of how a sword is forged or a bag is sewn does not tell us anything about how people engage in the craft, what skills they have, or how, informed by their skills, they perceive materials, make decisions, recognize and seize opportunities. How individuals experience family life and work, who trusts in the anvil (as a Tuareg saying puts it), or the spouse, or the parents, or luck in the gold mines, gives more insight into the meaning of craftsmanship for different craftspeople. My aim is to capture the ordinariness of craft, how craft is socially made, as well as the technical aspects of everyday work and family life. My main concern, however, is to bring African artisans back to current discourses in anthropology. Certainly, there is much to be learned from artisans about socially embedded approaches to things and materials.

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Call for Papers – *Shortcuts*

About *Shortcuts*

Shortcuts are relatively short interventions (1400-1600 words) that contribute to controversial contemporary problems and/or theoretical debates in anthropology and may well be provocative in nature. The aim here is therefore not to present a subject comprehensively, but to develop a concise argument that will ideally lead to further discussions in the specialist community or even beyond.

Rethinking 'Rethinking'

If there is something like a baseline assumption in the social sciences, anthropology included, then it is the premise that research ought to make a difference to the ecology of knowledge. It ought to present previously unknown empirical insights and/or put forward perspectives, interpretations and conceptualizations that differ from those in already existing studies. However, what is rarely debated is the question of how in particular this process of 'making a difference' is enacted in terms of the anthropologists' epistemic practices. While this practice is sometimes taken to mean 'making a radical break with the past', as the various anthropological 'turns' of the recent past seem to suggest, what is much more common is an approach that is not wholly dismissive of established perspectives, interpretations and conceptualizations, but instead seeks to reach a balance between reiterating some of them and overcoming a select few of the others. One of the strategies employed to do so is to 'rethink' what is then often claimed as representing anthropological common sense on a given issue. In fact, the history of anthropology is awash with attempts to 'rethink' its conceptual premises, methodologies and research ethics, objects of study, disciplinary subfields, or even the discipline as a whole.

But what is involved in the practice of 'thinking anew' (*re*think)? On the face of it, this notion denotes ruminating on thoughts previously thought in order to reconfigure them. More particularly, and with a view to the temporality of this epistemic process in the field of anthropology, it can be argued that it is the practice of actively engaging with ideas from the past to make a transformed version of them ready for present-day

anthropologies and their envisaged futures. In this way, anthropological pasts, present times and possible futures become folded into each other.

We invite short contributions (1400-1600 words) in English that reflect on the epistemic practice of 'rethinking' in anthropology. We welcome articles by anthropologists that critically engage with their own or other anthropologists' efforts in 'rethinking' long-standing concepts in anthropology and/or with the question of what this practice indicates about (potentially problematic) epistemological premises and 'progress'-driven orientations in our academic field.

Nachruf auf Hermann Amborn (1933–2024)

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Hermann Amborn lehrte und forschte zwischen 1987 und 1998 als außerplanmäßiger Professor am Institut für Ethnologie der LMU München. Und ‚außerplanmäßig' war in der Tat auch sein Weg als engagierter Wissenschaftler, akademischer Lehrer und öffentlicher Intellektueller. Anhand der zwölf Jahre seiner Professur ist Hermann Amborns Bedeutung als Lehrer, Ethnologe und Afrikanist kaum zu ermessen: Als Spätberufener reichte seine Zeit als aktiver Professor gerade aus, um eine Generation von Studierenden zu Magister und Promotion zu begleiten. Doch institutioneller Aufstieg und Einfluss waren ohnehin nicht zentrale Motive seines Ethnologieverständnisses. Karrierekalküle wurden persönlichem Engagement für eine Ethnologie untergeordnet, die Amborn als eine kritische akademische Disziplin verstand und lehrte, die wie keine andere dazu angetan ist, Selbstverständlichkeiten und institutionalisierte Machtverhältnisse und Hierarchien der eigenen Gesellschaft zu befragen und alternative Denk- und Lebensformen empirisch aufzuzeigen. Seine Unabhängigkeit von strategischem ‚Networking' und populären Diskursen erlaubte es ihm, Themen in den deutschsprachigen akademischen Diskurs einzuführen, die seinerzeit irrelevant schienen und erst in den letzten Jahren – wie so oft durch den Umweg über die englischsprachige Anthropology – prägend wurden: Jahrzehnte vor dem Ethical Turn führte Amborn Ethik als zentrales Thema und kardinale Aufgabe in ethnologische Diskurse und die ethnologische Lehre ein. 2001 gründete er die AG Ethik der damaligen DGV, deren Sprecher er bis 2013 blieb. Er setzte sich dafür ein, Ethik nicht als abstraktes Regelwerk für die institutionelle Absicherung von Feldforschung und Publikationen zu instrumentalisieren, sondern sie als selbstkritische und immer riskante reflexive Praxis in der universitären Lehre und im akademischen Dialog zu verankern (Amborn 2015 [1993]). Ethik war aus Amborns Sicht der eigentlichen wissenschaftlichen Arbeit nicht äußerlich, sondern Basis einer stets kollaborativen Feldforschung und Horizont theoretischer Analysen.

Innovativ war auch Hermann Amborns daran anschließende Theorie zu anarchisch oder polykephal organisierten Gesellschaften, in der er eigene Feldforschungen in Süd-

äthiopien, Habermas'sche Diskursethik und Foucault'sche Machttheorie in kühner Engführung verband (Amborn 2002, 2005, 2006b, 2016).

Diese leidenschaftliche Kombination von gesellschaftskritischer Reflexion und ethnographischer Forschung, die Hermann Amborns Werk prägt, ist nicht zuletzt im Kontext einer außergewöhnlichen deutschen Biographie zu verstehen: Geboren im Jahr der nationalsozialistischen Machtübernahme, 1933, wuchs Hermann Amborn in einer hessischen Pfarrersfamilie auf. Seine Eltern waren trotz Repressalien und Gefahr für das eigene Leben und das ihrer Kinder aktiv im Widerstand gegen das NS-Regime. Freunden erzählte Hermann Amborn, wie er als Kind von Nazischergen in der eigenen Wohnung verhört wurde und wie es den Eltern wundersamerweise gelang, dabei einen Stapel von Flugblättern zu verstecken. Solche Erfahrungen legten den Grundstein für einen in all seinen Umwegen geradlinigen Bildungsweg, der nicht vom Anpassungswillen an herrschende Machtverhältnisse geprägt war, sondern von deren kritischer Reflexion. Im Gymnasium hatten Lehrer, die Amborn während des Krieges als überzeugte Nazis erlebte und die sich danach als Regimegegner stilisierten, ebenso seinen Respekt verloren wie die Bildungsinstitution Schule, die er ohne Abitur verließ, um zunächst eine Ausbildung zum technischen Zeichner zu machen. Jahre später holte er das Abitur nach und studierte Ingenieurwissenschaften. Während dieses Studiums, das ihn auch nach München führte, kam er über Wolfgang Marschall mit der Ethnologie in Berührung, die ihn als kreative Herausforderung faszinierte und zudem mit seiner Reiselust korrespondierte. Ausgedehnte Reisen hatten ihn bereits in den 1950er Jahren in den Nahen Osten über Syrien, den Irak und Pakistan bis nach Indien geführt, wo er – konfrontiert mit völlig anderen Lebensentwürfen und Wertesystemen – seine radikale Kritik an jeder ‚Entwicklungshilfe' (wie es damals hieß) entwickelte und auf eigenes Risiko die Seiten wechselte: Amborn, der im Irak als technischer Zeichner auf einer Dammbaustelle gearbeitet hatte, wollte nicht länger als Repräsentant einer Zivilisation auftreten, die beanspruchte, anderen den Weg in die Zukunft zu weisen, er wollte verstehen, was in der eigenen Gesellschaft mitsamt ihren weltweit herrschenden Wissenspraktiken im Argen lag und was man von anderen Gesellschaften lernen könnte – eine Haltung, die er später als Aktionsethnologe weiterentwickelte.

Die Aufnahme eines Ethnologiestudiums mit höchst ungewisser Berufsperspektive im Jahr 1963 und die Aufgabe seines sicheren Ingenieurberufs waren ebenso radikale wie konsequente Entscheidungen, die schließlich dazu führten, dass er am Münchner *Institut für Völkerkunde und Afrikanistik* 1973 über die Eisenverhüttung in den Kulturen des Niltals promovierte (Amborn 1976). Dieses kulturhistorische Thema mag heutigen Betrachtern unverfänglich, ja irrelevant erscheinen, Hermann Amborn jedoch gründete darauf seine Kritik an einer damals dominierenden Richtung der deutschen Ethnologie, deren evolutionistische Vorannahmen er kritisierte. Diffusionisten wie der Afrikanist Hermann Baumann, bei dem er ursprünglich über das Thema promovieren wollte, vertraten die Auffassung, das nubische Reich von Meroe sei als ‚Hochkultur' der einzig denkbare Ursprungsort für die Eisenzeit in Afrika gewesen. Amborn hin-

gegen stellte genau diese Annahme auf den Prüfstand, was zum Zerwürfnis führte, das angesichts der patrimonialen Verhältnisse der damaligen akademischen Strukturen in Deutschland das Ende seiner Laufbahn als Ethnologe hätte bedeuten können, bevor sie überhaupt begonnen hatte.

Dass Hermann Amborn seine Dissertation dennoch abschließen und in der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie Fuß fassen konnte, verdankte er Helmut Straube, der 1968 die Institutsleitung übernahm. Er wurde sein Doktorvater, was Hermann Amborn als „großes Glück" bezeichnete, da ihn Straube wissenschaftlich nicht zu bevormunden versuchte. Als Schüler von Adolf Ellegard Jensen kam Straube zwar aus der kulturhistorischen Schule, distanzierte sich aber zugleich von deren spekulativen Behauptungen und versuchte, der Kulturgeschichte zu einer empirisch tragfähigeren Fundierung zu verhelfen, indem er auf möglichst breiter interdisziplinärer Basis urgeschichtliche, geografische, archäologische und linguistische Daten mit ethnographischen Forschungen verband.

Dieser Ansatz wurde auch zur Inspirationsquelle für Hermann Amborns eigene Forschungen. In seiner Dissertation (1976) wertete er archäologische und antike schriftliche Quellen kritisch aus und führte in einem Zeithorizont von 1.000 Jahren sozioökonomische Regionalgeschichte, die er mit dem Marx'schen Modell der Asiatischen Produktionsweise analytisch zu durchdringen versuchte, mit naturwissenschaftlich gestützten Erkenntnissen über Technologien der Eisengewinnung zusammen. Die Studie wurde zum Paradigma eines Wissenschaftsverständnisses, das große Sorgfalt im Detail mit theoretischen Fragestellungen verband und das Hermann Amborn in der Lehre auch als Auftrag an Studierende weitergab.

1973/74 bot Helmut Straube Hermann Amborn eine Stelle als wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter in seinem DFG-Projekt zur Erforschung der Burji-Konso-Gruppe in Südäthiopien an, wo dieser schließlich ‚seine' Region fand (Amborn/Minker/Sasse 1980). Die Burji-Konso-Gruppe faszinierte ihn nicht zuletzt aufgrund ihrer polykephalen Gesellschaftsordnung, deren konstruktive Konfliktstrategien ihn zu seinem Spätwerk über Anarchie anregten. Bis an sein Lebensende blieb er ihr daher wissenschaftlich und persönlich besonders eng verbunden.

Ausgiebige ethnographische Forschungen zur gesellschaftlichen Arbeitsteilung von Handwerkern derselben Gruppe und zu ihren Strategien sozialer Integration jenseits staatlicher Kontrolle mündeten 1986/87 in seine Habilitation *Differenzierung und Integration* (Amborn 1990). Auch hier verband Amborn sein technologisches Interesse mit sozial- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Fragestellungen und konnte zeigen, wie es diesen Gesellschaften gelang, trotz differenzierter gesellschaftlicher Arbeitsteilung einer Hierarchisierung entgegenzuwirken und Minderheiten effizient zu integrieren. In diesem Zusammenhang kritisierte er auch die in der Äthiopienforschung bis heute verbreitete Übertragung des Kastenbegriffs auf südäthiopische Gesellschaften.

Dem Forschungsnachlass seines Mentors Helmut Straube aus den Jahren 1955 und 1974 über diese Gruppe und dem Interesse vieler Burji an einer Revitalisierung ihrer Traditionen fühlte er sich so stark verpflichtet, dass er Straubes Aufzeichnungen ab

den 1990er Jahren in Aufsätzen bearbeitete und mit eigenen Forschungen verknüpfte (siehe z. B. Amborn 1995; Amborn & Kellner 1999), um sie 2009, lange nach seiner Emeritierung, abschließend in Buchform zu veröffentlichen. Dafür wählte er die ihm einzig sinn- und verantwortungsvoll erscheinende Form. Anstatt Straubes Notizen als ‚Steinbruch' oder bloße Datenbank zu veröffentlichen, leistete er dank seiner umfassenden Kontextkenntnis eine interpretative Deutung, die es erlaubte, die inzwischen historischen Quellen in den Rahmen aktueller ethnologischer Fragestellungen zu stellen (Amborn 2009a).

Hermann Amborn hat damit sehr bewusst den kulturhistorischen Ansatz der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie weiterentwickelt, indem er anders als die klassische *British Social Anthropology* nicht einzelne ‚Ethnien' isolierte und reifizierte, sondern sie in ihren geopolitischen und historischen Dynamiken als Entitäten mit fließenden Grenzen sichtbar machte (Amborn 1998, 2009b, 2010). Als unverzichtbar erachtete er dafür das dialogische Einbeziehen indigener Formen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses, wie z. B. zyklische Zeitkonzepte oder räumliche Mnemotechniken, die sich an Gedächtnisorten und Erinnerungslandschaften orientieren (Amborn 1995, 2004, 2006a).

Die dialogisch-kollaborative Zusammenarbeit mit Vertreter*innen anderer Gesellschaften bildet auch das empirische Pendant zu Amborns theoretischer Auseinandersetzung mit Habermas' Diskursethik und der Aktionsethnologie. Beider Schnittstelle und Potential sah er vor allem darin, durch gemeinsames kommunikatives Handeln die hermeneutische Kluft zwischen unterschiedlichen Traditionszusammenhängen zu überwinden. Anstatt kulturell fremde Gesellschaften im Rahmen eigener Theorien zu reifizieren, sah Amborn die Aufgabe von Ethnolog*innen darin, sich auf fremde Denk- und Sprechweisen oder Zukunftsentwürfe einzulassen, eigene Theorien und Wissenstraditionen zur Disposition zu stellen und sich in einem niemals abgeschlossenen dialektischen Prozess über gemeinsame (Erkenntnis-)Interessen und Sinnbezüge zu verständigen (Amborn 2015 [1993]).

Kollaborative Feldforschungen in Äthiopien bildeten schließlich auch die Basis für Hermann Amborns zentrales politikethnologisches Thema: Anarchie und Praktiken der Konfliktaushandlung in Gesellschaften, die sich bewusst staatlicher Kontrolle und institutionalisierten Hierarchien und Herrschaftsstrukturen widersetzten. Den diskursiven Charakter solcher Konfliktstrategien analysierte Amborn zwar in Auseinandersetzung mit Jürgen Habermas' Diskursethik (Amborn 2005, 2006b), doch er war vor deren Tendenz zur Idealisierung einer herrschafts- oder gar machtfreien Diskursgemeinschaft durch seine ethnographische Forschung gefeit, weshalb er sie theoretisch mit Michel Foucaults Machttheorie (Amborn 2002, 2016) kombinierte und korrigierte. Durch langjährige Feldforschungen stand für Amborn außer Frage, dass nicht das Fehlen von Macht- oder Dominanzansprüchen in einem idealen Diskurs Herrschaftsfreiheit und demokratische Beteiligung garantiert, sondern das Akzeptieren permanenter, gegensätzlicher Machtansprüche, die dynamisch gemäß bestimmten Regeln immer wieder neu ausgehandelt werden müssen. Dem idealisierenden Begriff der akephalen Gesellschaften zog Amborn daher auch den der polykephalen Gesell-

schaften vor (Amborn 2002), deren Widerstreit nie endet, aber eben darum in nachhaltige und selbstregulierende Formen der Anarchie mündet, wenn er in diskursiven Rechtspraktiken gefasst wird, für die Amborn beeindruckende ethnographische Beispiele fand (Amborn 2005, 2016).

Hermann Amborns wissenschaftliche Schwerpunkte waren weit gefächert: Sie reichten von der Agrarethnologie sowie der Anthropologie der Arbeit und des Handwerks über polykephale Gesellschaftsformen, Fragen der Identität, Ethik und sozio-religiöse Fragestellungen bis hin zur Oral History. All diese Bereiche betrachtete er jedoch nicht als voneinander isolierte, sondern ineinandergreifende und einander wechselseitig stützende Forschungsfelder (Amborn 2001, 2005, 2006a).

Die Spuren, die Hermann Amborn als ‚außerordentlicher' Wissenschaftler und Lehrer hinterlässt, reichen nicht nur über seine Lehrtätigkeit in München, sondern auch über die Grenzen rein akademischer Ethnologie hinaus: Zum einen inspirierte er bei Gastprofessuren in Hamburg, Kansas und Tübingen Studierende zu eigenen Projekten und einem ethisch engagierten Ethnologieverständnis, zum anderen hielten ihn weder der Ruhestand noch das fortgeschrittene Alter davon ab, seine theoretischen Ansätze weiter zu vertiefen und seine ethnologischen Seminare zu aktuellen Themen zuhause fortzusetzen. In seinen legendären ‚Küchenkolloquien' versammelten sich regelmäßig Studierende, jüngere Kolleg*innen, aber auch ethnologisch Interessierte aus anderen Disziplinen und Berufen. Parallel dazu entstand sein theoretisches Hauptwerk. *Das Recht als Hort der Anarchie* wurde 2016 in Hermann Amborns dreiundachtzigstem Lebensjahr publiziert und inzwischen in mehrere Sprachen übersetzt. Zu Diskussionen dieses Buches wurde Amborn nicht nur an Universitäten eingeladen, sondern auch in den *Roten Salon* des Berliner Volkstheaters. Eine enthusiastische Besprechung folgte im Deutschlandfunk Kultur, denn was Amborn in diesem Buch entfaltet, ist keine weltferne Utopie oder akademische Theorie, sondern ein durch empirische Feldforschung und historische Analyse wohl begründetes Beispiel dafür, wie das – in europäischen Staaten zunehmend prekäre – demokratische Zusammenleben von Menschen jenseits institutionalisierter Hierarchien gelingen kann.

Am 18.6.2024 ist Hermann Amborn gestorben.

Weggefährt*innen und ehemalige Schüler*innen vermissen einen integren, engagierten und menschenfreundlichen Vertrauten, der sich für andere interessierte und ihre jeweiligen Projekte unterstützte, ohne sie je der eigenen Agenda unterzuordnen. Die Ethnologie in Deutschland wurde durch seine Arbeiten zu Ethik, Anarchie und Südäthiopien nachhaltig bereichert und hat einen der wenigen Intellektuellen verloren, der das Fach über die eigenen akademischen Grenzen hinaus für einen kritischen gesellschaftlichen Dialog fruchtbar zu machen verstand.

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Buchbesprechungen/Reviews

Strümpell, Christian: Steel Town Adivasis: Industry and Inequality in Eastern India. 390 pp. London: Routledge, 2024. ISBN 978-10-32759-85-2

Christian Strümpell's *Steel Town Adivasis* is a major contribution to the literature on urban industrial India. Well-grounded, analytically cogent, it concerns issues that matter. Based on twenty months fieldwork among industrial workers over several stints since 2004 in the steel town of Rourkela in the state of Odisha, it focuses on the intersection between class, ethnicity and caste; on how the relationship between these axes of inequality, and their relative salience, changes with shifts in political economy. One of three mega steel plants commissioned under India's Second Five-Year Plan (1955-56), Rourkela was among those 'temples' to India's industrial modernity that Prime Minister Nehru enthusiastically promoted. Material foundation and inspirational model for 'a socialist pattern of society' based on secular principles, such projects supposedly heralded a brave new world that would set individuals free from atavistic collective identities based on caste, religion and ethnicity. That did not, of course, entirely work out – especially not in Rourkela.

The public sector Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) and its township were constructed with West German aid and expertise in Odisha's remote and rural northwestern highlands, to which it would bring 'development' and jobs. Previously part of a princely state, this 'tribal' area was incorporated into Odisha only one decade earlier. Land was requisitioned from 92 villages. Sixty per cent of those displaced were autochthonous Adivasis, members of various so-called Scheduled Tribes, one-quarter of them Christian converts. Scheduled Caste Hindus, 'Untouchables', accounted for another ten per cent. Displaced households were promised monetary compensation for their fields; a building subsidy and house plot in one of three resettlement colonies on the township periphery; arable land further out; and eventual appointment to a regular plant post of one male able-bodied member.

Initially, workers came from all over India. The temporary construction workforce reached 46,000. Some became regular production operatives. This permanent workforce grew to 39,000 by 1990, when the trend turned downwards as neo-liberal economic reforms bit. There were no compulsory redundancies, however, and the pay and conditions of those still in post remained privileged. Recruitment was largely suspended, and the labour of retirees was replaced by that of temporary contract workers who, without job security or other rights, could be required to work at higher intensity

for much lower wages. Satellite industries grew up in both public and private sectors. Though the package was less generous, other state-run factories also provided regular labour with organised sector employment rights, as did *some* private factories to *some* workers. The majority were casual labour. In addition, a considerable multiplier workforce in the unregulated informal sector supplied goods and services to the town and its industries. Historically, however, Rourkela had an unusually high proportion of households with secure formal-sector employment. Strümpell focuses on the fierce competition for such jobs, on what happened when that sector contracted, and on the varying importance at different junctures of the compulsions of class, caste and ethnicity for workers' lives. Baldly stated, the trajectory was from ethnicity trumping caste and class, to class crystallizing as the dominant axis of distinction.

One fundamental contradiction in Nehru's 'socialist' programme is immediately obvious. It was from the outset subverted by an industrial strategy that largely created, and certainly entrenched, a chasm *within* the manual workforce between on the one hand a privileged 'labour aristocracy', like regular RSP workers, and on the other hand the casual contract labour that worked alongside them in organised sector industry, and the coolies, cobblers and all the rest who worked outside it. In terms of pay, perks, prestige, job security and working conditions, the gap has been vast. RSP workers have middle-class incomes and often middle-class aspirations and life-styles. 'Middle-class' is how many identify and are identified by others. They are clearly distinct and have different interests from the informal 'labour class', a distinction reinforced by residential segregation, different consumption and educational standards, and divergent values. But it is not entirely stable, and Strümpell nuances his account with two instances when these different fractions of labour temporarily transcended their differences in response to the imperatives of ethnic politics or in opposition to management. Though over time the class boundary sharpened, there were episodes during which its edges were blunted.

At least in the company township, caste takes a back seat. Inter-caste dining is not an issue, hierarchy is downplayed, and breaches of caste endogamy widely condoned. The caveat is that Untouchables continue to be set apart, and inter-caste sociality is heavily inflected by regional ethnicity. Religious identities between Hindus and Muslims are deeply contentious and were the pretext for horrific bloodletting in 1964 when hundreds perished in an anti-Muslim pogrom. Its broader context was repeated violence between *regional* communities – and the context for that was competition for RSP posts. Rather than iconic of the new *India,* as Nehru intended, within a decade Rourkela epitomised *Odia* xenophobia. Billed as a catalyst to local employment, outsiders cornered the jobs - Punjabis, 'Madrasis' and Bengalis monopolizing the skilled and remunerative ones. Odias, including local Adivasis, were deeply resentful, and these 'foreigners' became their targets. It was, however, the so-called *Katkiyas* from coastal Odisha, who entered these backward highlands with the mindset of colonisers, who could best take advantage. The exigencies of electoral politics gave them significant leverage with the state government, which controlled local employment exchanges

and exerted considerable influence on RSP recruitment. By the end of the 1960s, that was heavily skewed in their favour, and they soon established a stranglehold on the pre-eminent union. Adivasis were left out in the cold. To them, *Katkiyas* were no less exploitative outsiders, and now Adivasis joined out-of-state 'foreigners' in competitive unions. That's been the not quite consistent pattern: rather than pursue a class agenda, unions have more commonly served as instruments of ethnic competition. Eventually, however, many Odias were themselves alienated by the corruption and loud-mouthed chauvinism of their union, which was ousted; the early cohorts of non-Odia workers retired, and space opened up for new Adivasi recruitment. During Strümpell's fieldwork, the workforce was overwhelmingly Odia and Adivasi. Ethnic identities remained crucial; ethnic stereotypes greatly influenced postings to different departments and the assignment of shopfloor tasks. Odias are disproportionately sent to the more forgiving mills, while Adivasis – as befits their 'natures' ('more brawn than brain') – go to 'hot' shops with the toughest conditions (against which their alcohol consumption is prophylactic).

A particular strength of Strümpell's analysis concerns the way that space refracts class and ethnicity. Aside from the crucial division between a salubrious company township with many amenities and the slummier resettlement colonies, we learn of middle-class developments for retired RSP workers, densely populated commercial and semi-criminalized neighbourhoods around the station, squatter *basti*s built on encroached RSP land and vestiges of erstwhile villages. Residential spaces are often ethnic enclaves. Though early on the township accommodated many non-Odias, it became a pre-eminently Odia space, socially, culturally and linguistically. Local Advasis built in the resettlement colonies (or in squatter *basti*s), where they were joined by Adivasis incomers. There were too few RSP quarters for the whole workforce, though it was also a positive preference. Who wanted to live alongside overbearing Odias? Indeed, at the planning stage an educated Adivasi elite insisted that to preserve their culture they needed their own space. The upshot was not only residential *segregation* between Odias and Adivasis, but also class *integration* between Adivasi RSP employees who lived alongside Adivasi informal-sector labour in the colonies. That changed. As the RSP workforce shrunk, township quarters became easily available, and Adivasis – both new recruits from outside and established employees living elsewhere – eagerly moved into them, mainly because township schools are far superior and the kids more likely to acquire the qualifications and social polish that will advantage them in an increasingly competitive job market. Emptied of RSP workers, the colonies have become 'sinks' for the 'labour class'. At the same time, these upwardly mobile township Adivasis have distanced themselves from their uncouth colony cousins and dropped support for the renewed campaigns of the latter - campaigns demanding that allegedly unfulfilled promises of plant jobs in lieu of their land should finally be honoured. Class has progressively superseded ethnicity as the mainspring of identity and driver of social action.

The tenacity of ethnic stereotyping, however, makes it hard for township Adivasis to feel secure in their 'middle-classness'. Tribal identity remains an indelible 'mark

of Cain', as is reported of Dalit ('Untouchable') identity in one of Rourkela's sister steel plants. Disappointingly, Strümpell takes the comparison no further, and we must speculate whether the two cases are as similar as he implies. Of Rourkela *Dalits* we hear very little; and – unless by class – little more about the way in which the category 'Adivasi' is internally differentiated today, though we do learn that the RSP workforce includes representatives of a dozen different 'tribes' which in the past were to some degree hierarchized. The impression one gets from Strümpell's account, however, is that such differences no longer count for much – at least not in the face of the wider society. But how true would that be of urban Dalits? Is there not much in the comparative literature that might suggest more intractable differences between them? The political implications of that would matter.

Inevitably there are gaps, but overall this is an impressive book and essential reading for anybody with any interest in industry and inequality in South Asia. A pity about the quality of the copy-editing and proof-reading.

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Vepřek, Libuše Hannah: At the Edge of AI. Human Computation Systems and Their Intraverting Relations.
330 pp. Bielefeld: transcript, 2024. ISBN: 978-3-8376-7228-2

Given the overwhelming number of publications on the rise of AI as the most recent instance of sweeping digital transformation, why should you read this particular book? The answer is that Libuše Vepřek's *At the Edge of AI: Human Computation Systems and Their Intraverting Relations* not only provides a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of perspectives on technology and AI from cultural anthropology and from Science and Technology Studies (STS), it also introduces the concept of 'intraversions' in a thoughtful consideration of the complexities and transience of human–machine configurations. This makes her work a meaningful contribution also to the sociology of technology, as it addresses one of its hardest problems: how to capture agency in complex, changing systems whose future is hard to predict. Vepřek also offers valuable insights into the everyday practices of the many actors involved in human computation (HC). These systems, which are often situated within citizen science and feature game-like elements, rely on networks of both human and non-human actors. They aim to solve complex problems with a level of accuracy and scale that would be impossible without such hybrid collaboration.

The book comprises eight chapters, beginning with a thorough grounding in theories of human–nonhuman agency and technology assemblage, followed by an overview of the methodology and an in-depth ethnographic analysis of three HC case

studies: *Foldit* (University of Washington), *ARTigo* (LMU Munich), and *Stall Catchers* (Human Computation Institute, Ithaca, New York).

Vepřek's approach is grounded in the writings and thinkings of German empirical cultural studies and European ethnology. Central to her theoretical framework is thus the conceptualization of technology as a "cross-cutting phenomenon" (Klaus Schönberger), emphasizing its pervasive influence across various domains of social life (cf. Manfred Faßler). Additionally, Vepřek builds on the understanding that human experience is inherently shaped and mediated by technology (cf. Thomas Hengartner). A key analytical and methodological anchor in her research is Stefan Beck's complex situational analysis of technology use as influenced by both practice and meaning. Vepřek also draws on Anne Dippel and Sonia Fizek's notion of *interferences* to describe the overlapping dynamics of work and play in digital environments.

From there, she integrates writings from scholars such as Lucy Suchman, Donna Haraway, and others in Science and Technology Studies. Her concept of intraversions is based on the notion of *assemblage*, and she applies a *co-laborative* ethnographic method (cf. Jörg Niewöhner) that involves and engages not only with the participants in these systems, but also with their designers and maintainers.

In *Stall Catchers*, a citizen science game, participants analyse Alzheimer's disease research data presented as short video sequences in a game format. They inspect blood vessels in the videos for blockages, characterizing them as either "flowing" or "stalled." Here, humans and computers are combined in novel ways to solve a data-analysis problem. The introduction of AI into the system reshapes these relations further, creating partnerships between humans and AI and redistributing roles and responsibilities. These shifts rely as much on the designers' and developers' imaginations as on the participants' active engagement and the technological affordances available to them. It is precisely this complex and evolving assemblage that Vepřek is interested in:

> "As a concept, intraversions refer to the processual forward movements and shifts within relations between humans and technology. These movements and shifts result from the introduction of new computational capabilities and through the potential arising from existing relations directly forming based on human actors' practices or algorithmic and material affordances." (p. 16)

Together, human and non-human actors form dynamic and contingent relations that constitute HC systems. These movements, it is shown, involve redistributions of agency, shifting role assignments between subjects and objects, and reconfigurations of tasks and practices between human and non-human actors.

The research question guiding the book is how HC systems in the field of citizen science

> "are formed in the interplay of different human (…) and nonhuman (or more-than-human) actors to determine how they are 1) imagined and developed as new forms of hybrid intelligence (HI) and 2), at the same time, negotiated in everyday life and

ethical practice in the entanglements of play and science. 3) I investigate the role of trust in the continuous formation processes." (p. 15)

While this might initially appear to be a collection of incommensurable themes, Vepřek skilfully weaves them together through the concept of *intraversions*, showing how volatile and flexible human–machine relations coalesce over time to form functioning HC systems.

Non-human actors in HC systems are, she states, "neither neutral nor passive objects only acted upon" (p. 16). While acknowledging their agency, she treats it as asymmetrical to human agency, following Karen Barad. The dynamic interactions between human and non-human actors lead to very diverse human–technology relations that result in the formation of HC systems such as *Stall Catchers*, which in turn reshape these very relations. This continuous becoming of the assemblage takes place in a space marked by both productivity and tension, due to the differing "affordances, expectations, and goals" inherent in play and science within citizen science games.

Various processes then influence the ever-changing assemblages, sometimes strengthening them, sometimes pulling them apart. One such process Vepřek identifies is the development of trust mechanisms, which must evolve alongside the intraverting relations in the systems.

The methodological approach employed in this study is a praxiographically inspired co-laborative ethnography, drawing on the conceptualization of praxis articulated by Beck, Niewöhner and Sørensen (2012), who define praxis as a form of human existence that is manifoldly situated. This ethnographic practice emphasizes direct experience while remaining attentive to the material, historical and cultural conditions that shape it. In addition to this ethnographic orientation, Vepřek incorporates experimental approaches to digital data, including code analysis and the examination of game chat interactions.

Like other sociotechnical systems, HC systems "are constantly in a state of becoming" despite the often linear narratives behind their design. The systems come into being through the interactions and negotiations of multiple actors, both human and non-human, leading to the systems never being closed or completed. This was clearly observed in HC games, where participants actively reconfigured the systems through creative engagement – tinkering, modding (i.e. modifying hard- and software), and other forms of appropriation – thus forging new forms of human–technology relations beyond what the designers envisioned.

While such dynamics may characterize many sociotechnical systems, HC systems are particularly intriguing in that they are not meant to be complete. They are conceived as open-ended, experimental spaces where new ideas about human–technology interaction can be tested. Neither the human nor the AI is merely an assistant in these hybrid systems, which are continually undergoing *intraversions*. As such, systems like

Stall Catchers and *Foldit* serve as laboratories for the co-evolution of human–technology relations.

An analysis of these systems shows that human–technology relationships evolve alongside system development. In *Foldit*, for example, participants progressed from passive users of automated protein models to active collaborators, working symbiotically with scripted tools and AI. Similarly, in *Stall Catchers*, participants initially supported machine processes, then trained machine-learning models, and eventually engaged in collaborative – or competitive – interactions with AI components.

Importantly, Vepřek's notion of *intraversions* includes not only participant–technology relations but also those involving developers and researchers. These relationships, too, evolve and "change and intravert as projects evolve, often in mutually reinforcing ways."

Does Vepřek's analysis address issues of power? While she does not offer an explicitly political critique of how these assemblages are used, by whom and to what ends, she lays the theoretical groundwork for such an analysis. By conceptualizing HC systems as non-monolithic and in constant flux, she shows how transformation always does happen – and once it does, it allows for interventions:

> „As the examples illustrate, intraversions are processes that, even when stabilized for a certain period of time, eventually present openings for new tweaks and improvements; the circumstances in which they occur tend to actively invite, almost require, such change." (245)

In line with this insight, Vepřek considers it crucial for digital anthropologists and STS researchers to move beyond merely advising on ethical or cultural questions. Instead, they should actively engage in shaping the very socio-computational systems they study.

Vepřek's analysis shows that the raison d'être of HC systems is to remain at the edge of both scientific research and technological innovation. They act as laboratories to experiment with possibilities for human–machine interactions. However, the systems she studies are shaped not only by their everyday becoming, but also by the continuous pursuit of pushing the systems toward a goal, an abstract idea of ideal human–technology relations that has yet to be materialized (and may or may not be reached, one guesses). In this sense they are also "at the edge" of becoming something that is, as yet, still imagined.

In addition, the book offers an impressive synthesis of key contributions in STS, the sociology of technology and anthropology, bringing together German and international thought in a compelling way. Vepřek demonstrates how relational conceptualizations of technology from German empirical cultural studies and broader STS scholarship can be fruitfully aligned, offering a situated, nuanced analysis that connects the everyday with questions of infrastructuring and sociotechnical assemblage.

This book not only provides an insightful analysis of a highly innovative field of human–machine interaction, it also leaves us with a powerful conceptual tool to continue thinking about agency in human–technology interactions. I am looking forward to seeing the concept of *intraversions* applied in future research across a wide range of other fields of practice.

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Whitehouse, Harvey: Inheritance: The Evolutionary Origins of the Modern World. 358 pp. London: Hutchinson Heinemann, 2024. ISBN 978-1-529-15222-7

In this book, Harvey Whitehouse sets forth a tantalising proposition: that by learning how humanity has evolved, we might be able to use our natural biases to reduce friction among ourselves and with the environment we are a part of. Our current path, Whitehouse says, is like a herd stampeding towards a cliff: it is up to us if we end up falling or if we change course before it is too late. The content relating to the subtitle, the evolutionary origins of the modern world, is the basis on which his proposal is built. Only by knowing how we got here can we envision a way of using the same traits that brought us here to alter our direction. Whitehouse builds his ambitious argument as an anthropological jigsaw puzzle, not limited to a single site or society, but combining his own observations and studies from different corners of our world.

Weaving together insights from several decades of research that combines ethnographic observations with experiments, Whitehouse pieces together a *longue durée* portrait of our species' cultural evolution. He argues that three natural biases – which have been repeatedly observed in all human societies – explain our path up until now: conformism, religiosity and tribalism. He calls them natural biases because they describe deep-rooted cognitive needs to conform, to believe and to belong (p. 4). Conformism refers to how we avidly copy others in order to fit in or be accepted. Religiosity designates our inclination to acquire and spread ideas about supernatural beings, influences or meanings. Tribalism is a profound feeling of belonging to a group that may lead to a willingness to risk life and limb on battlefields. These three biases, Whitehouse argues, have enabled us to cooperate and function in increasingly large-scale societies.

The structure of the book develops the three biases in three different sections: the first explains the mechanics of the evolution of each bias; the second shows how each bias is relevant in our lives; and the third suggests potential adaptations that could improve our relations among ourselves and those with other species and our planet. Whitehouse also adds an epilogue to explain that the scale of our social world is of crucial importance, arguing that, having lived in megasocieties, with millions of in-

habitants, humanity could now become a Teratribe, in which the billions now living on Earth would unite to address issues common to all.

In light of events of the last few months (as of March 2025), when neopopulist regimes around the world are seeking to divide rather than unite, such good wishes appear farther away than ever before. We appear to be entering a time of Big Man geopolitics where science is put in doubt as has not happened for a long time, and where raw power is exercised indiscriminately. Then again, this might be a phase that has been surmounted and laid behind us. In any case, it is refreshing to explore potential ways of using the same cognitive toolkit we have developed over millennia to seek solutions to some of our collective challenges.

This volume also offers insights into Whitehouse's unusual yet highly productive and provocative anthropological career. He describes this book as one of 'unnatural history' because it refers not only to the biological evolution of human psychology, but also, and crucially, to processes of cultural evolution. 'This is not a case of nature versus culture, but of understanding how the effects of nature and culture work together', he argues (p. 7). With first-hand descriptions of field research, collaborations and findings that helped inform each of his argumentative steps, Whitehouse explains his choices, doubts, findings and decisions along the way. Previously labelled 'cognitive anthropology', his work engages with experiments or quantitative studies that are perhaps closer to those of psychology or other disciplines. By insisting on an anthropological perspective, however, his inquiries pay close attention to how symbolism is lived in practice by examining people's interpretations, contexts, customs and actions. One of the tools he uses is the Global History Databank he set up at Oxford University, which is a massive collection of historical and ethnographic information.

With this wealth of data, Whitehouse depicts the necessary cultural evolutionary steps that have allowed humanity to live in increasingly larger and more interconnected groups. Each step was crucial to gain the upper hand in a particular moment in our evolution, and we now live with their accumulated legacies. One example is imitation or, as Whitehouse calls it, 'copycat culture'. In his view, humans copy the behaviour of others they deem older, wiser or more important. As he claims in his previous book, we are all ritual animals (Whitehouse 2021) and reproduce what others do in order to be accepted in their group. Of course, other animals also imitate behaviours that will provide them with food or other benefits. The difference is in what psychologists call 'overimitation', that is, 'the copying of behaviour that doesn't contribute to an end goal' (p. 29). As such practices add up, Whitehouse argues, conformism takes shape. But the type of conformism Whitehouse describes is not an extreme following-the-rules type, but rather a wish to belong in a group. Similar conceptual build-ups sustain the other two natural biases that are central to the volume.

Whitehouse illustrates each of his argumentative points with ethnographic vignettes of his own fieldwork, as well as experiments or observations. One of the experiments was among inmates in the UK participating in the Twinning Project, which aims to

twin every prison in England and Wales with their local professional football club to teach ex-offenders coaching skills that could help them after their release from prison (pp. 289-290). Set up as a collaboration, this study showed how routinised ritual practices helped shape future-mindedness and reduce impulsiveness among participants. These traits meant participants behaved better in prison and were less prone to join criminal groups. This is one of the cases where Whitehouse describes collaborations with former students and other scholars from different academic disciplines, explaining his aims, adjustments and findings at each stage. Such openness is refreshing, as it lays bare the difficult path of sociocultural research. A constant reference in his book is his own doctoral research in Papua New Guinea, alongside reflections of what he has learned in hindsight. This narrative style, interweaving his own experiences, observations and reflections with references to historical records, ethnographic literature, or experiments, adds credence and relevance to his own analyses.

A key element of Whitehouse's argument is that there is currently a ritualistic vacuum for collective ceremonies that are crucial for increasingly large societies. The rituals that Anderson identified as central to nation states' imagined communities (Anderson 2006) are only fragmentary and uneven across countries. In Whitehouse's view, large-scale religious rituals which provide a stronger symbolic glue to bring together people are lacking. A similar argument has been made by Seligman and Weller (2012) in their book about ambiguity. Seligman and Weller argue that modern systems have established such static criteria in bureaucratized rituals that they significantly reduce the much-needed ambiguities that have historically made life more manageable. What Whitehouse brings to this discussion is a formidable scaffolding of evidence that elucidates our own cultural evolution.

Whitehouse's proposal to extend our community to include not only all humans but also all natural beings seems extremely idealistic at the moment. Nevertheless, it is intriguing to reflect on our current predicaments in light of the conceptual scaffolding he provides. Could it be that new social media rituals with the mass concerted actions and reactions of millions of participants are filling in the gaps left by other symbolic institutions (mainly religions but also nation states)? But if this is the case, how could we break the vicious cycles of conspiracy-theory rabbit-holing? Are such practices not also reinforcing our natural biases towards conformism, religiosity and tribalism? Like many anthropologists, Whitehouse openly argues in favour of taking lessons from all walks of life or cultural settings. Perhaps by noticing how cycles of imitation and changing allegiances have occurred throughout human evolution, we could concert an effort to stop the destructive impulses of neopopulisms.

In any case, I highly recommend this book to anyone wishing to grasp a bird's eye view of human cultural evolution. As many have insisted beforehand, the best anthropology must take history into account. It is no coincidence that some of the brightest minds in our field have gifted us creative narratives of our species' path through the

ages, like David Graeber's *Debt* (2011), James Scott's *Against the grain* (2017) or Marshall Sahlins' *Apologies to Thucydides* (2004).

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Loyen, Ulrich van: Nachkriegsschamanismus. Beiträge zu einer Kultur der Niederlage.
151 Seiten. Wien: Turia + Kant, 2024. ISBN: 978-3-98514-084-8

Dass wir gegenwärtig eine Zeit der globalen Zusammenbrüche und eine fundamentale Erschütterung sicher geglaubter Werte und politischer Machtkonstellationen und Institutionen, bis hin zur viel zitierten Krise der Demokratie, erleben, steht außer Frage. Der Ethnologe und Siegener Medienwissenschaftler Ulrich van Loyen diagnostiziert nun gar eine „Kultur der Niederlage", die er durch die Konjunktur der wiedergängerischen Figur des Schamanen markiert und von einem Revival der Indigenisierung begleitet sieht. Das bedarf einer Erläuterung.

Das schmale Essay-Bändchen, das letztes Jahr unter dem Titel *Nachkriegsschamanismus. Beiträge zu einer Kultur der Niederlage* bei Turia + Kant erschienen ist, steckt voller bemerkenswerter Gegenwartsbeobachtungen und anregender Ideen zur Internationalisierung und historischen Instrumentalisierung der Figur des weltenwandernden Heilers. Van Loyens Ausgangsthese bezieht sich auf die westeuropäische Faszination für Schamanismus nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, die mit einer versuchten Ent-Schuldigung der Täter durch die Rückbesinnung auf alternative Modernen und der Überhöhung indigenen Wissens zusammenhänge. Von den Alliierten und der Geschich-

te besiegt, so van Loyen, verstünden sich Verantwortliche und Schuldige nunmehr selbst als Indigene oder würden zu deren Fürsprechern, suchten nach Legitimation und knüpften an schamanistische Schlüsselkompetenzen – wie beispielsweise den kontrollierten Selbstverlust oder die Fähigkeit, das Abhandenkommen menschlicher Handlungsmacht aufzuhalten – an. Diese auf den ersten Blick zugegebenermaßen steile These erweitert er dann zu einer globaleren Bestandsaufnahme im Zeitalter des Anthropozäns. Und damit wird es dann erst richtig interessant.

Geschickt verwebt und aktualisiert er seine initialen Überlegungen zum Nachkriegsschamanismus mit zwei Ereignissen aus der jüngeren (Medien-)Geschichte: Zum einen verweist er auf die ikonische Selbstinszenierung des so genannten QAnon-Schamanen Jake Angeli, der sich im Januar 2021 mit seiner Bemalung und seiner Kopftracht aus Bisonhörnern und Kojotenfell medienwirksam am Sturm auf das Kapitol in Washington beteiligte. Tätowiert mit Motiven aus der nordischen Mythologie wie Thorshammer, Sonnenrad und Hrungnir-Herz, erkennbaren Emblemen rechtsextremer neopaganer Gruppen, avancierte er zur Personifikation des gewaltsamen Protests gegen den vermeintlich gestohlenen Wahlsieg von Donald Trump. Zum anderen ruft van Loyen die Schlagzeilen in Erinnerung, als Wladimir Putin und sein damaliger Verteidigungsminister Sergej Schoigu einen Schamanen in Tuwa aufsuchten, um sich vor dem Angriffskrieg auf die Ukraine spirituell beraten zu lassen. In beiden Fällen sei das Auftauchen von Schamanen kein Zufall; Putin und Trump annektierten diese Figur in Phasen der gewaltsamen politischen Ermächtigung und ließen sie dann aber wieder verschwinden. Beide Male handelt es sich um den hegemonialen Zugriff auf lokal gebundenes Wissen, beziehungsweise dessen (Wieder-)Aneignung als paradoxe Reaktion auf die „Zerstörung der Kulturen der Anderen“ (Harvey 2017: 28). Während in Nordamerika im Zuge siedlungskolonialistischer Expansion die indigene Bevölkerung und ihre spirituellen Expert:innen ausgebeutet, vertrieben, domestiziert und systematisch vernichtet wurden, verschwanden in der Sowjetunion ebenso wie in China Schamanen über Jahrzehnte in Umerziehungslagern. Wenn deren Wissen jetzt von den mächtigsten Männern der Welt als folkloristisch überformtes kulturelles Repertoire abgerufen wird, ist das laut van Loyen Symptom einer globalen „Kultur der Niederlage“. Einst von Schivelbusch für die „Niederlagenklassiker“, den amerikanischen Süden nach 1865, Frankreich nach 1871 und Deutschland nach 1918 verwendet (Schivelbusch 2001), weitet van Loyen die Bezeichnung zu einem apokalyptischen Kulturbegriff aus, der den gegenwärtigen Ist-Zustand beschreibt.

In Zeiten, in denen die drohende menschengemachte Klimakatastrophe, die Krise des Grenzregimes und die immer größer werdende Ungerechtigkeit der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse die Menschheit an den Abgrund führt, wird die Überlegenheit amerindianischer Kosmologien postuliert und eine erdumspannende indigene Ökumene projiziert. Van Loyen liest dieses Revival der Indigenisierung als eine gesamtgesellschaftliche Strategie zur Verwindung des Scheiterns neoliberaler Wachstumsideologien und zugleich als Modus der Säkularisierung, die neben Aktivisten, Folkloristen,

Politikern auch die Wissenschaft erreicht hat: Animistische Onto-Epistemologie oder animistische Sensibilitäten als Gegenmodell zur kapitalistischen Moderne.

Die Fähigkeit, mit nicht-menschlichen oder mehr-als-menschlichen Entitäten Allianzen einzugehen, erscheint hier als eine ethische und politische Notwendigkeit: Rettung naht nicht in Form von Künstlicher Intelligenz oder durch die Phantasie von Weltraum-Kolonien, sondern durch die (Rück-)Besinnung auf ein Wissen, in dem die Mitwelt als lebendig und aktiv erfahren wird. Jetzt ist van Loyen aber kein Neo-Animist, sondern ein Italienforscher, der sich für die Verschränkung von Wissenschaft, Kunst und Politik und dabei besonders für den Austausch zwischen den Lebenden und den Toten interessiert. In drei Essays wendet er den Schamanismus als heuristische Denkfigur an, um einen Totenkult in Kampanien, den Kult um den die Stigmata Christi tragenden süditalienischen Kapuzinermönch Padre Pio und schließlich das Kunstschaffen von Jopseh Beuys zu analysieren. Als Äquivalente des zirkumpolaren, eurasischen Schamanismus in der abendländischen Kulturgeschichte sind die von ihm beschriebenen Schamanen in erster Linie Architekten des Selbst, die in exzentrischer Erhabenheit als Einzelne stellvertretend Abbitte in einer postfaschistischen Gesellschaft leisten.

Van Loyens Buch ist dann besonders erhellend, wenn man es im Kontext der beiden fast zeitgleich erschienenen philosophischen Plädoyers *Die Überlegenheit der Unterlegenen. Eine Theorie der Gegengemeinschaften* (Suhrkamp, 2024) von Daniel Loick und Andreas Webers *Indigenialität* (Matthes & Seitz, 2024) liest. In allen drei Texten wird auf unterschiedliche Art und mit sehr unterschiedlicher Komplexität skizziert, wie dem hegemonialen Blick verborgene Wissensbestände zugänglich gemacht und Unterdrückungs- und Krisenerfahrungen umgedeutet werden können. Loick, Professor für politische Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie, spricht von epistemischen Gegentraditionen und beruft sich vor allem auf Wissensbestände indigener Bevölkerungen, die Wissensproduktion von Arbeiter:innen, Frauen, Queers und rassifizierten Gruppen, die sich ihrerseits wiederum auf Theoriebestände z.B. der *Black Radical Tradition*, feministische und queere Theorien, post- und dekoloniale Theorien, Theorien der *disability studies* und ökologische Theoriebildungen berufen können. Sein Hauptargument, hier etwas krude vereinfacht zusammengefasst, lautet, dass Unterprivilegierte oft Zugang zu Einsichten und ethischen Haltungen besitzen, die Privilegierten fehle. Mit etwas Phantasie kann van Loyens Schamanismusanalyse durchaus als Phänomen solch epistemischer Gegentraditionen gelesen werden (z.B. ekstatische Heiligenkulte), das von Subalternen als Werkzeug zum Ausloten utopischer Möglichkeiten und zur eigenen Subjektivierung eingesetzt wird.

Ganz anders der Biologe und Publizist Andreas Weber, der mit heißer Nadel aus verschiedenen sozialanthropologischen Texten ein quasi-religiöses Traktat samt obskurer Handlungsanleitung strickt. Während Weber dafür plädiert, „das Indigene" im eigenen Denken zu mobilisieren und sogar zu spüren glaubt, wie sich in ihm die „eigene Indigenialität regt" (Weber 2024: 45), sieht van Loyen mit großer Klarheit die (identitäre) Gefahr der Selbstromantisierung und erkennt die Versuche okziden-

taler Exkulpierung, die sich jeder politischen und ethischen Verantwortung entzieht. Webers Traktat lässt sich im Grunde als eine naive Exekution der Selbst-Indigenisierungsthese van Loyens lesen. Was bei van Loyen als „Selbstaneignung durch Fremderfahrung" (van Loyen 2024: 88) beschrieben wird, wird bei Weber zu Selbsterfahrung durch Fremdaneignung.

Daniel Loick geht es im Gegensatz dazu nicht um eine Aneignung von Alterität, Indigenität oder gar Indigenialität, sondern er wechselt die Perspektive und erforscht das Wissen, die Strategien und die Ästhetiken von sogenannten Gegengemeinschaften und deren Erzählungen der Niederlage. Auch sein Projekt unterliegt der Gefahr der Romantisierung, die er aber durchschaut und im Kontext abolitionistischer Theorie mit konkreten politischen Anforderungen und Lösungsansätzen verknüpft. Anstelle der Aneignung der Position der 'Underdogs' und Marginalisierten ist seine politische Vision die Abschaffung von Institutionen und Herrschaftsverhältnissen, die Diskriminierung, Zwang und Unterdrückung erst ermöglichen. In allen drei Abhandlungen wird die Rückbesinnung auf ein anderes, gegenhegemoniales Wissen als einzig gangbarer Weg für eine bessere, gerechtere Welt beschrieben. Kitschige Phrasen à la „ganzheitliche Wirklichkeit" oder „ökologische Lebenskunst" wie sie Weber als Zukunftsvisionen und Antidot gegen Krisen beschwört, sucht man sowohl bei Loick als auch bei van Loyen allerdings vergeblich. Die beiden letzteren argumentierten entlang konkreter Beispiele, anhand derer sie die kulturellen Übersetzungsleistungen und funktionale Formen subalterner Sozialität aufzeigen.

Es ist ein Verdienst von Ulrich van Loyen, dass er Wissenschaft auch in der Öffentlichkeit betreibt. Seine Analysen, Reiseberichte und Rezensionen erscheinen regelmäßig in den Feuilletons der FAZ und der Süddeutschen Zeitung und auch in der Berlin Review, einer tollen neuen Zeitschrift für Bücher und Ideen, die ihren englischsprachigen Vorbildern wie der London Review of Books und der New York Review of Books in nichts nachsteht. Als Medienwissenschaftler und -anthropologe weiß er die Printmedien als eine Plattform für seine Bestandsaufnahmen gegenwärtiger Entwicklungen zu nutzen. Es bleibt zu hoffen, dass sich zunehmend mehr Stimmen aus unserem Fach finden, die die globalen Faschistisierungs- und Autoritarisierungstendenzen nicht nur attestieren, sondern ihnen etwas entgegenzusetzen haben.

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Pérez, Miguel: The Right to Dignity. Housing Struggles, City Making, and Citizenship in Urban Chile.
264 Seiten. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022. ISBN: 9781503631533

In *The Right to Dignity: Housing Struggles, City Making, and Citizenship in Urban Chile* untersucht Miguel Pérez die sozialen Mobilisierungen um das Recht auf Wohnraum in Santiago de Chile. Dafür nimmt er die Auseinandersetzungen um Wohnraum der einkommensschwachen Stadtbewohner:innen, der sogenannten *pobladores*, in den Fokus. Perez veranschaulicht, wie die *pobladores* seit Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts Kämpfe um Wohnraum und soziale Anerkennung geführt und neu ausgestaltet haben. Ein zentrales Anliegen von Pérez ist die Darstellung der sich über die Zeit wandelnden politischen Subjektivierungsprozesse der *pobladores*. Er veranschaulicht, wie sich die Bewegung im Laufe der Jahrzehnte transformierte: von Landbesetzungen des *Moviemento de pobladores* in der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts hin zu rezenteren Auseinandersetzungen innerhalb staatlicher Wohnbauprogramme, die durch staatliche Subventionen Hauseigentümergemeinschaften ermöglichten. Pérez zufolge sei das Konzept *poblador* als eine politisch aufgeladene Kategorie der Subjektivierung zu begreifen, die einen performativen Charakter trägt und über die Zeit hinweg in verschiedenen historischen Kontexten agentiv reartikuliert wurde. Ursprünglich mit politischen Forderungen verbunden, wird sie im Laufe der Zeit zu einer verallgemeinernden, klassenspezifischen Bezeichnung für arme Stadtbewohner:innen, bevor sie im Zuge neuer Mobilisierungen erneut als politisch-emanzipatorische Selbstzuschreibung aktiviert wird. Er zeichnet die Entwicklung der Bewegung über Jahrzehnte hinweg nach und zeigt auf, wie sich neue Formen urbaner Staatsbürgerschaft herausbildeten, die auf dem Recht gründen, dort zu bleiben, wo einst die Eltern bauten.

Insgesamt entwickelt das Buch eine überzeugende historisierende Perspektive, die die politische Rahmung, die wechselnde Zusammensetzung der Bewegung sowie ihren Wandel präzise nachzeichnet. Besonders interessant sind die Rückbezüge, durch die sich viele *pobladores* als Träger territorialer Rechte verstehen; Rechte, die von ihren Eltern und Großeltern erworben wurden. Die durch Versammlungen und kollektive Arbeit verstärkten Subjektivierungsprozesse hätten laut Pérez dazu geführt, dass sich Bewohner:innen auch heute im Rahmen staatlicher Programme als Individuen mit

einem „Recht auf Stadt“ verstehen. Ein Recht, das sie über das Vermächtnis früherer Wohnraumkämpfe für sich beanspruchen.

Pérez nutzt die historische Perspektive um Wohnraumkrisen und die damit verbundenen urbanen sozialen Mobilisierungen in Chile zu kontextualisieren. Er beschreibt detailliert, wie während der Militärdiktatur Pinochets (1973–1990) eine neoliberale Umstrukturierung stattfand, die das Wohnen von einem sozialen Recht zu einer marktorientierten Ware wandelte. Laut Peréz hätten auch die Regierungen der Nachdiktaturzeit die bestehende Politik fortgeführt, allerdings unter veränderten Vorzeichen. So seien neue, auf Subventionen basierende Programme eingeführt worden, die zwar neuen Wohnraum schufen zugleich jedoch ambivalente Effekte gezeigt hätten: Einerseits hätten sie Bewohner:innen über kreditfinanzierte Eigenheime in neue finanzielle Abhängigkeiten gebracht. Andererseits sei es im Zuge dieser Maßnahmen zu einer systematischen Verdrängung einkommensschwacher Bevölkerungsgruppen in infrastrukturell benachteiligte, periphere Stadtteile gekommen.

Während Pérez für die historischen Kontextualisierungen vor allem auf Archivmaterial zurückgreift, basieren die ethnografischen Teile des Buchs auf teilnehmender Beobachtung in Nachbarschaftszentren, Versammlungen und während Protestveranstaltungen zwischen 2011 und 2015. Ein zentrales Konzept, das Pérez aus dieser Forschung entwickelt, ist *vida digna* (Leben in Würde). Es dient den *pobladores* als politischer Bezugspunkt, der über die Artikulation materieller Bedürfnisse hinausgeht und Ansprüche auf Gleichbehandlung, soziale Teilhabe und Anerkennung zusammenführt. *Vida digna* steht als Gegenentwurf zu einem urbanen Ordnungsmodell, das Armut externalisiert und soziale Rechte marktorientiert organisiert. Es verweist auf das Recht auf ein würdiges Leben, Zugehörigkeit und auf das Bleiberecht. Die Frage, wie *pobladores* neue Formen urbaner Staatsbürgerschaft entwickeln, erörtert Pérez unter Rückgriff auf Konzepte von Henri Lefebvre, insbesondere dessen Idee vom „Recht auf Stadt“ und von „Stadtbürgerschaft“. Bürgerschaft wird dabei nicht als rechtlicher Status, sondern als praxisorientierte Aneignung und Mitgestaltung des urbanen Raums verstanden. In diesem Sinne erscheint die Stadt nicht nur als geografischer Ort, sondern als politisches Feld, in dem Zugehörigkeit und Ansprüche verhandelt werden.

Diese Form urbaner Bürgerschaft ist jedoch nicht frei von Widersprüchen. Wie Pérez zeigt, werden innerhalb der Bewegung der *pobladores* moralische Ideale wie Fleiß, Verlässlichkeit und Disziplin eingefordert und belohnt. Damit wirken neoliberale Werte, wie die Vorstellung, dass soziale Zugehörigkeit durch individuelle Leistung verdient werden muss, in emanzipatorische, kollektiv gedachte Praktiken hinein. Pérez fasst diese Ambivalenzen mit dem Konzept „*politics of effort*“: ein System der Rechteverteilung, das auf Narrativen persönlicher und kollektiver Anstrengung basiert. Das moralische Selbstbild der Bewegung formiere sich entlang der Figur des verantwortungsvollen Subjekts, das seine Familie priorisiere und sich aktiv im Viertel engagiere. Politische Teilhabe, etwa durch Beteiligung an Wohnraumbewegungen und der Mitgestaltung des urbanen Raums, gelte als Ausdruck politischer Handlungsfähigkeit und

legitimiere das Recht auf Verbleib im Herkunftsviertel. Kollektive Organisation und gemeinschaftliche Arbeit stärkten dieses Selbstverständnis zusätzlich.

Insgesamt zeigt das Buch, wie sich marginalisierte Menschen in einem von Marktlogiken dominierten Umfeld aktiv politisch zusammenschließen, Hoffnung schöpfen, Solidarität leben, neue Formen des Zusammenlebens erproben und ein Leben in Würde fordern. Pérez zeigt, wie der langjährige Kampf der Wohnraumbewegung Teil eines größeren Unmuts über soziale Ungleichheit ist. Es gelingt Pérez die politischen Alltagspraxen der *pobladores* in ethnografischen Vignetten anschaulich zu machen. Etwas mehr Einblick in alltägliche Lebensrealitäten jenseits der politischen Praxis, etwa in familiäre, ökonomische oder affektive Dimensionen hätte das Verständnis für die komplexen Lebenslagen der Beteiligten vertieft. Auch Aspekte wie Geschlecht, „Rassifizierung" oder interne Hierarchien innerhalb der Bewegung werden nur oberflächlich thematisiert. Die Ambivalenz zwischen kollektiver Zugehörigkeit und individueller Lebensführung sowie die doppelte Wirkung moralischer Ideale, sowohl einbindend als auch ausschließend, wird im Buch zwar angedeutet, dennoch bleiben individuelle Handlungsmomente, in denen sich Einzelne moralischen Erwartungen entziehen, Frust erfahren, sich aus der Bewegung zurückziehen oder nach dem Umzug sozialen Aufstieg erfahren, eher randständig. Gerade diese Perspektiven hätten jedoch das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen kollektiver Ordnung und individueller Abweichung weiter schärfen können.

Zusammengefasst eröffnet *The Right to Dignity* neue Perspektiven auf Staats- und Stadtbürgerschaft, Anerkennung urbaner (Un)-Gleichheit, und trägt damit zu gegenwärtigen wissenschaftlichen Forschungsfeldern der Stadt- und Politikethnologie bei. Seine besondere Stärke liegt in der historisierenden Perspektive sowie in den dichten Einblicken in aktivistische Praxis. Es lädt dazu ein, sozialwissenschaftliche Analyse als eine Praxis zu begreifen, die das Gewordensein sozialer Realitäten ernst nimmt. Historische Einbettungen werden dabei nicht nur als Hintergrund verstanden, sondern als konstitutiver Bestandteil gegenwärtiger Dynamiken und als Ausgangspunkt für Suchbewegungen, die dort ansetzen, wo Prozesse lange vor dem ethnografischen Beobachtungsmoment begonnen haben. Das Buch liefert nicht nur eine präzise, historisch fundierte Analyse von Wohnraumkämpfen in Santiago de Chile. Es regt auch dazu an, zentrale Konzepte wie Stadtbürgerschaft, Anerkennung und Recht auf Stadt neu zu denken, nicht als fixe Kategorien, sondern als Aushandlungsprozesse im Spannungsfeld von Alltag, Moral und Macht.

Elena Hernández,
Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz.

Konstanze N'Guessan, made with Openart.ai, 20.3.2025.

Welcome to the Book Reviews section of the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie | Journal for Social and Cultural Anthropology*. What you ought to be expecting here are thoughtful engagements with new publications within the field of social and cultural anthropology (and neighbouring disciplines). We all enjoy reading those, don't we? Yet, it is increasingly difficult to get colleagues to engage in this kind of intellectual exercise, and we all understand and share the constraints that often prevent us from contributing reviews. We at the *ZfE | JSCA* are in fact not alone with that problem; see the call to rethink book reviews recently published by Elizabeth Chin (2024) of *American Anthropologist*. For early career scholars, book reviews no longer seem to be counted as meaningful publications in competitive tenure-track career trajectories. Retired colleagues eventually found more interesting things to do after retirement than reviewing books they liked (or worse, they didn't like). With e-books and open access increasing, publishers now rarely sent out actual printed copies (which used to be part of the reward system for potential reviewers). Moreover, in the age of ChatGPT and similar generative AI chatbots, book reviews seem to have become a genre that is rather easily replaced by LLM-based so-called artificial intelligence. So we have decided to use the momentum of that empty space of "not a book review" to invite your participation in the potentially exciting transformation of book reviews as a re-imagined scholarly space.

We are seeking reviewers who wish to participate in meaningful conversations about recent anthropological works through both traditional and innovative formats. Our goal is to create a more dynamic, accessible and intellectually stimulating review section that reflects the diversity of anthropological thinking and practice.

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- Join our reviewer community: early-career scholars can participate in our mentorship program

- Contribute to themed sections: express an interest in our upcoming focus areas
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We encourage submissions from scholars at all career stages, including graduate students, early-career researchers and those from traditionally under-represented backgrounds in academic publishing. Reviews typically range from 500 to 2000 words, though we are flexible with length in the case of innovative formats. Books for review should generally have been published within the last three years.

To express an interest, suggest a book or submit a review, please contact the Book Reviews editor at nguessan@uni-mainz.de and anna-lena.wolf@ethnologie.uni-halle.de with a brief description of your interest. We look forward to your contributions to this vital space for scholarly engagement.

For the entire *ZfE* | *JSCA* editorial board
Konstanze N'Guessan and Anna-Lena Wolf

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