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# **Annali di Ca' Foscari**

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# Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale

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# Family Language Policies for Maintaining Arabic as a Home Language in Italy: The AHLI Project

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**Abstract** The AHLI Project, focusing on Arabic as a Home Language in Italy, explores family language policies among Arabic-speaking communities. Employing an interdisciplinary approach and a mixed-method design, the research reveals a complex linguistic spectrum. It uncovers the dynamic interplay between language maintenance and shift, the desire to transmit Arabic, attitudes, and family choices. While highlighting the significant presence of Arabic in linguistic repertoires, disparities between practices and beliefs emerge. The findings bear theoretical and practical implications for promoting democratic plurilingual education and guiding language policy actions at both micro and macro levels.

**Keywords** Family language policy. Language maintenance and shift. Arabic. Home language. Plurilingualism.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Arabic Language(s) and Arabic-Speaking Communities in Italy. – 3 Maintaining a Home Language: The Role of Family Language Policies. – 4 Research Methodology. – 4.1 Q-AHLI: Creation, Piloting, and Validation. – 4.2 Q-AHLI: Structure and Topics. – 4.3 Q-AHLI: Dissemination and Analysis Procedures. – 5 Overview of the Participants. – 6 Overview of FLP in Arabic-Speaking Communities in Italy: Initial Findings from the AHLI Project. – 6.1 Language Practices and Plurilingual Repertoires. – 6.2 Managing Plurilingualism Between Practices and Ideologies. – 7 Discussion and Conclusion.



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## 1 Introduction

The maintenance of Home Languages (HL) presents a multifaceted and pressing opportunity and challenge that deeply involves linguists, policymakers, educators and, most notably, families and individuals (Polinsky 2015; Pauwels 2016; Hollebeke, Struys, Agirdag 2020). Today, this challenge has become more significant than ever before. This collective endeavour transcends linguistic boundaries, encompassing political and social dimensions, and its outcomes reverberate on both a societal level and within the lives of individual community members.

The shared commitment of families and institutions to maintaining home languages aligns with efforts to promote sustainable and democratic multilingualism and plurilingualism (Council of Europe 2022). In this perspective, linguistic diversity serves as a cornerstone, enriching the cultural fabric of societies and as a fundamental right that requires safeguarding and protection.

As we delve into the complexities of HL maintenance, we find ourselves at the intersection of issues related to language, identity, and rights. Pursuing home language maintenance is not just a matter of choice but a necessity to ensure the continued flourishing of diverse linguistic repertoires and landscapes.

Building upon these foundational principles, the AHLI Project, an acronym denoting 'Arabic as Home Language in Italy', embarks on a purposeful journey. Although the term 'heritage language' is more widely used in the literature (Polinsky 2015), we considered it more appropriate to use the term 'home language' (HL). This term encompasses all language varieties used in the context of domestic communication and those acquired in early childhood (Council of Europe 2022, 13). The name of the Project has been thoughtfully chosen (in Arabic, *'ahl-ī* literally translates as 'my family') to direct attention towards the pivotal role and significance of Family Language Policy (FLP) (King, Fogle, Logan-Terry 2008) in the transmission and maintenance of the Arabic language(s) as a home language. The primary objective of the AHLI Project is to explore and describe FLP in relation to the maintenance of Arabic as HL in Italy, identifying practices, management choices, and ideologies (Spolsky 2004) that influence the intergenerational transmission of the language.

The AHLI Project was born out of a complex web of reasons, primarily due to the gaps and limitations in the current scientific research on this topic. While there have been numerous notable studies

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The structure of the paper reflects the collaborative efforts of the co-authors. Ibraam Abdelsayed is responsible for paragraphs 2, 4, 4.2, 5, and 6.1, while Martina Bellinzona is responsible for paragraphs 1, 3, 4.1, 4.3, and 6.2. Both Authors jointly contributed to the composition of paragraph 7 and the Bibliography section.

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on FLP in relation to the maintenance of Arabic as a HL worldwide,<sup>1</sup> a comprehensive review of the literature reveals certain shortcomings.

One significant drawback is the prevalence of qualitative studies, often focused on specific case studies. It is also important to note that existing research often addresses the maintenance of a generic 'Arabic' without acknowledging the diverse range of Arabic dialects.<sup>2</sup> This broad approach could lead to the oversight of crucial differences that impact language maintenance in various ways. Moreover, this generalisation could undermine the effectiveness of any (language) policy actions, as they might be based on inaccurate assumptions, potentially leading to inefficiency or even counterproductivity.

Moreover, within the Italian context, it is critical to emphasise the absence of comprehensive research regarding the maintenance of Arabic language(s) and its intergenerational transmission (but see D'Anna 2017). This research void takes on heightened significance when we consider that citizens with Arabic backgrounds represent one of the largest and most substantial immigrant groups in Italy, making up more than 14% of the entire immigrant population in the country (ISTAT 2022).<sup>3</sup> Consequently, this leads to a major gap in understanding the challenges and perspectives these communities face at the micro and macro levels.

Taking into account these considerations, the AHLI Project is dedicated to exploring the domain of FLP as it pertains to maintaining the Arabic language, or more precisely, the various Arabic languages, as HLs in Italy. The AHLI Project is characterised by its strong interdisciplinary approach, ongoing nature, and adoption of a multifaceted research framework. This approach encompasses the collection of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data organised in a layered manner. These datasets are designed to provide insights into the overall vitality of the Arabic languages in Italy and to delve into specific aspects related to their usage, contexts, and the motivating factors that underlie intergenerational language transmission.

Considering the vastness and heterogeneity of the collected datasets, and the space limitations, this contribution has two primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to introduce the AHLI Project, providing the contextual and theoretical foundations underpinning its execution. It also seeks to explain and justify the methodological choices and describe the research instruments developed. Secondly, it aims to provide an overview of the initial findings, with a specific focus on addressing two main research questions:

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**1** Sawaie, Fishman 1985; Al-Sahafi, Barkhuizen 2006; Goma 2011; Gogonas 2011; Dweik, Nofal, Qawasmeh 2014; Wardini 2017; Alasmari 2023; Bahhari 2023 *inter alia*.

**2** But see Albirini 2016; Bassiouney 2020; Azaz, Abourehab 2021; ElHawari 2021.

**3** Retrieved from: [http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS\\_POPSTRES1](http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPSTRES1).

RQ1: What languages contribute to the structuring of the linguistic repertoires of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy? What is their proficiency in each language and what role do these languages play in usage?

RQ2: What are parents' ideologies towards bilingualism? How does the multifaceted sociolinguistic situation of Arabic impact family language management about HL maintenance?

In the following sections, we will start by delineating the sociolinguistic landscape of the Arabic language and providing data on the presence of Arabic speakers in Italy (§ 2). Following this, we will introduce the theoretical framework guiding our research (§ 3). Subsequently, we will present a detailed explanation of the methodology employed (§ 4), along with an introduction to the sample of participants in this study (§ 5). Furthermore, we will provide a comprehensive overview of the prevailing trends in the maintenance of Arabic as a HL in Italy, addressing the research questions (§ 6). Finally, we will draw conclusive insights (§ 7), and outline future research prospects.

## 2 Arabic Language(s) and Arabic-Speaking Communities in Italy

Arabic is a widely spread language that has secured its place as one of the six official languages of the United Nations, highlighting its substantial global impact and presence worldwide. An estimated 400 million individuals worldwide utilise a variety of Arabic as their first language, ranking it among the top six most widely spoken languages. Arabic<sup>4</sup> is the (co-)official language of 26 countries, but most countries and regions have their own variety of Arabic, commonly referred to as 'dialect' or 'colloquial Arabic.' The Arabic language, as a 'historical language' (Coşeriu 1980), is characterised by its complex linguistic diversity, encompassing a wide range of dialects that reflect the rich cultural heritage of its speakers.

Sociolinguistic research often distinguishes three linguistic varieties in the Arabic-speaking world: Classical Arabic (CA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and Dialectal Arabic (DA).<sup>5</sup> CA, often con-

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<sup>4</sup> Here, the term 'Arabic' primarily refers to what is commonly called 'Modern Standard Arabic'.

<sup>5</sup> In Arabic terminology, the term 'dialect' is referred to as *dāriġa* (derived from the adjective *dāriġ*, meaning 'circulating' and 'common') or *ʿāmmiyya* (derived from the adjective *ʿāmmiyy*, meaning 'popular'). The structural deviation of dialectal varieties from Standard Arabic frequently exhibits notable disparities, affecting various facets across the spectrum of linguistic analysis. This deviation extends beyond superficial characteristics such as vocabulary and pronunciation, permeating into the realms of morphology and syntax, signifying a profound and multifaceted divergence.

sidered the archaic form of Arabic used in the Quran,<sup>6</sup> refers to a standardised version of the language that emerged around the tenth century. Conversely, MSA is a literary form derived from CA, adapted to meet modern needs. While MSA is the official language of Arabic-speaking countries, it is not the mother tongue of any speaker (Holes 2018). The innovative differences brought by MSA compared to CA are mainly lexical and stylistic, but the reference grammatical model has always remained the same. It is important to note that the distinction between CA and MSA does not correspond to any Arabic terminology. In Arabic terminology, there is only the distinction between *fushhā* (from *faṣāḥa*, meaning ‘linguistic purity’, ‘clarity’, and ‘eloquence’) and *‘āmmiyya* or *dāriġa*. Ryding (2005, 7) states that both MSA and CA refer to the Arabic terminology *al-luġa l-fuṣḥā* (literally ‘the language of eloquence’). In contrast, DA is the daily language used for communication (both orally and in writing),<sup>7</sup> and it is the native language of speakers, exhibiting regional variations across (and within) different Arab countries.

The sociolinguistic context of Arabic is often described as ‘diglossia’ (in Arabic, *al-izdiwāġiyya fī l-luġa*, meaning ‘language duplicity’). The term ‘diglossia’ in the sociolinguistic context of Arabic was first used by Marçais (1930) and later popularised by Ferguson (1959). Ferguson’s model posits the existence of two poles: a high, formal variety (CA/MSA) that largely corresponds to written language, and a low, familiar variety (DA) that is represented by vernacular Arabic languages.

Ferguson’s model is an abstract and idealised representation of a much more complex linguistic situation. While this is not the appropriate context to delve into the sociolinguistic situation in the Arab world, it is essential to highlight that any discussion on the Arabic language must consider its ubiquitous linguistic variation. Ignoring this fact would be to engage in mythmaking. For this reason, while acknowledging the potential oversimplification of sociolinguistic reality, this paper consistently addresses both language varieties: Standard Arabic (henceforth SA, which refers to both CA/MSA, i.e. *al-fuṣḥā*) and so-called Arabic dialects (DA).<sup>8</sup>

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**6** It is important to note that the Quranic language should be classified as pre-Classical Arabic, as it exhibits linguistic features that would be considered deviations from the norms established in CA.

**7** With the rise of new virtual communication channels, dialectal varieties are spreading more than ever before, not only in their oral form, but also, and possibly even more so, in their written form. This written form can be seen in many domains, from the vast number of texts produced on virtual channels, to movie samples, advertisements, and even popular literature (Rosenbaum 2004).

**8** When we use the term ‘Arabic’ without any additional specification, we are specifically alluding to the Arabic language in its complete form, encompassing both its

The linguistic diversity of Arabic speakers' repertoires becomes further complex by emigration because of the relationships established with the host country's language and other languages in the language space, including local dialects, minority languages, other immigrant languages, and languages for international communication. From this point of view, Italy provides an ideal context for exploring these relationships, given the substantial presence of citizens with Arabic backgrounds, representing one of the country's largest and most deeply rooted immigrant communities.

In modern times, the first migratory flows from Arab countries to Italy date back to the late 1960s, particularly in Sicily where, in 1968, organised recruitment by ship owners in Mazara del Vallo began to hire Tunisian citizens on fishing boats (Colucci 2018).<sup>9</sup> However, data shows that the presence of Arab immigrants in significant numbers was recorded from the 1990s, and even more so with the last wave of migration, which began in 2011 with the Arab Spring. From 2011 to today, the annual progression of Arab immigrants has slowed and come to a halt.

The overall number of immigrants residing in Italy (including, therefore, EU citizens), based on ISTAT (2022), reaches 5,030,716 (approximately 8.5% of the total Italian population). As can be observed in table 1, the three Arabic-speaking communities with the largest presence in Italy are Moroccan, Egyptian, and Tunisian; all three together constitute the overwhelming majority (approximately 93%) of the entire Arabic-speaking group in Italy, which counts a total of 711,309 individuals (equivalent to 14.1% of the total number of immigrants in Italy) [tab. 1].<sup>10</sup>

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standard and dialectal forms. We are aware that the term 'dialect' is not linguistically precise. However, for simplicity's sake and to facilitate understanding among participants in this research, who are often not linguists, we use DA to refer to these languages. For us, DA encompasses the set of local linguistic varieties shared among communities that perceive them as part of the same language.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed exploration of the sociolinguistic aspects of the Tunisian community in Mazara del Vallo, we recommend consulting D'Anna 2017.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that this number does not include the children of neutralised Arabic-speaking parents, which are estimated to be more than 300,000.

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**Table 1** Arabic-speaking communities in Italy

Country of origin	Total	%
Morocco	420,172	59,070
Egypt	140,322	19.727
Tunisia	99,002	13.918
Algeria	17,998	2.530
Somalia	8,370	1.177
Syria	6,109	0.859
Iraq	6,043	0.850
Lebanon	4,082	0.574
Libya	2,642	0.371
Sudan	2,444	0.344
Others	4,125	0.58
Tot	711,309	100

As shown in figure 1, based on ISTAT data (2022), the distribution of Arabic-speaking communities in Italy reveals a more prominent presence in the northern regions, notably in Lombardy (212,407; 29.86%) and Emilia-Romagna (92,883; 13.06%), followed by Piedmont (69,456; 9.76%), Veneto (56,321; 7.92%) and Lazio (45,111; 6.34%) [fig. 1].

Despite the well-established presence of Arabic-speaking communities in Italian society and the numerous European recommendations that stress the importance of maintaining HLs among the second and third generations of migrant communities (Council of Europe 2016; 2019; 2022 *inter alia*), top-down language policies still fail to implement focused and structured measures and actions in Italy. The absence of explicit top-down language policies places the responsibility for HL maintenance mainly on families.

For this reason, commencing our examination from the family domain is crucial to comprehend the factors that shape FLP and the resulting consequences of these policies. In the next section, we will briefly discuss these concepts to frame the AHLI Project from a theoretical point of view.

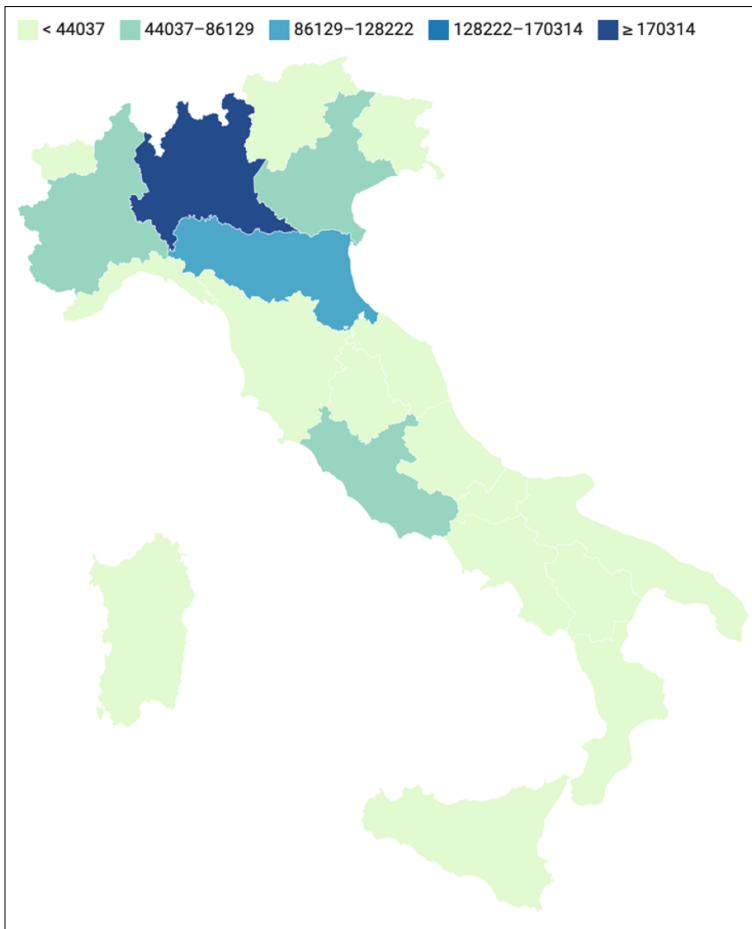


Figure 1 Geographical distribution of Arabic-speaking communities in Italy<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The data visualisations presented in figs 1 and 3 were generated using the online tool Datawrapper (<https://www.datawrapper.de/>).

### 3 **Maintaining a Home Language: The Role of Family Language Policies**

Language maintenance, as defined by Pauwels (2016, 20), is a complex and ongoing process that involves the continued use or retention of an L1, a minority or heritage language in various spheres of language use. The preservation of a heritage language is a perpetual challenge, a struggle, as it is in constant contact with the majority language, which permeates all (or almost all) contexts and domains of use, imposing its social power and cultural strength. Languages, as suggested by Blommaert (2009, 263), are the very fabric of social behaviour, integral to the distribution of power and resources in all societies, and a mechanism for social control. Therefore, the policies that regulate language use and practices reflect and (re)produce the distribution of power in society (McCarty, May 2017).

The decision to transmit one's own language, especially when this is not the majority language, is not a neutral act, but rather a 'political' one, which underlies worldviews, ideologies, beliefs, identity factors, emotional ties, and much more. This is what we refer to as family language policies, a term that encompasses the conscious planning of language use among family members (Quay, Montanari 2018). This planning can be explicit, *overt*, and composed of all the

observable efforts made by adults and their conscious involvement and investment in providing linguistic conditions and context for language learning and literacy development. (Curdt-Christiansen 2018, 420)

However, we also recognise an implicit, *covert* component in FLPs (Fogle 2013; Hollebeke, Struys, Agirdag 2020). This component, observable in the language practices of individuals (Spolsky 2017; Shohamy 2006), often does not correspond to the explicit one, either due to lack of resources or to ideological beliefs and convictions (Schiffman 1996; Schwartz 2008).

All these concepts, planning and management, practices and uses, beliefs and ideologies, find an organic synthesis in the language policy model proposed by Spolsky (2004), which is taken in this study as the reference theoretical framework. In this model, the three essential components (language management, practices, and ideologies) contribute to the definition of language policy and are closely connected to each other.

Language management refers to any specific intervention to modify or influence a specific linguistic situation. This is the set of rules, more or less explicit, aimed at determining linguistic uses inside and outside the home (Hirsch, Lee 2018; Moustououi, Poveda 2022). Language practices are

the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its [of a speech community, ed.] linguistic repertoire. (Spolsky 2004, 5)

It is from the practices that the real language policy emerges. By ideologies, we finally mean “the beliefs about language and language use” (Spolsky 2004, 5). These are beliefs about the appropriateness of linguistic uses,

the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language (Schiffman 1996, 5)

as well as towards bilingualism itself (Piller 2002; King, Fogle 2017). Without ideologies, (family) language policies would not exist (Palmviainen, Bergroth 2018), as they are the underlying forces that influence any decision and choice (Curdt-Christiansen 2013). Management, practices, and ideologies are closely connected: beliefs strongly influence management, which can seek to legitimise or produce a change in dominant ideologies and practices. Likewise, beliefs can originate from practices or, in turn, shape the practices themselves (Spolsky 2004, 14).

In this study, as mentioned previously, we will explore the FLPs in relation to the maintenance of Arabic as HL in Italy, considering the various factors, both internal and external, capable of influencing this ‘political’ project.

## **4 Research Methodology**

The AHLI Project is grounded in the pragmatic paradigm, prioritising the research question as the focal point of reflection and rejecting the notion of a singular scientific method (Mertens 2005). The foundational belief is that only by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods can we effectively interpret reality, including the sociolinguistic one (Tashakkori, Teddlie 1998; Creswell, Plano Clark 2011). In alignment with this perspective and the objectives of our project, a mixed-methods approach has been selected as the optimal choice for obtaining meaningful inferences, minimising the limitations associated with a single method, and ensuring a broader diversity of perspectives (Tashakkori, Teddlie 2003).

The AHLI Project has adopted an explanatory sequential design (Creswell, Plano Clark 2011), a two-phase approach where the use of qualitative data follows the collection and analysis of quantitative data. This approach was deemed necessary due to the unexplored nature



of the situation concerning the maintenance of Arabic as an HL in Italy. We first captured a general overview of the situation and research problem by planning the collection of quantitative data. These were obtained through the distribution of a specifically designed and validated questionnaire (Q-AHLI; see further details below).

Based on the outcomes derived from the questionnaires, focus groups were conducted with Arabic-speaking families in Italy. They were organised online using Google Meet (Gaiser 2008; Stewart, Williams 2005), subsequently transcribed, and analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis with NVivo Pro 11 (Braun, Clarke 2021). Given the purpose of this article and for space constraints, the results of the focus group analysis will not be presented here. Nevertheless, it was necessary to mention them to provide a comprehensive overview of the AHLI Project. In the following sections, we will present the Q-AHLI's development, pilot testing, and revision process, focusing on its structure, addressed themes, and distribution and analysis procedures.

#### 4.1 Q-AHLI: Creation, Piloting, and Validation

The authors developed the questionnaire based on the objectives and research questions of the AHLI Project. Following the review of the literature (cf. §§ 2 and 3), it became evident that there was a need to create a specific tool capable of eliciting both the sociolinguistic characteristics of Arabic-speaking communities in Italy and the various dimensions, as well as how they intersect, of FLP. The target population of the AHLI Project consists of individuals with Arabic backgrounds, whether first- or second-generation, encompassing all those who could reasonably have Arabic (in a broad sense) as their HL.

Considering the guidance provided by Brown (2001) and Dörnyei (2002; 2007), the general characteristics of the Q-AHLI were established regarding its division into main sections, layout, format, and length. Google Form was chosen due to its advantages in terms of cost-effectiveness (researchers' time, effort, financial resources) and user-friendly nature, ensuring accessibility for the target population (Dörnyei 2002; Ruliyanti et al. 2021).

After formulating and randomising the items, instructions were written. In compliance with EU Regulation 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR) and following ethical principles of scientific research, all information about the study, the researchers, the affiliated institution, the research purpose, data management and retention, and the consent statement were explicitly stated on the first page of the survey. Additionally, the researchers' contact information was provided to allow interested individuals to access study results or send comments, questions, or requests for clarification.

To ensure a quantitatively and qualitatively significant number of participants, a strategic decision was made to offer two linguistic versions of the questionnaire, one in Italian and one in SA. This decision, though challenging due to the absence of specific terminology and conceptual overlap on certain topics, was a testament to the project's adaptability and inclusivity. It not only ensured a wider distribution of the survey but also proved to be valuable for the interpretation of the data, as will be discussed later.

Before its distribution, a pilot version of the questionnaire was administered to a small group of 20 participants who met the characteristics of the research target population. Based on the qualitative results from the pilot, specific questions were removed, and others were slightly modified.

To assure reliability and validity in the results, a panel of three experts, selected based on their well-established experience in the research topic, rigorously reviewed the questionnaire items. A blind evaluation module was developed, focusing on clarity, coherence, relevance, and sufficiency (Escobar-Pérez, Cuervo-Martínez 2008). The evaluations and valuable suggestions received led to further adjustments in the structure and items of the Q-AHLI. Following a second round of evaluations, the interrater agreement among the experts, measured using Cohen's Kappa statistics, was found to be significant and excellent,  $p < .05$ ,  $k > .80$  (Hernández-Nieto 2011). The final version of the survey, available in duplicate in both Italian and Arabic, consists of 101 items. Participants can activate various items based on their responses to specific questions. The structure of the questionnaire and the addressed themes will be presented in detail in the next section.

## 4.2 Q-AHLI: Structure and Topics

The Q-AHLI is structured into 5 sections, and their titles and essential characteristics are provided in table 2 [tab. 2]. As can be observed, some sections are common to all participants (sections 1 and 2); in contrast, others are reserved for participants with specific characteristics (sections 3 and 4 only for parents and section 5 only for children). The decision to offer distinct paths is linked to the project's objective, which, as previously highlighted, aims to investigate FLPs and their effects. In this regard, it became necessary to involve not only parents, who are the primary drivers of language policy at home (Hollebeke, Struys, Agirdag 2020) but also the children themselves, who are both recipients of these decisions and active social agents (Luykx 2005; Paugh 2005).

**Table 2** Essential characteristics of the Q-AHLI sections

<b>Section</b>	<b>Addresses</b>	<b>No. items</b>	<b>Items format</b>
1. Sociodemographic and sociolinguistics data	All (both parents and children)	25 items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple choices</li><li>• Likert scale</li><li>• Open ended questions</li></ul>
2. Language practices	All (both parents and children)	24 items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple choices</li><li>• Open ended questions</li></ul>
3. Language management	Parents	17 items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple choices</li><li>• Likert scale</li></ul>
4. Language ideologies related to bilingual parenting	Parents	16 items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Likert scale</li></ul>
5. Language attitudes related to the different languages of the repertoires	Children	19 items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple choices</li><li>• Open ended questions</li></ul>

The first section of the Q-AHLI consists of 25 items, comprising open-ended questions, multiple-choice queries, and Likert-scale questions (ranging from 1 to 5). This section aims to gather information about the sociodemographic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural background of the participants. The questions included in this section are designed to collect data on gender, age, birthplace of parents, length of stay in Italy, educational qualifications, occupation, and linguistic repertoires. Additionally, it includes a self-assessment of language proficiency (both in written and oral production and comprehension) in Italian, SA, and DA.

The second section consists of 24 items with open-ended or closed-ended responses. These items are specifically designed to investigate language practices and some factors that may potentially influence them, such as relationships with the country of origin and with Arabic speakers and communities in Italy. Language use is thoroughly explored across various social domains to identify communication patterns within and outside the family. This in-depth exploration helps to understand which language is predominantly used depending on the interlocutor (parent, sibling, relative, friend, colleague, etc.) and the activity being undertaken (work, study, leisure, etc.).

The third section is intended for parents and is internally divided into two parts. The first part outlines the family units' profile (number and age of children, linguistic proficiency of children, partner's origin, etc.). The second part seeks to gather information about language management at home and outside regarding frequency of language use, awareness of linguistic choices, and the contexts in which children use and learn the HL. This section, consisting of 17 items,

is formulated using multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions (1-5), providing a comprehensive view of the family's language dynamics.

The fourth section, also exclusively for parents, consists of 16 items on a Likert scale (1-5). These items are designed to investigate language ideologies regarding Italian-Arabic bilingual parenting. As highlighted in § 3, positive ideologies are a prerequisite for successful language acquisition and can influence not only practices and management decisions but also the language attitudes of the children themselves (Spolsky 2004; Pearson 2008). Given the breadth of possible language beliefs, a choice was necessary. Considering the consulted literature, we opted to use four distinct scales, considered suitable for covering the most relevant advantages of bilingual parenting, namely cognitive, instrumental, linguistic, and sociocultural advantages (Grosjean 1982; Bialystok 2001; Sorace 2010 *inter alia*). Each scale consists of 4 items, with two formulated positively and two negatively.

Finally, the fifth section is dedicated to children and comprises 19 items with closed and open-ended questions. This section also aims to investigate language ideologies. However, exploring attitudes towards the different languages in the repertoire (particularly Italian, SA, and DA) concerning value associations was deemed appropriate in this case. Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred language, associate three adjectives with each language under examination (following the 'Free Response Experiment' model, cf. De Pascale, Marzo 2016 *inter alia*), and briefly describe their own relationship with each language. Furthermore, following a well-established model in the study of language attitudes, respondents were asked to indicate which of the three languages they considered as the most beautiful, useful, easy/difficult, prestigious, linked to religion, culture, identity, etc. (Dweik, Qawar 2015 *inter alia*; for further details, cf. Abdelsayed, Bellinzona forthcoming).<sup>12</sup>

### 4.3 Q-AHLI: Dissemination and Analysis Procedures

Various methods were employed to disseminate the Q-AHLI among the target population.

First and foremost, we leveraged personal contacts and networks, utilising word-of-mouth and the so-called snowball effect (e.g. Noy 2008). This strategy proved valuable in obtaining initial data; it also highlighted noteworthy dynamics regarding the desire and pride of many second-generation Arabic speakers to have their linguistic

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<sup>12</sup> The Q-AHLI is available in Italian at this link: <https://forms.gle/TFvDTK1HVh-gtrM2BA>; and in Arabic at this link: <https://forms.gle/Q9Ud7RT5wWtA8tC49>.

situation at the centre of scientific research. However, due to our own characteristics and social networks, the sampling was not representative of the entire population but rather skewed in terms of geography and socioeconomic factors.

Therefore, we surveyed Arabic language schools, mosques, *madrasa*, *kuttāb*, and churches throughout the national territory. We emailed or, when possible, called them to explain the project and request their collaboration in disseminating the questionnaire through their websites, newsletters, mailing lists, and forums. Unfortunately, this approach proved unproductive, as none of the contacted institutions expressed willingness or interest in the project.

Recognising the evolving communication landscape, we heeded the recommendations of Kayam and Hirsch (2012) and strategically shifted to the power of the web and Social Media Networks, particularly Instagram and Facebook. On Instagram, we contacted influencers and users with a substantial following who actively promoted the Arabic language in Italy. On Facebook, we joined or became members of the most active and popular pages and groups frequented by our target audiences.<sup>13</sup> We requested moderators to post the links or post them ourselves whenever possible. In the context of our research, this approach proved to be the most effective and allowed us to gather quantitative and qualitatively significant data in a short period.

The data we collected were rigorously analysed using the SPSS software (v.23). In addition to descriptive analysis, we conducted various inferential procedures, including parametric tests such as regressions, correlations, T-tests, and ANOVA tests, as well as non-parametric tests.

As the AHLI Project is an ongoing research initiative, and data collection is still in progress, we will now present the characteristics of the sample of respondents who completed the questionnaire during the first two months of dissemination (July-August 2022), providing a glimpse into the early stages of our findings.

## 5 Overview of the Participants

This section provides an overview of the informants who participated in the AHLI Project. The study included 168 subjects who completed the questionnaire, excluding those from the pilot group and those who did not meet the selection criteria. Most of the participants were female (62%). On average, the participants were relatively young, with the highest proportion falling within the age range of 18 to 30 [fig. 2].

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<sup>13</sup> The search for groups and pages to contact was conducted using keywords such as 'Arabs in Italy', 'Moroccans in Italy', 'Egyptians in Lombardy', and so on.

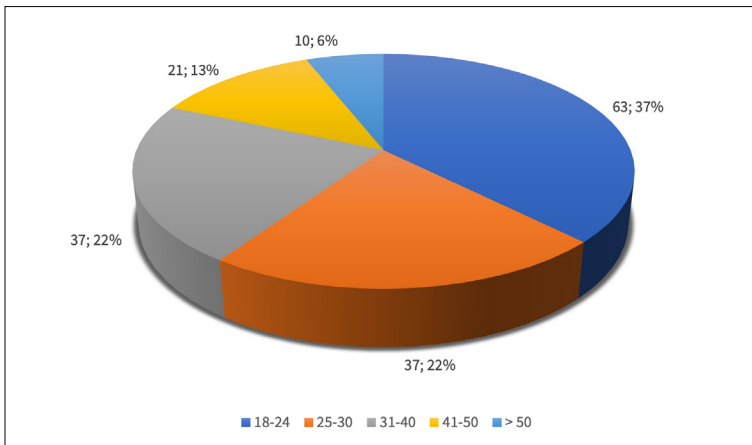
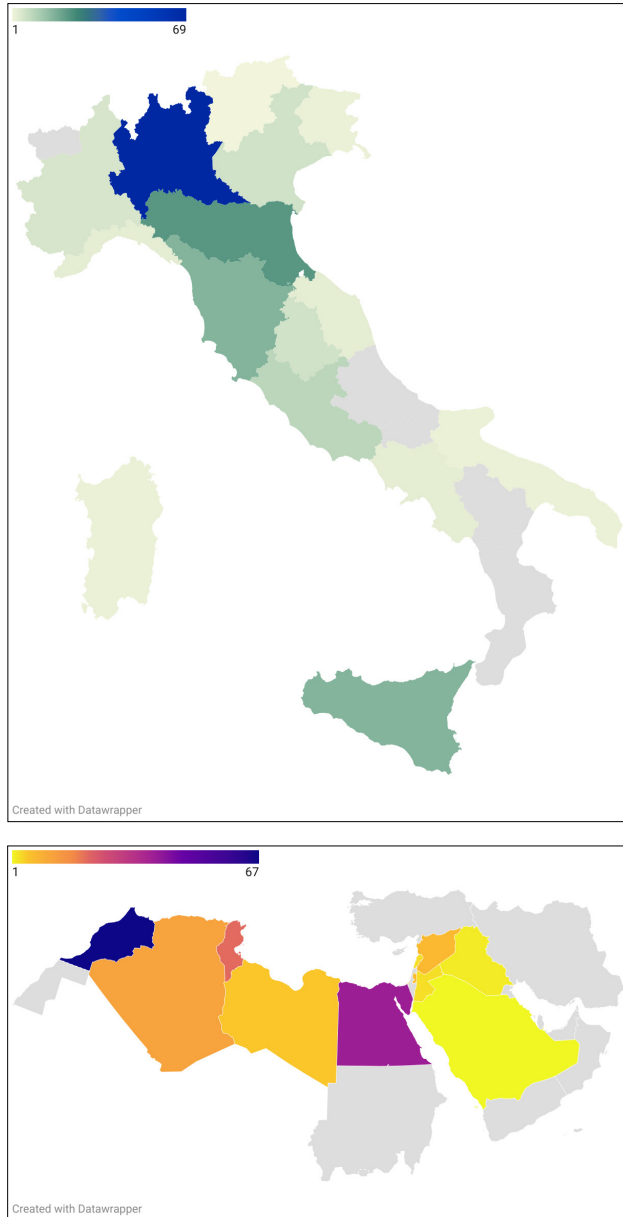


Figure 2 AHLI Project Participants' Age

As presented in figure 3, the geographical distribution of informants closely mirrors the distribution of Arabic-speaking individuals in Italy, which was discussed in § 2. Indeed, it is worth noting that most of the study participants are concentrated in Lombardy (69; 41.1%) and Emilia-Romagna (23; 13.7%), followed by Sicily and Tuscany (each 17; 10.1%) and Lazio (9; 5.4%).

The participants come mainly from countries that closely reflect the overall national composition, with a significant proportion of respondents originating from Morocco (67; 39.9%), Egypt (39; 23.2%), and Tunisia (21; 12.5%) [fig. 3].



**Figure 3** Geographical distribution and origin of AHLI Project Participants

To conduct a thorough analysis of the survey responses, it was deemed necessary to classify the participants into three distinct groups based on their generational status: second-generation immigrants (85; 51%),<sup>14</sup> first-generation immigrants with children (46; 27%), and first-generation immigrants without children (37; 22%). Given the importance of understanding the experiences of immigrant families and their children, our primary focus here will be on the first two groups.

All the parents in the sample were born in an Arab country. However, 62% of the second-generation immigrants reported being born in Italy. Among those second-generation individuals born outside of Italy, the vast majority arrived at a very young age and completed the entire education, at least from middle school onwards, within the Italian school system. This suggests a structural shift in the migration phenomenon in Italy. Immigrants are increasingly integrated into Italian society and are raising families of their own, a promising development.

Figure 4 shows that the participants are predominantly highly educated, with qualifications that are at least equivalent to or exceed high school level [fig. 4]. This trend is noteworthy not only among the younger second-generation respondents but also among the first-generation groups. Furthermore, about 80% of the ‘parent’ respondents reported having a university degree or higher.

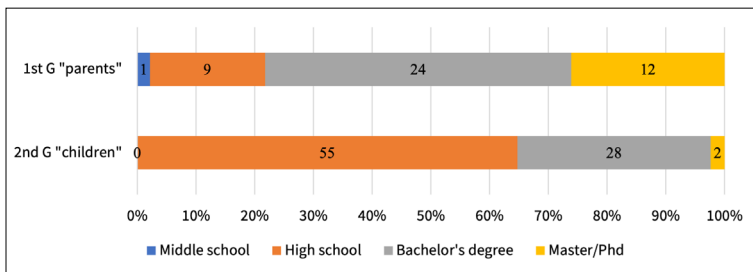


Figure 4 AHLI Project participants' level of education

**14** In this initial reconnaissance phase of the AHLI Project, we use the term ‘second-generation’ in *lato sensu*, which cover various groups as identified by Rumbaut (2004), and Rumbaut and Ima (1988). Specifically, the term ‘second-generation’ in this article encompasses children born in Italy to two Arabic-speaking parents (i.e. 2.0 generation), children born in Italy to a mixed couple with one Arabic-speaking parent and the other speaking a different language (i.e. 2.5 generation), as well as Arabic-speaking children who arrived in Italy at different developmental stages: 1.75 generation (who arrived as pre-school children, ages 0-5), 1.5 generation (who arrived in middle childhood, ages 6-12), and 1.25 generation (who arrived in adolescence, ages 7-13).



The high level of education among the participants is also reflected in their job profiles, as demonstrated in figure 5, which are largely related to intellectual or highly specialised professions [fig. 5].

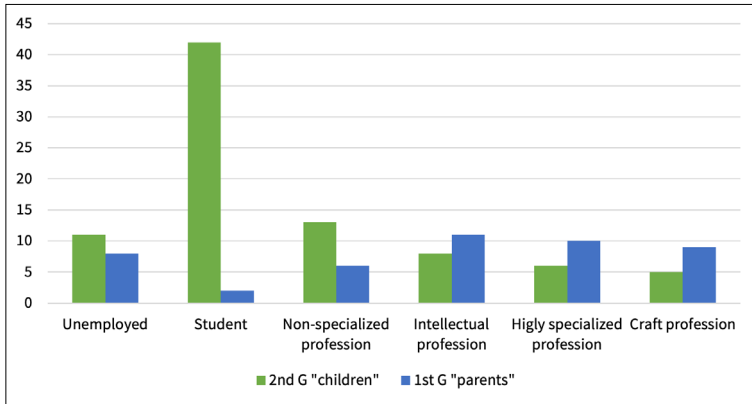


Figure 5 AHLI Project participants' occupations

## 6 Overview of FLP in Arabic-Speaking Communities in Italy: Initial Findings from the AHLI Project

This section offers an overview of the results to answer the research questions formulated. Therefore, we will begin by exploring the linguistic repertoires of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy, surveying the level of proficiency in different languages and their respective contexts of use. Subsequently, we will delve more into family language management concerning the HL, paying special attention to the different roles, importance, and meanings assigned to SA and DA.

### 6.1 Language Practices and Plurilingual Repertoires

Our first foray into the initial findings of the AHLI Project commences with an investigation into the language practices and repertoires of second-generation individuals. The analysis illuminated their repertoires' remarkably plurilingual and diversified nature, with an astonishing average of 5 languages reported by the informants. Italian and English were the most widely known languages (respectively 85; 100% and 79; 92.9%). However, the DA was also prevalent, with almost 92% of the sample including it as part of the linguistic repertoire (78 informants). In contrast, compared to the DA, the percentage dropped by c. 27% when it came to SA, which was reported in

only 65.9% of cases (56 participants). Other known languages among the sample included French (60; 70.6%), one of the dialects of Italy (32; 37.6%), Spanish (32; 37.6%), German (10; 11.8%), and other languages (2; 2.4%). This self-reported plurilingualism reflects a commendable level of language awareness and recognition of the value of linguistic diversity. However, it is important to note that merely including a language in one's linguistic repertoire may not accurately represent the actual proficiency in those languages.

Delving deeper into the self-assessment of individual linguistic skills (oral and written comprehension, oral and written production) in reference to each language, more detailed trends emerge. The data in Table 3 showcases that the overall average knowledge of Italian is high, with a mean score of 4.89 on a scale that ranges from 1 to 5. This suggests a high degree of integration into the host society, at least from a linguistic standpoint. In contrast, the overall mean proficiency score for the DA is 3.77, indicating a lower level of proficiency compared to Italian. However, further investigation into the individual language skills of participants reveals that the lower average proficiency score for DA is primarily due to weak writing skills, both relating to comprehension (M = 3.48) and production (M = 3.12).

On the other hand, when examining proficiency in SA, two significant data points emerge: first, the overall mean proficiency in SA is quite low (M = 3.00; SD = 1.16). The t-test results underscore a significant difference in the mean proficiency in SA not only compared to Italian (M = 4.89; SD = 0.27),  $t(84) = -15.049$ ,  $p < .001$ , but also in comparison to DA (M = 3.77; SD = 1.22),  $t(84) = -6.131$ ,  $p < .001$ . Second, it is observed that the weakest skills are those related to production, both in written (M = 2.55) and oral (M = 2.85) aspects [tab. 3].

**Table 3** Self-evaluation of proficiency in Italian, DA, and SA

	Comprehension		Production		Overall proficiency
	Oral	Written	Oral	Written	
Italian	M = 4.92; SD = .28	M = 4.93; SD = .26	M = 4.85; SD = .39	M = 4.85; SD = .36	M = 4.89; SD = .27
DA	M = 4.34; SD = 1.18	M = 3.48; SD = 1.47	M = 4.15; SD = 1.27	M = 3.12; SD = 1.49	M = 3.77; SD = 1.22
SA	M = 3.53; SD = 1.31	M = 3.08; SD = 1.36	M = 2.84; SD = 1.29	M = 2.55; SD = 1.26	M = 3.00; SD = 1.16

Therefore, a good level of maintenance in Arabic, particularly in the DA variety, is observed. Furthermore, Pearson's correlation test between the levels of proficiency in SA and DA showed a significant positive correlation,  $r(85) = .674$ ,  $p < .001$ . Consequently, as proficiency in one variety increases, so does proficiency in the other. However, despite this high level of heritage language maintenance, some data

suggest potential tendencies of language shift, particularly when examining the linguistic choices made while completing the Q-AHLI. Of the 85 informants considered, 80 (94%) chose to complete the questionnaire in its Italian version, with only 5 opting for the SA version. It is also important to note that these 5 informants belong to the 1.5 generation group (cf. Rumbaut 2004), meaning they were born in an Arab country and later moved to Italy as children.

Certainly, to correctly interpret the data relating to the proficiency it is necessary to consider a series of factors, both internal and external to the person. We will explore some of them below. In this regard, considering what has just been said about the choice of the questionnaire, it is necessary to verify to what extent the place of birth impacts linguistic skills in the HL.

Regarding SA, the 32 participants born in an Arab country ( $M = 3.445$ ;  $SD = 1.184$ ) compared to the 53 participants born in Italy ( $M = 2.731$ ;  $SD = 1.065$ ) declared a significantly higher proficiency,  $t(83) = 2.871$ ,  $p < .005$ . The same trend is observed considering the DA, as the informants who were born in an Arab country ( $M = 4.109$ ;  $SD = 1.032$ ) self-evaluate a higher proficiency in DA than the ones born in Italy ( $M = 3.571$ ;  $SD = 1.284$ ). This difference was statistically significant,  $t(83) = 2.012$ ,  $p < .05$ . Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe a distinction in the magnitude of the impact of birthplace on language proficiency between SA and DA. In the case of SA, the effect size (measured by Cohen's  $d$ ) is medium-large,  $d = .617$ , signifying a robust influence of birthplace on language proficiency. Conversely, the effect size for DA is medium-small,  $d = .443$ .

This implies that the endeavours of Arab families in Italy to convey and uphold their HL manifest in the heightened proficiency levels among individuals born in an Arab-speaking country, particularly concerning SA. This underscores the intricate interplay between home languages, dominant languages, and the environment in which language learning and usage occur. The relatively smaller effect size observed for DA suggests the involvement of additional influential factors. These factors may encompass a higher degree of exposure to DA in the home environment and the more spontaneous use of DA within the community, in contrast to the somewhat abstract nature of SA. These elements contribute significantly to maintaining proficiency in the home dialect among second-generation individuals born in Italy.

In this regard, to unravel the complex network of languages comprising the linguistic repertoires of second-generation Arabic speakers, it is not just important, but essential to comprehend the languages they use with various interlocutors and in diverse contexts.

In addition to the family domain, to which we will return shortly, the questionnaire highlighted some of the social contexts in which participants more easily establish relationships with Arabic speakers. As evident from the data reported in table 4, the university

environment appears to be the one in which one most easily deals with the Arabic language, followed by places of pleasure, mosques, and schools [tab. 4].

**Table 4** Social domains in which relationships are established in Arabic (excluding the domestic domain)

	No.	%	% cases
At the university	44	24.0%	63.8%
In places of leisure	36	19.7%	52.2%
At the mosque	25	13.7%	36.2%
At school	23	12.6%	33.3%
At work	21	11.5%	30.4%
In shops	19	10.4%	27.5%
In associations	9	4.9%	13.0%
At the church	4	2.2%	5.8%
Others	2	1.1%	2.9%

These are very different social domains, visited with different frequencies, with different purposes, and in which people interact differently. This can only impact the languages learned, the individual linguistic skills developed in the different varieties, and the very role assigned to languages. In this regard, it is useful to see the association between languages and activities carried out. The analysis reveals that Italian is the most used language across most activities, as demonstrated in the graph in figure 6 [fig. 6]. However, a closer examination reveals four major groupings based on the responses received.

First, Italian takes the lead in what can be aptly termed as ‘intellectual activities’, encompassing work, study, reading, and writing. SA is the language of choice for religious activities, highlighting its cultural and spiritual importance. ‘Recreational activities’, including browsing the internet, watching movies, and listening to music, are performed in all languages, indicating a shared global, multilingual culture irrespective of origin. Finally, for ‘personal and intimate’ activities, such as thinking and dreaming, Italian language and DA are equally divided, suggesting Italian-DA bilingualism among participants.

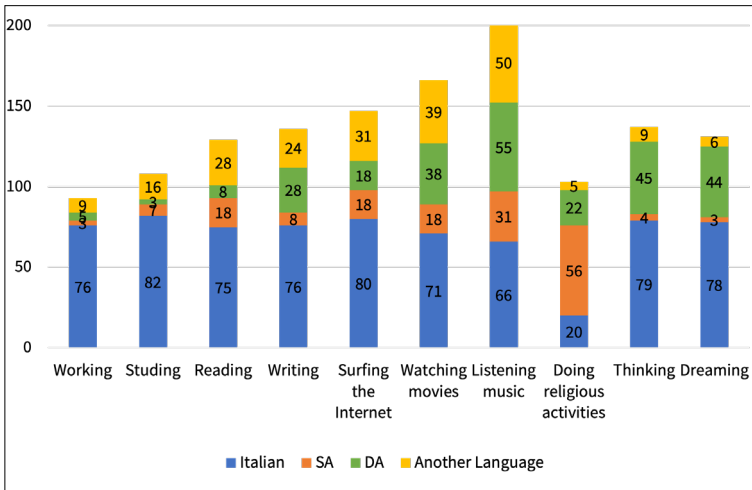


Figure 6 Languages of the repertoire associated with the different activities

As mentioned, in addition to the activities, it is important to explore how language practices vary depending on the people in the interaction. The graph in figure 7 provides a first overview of these uses [fig. 7]. First, we note that with parents and other family members, the most used language is Arabic, in particular DA. Notably, no participant declared using SA as the prevalent variety with any of the categories of people considered. Interestingly, the data reveals also that when children communicate with siblings, friends, acquaintances, and strangers, they report using Italian more frequently than Arabic.

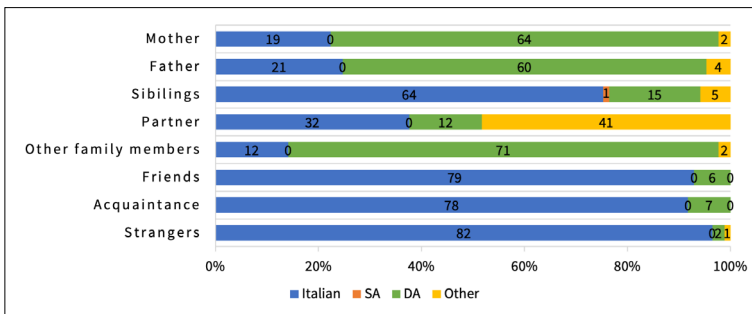


Figure 7 Language uses according to different people

## 6.2 Managing Plurilingualism Between Practices and Ideologies

With the second research question, we explored parents' ideologies and management choices in relation to the maintenance of the HL. It is necessary to look at numerous elements to answer such a complex question. First, it is worth highlighting how the study results suggest strongly positive ideologies towards bilingual parenting ( $M = 3.8668$ ;  $SD = .49924$ ). These, as can be seen from table 5, are mainly due to the recognition of the instrumental ( $M = 4.0598$ ;  $SD = .60135$ ) and sociocultural ( $M = 3.9130$ ;  $SD = .62409$ ) advantages of an Arabic-Italian bilingualism (cf. § 4.2) [tab. 5].

**Table 5** Ideologies related to bilingual parenting

Scales	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Instrumental advantages	46	3.00	5.00	4.0598	.60135
Cognitive advantages	46	2.50	5.00	3.6359	.64487
Linguistic advantages	46	2.50	5.00	3.8587	.72390
Sociocultural advantages	46	3.00	5.00	3.9130	.62409
Tot.	46	3.00	4.88	3.8668	.49924

On the one hand, there is awareness of the importance of language learning for school success and for future job opportunities; on the other hand, particular importance is given to the possibility of guaranteeing double access to the cultural sphere, both Arab and Italian, while at the same time maintaining a link with the country of origin.

At first glance, these ideologies seem to be reflected in the linguistic uses in the family, as can be seen from the graph in figure 8, which accounts for the frequency of use of the languages under analysis within the home context [fig. 8]. The language used most frequently to communicate with children appears to be the DA ( $M = 3.87$ ;  $Mdn = 4.00$ ;  $SD = 1.327$ ), followed by Italian ( $M = 3.13$ ;  $Mdn = 3.00$ ;  $SD = 1.204$ ). Conversely, SA is used less frequently ( $M = 2.15$ ;  $Mdn = 2.00$ ;  $SD = 1.115$ ).

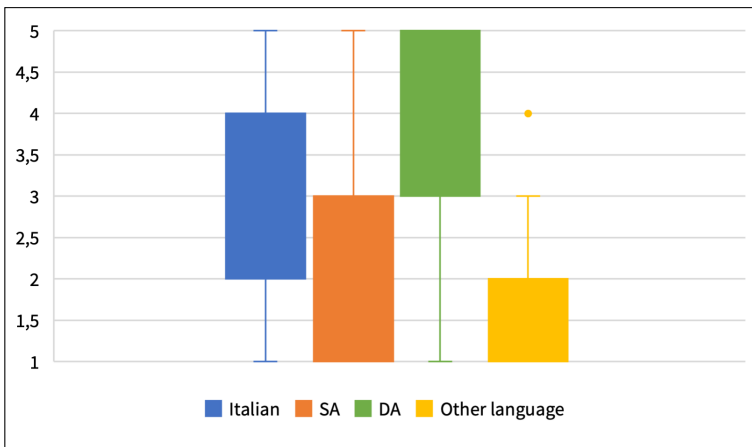


Figure 8 Frequency of use of different languages with own children

However, it is interesting to observe how the decision to speak Arabic with one's children, in most cases, is not the result of thoughtful reflection or discussion but of a spontaneous behavioural attitude. As evident from the graph in figure 9, of the 42 individuals who said they mainly use Arabic with their children, 50% declare that they have not thought about the reason for this choice [fig. 9]. Small percentages of informants say they made their decision following a discussion with their partner (7.17%) or with relatives in their country of origin (2.5%), and even fewer with experts (2.5%) or for other reasons, mainly university studies (3.7%).

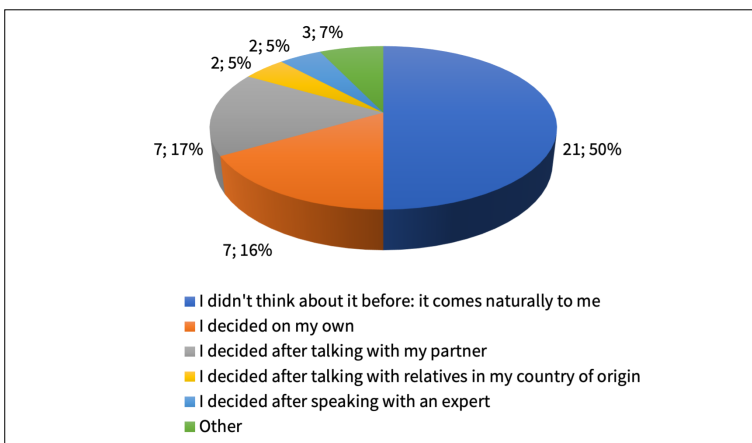


Figure 9 Awareness and reasons behind language practices

In any case, language practices seem to impact children's linguistic proficiency, at least as evaluated by the parents themselves. The link between the two variables (for all three languages – Italian, DA, and SA) was tested through a Pearson correlation, which highlighted a significant correlation with a linear and positive relationship:

Children's proficiency in DA and frequency of DA use with children:  $r(46) = .688, p < .0001$

Children's proficiency in SA and frequency of SA use with children:  $r(46) = .639, p < .0001$

Children's proficiency in Italian and frequency of Italian use with children:  $r(46) = .310, p = .03$

This hypothesis is further bolstered by the insights shared about the places and contexts of language learning [fig. 10]. Notably, of the 38 respondents who said they had their children study Arabic, 21 (55%) pointed to the domestic context as the primary learning environment, sometimes combined with other contexts, such as mosques and cultural associations (11 each; 29%), at school (8; 21%) and in the country of origin (6; 16%).

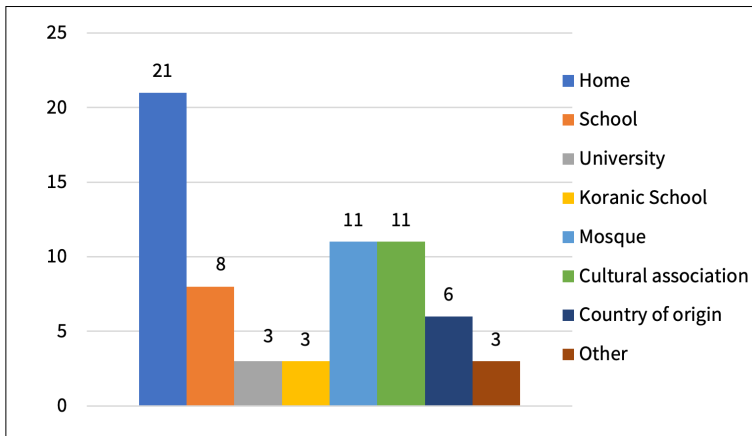


Figure 10 Language learning contexts

Nonetheless, it is necessary to highlight how language practices do not always correspond to the linguistic proficiency declared by parents. Also in this case, the link was tested using a Pearson correlation, which gave the following results:

- Parents' proficiency in DA and frequency of DA use with their children:  $r(46) = .382, p < .005$
- Parents' proficiency in SA and frequency of SA use with their children:  $r(46) = .226, p > .05$



- Parents' proficiency in Italian and frequency of Italian use with their children:  $r(46) = .383, p < .005$

While proficiency in Italian and DA significantly correlates with parents' language practices, the same cannot be said in the case of SA. This, on the one hand, raises questions about the real practices related to the maintenance of Arabic (and of which variety of Arabic) and, on the other, suggests the presence of very strong and deep-rooted beliefs towards SA.

In this regard, and before concluding the section, we would like to highlight one last fact. Although the ideologies towards bilingualism are positive and there is an attempt, both at home and in other contexts, to transmit the HL, contrasting attitudes are observed towards the various varieties within the so-called 'diglossia' of Arabic. To the question 'What language(s) do you think is important for your children to know?', in fact, 35 informants (76.1% of the total) indicated SA, 34 Italian (73.9% of the total) and only 27 DA (58.7%).<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, as evident from the graph in figure 11, while almost all the respondents (43; 93.5%) would be interested in enrolling their children in an SA course, less than half (22; 47.9%) would do the same for a DA course. This trend, which is consistent with studies on Arabic-speaking communities in other European countries, underscores the strong preference for SA over DA in formal learning contexts. Similar results were found in research on Moroccan immigrant communities in the Netherlands and France, where most respondents favoured MSA over dialects (Extra, de Ruiter 1994; Boumans, de Ruiter 2002).

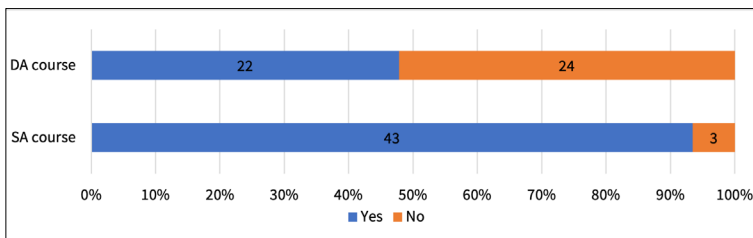


Figure 11 Predisposition to enrol children in HL courses

<sup>15</sup> 18 informants (39.1%) indicated another language in addition to these.

## 7 Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we presented the AHLI Project, which stemmed from the need to explore the vitality and maintenance of the Arabic language - both SA and DA - in Italy. This necessity is intertwined with the distinctive characteristics of migrations in Italy (Colucci 2018). The project addresses research gaps in FLPs and HL maintenance, particularly concerning Arabic, owing to its complex and multifaceted nature (Albirini 2016; Holes 2018).

We examined several research results to address two questions: firstly, how the linguistic repertoires of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy are structured and which role the Arabic language(s) plays in this context; and secondly, how the presumed 'diglossic' situation of the Arabic language (Ferguson 1959) impacts the ideologies and beliefs of parents and, consequently, their FLPs.

The results shed light on the intricate interplay between home languages, dominant languages, and individual language skills, emphasising the nuanced complexity of linguistic repertoires among second-generation individuals. This finding offers a deeper insight into the relationship between language proficiency and contextual variables. It underscores the notion that mastery of a language is closely intertwined with lived experiences and language's natural use within the community and the home environment. Consequently, it reaffirms the pivotal role of cultural and environmental factors in shaping linguistic repertoires and achievements within immigrant communities.

The analyses have suggested an ongoing language shift process, although it is still in its initial stages. This trend becomes apparent, firstly, through the high proficiency of the second-generation in Italian, the majority language, as indicated by both their self-assessed proficiency and their preference for filling out the Italian version of the Q-AHLI. Secondly, the shift is evident when considering bilingualism and the diglossic division of linguistic usage across various social domains, activities, and interactions with different individuals. Notably, the use of Italian in communication between siblings, as observed elsewhere (Barron-Hauwaert 2011 *inter alia*), is emblematic in this context.

Nevertheless, the results still reflect a commendable level of maintenance of the Arabic language. The data highlights linguistic dynamics and practices within second-generation individuals, where the HL holds significant importance alongside proficiency in dominant languages like Italian. This is suggested by the high proficiency levels among second-generation individuals, as self-evaluated and evaluated by parents. Furthermore, the maintenance of Arabic is in line with what emerged from the analysis of parents' ideologies, which appear strongly positive towards bilingualism (Curdt-Christiansen 2013).

The results, however, suggest that we cannot speak of maintaining a generic Arabic; instead, it is mandatory to distinguish between its varieties (although aware that it is a linguistic *continuum* or, more accurately, a composite language space; cf. Abdelsayed 2021) to understand what the true HL is (and act accordingly). As highlighted by Albirini (2016) *inter alia*, in fact, the findings underscore the enduring significance of the DA as the primary linguistic variety maintained among Arabic speakers. The DA is the variety in which the second generations have a higher proficiency; it is the most used in the various social domains and the domestic context, configuring itself as the real HL. Furthermore, the data relating to proficiency in the various linguistic skills highlight greater skills in orality, unlike SA, which appears limited in contexts of use, activities, and production skills.

However, the lack of competence in writing skills raises important questions regarding the maintenance of DA itself, intersecting with issues related to educational policies (at local and national levels) and literacy. As known, oral and written HL proficiency requires linguistic reinforcement in both school and home environments. It is not always (indeed, rarely) possible to access formal or informal pathways responsible for maintaining DA, considering the lack of structured educational programs designed for DA. Nevertheless, data have shown that proficiency in DA is positively and significantly correlated with proficiency in SA. Consequently, policy and educational decisions should consider that any action supporting the learning or maintenance of one variety can also positively influence the other.

Furthermore, the data stresses a further obstacle linked to the generally negative attitudes of parents towards this linguistic variety (Shalaby 2021 *inter alia*). Although they communicate with their children mainly in DA (Albirini 2016), which is also used to maintain relationships with relatives in the country of origin (one of the most positively evaluated aspects of Arabic-Italian bilingualism), few parents would enrol their child in a DA course. This reluctance stems from two main factors. Firstly, there is a belief that learning the DA in formal educational settings is less essential during the emigration process. Secondly, this attitude can be viewed within the broader context of language policies in Arab countries, where educational systems typically do not include provisions for teaching the native Arabic dialect.

It is worth underlining how the absence of provisions for the maintenance of the DA can only negatively influence attitudes, which in turn determine practices, in a circle that can only lead, in the long term, to harmful consequences for language maintenance (Spolsky 2004). In other words, FLPs are influenced by personal beliefs, values, and socio-economic factors, which shape family language decisions and practices. This circumstance can result in a decline in the use of the HL, particularly among future generations, as there

is no wider support network. The absence of structured and targeted measures to maintain HLs may also foster negative attitudes towards these languages and the cultures they represent. These results, among others, need to be considered for implementing more targeted language policies and interventions focused on the real sociolinguistic condition of their recipients.

The research presents some limitations related to the sample of informants, the research tools, and the analyses. We are aware, in fact, that the sample is not completely representative of the target population, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, as a large part of the informants were young, highly educated, and with generally high-profile jobs. Thus, in the next stages of the research, we aim to address this limitation by expanding our sample to include individuals from low socio-economic and cultural backgrounds who may be difficult to reach through online surveys.

Furthermore, although a quantitative overview is essential and constitutes one of the merits and innovations introduced by the AHLI Project, it is not sufficient to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Arabic's vitality in Italy and the FLPs in relation to its maintenance. The focus groups already conducted, which have not been considered here for space reasons, contribute to fill this gap, allowing us to enter the depth of ideologies and language management. However, we believe it is necessary in the future to combine these approaches with an ethnographic investigation, which includes case studies and observations, indispensable to investigate implicit FLP (Schiffman 1996; Schwartz 2008).

Further and more in-depth analyses of this group's language skills, needs, and challenges are also necessary to understand how Arabic-speaking immigrants navigate the complex interplay between their HL and the Italian language and to grasp the factors that contribute to (or conversely, hinder) language maintenance and proficiency (King, Fogle 2006; Curdt-Christiansen 2018). This is essential to targeted policies and programs supporting their integration and success, addressing their unique needs, and promoting their linguistic and cultural identities.

At the same time, however, the AHLI Project presents itself as a novelty thanks to its broad, stratified, and multidisciplinary structure. The variety and quality of data collected, and the analyses proposed can provide an accurate, though partial, snapshot of the presence and integration of Arabic speakers in Italy, their linguistic repertoires, and their FLP. For example, the data relating to the time of arrival in Italy, the qualification, and the proficiency in Italian itself suggest that these individuals have likely been heavily influenced by Italian culture, social norms, and educational practices, which may have significant implications for their experiences and identities as immigrants. Furthermore, the results allow us to frame

the linguistic issue of Arabic 'diglossia', at least in the migration context, starting from concrete data and not based on prejudices and inaccurate assumptions. This finding underscores the need for policies that consider the evolving needs and experiences of these communities, particularly regarding issues such as education and social integration. These need to consider linguistic aspects and the socio-cultural dynamics that impact language maintenance and proficiency. Embracing such a holistic approach is essential for nurturing immigrant communities' linguistic and cultural identities and facilitating their successful integration into the host society. Therefore, AHLI's mission represents a vital effort to delve into these nuances and complexities, shedding light on the subtleties of the FLP and its role in transmitting and maintaining Arabic as a HL, contributing to more informed and tailored language maintenance strategies.

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# Stations of the Ottoman Period in Iraqi Kurdistan: Preliminary Results from the Bazhera Archaeological Project

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**Abstract** In 2023, an archaeological research project was initiated by the University of Udine, in cooperation with the Dohuk Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, on the site of Bazhera, on the eastern bank of the Nahr al-Khazir, in the Akre district. The site consists of a partially standing building, which would have played a role in the communication system of the region during the late Islamic period, as one of the stations in support of travellers. The main objective of the project is to reconstruct the functioning of this structure, its material culture and its relationship with other archaeological remains identified on the settlement and with the surrounding landscape, in order to provide new data regarding land management and protection of a frontier region of the Ottoman empire which has been neglected by archaeological research.

**Keywords** Ottoman archaeology. Ottoman material culture. Ottoman stations. Khans and routes of the Islamic world. Late Islamic Kurdistan.

**Summary** 1 Towards an Archaeology of the Ottoman Period in Iraqi Kurdistan (VV). – 2 The Bazhera Archaeological Project (VV, BH). – 3 Season 2023: An Overview (VV). – 4 Archaeological Analysis of the Main Enclosure (CT). – 5 Conclusions (VV, BH).



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## 1 Towards an Archaeology of the Ottoman Period in Iraqi Kurdistan (VV)

The Kurdistan region of northern Iraq is undergoing a period of increasing archaeological research in an effort to uncover the stages of human occupation and land use over the centuries.<sup>1</sup> While research into the Islamic period has been a marginal field of archaeological investigation for many years, in the Iraqi area as in other regions of the Islamic world, thanks to this recent archaeological research, new data have emerged regarding settlement history during the Islamic period (from the seventh to twentieth centuries).<sup>2</sup> In the region on the eastern bank of the River Tigris, in the provinces of Ninawa (*al-Maw-sil*) and Dohuk, bounded by the Zagros mountain range, the University of Udine's *Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project* has identified around 400 sites dating to this period, attesting an intense occupation consisting of rural settlements and installations for land-use and land-management (Tonghini, Vezzoli 2020; Tonghini, Usta 2021; Usta, Tonghini 2023).<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding the growing interest in this period, regarding not only to the material evidence but also the analysis of written sources,<sup>4</sup> much still needs to be done to better understand the nature of settlements, the material culture, and the relationship

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**1** The article by Kopanias, MacGinnis and Ur (2015) provided a first discussion of this new season of investigations in the region, with an annotated list of archaeological projects, emphasising the richness of the archaeological landscape from the Palaeolithic up to recent times. Archaeological activities in the region have since been further increased; no less than 11 Italian archaeological projects were supported by the Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale in 2023, which make an important contribution to our knowledge of the history of this region and the enhancement of its heritage (*"L'archeologia italiana nel mondo"* 2023, 74-85).

**2** Several studies have focused on examining settlement distribution, providing more precise dating (when possible) within the broad chronological span of the Islamic period, and an initial picture with regard to material culture - and more specifically, local and imported pottery productions (Nováček et al. 2016; Tonghini, Vezzoli 2020; Ahmad, Renette 2023).

**3** The project of the University of Udine *Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project* (LoN-AP) started in 2012 under the direction of Prof. Daniele Morandi Bonacossi; it is a wide-ranging multidisciplinary research project which aims at studying the archaeological landscape of the region of Dohuk and at recording, conserving and promoting the heritage of this region, from prehistory to the Islamic era (Morandi Bonacossi, Iamoni 2015). <http://www.terradininive.com/>.

**4** An example is the project *Land Use, Settlement Patterns and River Irrigation in the Upper Mesopotamia in the 16th Cent.: The Case of Mosul* by Dr Onur Usta (Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University), funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung Research Grant.

with the territory and surrounding regions. Documentary references, especially for pottery finds, are therefore still incomplete, posing an obstacle to the identification and interpretation of the evidence for this long period. The later phases of the region's history in particular, from its annexation to the Ottoman empire until modern times, have often remained marginal in archaeological studies, despite the fact that preliminary data from surveys provide evidence of intense and varied occupation.<sup>5</sup> In an attempt to fill these gaps, a new group of studies on the Ottoman period is getting under way,<sup>6</sup> one of which is the project presented here.

The region of Kurdistan was annexed to the Ottoman empire in the early sixteenth century. The Ottomans found a territory in difficulty with respect to resource and land management; this was initiated by the Mongol invasions in the second half of the thirteenth century and aggravated by the Timurid invasion in the early fifteenth century. From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, this area constituted the border with the Safavid empire, the boundaries of which were sometimes ambiguous due to constant clashes between the two powers over these territories. The region has been occupied for centuries by Kurdish tribes who, depending on their interests in the territory, have supported one power or the other, going so far as to gain autonomy to control the territories around the Zagros mountains (Kaya 2022, 26).

The Battle of Chardiran (in present-day Iran) in 1514 marked the final seizure of eastern Anatolia by the Ottoman army. The Ottomans never directly and rigidly controlled this peripheral region and delegated management of the territories to Kurdish tribal leaders. In Mosul, they appointed a governor-general (*beylerbeyi*), while Kurdish families around the areas of Kirkuk and Sulaymaniya were put in charge of tax collection and the protection of the Iranian frontier.

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<sup>5</sup> Usta and Tonghini's study of the watermills (2023) revealed several aspects on the political and socio-economic management of water in the Mosul region and its hinterland in the late Islamic period. Work on settlement during the Islamic period in the LoNAP area is currently being published; it also proposes a new interpretation of the region's characteristics in the late Islamic period.

<sup>6</sup> Among the projects aimed at an in-depth study of this period is the *Zeyd Archaeological Project* (ZAP). In 2022, the University Ca' Foscari of Venice started a project on the site of Tell Zeyd (under the direction of Prof. Cristina Tonghini), which constitutes an extraordinary observatory for studying the long-term settlement features, resource management and material culture of the area on the long period, between the seventh and nineteenth centuries. The first excavation campaign uncovered a workshop for the production of smoking pipes from the Ottoman period; investigation of the workshop area and adjoining spaces is providing for the first time in the region a chrono-typology for ceramic productions of the late Islamic period. An article will appear soon on the first season of excavation and preliminary results that emerged from the discovery of the workshop, by Tonghini et al. 2023. For a presentation of the project's objectives, activities and first results see <https://www.zeydarchaeologicalproject.net/>.

Like other outlying provinces of the empire, Iraq was not fully integrated into the Ottoman administrative system, thus remaining free from strict control by the central government (Çetinsaya 2009, 273). This situation was confirmed even after the Zohab Treaty of 1639, signed to settle border disputes between the Safavids and the Ottomans, which favoured the increased autonomy of local Kurdish dynasties, especially in the Zagros mountains region (Kaya 2022, 27; Ateş 2013, 96-100).

### 1.1 Stations and Outposts of the Ottoman Period: An Overview of the Archaeological Evidence

Archaeological evidence of later periods in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, especially from non-urban contexts, is rare and scarcely studied; among this, khans and other outposts for the protection of travellers, located in strategic areas for the control of the main routes, are certainly clear material evidence of the complex territorial management policy of this border region of the Ottoman empire.

Despite the not always stable situation of the Kurdistan region during the late Islamic period, on the border between these great empires, the area included between the Tigris in the west and the Zagros mountains in the east was traversed by several communication routes that branched off in a north-south and east-west direction. In this region, military actions intersected with commercial activities along major routes and merchants and pilgrims travelled along the same routes used by the two armies. The trade routes that departed from Baghdad in the direction of Mosul, then continuing to Diyarbakir and finally Aleppo, were marked by the presence of khans and forts that functioned as stopover stations (Peacock 2009, 2), as also recounted by Ottoman travellers, such as Matrakçi Nasuh (sixteenth century) and Eviliya Çelebi (seventeenth century) (Kale 2017, 132-3).

In the more distant frontier territories, the Ottomans delegated the construction of bases that protected borders and principal roads to local chiefs, without any financial support and without providing any particular guidance on how to build them. For this reason, in these regions, it is difficult to find regularity and continuity of construction (building techniques and materials) of the forts and stations; a different situation appears instead in urban centres or those with greater strategic importance for the control of borders and movement of people and armies (Peacock 2009, 19-20).

At the site of Bazhera (described in the following section, 2. The Bazhera Archaeological Project), which was the object of an initial archaeological investigation in 2023 with survey and excavation activities, the remains of a structure still visible today above ground may in fact provide a good example of a regional khan. This structure



Figure 1 Aerial view of the site of Bazhera. Credits: LoNAP. © A. Savioli

consists of an irregular square-shaped building with buttresses that may have served as a road station and point of control of the area between the Navkur plain (and the River Al-Khazir basin), to the south, and the access to the Zagros mountains, to the north [figs 1-2].

While these kinds of shelter structures have been studied in detail in other chronological and geographical contexts, for example in works on medieval caravanserais in the Levant and Middle East region (Önge 2007; Cytryn-Silverman 2010) or on Ottoman-era stations on the *hajj* route (Petersen 2008), this region of northern Iraq has not been investigated so far. Except for study and valorisation projects concerning a few khans in urban settings,<sup>7</sup> no archaeological study has so far been carried out to determine how they functioned, who they housed, and how they fit into the management framework of borders, major trade routes and land or water resources during the late Islamic period. Nevertheless, various evidence confirms the presence of stations and territorial protection or control buildings,

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<sup>7</sup> An international project focused on the restoration and valorisation of the architectural heritage of late Islamic Koya also included the study of urban commercial buildings dating to the nineteenth century (*qaysariya*, a covered, enclosed commercial building). Other similar structures are attested in other main centres of Northern Iraq, such as Erbil, Sulaymaniya, Mosul, Kirkuk, Kifri, some of which are still in use. <http://koyaheritage.com/>.



Figure 2 Bazhera and the locations mentioned in the text

built in the late Islamic period in the region.<sup>8</sup> Written sources also confirm this presence.<sup>9</sup> Some of these structures appear today in isolated contexts, far from urban centres or main villages, but always located in strategic areas, from the point of view of land management [fig. 2]. Only a few of them have been identified and partially studied. To the east of the Yazidi shrine of Lalish, located in Sheikhan district in Nineveh Governorate, about 30 km west of Bazhera, stands a station (19.5 m × 9.5 m), the foundation or dating of which is uncertain, but generally associated with the early Ottoman period. It is rectangular in shape, with a domed central room, considered to be associated with the accommodation of visitors to the shrine.<sup>10</sup>

Following the direction of the mountains, south of Koya – a city located about 50 km east of Erbil, along the road that connects this centre with Klkesimaq, Dukan and Sulaymaniya – there is an inn, outside of the urban area. It is rectangular in shape (16 m × 4.5 m), with domed rooms and a large space supported by columns, built of stone, mud and plaster. Within the city of Koya itself is located another large caravanserai (Mahmud Agha Khan); it is a khan with two

<sup>8</sup> Further elements, and especially archaeological investigations, are needed to clarify the dating of many of these buildings.

<sup>9</sup> In the *vilâyet* (administrative division) of Mosul, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, dozens of caravanserais are mentioned in the various districts, the location of which, however, is not precisely indicated (Eroğlu, Babuçoğlu, Özdil 2012).

<sup>10</sup> *The Guide of Archaeology Site in Kurdistan Region* 2017, 45. The foundation of the sanctuary area seems to date back to the twelfth century.



floors and a large central courtyard, with rooms for storage, accommodation and stables, and decorative elements on the doors. Both structures are attributed to the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Moving westwards, on the River Tigris where today there is the Mosul Dam Lake, in the area of the so-called *Saddam Dam Salvage Project*,<sup>12</sup> several buildings, which have been interpreted as khans, were documented. In the southern region of the lake, a stone-built khan, consisting of a courtyard (22.5 m × 21 m) and rows of rooms on three sides, was identified in the village of Mishrifieh (site no. 17), probably founded during the Abbasid period but still in use in the Ilkhanid and likely Ottoman periods.<sup>13</sup> Another khan with a similar plan has been identified in Tell Baqaq 3 (site no. 23), generally attributed to the Islamic period,<sup>14</sup> caravanserai facilities have also been found in Hatara Kebir (Simpson 1997, 88).

The presence of these structures along the River Tigris during the Islamic period may be explained by the function of this watercourse as a transport and trade route that connected large urban centres, from Basra to Mosul, passing via Baghdad, and then directed towards western trade itineraries. Moreover, from Baghdad and Basra started the Iraqi *hajj* route towards Mecca and Medina (Petersen 1994, 47-56).

Archaeological evidence of the presence of other Ottoman period khans also comes from more southerly contexts, mainly located along the banks of the River Tigris. In the nineteenth century, khans were built in the area south-east of Samarra and Balad, to provide shelter stations for pilgrims (visiting the Shi'a shrine of Samarra) and travellers on their way to Baghdad.<sup>15</sup>

While these structures fulfilled the function of caravanserais, located on main routes and with rooms that were evidently used for housing travellers, goods and animals, it cannot be ruled out that this function could have also been provided by other types of buildings with a more clearly protective and defensive aspect, such as castles

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**11** *The Guide of Archaeology Site in Kurdistan Region* 2017, 17-18. Mahmud Agha Khan, one of the town's three nineteenth century khans, was founded in 1860-61 in a prominent area of the city, close to the Great Mosque. [http://koyaheritage.com/#xl\\_xr\\_page\\_mahmud%20agha%20khan](http://koyaheritage.com/#xl_xr_page_mahmud%20agha%20khan).

**12** *Saddam Dam Salvage Project* (formerly known as the *Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project*) was an international archaeological salvage operation organised by the Iraqi Directorate of Antiquities in the 1980s in order to document the archaeological heritage of this region prior to the building of a dam on the River Tigris.

**13** "Excavations in Iraq, 1983-84" 1985, 235-6.

**14** "Excavations in Iraq, 1983-84" 1985, 228.

**15** One is the khan al-Sa'yawiya ("Excavations in Iraq, 1981-82" 1983, 219). In order to avoid problems with some tribes in the region, the pilgrims would cross the Tigris at Balad and then continue on the eastern bank (Northedge 2012, 63-4).

or forts. These presumably served to protect territories, most of them associated with Kurdish emirates, but may also have been used to accommodate travellers and merchants. Several forts, castles and military outposts are attested in the region throughout the late Islamic period, which fulfilled various functions. A series of relatively small forts seem to have been built around the sixteenth century and restored or renovated in the nineteenth century; they are located on main roads that connect Erbil with northern and eastern territories, usually in elevated positions (Khanzad, Dere and Dwin castles are located on the main road from Erbil to Ruwanduz).<sup>16</sup> They have been seen as part of the construction activities for the protection of the Soran Emirate (sixteenth-nineteenth century), which controlled a wide region east of the Tigris, including the cities of Erbil and Ruwanduz. Khanzad is a two-floor rectangular building with large circular corner towers, made of small sized stones bound with mortar; Dere is a hexagonal structure with rounded-shaped towers at each corner. The Dwin walled citadel, on the top of the Pirman mountains, was also once the capital of the emirate and was occupied by residential areas, a mosque, places for keeping animals and a water collection system.

The site of Qalat Lokhan is a fortress located on the north edge of the modern village of Ruwanduz, which was investigated by the *Rowanduz Archaeological Program* and seems to have been part of a network of towers and forts that protected the Soran Emirate (Danti 2014) - which likely included also the construction of the Sartka castle, situated further south near the modern village of Dukan, built with stones bound with mortar, used to guard the borders with the Baban Emirate<sup>17</sup> and to protect commercial caravans.<sup>18</sup>

In the late Ottoman period, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several outposts (*qishle*) of the Ottoman empire were established in Kurdish cities for the administration of territories.<sup>19</sup>

The region shows traces of various structures that served to protect borders and main routes, especially in the area of the mountains and along the rivers. These sites were part of a broader framework of infrastructures in support of land and water management, such as bridges to cross the main watercourses and mills.

A better understanding of the archaeological evidence associated with stations and khans of the Ottoman period, which also includes

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<sup>16</sup> *The Guide of Archaeology Site in Kurdistan Region* 2017, 14-16.

<sup>17</sup> This was a Kurdish emirate existing from the sixteenth to mid-nineteenth century; the main centre was Sulaymaniyah.

<sup>18</sup> *The Guide of Archaeology Site in Kurdistan Region* 2017, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Akre *qishle* is a large rectangular structure with a large central courtyard and two floors that was founded in the second half of the nineteenth century. *The Guide of Archaeology Site in Kurdistan Region* 2017, 48.

buildings similar in plan to the Bazhera structure, comes from the *hajj* route in the Arabian Peninsula, where the forts erected to protect trade and pilgrims' roads were constructions of small size (circa 20 m across), employing simple construction techniques with the use of local materials, whose function was not so much to maintain military control of a region as to protect trade and pilgrims (Peacock 2009, 19). In his study of the *hajj* road during the Ottoman period, Petersen identifies two main phases of building typologies for these structures. A first phase, linked to the early years of the Ottoman conquest in the region of the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula (early sixteenth century), saw the construction of several buildings, mainly square in plan (about 20 m per side) and with a rectangular central courtyard surrounded by vaulted rooms; these generally have a ground floor, a first floor and an additional floor with a parapet. Generally, these buildings are constructed with locally available materials and have few decorative elements, usually located on the main door (Petersen 2008, 32-3). Another important phase, which took place in the eighteenth century, involved the construction of small, square-shaped stations with corner towers with gun slits (2008, 32-4). These buildings have no decorative elements, not even at the main entrance. They are organised around a central court and have one ground floor, usually with vaulted rooms used for sheltering animals or for storage, and a first floor (Shqairat 2020, 108).

These structures were all supplied by cisterns or water reservoirs, an extremely important feature for their function but also for the reception of pilgrims; other infrastructures along the roads, such as bridges, ensured their accessibility (2020, 104-5).

## 2 The Bazhera Archaeological Project (VV, BH)

On this basis, and with the aim of providing new data on the material culture and land management of these later periods, in August 2023 an archaeological research project was initiated by the University of Udine, in collaboration with the General Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, on the site of Bazhera, located on the eastern bank of the Nahr al-Khazir, about 20 km west of the town of Akre and 80 km north-east of Mosul and at a short distance from the Zagros mountains [fig. 2].

The site consists of a partially standing irregularly square-shaped structure with buttresses, flanked to the east and south-east by archaeological remains. The northern side of the enclosure is not standing. The masonry is well preserved, built in regular banks with local river stones bound by mortar. At the eastern end of the settlement, before a steep slope, is a cemetery area protected by a low stone wall. The settlement covers an area of about 3 hectares [fig. 3]. The

settlement overlooks a stream, an irrigation canal redirected by the Nahr al-Khazir, and the surrounding landscape is relatively well preserved, with cultivated fields.



Figure 3 Orthophotos showing study areas. Credits: DYA Survey Group

On the basis of preliminary analyses and comparison with other similar structures, this building, built as a protected space in a prominent position, could be interpreted as a station (a khan) for the reception and protection of travellers, goods and animals, attributable to the late Islamic period, when this region was situated on the border between two great empires, the Ottoman and Safavid, and occupied for centuries by local Kurdish entities.

The site is located in a region that shows several traces of occupation during the Islamic period. Data collected during the survey of the *Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project* (LoNAP), which investigated the human settlement and archaeological features of a large area of the Dohuk Governorate,<sup>20</sup> show that the region south

**20** The site of Bazhera was one of those identified during this survey (site no. 510). The study of Islamic period surface material from this large survey project was conducted within the framework of the project *Land Behind Mosul: Settlement, Landscape*

of Bazhera, the Navkur Plain, was densely occupied during the Islamic period. Proceeding further north, at a pass leading to the Zagros mountains, water mills were identified, with phases attributed to the Islamic period (Usta, Tonghini 2023). The site of Bazhera lies in an area where water is readily available, a short distance from a pass that provides quick access to the interior valleys of the Zagros range, which were often under the direct control of Kurdish authorities during the late Islamic period.

The three-year archaeological project started on the site of Bazhera aims at studying the history of a settlement that played a key role in the communication network of this area, within a complex historical and political framework. Archaeological investigations of the main structure and related remains could help shed light on some of the features of the region's road and trade traffic network, where stations were areas of rest and protection for merchants and travellers. The archaeological study of this site would give an understanding for the first time in this area, of how such a settlement functioned – on one hand in relation to the users of the premises (where they stayed, how many could be accommodated, etc.), and, on the other, in relation to the surrounding territory (relationships with other installations and with agricultural areas). Through comparison with written sources from the Ottoman period, as envisaged by the project, it would also prove possible to reconstruct the network of stations and routes that passed through this territory and determine the role of Bazhera in this context.<sup>21</sup>

### 3 Season 2023: An Overview (VV)

In the course of the first campaign at Bazhera, an intensive archaeological survey was carried out in order to establish a distribution model for the site's occupation during the Islamic period and to collect surface finds that could provide more precise information on the dating of the settlement.<sup>22</sup> The archaeological area was divided into 20 m x 20 m quadrants; all visible features were described, and finds collected

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*and Material Culture of the Islamic Period in Northern Iraq*, a specific research chapter within LoNAP, under the direction of Prof. Cristina Tonghini (University Ca' Foscari of Venice). For preliminary results of the surface pottery evidence see: Tonghini, Vezzoli 2020; the final publication of the *Land behind Mosul* project is currently in preparation.

**21** A preliminary study of written sources from the Ottoman period is planned for next year.

**22** In addition to scientific investigations, events were organised on certain days to involve the communities in the site's investigation and the enhancement of the region's archaeological heritage. The team invited students at the elementary school of the village of Bazhera (Bajer Jer) and students at the Akre University Department of History.

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(pottery, bones, glass, metals, etc.).<sup>23</sup> The surface data made it possible to ascertain an occupation for the late Islamic period (sixteenth-early twentieth century), as expected, and to highlight an important occupation during the early Islamic period (seventh-tenth century); to a lesser extent habitation in the middle Islamic period (eleventh-fifteenth century) has been documented by the pottery evidence.

The inner area of the main building was also divided into sectors and described by archaeologists, who collected potsherds. All the ceramic material has been studied and documented, giving a preliminary picture of types attributed to the Islamic period attested on the site.

An 11 × 11 m test pit (Sounding 1) was dug with the aim of proceeding with the stratigraphic excavation of one of the structures located to the east of the main building [fig. 3], in order to provide information on its possible relationship (at a chronological or functional level) with the main enclosure and to determine the nature and chronology of the archaeological evidence characterising the settlement.<sup>24</sup> A square-shaped room, delimited by four walls (all of which have almost completely collapsed), was brought to light (it was already partially visible on the surface) [fig. 4]. The masonry consists of an internal and external face made with medium to large-sized stones, split only in the inner face ('spaccato' technique), and a core composed of soil as a binder with small-sized stones. A deeper excavation next to the interior of the west wall likely revealed the probable foundations of the structure. The stratigraphy and finds indicate as *terminus post quem* the late Ottoman period (eighteenth-early twentieth century). The presence of some tobacco pipes is particularly significant (for absolute dating). The continuation of the excavation in this area planned for the next season will hopefully yield to provide more information on its function, which has not clearly emerged yet.

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**23** Since pottery finds were not abundant, it was decided to collect every fragment identified, even non-diagnostic ones, in order to be able to analyse them in detail and define the chronology of occupation of the site.

**24** The archaeological excavation of Sounding 1 was conducted under the supervision of Dr Margherita Dallai (PhD, University of Florence) and Carla Stancanelli (postgraduate, Ca' Foscari University of Venice) in cooperation with Khaled Aziz Mahmud (Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq). Students at the University of Udine (S.I. Bernal, A. Bettin, V. Ridolfo) and archaeologists of the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Lawand Shamal Ahmad and Rozhan Mahir Rashid) also participated in the operations, with the support of workers from the village of Bazhera (Malek Mirali Ali, Muhammad Khaled Ali, Hamza Abed Shanket and Niçirvan Osman Muhammad).



Figure 4 Sounding 1 after removal of surface layers

The intensive survey of the site led to the identification of the cemetery area of Bazhera, located south-east of the main building and delimited by a low stone wall [fig. 3]. It is characterised by the presence of unworked stones, placed on their longest sides, facing east [fig. 5]. The limits of the tombs are unclear; however, the buried stones indicate the orientation of the bodies – which, in accordance with Islamic practices, are buried on their side, facing towards Mecca. Only a few more complex tombs have been identified; these are rectangular structures formed by walls with stones of various sizes not bound with mortar, also with one or two oblong stones buried in the centre and facing east.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In order to find elements for comparison, the team visited a neighbouring cemetery with very similar characteristics. The village of Baqusbe is located north of Bazhera and has a much larger cemetery area, located on a hill overlooking the River al-Khazir. Here, a number of carved stones were also identified, with engraved or relief decorations with geometric figures that are difficult to interpret; a couple of stelae with



Figure 5 The cemetery area with the stones facing east

DYA Group Survey based in Dohuk (Iraqi Kurdistan) carried out the topographic recording of the site, produced a 3D model of the main building and processed the DEM (Digital Elevation Model) of the area.<sup>26</sup>

## 4 Archaeological Analysis of the Main Enclosure (CT)

### 4.1 The Enclosure

One of the main goals of the first season of fieldwork at Bahzera was to study and document the structures preserved above ground, in order to derive an initial set of data on the construction history of the structure and to formulate specific questions for further research.

The structures currently preserved above ground belong to an enclosure of which three sides - east, south, and west - are visible today [fig. 6]. The standing structures are preserved to a maximum height of about 4 m, measured on the outside; the interior is now covered by layers of rubble.

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inscriptions were also attested. Both cemetery areas, documented and photographed, will be the subject of a BA dissertation at the University of Udine (student S.I. Bernal).

<sup>26</sup> I would like to thank Zerevan Binavi and DYA Survey Group team for support during archaeological activities at the site.





Figure 6 General view of the main building. Credits: LoNAP. © A. Savioli

The enclosure has four three-quarter circle corner buttresses, plus two semicircular side-buttresses on the south and west sides. The north side of the enclosure has not survived, but its original course is indicated by the two corner towers that once connected it to the west and east sides. The south and west sides appear to be preserved for their entire lengths (the western side is, however, partially collapsed in the northern part). The south side measures about 34 m (measured on the inside) and has a semicircular outer buttress at the centre. The west side measures about 27 m (measured on the inside) and, like the south side, has a semicircular buttress in the centre. Middle buttresses on the other sides are not currently visible. The east side has a peculiar shape: the south-east buttress is not in line with the north-east buttress, and therefore, to connect, the south-eastern portion bends westwards to meet the portion coming from the north-east, creating a recess. The wall fragments visible today do not allow us to understand the exact configuration of this side, or to hypothesise the presence of specific defensive elements that may have determined this specific layout, such as a bent entrance.

No traces of the original entrance are preserved; the original limits of the opening seen today on the eastern side are not visible, and the northern side is completely collapsed, therefore without excavation it is not possible to establish its contemporaneity with the original layout. The masonry visible today has no openings of any kind, or specific defensive elements, such as crenelations [fig. 7].



Figure 7 Masonry of the western external wall

Figure 8 Greater width of the lower courses of the western internal wall

The collapse in the interior means that it is not possible to understand whether multiple storeys were present. However, the thickness of the rubble deposits, as well as a greater width of the lower courses of the internal walls seem to suggest the presence of a roofing system [fig. 8]. The thicker masonry, in fact, could have supported vaulting.

The extreme homogeneity of the construction that can be observed today suggests the absence of major interventions on the structure, and thus would seem to indicate a single construction phase. Only by means of the excavation of specific portions of the deposit will it be possible to acquire information useful for reconstructing the layout of the enclosure and understanding the details of its occupation phases.

## 4.2 Building Technique and Materials

The foundation of the structure is not visible today. The standing walls are very homogeneous in terms of building techniques and materials, including the buttresses. The masonry is built in regular banks that can be identified all along the internal and the external faces. The height of the bank varies from 27 cm to 58 cm; the choice of a specific height for a given course does not seem to relate to its position in structure: thicker banks are not necessarily used in the lower parts [fig. 9]. Unworked cobbles of medium (around  $25 \times 13$  cm) and small size (around  $12 \times 9$  cm) are bound together with abundant mortar [fig. 10].



Figure 9 Regular banks of the masonry (eastern external wall)

These cobbles were likely been collected from the banks of the neighbouring wadis, where their presence can also be observed today. The masonry is built with two faces and a core, with a thickness of about 70 cm. The building material is carefully laid in series of rows in the faces, with elements of larger-sized pieces at the bottom of the bank and smaller ones at the top; blocks are laid lengthways. In the core small sized cobbles are generally used, with a higher percentage of mortar.



**Figure 10**  
Characteristics of stone  
placement in the horizontal  
banks (western internal wall)

The mortar is tough, made of abundant sand of variable grain size and lime;<sup>27</sup> it is abundant and extrudes between stones. The original finishing can be observed east of the south-west buttress [fig. 11]: the mortar is not smoothed but extrudes against the formwork; no clear traces have survived on the surface of the mortar to indicate the nature of the formwork (wooden planks?). The upper layer of each bank shows a regular surface obtained by a rough smoothing of the mortar [fig. 12]. The construction seems to have proceeded homogeneously by horizontal levels, as a single bank can be followed along the whole structure visible today. The passage from one portion of formwork to the adjacent one has left no traces in the faces of the walls. An interruption can only be seen on the external faces in proximity to the circular buttresses [fig. 13], where a different formwork was presumably required; no interruption is perceived on the corresponding portion of the internal face.

The internal face of the walls presents a peculiarity: in several cases the blocks are cut as to obtain a more regular surface; this operation seems to have been carried out once the wall was already completed. It never occurs on the exterior, where irregularities were presumably not inconvenient.

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**27** Petrographic analyses of the mortar are being conducted in the CIBA laboratories of the University of Padua (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca Studio e Conservazione dei Beni Archeologici, Architettonici e Storico-Artistici).



Figure 11 Detail of the mortar binding the stones (south-eastern buttress)

Figure 12 Detail of the rough smoothing of the mortar (from the collapsed north-eastern buttress)

### 4.3 Interpretation and Dating

On the basis of the preliminary analysis carried out so far, no clear indication as to the function of the structure seems to emerge. The absence of elements clearly related to defence is certainly relevant, although the fragmented condition of the building clearly limits the interpretation of negative evidence. However, the building of a robust structure in such a prominent position, overlooking the valley and dominating the surroundings, is compatible with the function of a khan.

As to its dating, only hypotheses may be put forward at this stage of the research.

Other khans are present in the region. They have never been studied in detail, but they are usually ascribed to the last phase of the Ottoman period.

The masonry typology may provide some chronological indications, but for the area this is still in the process of being established.<sup>28</sup>

The masonry in banks seems to have appeared in the region in the late Ottoman period. So far, this type of masonry has been studied in detail only in relation to milling installations, and therefore

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<sup>28</sup> A masonry typology for the area is being established in the framework of the *Lands behind Mosul* research programme (University Ca' Foscari of Venice, directed by C. Tonghini), part of the *Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project* (LoNAP: University of Udine, directed by D. Morandi Bonacossi): Tonghini, Usta 2021.



**Figure 13**  
Interruption of the banks  
for the construction  
of the tower (western external wall)

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any similarities should be treated with caution. In the group of mills excavated in the Wadi Bandaway (site no. 124 of the LoNAP survey), this banking technique is employed for the building of the millhouse. In Period 4 (late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries, Tonghini, Usta 2021, 109-13), natural cobbles are used together with split stone (usually limestone), the latter in much larger quantities. In Period 3, the use of cobbles prevails over that of other types of material, and the masonry shows similarities to that studied at Bazhera (2021, 105-9). Period 3 at Wadi Bandawai pre-dates Period 4; as regards absolute chronology, it has been tentatively ascribed to the early Ottoman period, i.e. to the sixteenth century (2021, 115). Given certain technical similarities, and taking into account the historical context, a similar chronological horizon may fit the building of the khan at Bazhera. The continuation of fieldwork, especially excavation, may in the future provide more conclusive evidence in this respect.

## 5 Conclusions (VV, BH)

The first campaign of archaeological investigations at Bazhera indicated a distribution model for the occupation of the site during the Islamic period and permitted an in-depth analysis of the structure preserved above ground, with gathering of the first data regarding its possible function.

The masonry of the preserved enclosure is well preserved, built in regular banks with local river stones and mortar. The extreme homogeneity of the masonry would seem to indicate a single construction phase. Although only the archaeological excavation planned for the next campaigns may resolve doubts related to the function of this space, the building currently documented does not show any specifically defensive features. The thickness of the rubble deposits on the inside and a greater width of the lower courses of the internal walls suggest the presence of a possible upper floor. These elements, in addition to the fact that the building stands in a prominent position overlooking a watercourse and a short distance from an important pass leading to the valleys of the Zagros mountains, suggest that this building could have been used as a khan or station to receive travelers, merchants, pilgrims.

The surface pottery collected on the site,<sup>29</sup> and comparisons with well-dated construction techniques present in the same region, in relation to watermills, seem to indicate its attribution to the late Islamic period, more probably to the early Ottoman period.

However, the pottery collected on the site and the other available archaeological evidence point to a much longer occupation of the settlement, already from the early Islamic period, which only further archaeological work will be able to define.

The archaeological evidence and written sources, although still scarce and uneven, help to reconstruct a broader picture of the management of the territory between the Tigris and Zagros mountains during the late Islamic period. Although these regions were not fully integrated into the central system of the Ottoman government, the presence of the Kurdish emirates and the need to protect these border territories with the Safavid empire led to the careful management of the most important areas. A network of caravanserais, both urban and extra-urban, located on the main roadways, along the River Tigris and its tributaries and at the entrance to the Zagros range, was present throughout the late Islamic period. It was supported by the presence of other defensive and protective posts (which probably

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<sup>29</sup> The dating of the ceramic material is based on the typology identified for the LoN-AP project (Tonghini, Vezzoli 2020), whose complete and final publication is currently being prepared.

also served as refreshment areas for travellers and armies) and by a system of infrastructures that guaranteed circulation within the territories and the management of agricultural and water resources. However, at the current state of research, there does not seem to be any standardisation in construction techniques or a regular sequence of these stations, confirming the lack of planning by a central government but rather the action of local entities.

It should also not be forgotten that this region was connected to a broader communication network, which was also part of the system related to the movement of pilgrims from Iraq to the Arabian Peninsula.

The continuation of the excavations in 2024 has the objective of bringing to light both the eastern limits of the structure, which present unaligned masonry, where the entrance to the khan could possibly be located, and the organisation of the interior spaces, in an attempt to understand the function of the space and the presence of an upper floor. Only with an overall view of the settlement, which will therefore also involve the continuation of excavations outside the khan, it will be possible to reconstruct the site's role in a broader framework, including the management of the territory and its connection to the road system of the region during the late Islamic period.

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# Looking for the Signs An Unfinished Royal Bowl from Karmir-Blur of Minua, King of Urartu

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**Abstract** Among the most representative objects not only of metallurgy, but of the Urartian kingship itself, there is a rather conspicuous group of bronze bowls bearing short inscriptions in cuneiform. These texts allow to attribute the ownership of these objects to a series of Urartian rulers. Since 2022, a new project has been underway to study comprehensively these objects, most of which are stored in the History Museum of Armenia. The present article deals with two bowls referable to king Minua, son of Išpuini, one of which, unpublished, bears an unfinished inscription. A reconstruction of this inscription is given based on microscopic analysis of the epigraph preparation marks.

**Keywords** Urartu. Bronze bowls. Minua. Karmir-blur. Cuneiform inscriptions.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Size and Morphology of the Bowls. – 3 Reconstruction of the Unfinished Inscription. – 4 Conclusions.



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## 1 Introduction

In the summer of 2022, as part of a cooperation agreement signed between the History Museum of Armenia and ISMEO - The International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies, a project was initiated for a new study and classification of the Urartian materials preserved within the Museum. The first objects selected for this project were 71 bronze bowls with Urartian royal inscriptions discovered during excavations at Karmir-blur/Teišebai.URU [fig. 1]. The site of Karmir-blur is one of the most important Urartian sites on the Armenian Highlands; its most relevant occupation is the Urartian period (seventh century BCE), to which most of the evidence dates (see Grekyan 2021). The citadel was founded by Rusa, son of Argišti, towards the end of Urartian history, and the circumstances of its destruction are still debated. It seems possible that the site continued its life beyond what is believed to be the fall of the Urartian state in the second half of the seventh century BCE. Several bronze shields (CTU B 8-2, B 8-3, B 8-4) and a solid bronze cylinder (CTU B 8-21) bearing inscriptions of Argišti, son of Minua, are particularly relevant for the aim of this article, as they report that they were originally realised and preserved in Erebuni and only subsequently moved to Karmir-blur. This circumstance has allowed us to hypothesise that the objects bearing inscriptions of kings preceding Rusa, son of Argišti, were all originally preserved somewhere else and moved to Karmir-blur only when this became the new royal residence and the main administration centre of the Ararat Plain (Dan, Bonfanti 2023, 172).

The bowls were discovered in 1949 (Piotrovskij 1950, 59-60; Piotrovskij 1952, 20, 54-64), all found inside *pithos* nos 4 or 5,<sup>1</sup> which was sealed by wooden planks, in storeroom 25, at the basement level of the fortified complex. The deposition of these objects within the *pithos* clearly appears to be intentional, and the only terminus for dating this deposit appears to be the most recent inscription, whose date is still debated.

The first bowl considered in the present study (Bowl A; fig. 2), kept at the History Museum of Armenia under inventory number 2010/3252, is a peculiar and unique specimen in the panorama of the research, as it bears an unfinished inscription of the ruler Minua [figs 3-4], thus datable to early Urartian history (see Burney 2021, 95-6). The careful observation of the bowl offers evidence for the study of the stage preceding the final manufacturing of the inscription, as the latter is carved as a sort of preliminary 'draft' from which

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<sup>1</sup> *Pithos* no. 4: Piotrovskij 1951, 110; Piotrovskij 1952, 56. *Pithos* no. 5: Piotrovskij 1952, 20.

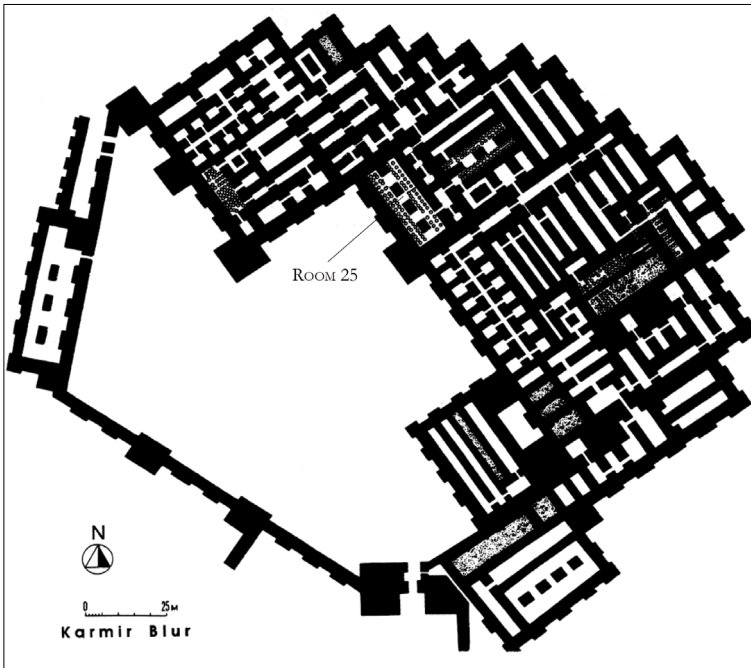
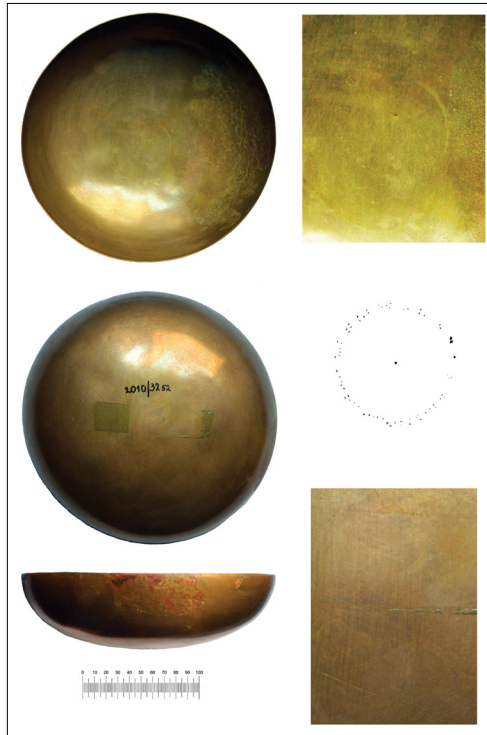


Figure 1 Plan of the Karmir-blur fortified complex (adapted after Seidl 2004, fig. 2)

the entire text can be reconstructed here for the first time. This specimen also offered the opportunity to study in person another bowl (Bowl B; fig. 5) bearing the same text (stored at the History Museum of Armenia, inventory number 2010/327; figs 6-7), published only in a drawing by Piotrovskij (1952, 55, fig. 26; fig. 8a), which, upon collation of the text, appears to be incorrect [fig. 8c].

The bowls were first published by B.B. Piotrovskij in 1951, when he summarised the findings of the excavations of *pithos* 4, Storeroom 25. Within the second volume of the excavation reports from Karmir-blur (Piotrovskij 1952, 54-64) an entire chapter has been devoted to Urartian inscriptions on metal objects, where the author reports the (erroneous) drawing of the epigraph engraved on bowl B, in a figure dedicated to the inscriptions of Minua on bronze bowls (Piotrovskij 1952, 55, fig. 26D). The inscription was never later checked again in person, and it appears in the corpora as: *m̄m̄i-nu-<a>i-ni-e-i ú-ri-<iš>-ḥu-si-ni-e-i* (see Salvini 2012, CTU B 5-5C, with previous bibliography). The bowl A has never been studied individually, probably due to the preliminary condition of the incised inscription, which is not visible to the naked eye; in publications that have analysed the



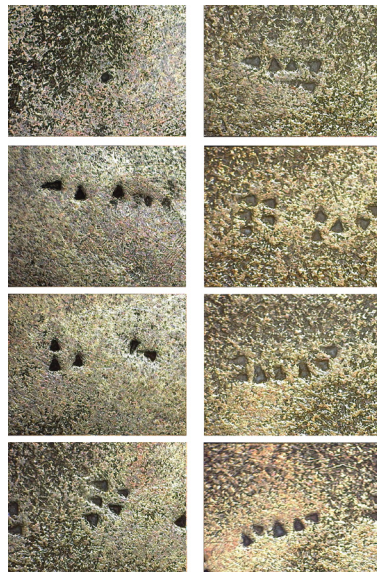
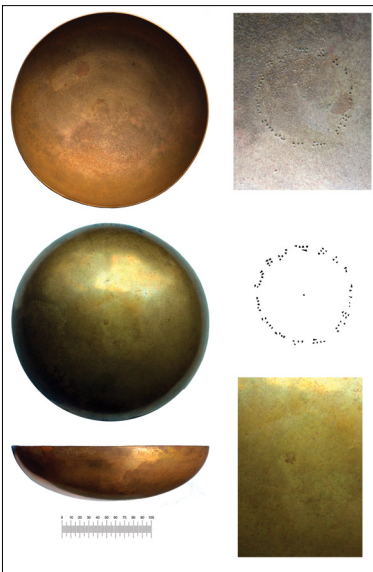
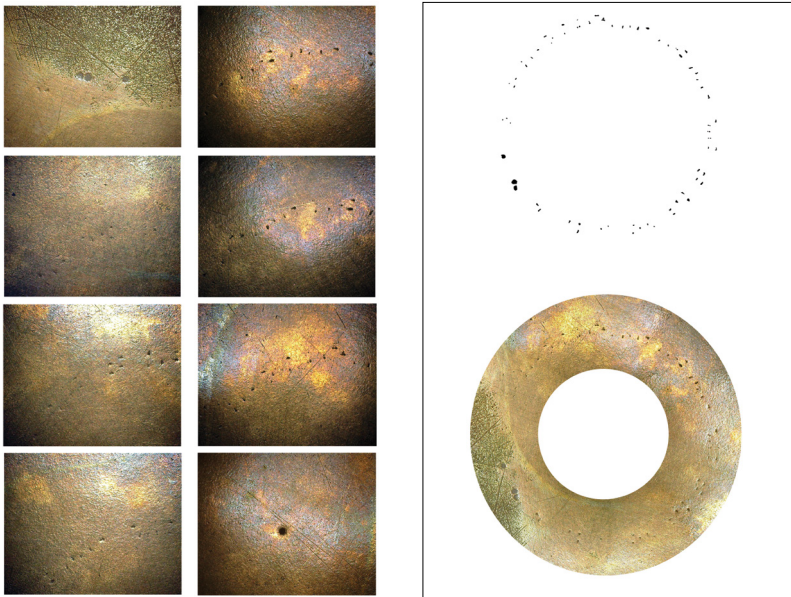
**Figure 2**  
Urartian inscribed royal bowl with  
an unfinished inscription  
by king Minua (Bowl A)

bowls' corpus as a whole (Seidl 2004, 24; Salvini 2012, 29-30) only bowl B is considered to bear the previously mentioned erroneous text, based on the erroneous drawing by Piotrovskij.<sup>2</sup>

A picture of bowl A has never been published before, and it was considered appropriate here to study it together with the specimen B, as they bear the same cuneiform inscription; in fact, they turned out to be the only two bowls bearing the same variant of this epigraph of king Minua. In the present article, the authors will provide a reading of the unfinished bowl's text and highlight some peculiar features belonging to both specimens.

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<sup>2</sup> Salvini (2012, 29) refers to the specimen catalogued as 2010/32/52 when publishing the text CTU B 5-5C, saying explicitly that it is not possible to collect pictures of this specific object.



**Figure 3** Microscopic views of the inscribed royal bowl with an unfinished inscription by king Minua (Bowl A)

**Figure 4** Microscopic view and drawing of the unfinished inscription by king Minua (Bowl A)

**Figure 5** Urartian inscribed royal bowl with an inscription by king Minua (Bowl B)

**Figure 6** Microscopic views of the inscribed royal bowl with an inscription by king Minua (Bowl B)

## 2 Size and Morphology of the Bowls

The bowls considered in this paper are hemispherical shallow bowls with a continuous profile, an indistinct rim, and a concave bottom in continuity with the profile. They fall into a standardised morphology comparable with all the other specimens of Urartian inscribed metal bowls (see Seidl 2004, 55-9). The unfinished bowl (A) weighs 305 grammes and has a diameter of 18.9-19.2 cm, a thickness of 0.1 cm, and a height of between 5.1-5.6 cm. The other one (B) weighs 456 grammes and has a diameter of 19.2 cm, a thickness of 0.2 cm, and a height of between 5-5.9 cm. The inscriptions are placed at the centre of the internal surface of the bowls and don't have any iconographic apparatus, as is usual for Minua's bowls (see Seidl 2004, 24-5). The inscriptions follow a circular shape traced with the use of the compass, which can be reconstructed thanks to the needle impression at the centre of the bottom in both bowls. Both inscriptions present a counterclockwise development.

## 3 Reconstruction of the Unfinished Inscription

Based on the careful examination of the preliminary drafts of the cuneiform signs, it is possible to suggest the following transcription of the entire inscription engraved on bowl A [fig. 8b]:

[<sup>m</sup>mi]-nu-a-<sup>i</sup>'-ni-i-e-i ú-ri-iš-ḫu-<sup>ʿ</sup>si-ni-e-i-i(?)

The inscription comprises at least sixteen signs preliminary to the final cuneiform that will be engraved later; it runs counterclockwise, as usual, following a circular outline traced with a compass (see above). These preliminary marks are found in correspondence with the single wedges that form the cuneiform signs: sometimes they are well executed (see, for example, the traces for the sign 'e'), while in other cases they are rather sketchy drafts (see the final signs of the inscription).

Reading the epigraph from these preliminary signs is not particularly difficult, as we are dealing with a standardised inscription modelled on others already well attested in the corpus of inscriptions of Minua (CTU B 5-5, in particular 5-5C). Having been able to study the inscriptions on the Urartian bronze bowls in the History Museum of Armenia in person, it was also possible to complete and confirm the reading so far given to the epigraph on the bowl B, catalogued by





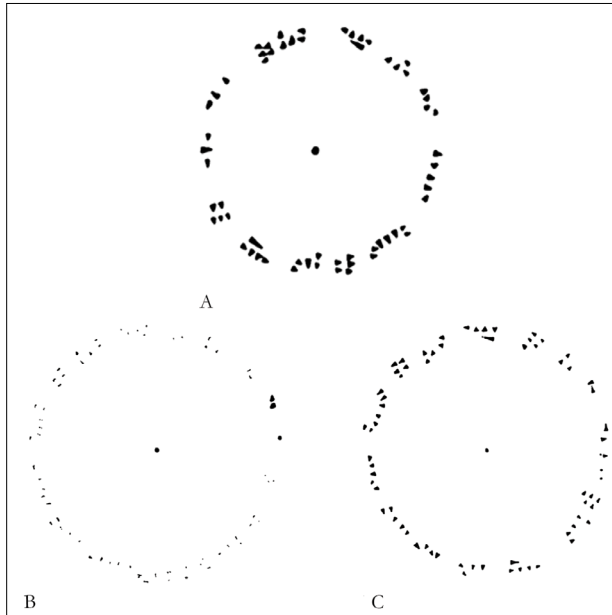
Figure 7 Microscopic views of the inscribed royal bowl with an inscription by king Minua (Bowl B)

Salvini as CTU B 5-5C<sup>3</sup> and originally based on an incorrect drawing by B.B. Piotrovskij (1952, 55, fig. 26D). The final transcription is:

<sup>m</sup>mì-nu-a-i-ni-e-i ú-ri-iš-ḥu-si-ni-e-i

The only discordant reading of bowl A with respect to bowl B and to other already known inscriptions seems to be at the end of the epigraph, which may present an additional sign compared to the previous epigraphs. In fact, the reading seems to agree with the other epigraphs, although the preliminary signs become less clear from the middle of the second word to the final ni-e-i signs. At that point, however, the draft of a further sign seems to be engraved, represented by the three dots highlighted in the figure [fig. 6], which could be another ‘i’ sign: however, this spelling of the word *urišḥusini* is not attested elsewhere, making this reading unique. Here too, the bowl B helps the reader [fig. 8c]: the photograph shows the incision of two dots at the end of the inscription, separating the last cuneiform sign

<sup>3</sup> Salvini 2012, 29: “1 <sup>m</sup>mì-nu-<a->i-ni-e-i ú-ri-<iš->ḥu-si-ni-e-i. L’omissione di due segni su questo esemplare, di cui non è reperibile una fotografia, viene da Harutjunjan attribuita alla copia di Piotrovskij”.



**Figure 8**  
Drawings of the Minua's bowls:  
A) Bowl B (after Piotrovskij 1952,  
55, fig. 26D); B) Bowl A; C) Bowl B

from the first one, indicating the beginning and end of the epigraph. It is possible that the dots engraved on the draft of the epigraph on bowl A also have the same function, which is not attested in any other case apart from these two among the inscriptions on Urartian royal bowls. If this were the case, the inscription should be read with the corrections already mentioned, as CTU B 5-5C:

<sup>m</sup>mì-nu-a-i-ni-i-e-i ú-ri-iš-ḥu-si-ni-e-i·

A first hypothesis regarding the incompleteness of the epigraph is that the metalworker made a mistake in measuring the entire inscription, arriving at the end of the drafts, and realising that it was not well distributed within the available space and, therefore, avoiding concluding it by carving the final cuneiform signs. Another observation regarding the epigraph is to refer to the two initial marks, <sup>m</sup>mì: the marks are undoubtedly placed in the correct position for these two signs to be made, but the craftsman does not seem to have gone over them carefully, making two incised marks that, instead of being wedge-shaped, have an indistinct shape. Again, it is possible to assume that the epigraph was not finished due to an error by the metalworker, who did not make the two initial marks properly.

## 4 Conclusions

The two bowls analysed in this article are part of a group of at least six specimens of bronze bowls inscribed by the Urartian ruler Minua, son of Išpuini; the inscription engraved on them is a graphic variant of those already known from the other bowls. The ductus of the inscriptions, or at least of the finished one, is rather 'triangular', similar to that of the sovereign's monumental epigraphs, presenting some graphic peculiarities in the rendering of the signs on metal that will have a follow-up in Urartian epigraphy: one should note, for example, the rendering of the sign 'ú', with shortened vertical wedges, which will also have continuity in the bronze texts of Sarduri, son of Argišti (see, for example, the bowl preserved in the History Museum of Armenia with the inventory number 2010/32/66). Within the group of Minua's bowls, it would seem possible to distinguish at least two different phases of production based on a systematic analysis of the used ductus. The first period's ductus would seem to refer to a phase probably prior to Minua's enthronement, possibly ascribable to the phase of the so-called 'co-regency' with Išpuini, as the similarity of the ductus to some of his father's inscribed objects would suggest. The bowls analysed, on the other hand, appear to belong to a later period and are similar to the 'monumental' ductus, which would later be characteristic of the bowls of his successors.

The corpus of Minua's bowls is particularly important because it represents the model for later Urartian inscribed bowls, which will take up the morphology and sometimes even the text, forming a coherent set of objects typical of Urartian kingship. No iconographic elements are found in Minua's bowls, unlike later ones, when mainly tower temples and lion heads are depicted.

What is surprising is the finding of the entire corpus of inscribed bronze bowls within a single *pithos* in the site of Karmir-blur, configuring the find as a conscious repository of these objects referable to Urartian rulers: even the unfinished bowl was thus clearly perceived as a property of Minua, to be preserved together with the other specimens whose inscription was finished. It is unclear, to this day, whether the person who deposited the bowls was able to read cuneiform and understand Urartian, and whether he was therefore aware of the antiquity of the object he had in his hands and which, at that time, must have been produced at least two centuries earlier. What emerges, however, is the perception of the bowl as inscribed, and therefore worthy of being preserved among the other finished specimens, even though it was not complete.

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# Immortali fragranze. Realtà e immaginario del giardino nei testi manichei iranici

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**Abstract** The present contribution deals with an inquiry about Iranian Manichaean texts (Middle Persian and Parthian) concerning the description of the garden and its symbolic values (of peace, rest, evergreen flowery, fragrance, immortality). The aim of the essay is to provide a sketch of Iranian Manichaean passages to improve the already mentioned hypothesis of a pre-Islamic influence on the Persian literature at the foundation of its imagery, which displays the motif of the garden as a characteristic mark of poetic inspiration to feature beauty, love, mystical feeling and desire for paradisiac condition.

**Keywords** Iranian Manichaean texts. Literary imageries. Garden metaphors. Olfactory aesthetic. Persian literature. Religious experience.

**Sommario** 1 Premessa. – 2 Intenti del presente lavoro. – 3 Il giardino regale e quello paradisiaco: frammento M 47 in partico. – 4 Inni partici e testo sogdiano sul paradiso. – 5 Il giardino della buona operosità religiosa. – 6 Il precetto di non-violenza sulla Terra. – 7 Luoghi e atmosfere di una ‘immaginazione olfattiva’. – 8 Repertori testuali manichei e letteratura persiana.



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## 1 Premessa

Lo studio dei testi manichei, nella loro eterogenea produzione linguistica, consente di analizzare contesti trasversali e storie culturali che testimoniano la controversa e problematica convivenza di istituzioni religiose ortodosse con forme, dottrine e pratiche di una religiosità scomoda e rigettata (come quella manichea), sia a occidente che a oriente, per varie ragioni: come il suo impianto dualistico, la cristologia e la profetologia. Tuttavia l'attestazione di pensatori, autori e testualità anche in zone dottrinalmente avverse come il mondo islamico - seppur non indifferente alle dottrine di Mani - rende il manicheismo un ambito privilegiato: per valutare sopravvivenze dissimulate e camuffate, in modo da trasmettere, sotto forme adeguate, determinati contenuti dottrinali, in modo non sospetto e non riconducibile allo stigma esecrando della *zandaqa*, contestata e ricusata in dibattiti e confutazioni che fiorirono specialmente nell'epoca della massima attività persecutoria (nel periodo abbaside), sobillata dalle autorità zoroastriane, alleate con le istituzioni del Califfato per reprimere un secolare nemico. Tra le maglie delle condanne e delle controversie vi furono comunque interstizi di occasioni per far tralucere, nella poesia e nella prosa della letteratura persiana, temi e immagini appartenenti a varie tradizioni confessionali, veicolate da medesimi linguaggi (iranici) che nella loro evoluzione (verso il neo-persiano) trasmisero un repertorio di motivi all'interno di una cultura islamica interattiva e aperta a molteplici influenze, sia zoroastriane, che manichee, cristiane e buddhiste.

## 2 Intenti del presente lavoro

In modo analogo a uno studio precedente, pubblicato in questa sede editoriale (Piras 2023a), la mia intenzione è quella di condurre una analisi dei testi manichei (specialmente quelli iranici) per valutare un retroterra narrativo che possa essere confluito nell'Islam. Al pari di quelle metafore presenti in componimenti in neo-persiano manicheo - con tratti di mimetismo sotto veste islamizzante, per cautele protettive - riscontriamo nei testi manichei medio-iranici, ma questa volta senza intenti dissimulativi, una ricca casistica di un tema ricorrente anche nelle *imageries* letterarie e poetiche della letteratura persiana: il motivo del giardino (partico *bōdestān*, medio-persiano *bōyestān*). Mi ripropongo quindi di approfondire, con vari passaggi, e di avvalorare la menzione cursoria di Meisami,<sup>1</sup> che nel suo studio sull'immagine del giardino nella letteratura persiana citava

<sup>1</sup> Meisami 1985, 231, 255 nr. 17 dove menziona il libro di Boyce (1954, 15-23).

dei possibili antecedenti zoroastriani e manichei, ma senza specificarli nel dettaglio o riportare brani esemplificativi di *corpora* che potessero risaltare come *thesaurus* narrativo di ispirazione.

Questi depositi di narrazioni, espressioni e motivi poterono essere utilizzati nella letteratura persiana: sia per tramite di testualità a noi non pervenute, per cause legate anche alle frequenti persecuzioni e distruzioni di libri in epoca islamica, nonostante la presenza di testi neo-persiani in grafia manichea;<sup>2</sup> sia per una circolazione dell'oralità interdiscorsiva che poteva tramandare nel linguaggio corrente delle parlate iraniche (neo-persiano) brani, citazioni e temi di una variegata comunità religiosa di utenti che utilizzavano idiomi di testi canonici (medio-persiano e partico) in una situazione linguistica 'mista', di parlanti neo-persiani che adattavano e 'modernizzavano' la lingua delle loro scritture confessionali.<sup>3</sup>

### 3 Il giardino regale e quello paradisiaco: frammento M 47 in partico

Il regno vegetale, nella sua varietà di ambienti (alberi, fiori, frutti, campi, orti), è una dimensione di notevole rilevanza nell'immaginario della letteratura manichea,<sup>4</sup> in quanto realtà ecologica che – seppur contaminata dall'attacco primordiale della Materia, come tutto il cosmo – ha in sé delle potenzialità di riscatto messe in opera da una serie di prescrizioni e comandamenti che orientano l'etica dei fedeli.

Il racconto missionario del dialogo fra Mani e Mihršāh – un membro della casata regale sassanide – è un esempio di intenzionale antitesi tra valori secolari e valori spirituali, ed è emblematico che il focus di tale racconto di evangelizzazione e conversione si giochi intorno al tema del giardino, anzi di due giardini contrapposti: quello del sovrano, dimora lussureggiante di delizie e di riposo, e quello del profeta, luogo di incorruttibile e perenne rigogliosità di una vegetazione immarcescibile e quindi 'paradisiaca'. Dal tono del dialogo fra il re Mihršāh e Mani si capisce, nel testo, l'opposizione fra un giardino mondano (*bōdīstān*) e quello incluso nel paradiso (*wahīšt*) che è al centro della predicazione di Mani, in quanto luogo di ricompensa escatologica per gli Eletti, liberati dal ciclo della trasmigrazione. È

<sup>2</sup> Su cui si veda la rassegna di Provasi 2011 per la pubblicazione di nuovi frammenti di neo-persiano in grafia manichea. Importante è anche la trattazione di Orsatti 2007, 147-72, sullo *status* linguistico e morfologico di questa varietà del neo-persiano.

<sup>3</sup> Questa complessa interazione fra parlato e scritto, con conseguenze nella ortografia, nel lessico e in fatti morfologici e sintattici, è stata bene analizzata da Durkin-Meisterernst (2003, 1-6).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. la ricca trattazione di vari paragrafi del libro di Arnold-Döben (1978, 7-44).

in virtù della sua facoltà di compiere prodigi (*warž*)<sup>5</sup> che Mani ha il potere di ‘mostrare’ questi luoghi oltremondani al sovrano incredulo che viene così persuaso della loro realtà.

Allora, vi era un fratello di Šābuhr re dei re, un signore della Mese, che si chiamava Mihršāh e che era molto ostile alla religione dell’apostolo; per lui era stato preparato un giardino molto piacevole e ampio che non è simile a tutti gli altri. Allora l’apostolo seppe che il tempo della salvezza era giunto, quindi si alzò e si presentò a Mihršāh che stava nel giardino [e] nel banchetto in grande felicità. Quindi l’apostolo [disse] «Salute!». Così Mihršāh disse all’apostolo: «Nel Paradiso di cui parli vi è un giardino come questo mio giardino?». Quindi l’apostolo riconobbe il suo pensiero scettico, [e] così nel prodigio [*warž*] gli mostrò il Paradiso Luminoso insieme a tutti gli dèi, le divinità e l’Immortale Aria della Vita, e tutte le specie del Giardino e ogni altra desiderabile apparizione che era là. Allora [Mihršāh] cadde privo di coscienza per tre ore e quello che vide lo conservò in memoria nel cuore. Quindi l’apostolo gli pose la mano sul capo [e lui] riprese coscienza. Quando si rialzò si gettò ai piedi dell’apostolo, gli prese la mano destra e l’Apostolo disse «Questo».

*bid Šābuhr šāhān šāh brād būd Mēšūn xwadāy ud Mihršāh nām ahāz ud ō frēštāg dēn iškift dušmen būd u-š bōdistān wirāšt ēw kē nēw argāw ud iškift gušād kē kēž hāwsār nē ast abyān frēštāg zānād ku bōy žamān nazd gad abyān āxāšt ud parwān Mihršāh šud, kē pad bōdistān pad bazm ahāz pad wuzurg šādīft abyān frēštāg \*drōd; abyān Mihršāh ō frēštāg wāxt ku andar wahišt kē tu nām barēh awāyōn bōdistān ahād čawāyōn im man bōdistān abyān frēštāg zānād hō awāwarīg parmānag abyān pad [warž] nimād wahišt rōšn, aḏ harwīn bayān yazdān ud wād anōšag čē žiwahr, ud bōdistān wisp zanag, ud aniž gawānīg dīdan čē ōḏ. hampad abē uš kaft yad ō hrē žamān ud čē dīd pad zird abyādgar dird abyān frēštāg dast pad sar awistād ō uš āyad kaḏ abar āxāšt, pad frēštāg pāḏ kaft, dašn padīyrišt ud frēštāg wāxt hān.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Sulla tematica del miracolo/prodigio (*warz/warž*) nei testi manichei, zoroastriani e buddhisti, cf. Piras 2023b.

<sup>6</sup> Testo originale in Boyce 1975, 37-8 (testo f). Si è seguita anche l’edizione di Sundermann (1981, 101-3) per alcune integrazioni.



#### 4 Inni partici e testo sogdiano sul paradiso

Il ciclo degli inni partici come lo *Huyadagmān* o lo *Anqad Rōšnān* riporta frequenti descrizioni liriche del sentimento di redenzione e salvezza che arride all'anima accolta nelle dimore paradisiache e in atmosfere di luminosità irradiante, beatitudine, fragranze e quiete; quindi in un ambiente dove un'*imagery* del giardino (*bōdīstān*), di fiori (*isprahm*) e di ghirlande (*pusag*) esprime al massimo grado quella immarcescibilità sempreverde di luoghi incorruttibili e immortali dove risiedono i beati:

Their verdant garlands never fade; they are wreathed brightly, in numberless colours. (*Huyadagmān* I, 22)

*hwyn pwsq zrgwng y'wyd'n ny wmsy(d) 'wd 'm(y)'st pd nys'gyft pd 'n's'g gwng.* (Boyce 1954, 69)

In un altro passo, purtroppo molto lacunoso, il nesso tra giardino ed effusione di profumi (verbo *fraβōy-*) designa una rigogliosità diffusa e libera, priva di rocce e di spine:

[All the gardens] give out fragrance, so that (?) [...] [Bricks and thorns are] never [found] among [them]. (*Huyadagmān* I, 38) (Boyce 1954, 69)

Di argomento e linguaggio metaforico affine al lirismo degli inni partici - e in specie al primo canto dello *Huyadagmān* appena esaminato sopra - vi è da ricordare il testo sogdiano cosmogonico M 178, sulle Cinque Grandezze che formano il Regno della Luce ma di cui ne rimangono solo tre, fra le quali di particolare vividezza è la sezione sul Puro Etere (*'wswyc bry'*) che comprende il Paradiso (*rwxs'n'yrōmn*) - ugualmente pervaso dagli aromi e da una profumata ghirlanda (*βwδ'ndc 'ps'k*) - che fa da vestibolo alla Terra della Luce (*rwxs'n z'y*). Di questa ultima si dice che è:

Esistente per sé stessa, eterna, miracolosa,<sup>7</sup> la cui altezza è irraggiungibile, la cui profondità non può essere percepita. Nessun nemico e nessun distruttore calpesta questa Terra: il suo divino selciato è della stessa sostanza del diamante<sup>8</sup> che non trema mai.

<sup>7</sup> Al pari del *warž* 'miracolo' del testo partico M 47 sopra menzionato, anche la Terra di Luce è detta, in sogdiano, miracolosa (*warč-xundakyā*).

<sup>8</sup> Il sogdiano *βjyrny* < sanscrito *vajra*, si ritrova in un altro testo (M 5271) sulla Terra Adamantina paradisiaca, edito da Provasi (2013, 380-2) (traduzione e commento di M 5271, 386-90).

Tutte le cose buone vi nascono: colline ornate ed amene, ricoperte di fiori cresciuti meravigliosamente; verdi alberi da frutta, i cui frutti non cadono mai, non marciscono mai, e non diventano mai bacati; sorgenti che versano ambrosia, che riempiono l'intero Paradiso; innumerevoli boschetti e pianure, dimore e palazzi, troni e seggi che esistono per sempre, in eterno.<sup>9</sup>

## 5 Il giardino della buona operosità religiosa

Un insieme di metafore esprime quindi l'operosità di chi attende al lavoro religioso (missione, predicazione, diffusione della dottrina) come un giardiniere, come un agricoltore o come un mercante - tipologia di metafore, quest'ultima, che rimanda a un immaginario commerciale della 'merce', del 'carico', della 'carovana' o della preziosità di gemme che esprimono quei valori di ricchezza spirituale e religiosa, allusa da oggetti e attività che non a caso incontrarono quel pubblico confessionale dei ceti mercantili, che si sovrapponevano ai missionari nelle loro alatri e itineranti peregrinazioni sulle vie di traffici materiali e culturali.<sup>10</sup>

Non è quindi insolito che Mani stesso, autore come si è visto più sopra di quei prodigi di rivelazione miracolosa (*warž*) dei Giardini paradisiaci, sia, oltre che maestro di disvelamenti, un vero e proprio giardiniere che - in modo analogo alle metafore della 'Vigna del Signore' nelle testualità neotestamentarie -<sup>11</sup> prepara quegli spazi migliori di accoglienza e dimora per le energie del soprannaturale con cui è in contatto. Un inno partico commemorativo appartenente al genere dei componimenti elegiaco-funerari di celebrazione della sua morte (gli *Inni del Parinirvāṇa*) raffigura questo mestiere di 'operaio della fede' attento alla edificazione di un mondo trasformato per ricevere e insegnare le presenze divine:

il potente in eterno, [i.e. Mani] stava in preghiera [e] implorò il Padre con una supplica: «io ho spianato la terra, ho sparso il seme e ho portato davanti a te il frutto della vita; ho costruito un palazzo e una dimora gradevole per il tuo Nous; ho seminato lo Spirito Scelto [nel] giardino, nel verde prato, e verso di te ho portato una ghirlanda piacevole, ho reso brillanti alberi pieni di frutti e ho mostrato ai figli la via verso le altezze, ho pienamente compiuto il tuo ordine per il quale sono giunto in questo mondo.

<sup>9</sup> M 178, sogdiano. Traduzione da Provasi 2008, 177-8.

<sup>10</sup> Per questa ricca simbologia del mercante, della merce, del tesoro e della perla, cf. ancora Arnold-Döben 1978, 45-68.

<sup>11</sup> Si rimanda a un lavoro di Murray (2006, 95-130) per queste metafore ampiamente diffuse nella letteratura siriana, così affine a certe testualità del manicheismo.

*lālmīn kirdagār awištād pad wendišn padwahād ō pidar pad āfrīwan ku-m zamīk nimušt u-m kišfān parāgand u-m bār žīwarhēn parwān tō sānād; man dišt \*appaḅan ud mānistān huāramēn ō \*tawān manohmēd ud wād wižīdag kištom bōdistān isprahmžār huzaryōn u-m pusag wišmināg padīž tō žāmād; nisāgēn draxtān man kird bārwar, u-m rāh ašdišt ō burzwār zādagān; hanjaftom ispurrr tō framān kirbag čē ho wasnād frašud hēm ō im lōg.<sup>12</sup>*

In un frammento di un inno liturgico si legge:

[qui] comincia l'inno sul corpo e sull'anima: buona dimora che è il giardino, possa tu essere la mia lieta dimora! Vieni ancora [a me], rimani in me; possiamo noi essere uniti per la tua benevolenza.

*nisārād tangyānīg bāšāh: ārām kirbag čē bōdistān, bawāh ō man ārām kirbag abāž āsāh pad man mānāh, bawām hamāxwand pad tō kirbag.<sup>13</sup>*

Nella categoria degli inni per la gerarchia ecclesiastica,<sup>14</sup> e per i dignitari della chiesa, si ritrova, all'interno di un linguaggio aulico, tutta una serie di espressioni che celebrano la comunità e i suoi membri, in questo modo: «Salute e benedizioni su questo giardino benedetto dai fiori fragranti» (*drōd ud āfrīn abar ēn bōyistān āfrīdag īg isprahmān xombōyēnān*).<sup>15</sup>

In un inno dedicato alla comunità, oltre alle preghiere e alle benedizioni rivolte ai maestri e ad altre personalità ecclesiastiche, ci si rivolge così ai vescovi (*ispasagān*):

e vengano lodati i settantadue vescovi [che sono] i guardiani del fertile giardino.

*ud istūd bawānd haftādān ud dōnān ispasagān parwarāgān ī bōyistān huābād.<sup>16</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> Testo partico M5, Boyce 1975, 136-7 (testo *ce*).

<sup>13</sup> Testo partico M4a, Boyce 1975, 161 (testo *cv*, ll. 15-16).

<sup>14</sup> I nessi metaforici tra gnosi, fragranza e comunità monastico-ecclesiale sono stati ben rilevati da van Tongerloo (1993, 253-4).

<sup>15</sup> Testo medio-persiano M 36, Boyce 1975, 145, § 10 (testo *cm*).

<sup>16</sup> Testo medio-persiano M 11, Boyce 1975, 146, § 5 (testo *cn*).

## 6 Il precetto di non-violenza sulla Terra

I passi esaminati rivelano la concezione di uno spazio privilegiato e curato, approntato dall'opera paziente e alacre del lavoro umano, e quindi adatto per esemplare metafore di dedizione e umiltà, facilmente rappresentabile dall'insieme di attività legate al mondo vegetale e agricolo, al suo ambiente (alberi, prati, fiori) e ai suoi prodotti (frutti, semi, grano, orticoltura). Nella mentalità e nelle pratiche del manicheismo la natura ricopre infatti un ruolo importante, ancorché prodotta della Materia, e quindi ambigua nel suo essere ricettacolo materico (in sé negativo), che però racchiude una scintilla di luce imprigionata, catturata e divorata in quegli eventi cosmologici che vedono i due regni, di Luce e Tenebre, affrontarsi e contendersi quella lucentezza dell'Anima viva gettata come 'esca' nella trappola della creazione che lega i due regni in un intricato contagio di mescolanza. Questo spiega il valore dell'ambiente e di quella scintilla imprigionata che deve essere rispettata nel comandamento della non-violenza, che insieme alla bocca e alla sessualità configura il triplice sigillo (mani, bocca, seno) di dominio degli istinti. Il formulario sogdiano (M 801) di confessione degli Eletti presenta la terra (*zāy*) come ricettacolo della luce-anima, da avvicinare con rispetto e senza offenderla con ferite:

Orunque [è un dato di fatto che] io tormento e maltratto continuamente i cinque Elementi e la Luce imprigionata che sta nella terra riarsa e nella terra umida: il corpo pesante, l'affliggente mia identità (*grīw*), della quale sono permanentemente rivestito, sale, scende, si muove veloce, lento, ora a piedi ora a cavallo, colpisce, fende la terra riarsa, battuta e spaccata, schiacciata e calpestata; scava, demolisce, costruisce, disfa [...] per tutto questo, perdono!<sup>17</sup>

Il formulario continua, nella sezione sul precetto di castità, con una descrizione che reimpiega il giardino in una velata, ma evidente, metafora sessuale, a indicare un atto proscritto nella lista dei doveri dell'Eletto.

Se io, in modo niente affatto castigato, in giardini o poderi, piantando e seminando nella fertile Terra, irrigando al tempo giusto con acqua necessaria le culture, nei mattini primaverili ho avuto qualche contatto con alberi, fiori o rampolli [...]; se ho avuto contatti con neve, pioggia, rugiada; se io colà ho messo piede sul ventre materno della Terra, dove è crescita e sviluppo, sì che per mia colpa ne sia derivata mescolanza.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Belardi 2000, 257 per quanto riguarda il tema della non-violenza.

<sup>18</sup> Belardi 2000, 258 per quanto riguarda il tema della castità.

## 7 Luoghi e atmosfere di una 'immaginazione olfattiva'

I contesti e i temi esaminati rinviano a una serie di narrazioni incentrate su una realtà ambientale ed ecologica che ha sempre avuto nella storia culturale dell'iranismo una emblematica rilevanza. La centralità del mondo vegetale, come luogo di produzione e sostentamento, oltre che di accoglienza e di ristoro – di contro a più ostili ambienti desertici – ha le sue origini, oltre che negli usi e nelle istituzioni del mondo achemenide e dei suoi 'paradisi' – giardini recintati e dimore regali – nella percezione di una natura tutelata da entità divine come gli Immortali Benefici (Aməša Spənta) della religiosità zoroastriana, una delle quali – ovvero Spənta Ārmaiti – è custode della terra e delle potenze generative del suolo, nome avestico trasmessosi poi al pahlavi Spandarmad o al sogdiano Spandarmad-zāy, quel 'genio della terra' che si ritrova anche nel khotanese Śśandrāmātā, sia 'spirito della terra' che 'terra' (come avviene, in un senso più secolare e demitologizzato nel sogdiano buddhista). Lo stesso dio supremo, Ahura Mazdā / Ohrmazd, nel suo ruolo di padrone della creazione, da lui usata come 'esca' per imprigionare il maligno, Ahriman, è nominato con un epiteto di «Signore del giardino» (*bāy-xwādāy*) o di «giardiniere» (*bōstānpān*)<sup>19</sup> che caratterizza questo suo compito di accuratezza artigianale verso il creato.

Questo sostrato pan-iranico di elaborazione simbolica e mitologica doveva poi trovare accoglienza nelle multiformi testualità del manicheismo in lingue iraniche (e non solo). Il punto centrale che connota questi luoghi è la percezione olfattiva e le terminologie che da essa provengono per designare dei 'luoghi del profumo' – medio-persiano *bōyistān*, partico *bōdistān*, sogdiano *βōdestān* – che rinviano a stadi linguistici anteriori nell'antico-iranico dell'avestico *baōdah-* e del tipo di percezione che configura anche un tipo di coscienza.<sup>20</sup> Il ruolo delle percezioni sensoriali, e di una sorta di estetica che ne deriva, rappresenta nel manicheismo una categoria esperienziale abbastanza diffusa anche in altri contesti di quella 'Olfactory Imagination' studiata da Susan Ashbrook Harvey (2006), che ha dedicato un volume importante per comprendere le fenomenologie di una 'Scenting Salvation' che possiamo a pieno titolo riconoscere nella simbolica del giardino sopra esaminata. Anche se dobbiamo considerare una poliedricità di influssi alla base del manicheismo (gnosi, giudeo-cristianesimo, buddhismo), è importante riconoscere quella componente

<sup>19</sup> Epiteti riportati nell'opera apologetica zoroastriana in pahlavi dello *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* IV, 63 (de Menasce 1945, 54-5).

<sup>20</sup> Si rimanda a uno studio di Panaino (1998) sulle terminologie iraniche (avestiche e pahlavi) del profumo e del fetore, e alle loro implicazioni etico-morali di una estetica olfattiva dualistica.

zoroastriana basilare nella formazione delle testualità iraniche, sia per gli immaginari olfattivi connessi a divinità escatologiche (come Daēnā), sia per quelle atmosfere di luoghi ‘paradisiaci’ che traggono le loro denominazioni dal patrimonio lessicale iranico (‘paradisi’ regali achemenidi, giardini, Paradisi escatologici), sia per quelle potenze del mondo vegetale più adatte a esprimere quella ‘vita’ sempreverde e immarcescibile che arride a coloro che vengono salvati e accolti nelle loro dimore.<sup>21</sup>

## 8 Repertori testuali manichei e letteratura persiana

La casistica dei passi analizzati sopra può arricchire il catalogo di Bausani sui motivi e sulle forme della poesia (e, aggiungerei, della prosa) persiana, o per meglio dire sviluppare ulteriormente quella diade di Albero Paradisiaco e Cipresso, menzionata da Bausani (1960, 286-90) insieme ad altri motivi provenienti dal patrimonio zoroastriano ma anche gnostico (la Coppa di Jamšīd, la Perla inaccessibile, il Vino Mistico e il Superiore dei Magi, Gesù taumaturgo, l’Uccello-Anima e la Fenice). I materiali testuali analizzati provengono da una cultura letteraria e bibliofila, quale fu quella manichea, con forti aspetti ‘belletristici’ anche se subordinati a esigenze confessionali diverse,<sup>22</sup> rispetto ai vari *corpora* della letteratura neo-persiana e alla loro stilizzazione e ricercatezza di elaborati linguaggi e figure retoriche. Infatti, a differenze della individualità degli autori che decretarono la fama della letteratura persiana, nella prosa e nella poesia, l’anonimato degli estensori degli scritti manichei (a parte qualche menzione nei colophon) riflette l’impersonalità degli *scriptoria* e dell’ambiente monastico (anche se non esclusivamente tale) dedicato alla copiatura e trasmissione di testi religiosi e di insegnamenti di salvezza veicolati da una pluralità di generi (sermoni, inni, salmi, omelie, agiografie, parabole) e impreziositi da una raffinata arte miniaturiale che ha reso celebre sia il manicheismo che il suo fondatore, il Pittore per antonomasia, anzi il «Pittore della Luce» secondo la definizione del poeta della corte ghaznavide Asadī Ṭusī (XI secolo).<sup>23</sup>

Ma nonostante la diversità di intenti e di pubblico – il chiostro manicheo vs gli ambienti cortesi – e l’intenzione tutt’altro che ‘secolare’ e di esercizio poetico-letterario e stilistico (anche se non bisogna

<sup>21</sup> Sui ‘paradisi’ achemenidi e sulle concezioni del paesaggio nelle culture iraniche, cf. Piras 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. la voce di Sundermann 2006, nell’*Encyclopædia iranica*, al paragrafo «Non-Zoroastrian belles-lettres».

<sup>23</sup> I riflessi di questo immaginario pittorico nella letteratura persiana sono stati ben studiati da Pellò (2013); di cui si veda anche Pellò 2015, per allusioni e riverberi di concezioni manichee nella poesia persiana.

sottovalutare una componente di *entertaining* a scopo missionario di conversione) possiamo individuare nei testi manichei iranici esaminati un importante e ricco *thesaurus* di narrazioni, di *imagery* e di ispirazioni che ci hanno permesso di corroborare quanto menzionato da Bausani, nel merito di testualità centrate sulla vegetazione e la sua estetica simbolica (rigenerazione, immarcescibilità, balsami e profumi). Non solo, ma anche di abbinarlo al saggio di Meisami e alla sua cursoria, benché puntuale, menzione di un retroterra manicheo (oltre che zoroastriano), laddove cita il noto libro di Mary Boyce (1954) sui cicli innologici partici. In questi inni partici le aspirazioni di salvezza escatologica sono al centro dei sentimenti dei fedeli, e quindi di una poetica venata di speranza, toni elegiaci di trepida emozione e nostalgia per quel mondo di beatitudine paradisiaca, spesso alluso e richiamato da metafore del giardino. In uno di questi inni manichei partici è possibile individuare un uso metaforico della rosa che, come ha giustamente notato il compianto Aloïs van Tongerlo (1993, 248), può essere riconducibile ai toni della poesia neo-persiana.

Il settimo canto dell'*Angad Rōšnān*, nel suo trionfale anelito alla venuta dell'anima salvata (*āsāh tō gyān* 'vieni tu, o Anima!') descrive una climax che passa da una condizione di angustie (malattia, terrore, sofferenza, angoscia, morte e inferno) a una letizia priva di rinascita, agonia, e decrepitezza, e quindi a una bellezza (*hužihrift*) incorrotta, differente da quei valori mondani che la componente ascetica e spirituale della religiosità manichea rigetta. La vanità del transeunte è quindi pari alla neve che si scioglie al sole o a una rosa spezzata, di cui si dice:

It withers and fades as a broken rose, that wilts in the sun, whose grace is destroyed. (*Angad Rōšnān* VII, Boyce 1954, 157, § 12)

La similitudine «come una rosa spezzata» (*čawāyōn wār sistag*) riporta l'unica attestazione della rosa (partico *wār*, soggiano *warδ*) nei testi manichei, a differenza delle innumerevoli ricorrenze della poesia persiana, di certo non paragonabile a questa isolata menzione;<sup>24</sup> che però ha il merito di individuare un motivo comune a quella lirica di impostazione spirituale, attenta a esaltare il sovrasensibile contro l'effimero, e la ricerca dell'Assoluto, priva di vanità e frivolezza, che può essere stigmatizzata in questa opposizione tra valori e disvalori.

In questo senso il 'posto degli aromi' (medio-persiano *bōyistān*, partico *bōdistān*, soggiano *βōdestān / βāy*) configura una dimensione

<sup>24</sup> L'importanza del ciclo degli inni partici e della loro struttura metrica, paragonabile a certi ritmi della poesia persiana - come notato da Lazard (1985, 390-1) - è un altro di quegli aspetti di una comparazione fra testi manichei e letteratura persiana che sarebbero meritevoli di ulteriori approfondimenti e confronti.

estetica e olfattiva frequente nei testi manichei come in quelli zoroastriani, buddhisti e cristiani, rispondente a un insieme di valori che poterono essere condivisi anche dalla cultura islamica, sia quella della letteratura poetica persiana come pure di certe contaminazioni nell'ambito religioso - nonostante le differenze dottrinali - specialmente in certi aspetti del sufismo e della sua introspezione mistica, oltre che in certe analogie fra strutture monastico-conventuali che attinsero a una comune esperienza e pratiche ascetiche.<sup>25</sup> Sulla base della recente disamina di Saccone (2017, 76-7),<sup>26</sup> sui giardini fioriti nella poesia persiana - dagli ambienti cortesi alla meditazione amorosa e mistica - si può tentare una sovrapposizione del giardino manicheo con luoghi e atmosfere come quelle di Sa'di, Rūmī e Iqbal, per certi toni lirici e per una trasfigurazione della natura percepita come ricettacolo di vita, bellezza e fragranza; anche se per i testi manichei dobbiamo constatare una poeticità secondaria, non dettata da esercizi di stile ma procedente da un afflato e da una meditazione sul mondo (e su ciò che è oltre questo mondo), e proprio in virtù di ciò potrebbero aver agito su certe forme della poesia persiana di ispirazione sufi.<sup>27</sup>

È interessante, in conclusione, riscontrare quelle permanenze dell'immaginario paradisiaco dei giardini di Mani anche nella contemporaneità: nel romanziere libanese Amin Maalouf (2001) autore dell'opera *Giardini di luce*, una veridica rivisitazione narrativa della vita e delle opere di Mani, il cui titolo riecheggia in esergo quel 'Giardino della Luce' (arabo *jināni al-nūri* = medio-persiano *wahišt*, cf. sopra, § 3) del resoconto del *Fihrist* di al-Nadīm, il dotto musulmano e bibliofilo della Baghdad abbaside del X secolo che ci ha trasmesso una puntuale descrizione di Mani e della sua dottrina.<sup>28</sup>

**25** Il confronto fra monasteri manichei e conventi sufi in Asia Centrale è stato proposto da Utas (1985) con buone argomentazioni, nel merito di prassi eremitiche, ascetiche e devozionali di mutua interazione.

**26** Sulla metafora del giardino nel sufismo indiano, cf. Gaeffke 1987.

**27** Questo era già stato opportunamente notato da Behbahni (2019), a proposito di certi toni malinconici e dolenti della sorte dell'Anima vivente' prigioniera del mondo ma desiderosa dell'assoluto da cui proviene, un contrasto analogo a tematiche sufi riflesse nella lirica persiana.

**28** Cf. Ventura 2006, 269-70, per la traduzione del passo del *Fihrist* sulla vita futura nella dottrina manichea.



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# Modarres-e Reḡavi's Edition of Anvari's *divān*: A Critical Assessment

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**Abstract** The aim of this paper is two-folded: 1) to discuss Modarres-e Reḡavi's edition of Anvari's *divān* in order to show that this edition, although still very valuable, should be used cautiously: even for non-philological, literary-oriented studies manuscripts should be checked. These should include not only the newly-discovered codices, not used by the editor, but also the manuscripts he used, which must be double-checked; 2) to give a solid starting point to any scholar attempting to investigate Anvari's *divān* from a philological perspective, by showing in which areas Modarres-e Reḡavi's edition is lacking and to what extent.

**Keywords** Anvari. Persian literature. Persian manuscripts. Persian poetry. Philology. Saljuqid literature.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. Modarres-e Reḡavi's Edition. – 2 Modarres-e Reḡavi's Method. – 3 The *Apparatus*. – 4 Conclusions.



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## 1 Introduction. Modarres-e Reḡavi's Edition

Born in Xorāsān in the first decades of the twelfth century CE,<sup>1</sup> Owḡad al-din Anvari is one of the most important Persian authors of the classical period. His compositions, as usual for a poet of his age, mainly consist of panegyrics addressed to prominent men of his time, who were willing to accept the poet's services and pay him in return. Such poems, even beyond their intrinsic literary beauty, are an invaluable source to deepen our knowledge of the later part of the Saljuqid period.

Anvari was both successful during his lifetime – he praised both the sultan Sanjar and his vizir, Nāṣer al-din Tāher nephew of Neẓām al-Molk – and highly appreciated by later poets, who considered him a model to imitate. His style is notoriously difficult: not only allusions to almost all fields of knowledge of his time can be found in his poems, especially astrology, but he also routinely employed complex figures of speech.

His *divān* (collection of [lyrical] poems) has been edited twice; a first edition by Sa'īd Nafisi was published in 1958, and a second one by Modarres-e Reḡavi in 1959-61, in two volumes.<sup>2</sup> Scholars agree on preferring the latter, compiled on the basis of fifteen witnesses.<sup>3</sup> J.T.P. de Bruijn writes: "The modern editions by Sa'īd Nafisī and Modarres Raẓawī are both based on early manuscripts, but Raẓawī offers a far more reliable text than Nafisī" (1986).

MR (Modarres-e Reḡavi, thus abbreviated from now on) originally wrote two introductions:<sup>4</sup> at the beginning of the first volume he briefly details his editing method and describes the witnesses he used (Anvari 1959-61, 1: 15-22), while a much longer introduction was published at the beginning of the second volume, which appeared a couple of years later (2: 31-163). Here MR gives information about the poet's life, work and patrons (Anvari 1959-61, 2: 31-140), enumerates the previous printings of Anvari's poems (2: 141), describes again the manuscripts used for the edition (2: 142-58) and summarises again his editing method (2: 158-63), which he had already described in the introduction to the first volume.

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This paper was written with the help of many people: first and foremost my supervisors, Daniela Meneghini and Paola Orsatti. Many thanks also to Anna Livia Beelaert for discussing this topic with me, pointing out useful bibliography such as Ritter 1952 and Čangiz Golām-'Alī Bāy Burdi 1991, and to Mojarrad Mojtabā for helping me to understand the final page of Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615.

- 1 The precise birth date is not known.
- 2 Poems will be referred to by the number assigned to them in this edition.
- 3 I choose to translate *nosxe* (pl. *nosax*) as 'witness' rather than 'manuscript' in the context of discussing the edition since two of MR's witnesses, also called *nosxe*, are lithographical editions of Anvari's *divān*, not manuscripts.
- 4 In later editions of MR's work only the second, longer introduction has been reprinted, and it was placed at the beginning of the first volume.

One obvious problem MR's edition has is its incompleteness. MR did not edit any of the compositions he perceived as obscene, not wanting to publish poems full of vulgar words in a book he meant for students.<sup>5</sup> F. de Blois, in the section of *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* dedicated to Anvari, wrote:

The only more or less critical edition of his [Anvari's] *dīwān* is the one by Mudarris i Riḡawī, who at least consulted the oldest dated copy (London Or. 3713) and two of the old Istanbul manuscripts and recorded variants from a number of others. However the edition is not complete, since the editor has omitted some of the poems that he considers obscene; for these the older edition by Nafīsī can be consulted. (de Blois 2004, 221)<sup>6</sup>

Over time, especially after the discovery of old manuscripts that were not used by MR,<sup>7</sup> various scholars started to question the reliability of MR's work. While not discussing the edition itself, two important studies on Anvari's poetry by Iranian scholars, Šahīdī and Šafī'i Kadkani, do not quote the poet's lines from this edition, but the authors give their own version of the texts they analyse, relying on various other sources.

Šahīdī's commentary of Anvari's *divān* was printed in 1978.<sup>8</sup> In the introduction the author writes: "When commenting a line, the first thing that needs to be done is to establish the correct form of the line, or at least a form close to it" (Šahīdī 1978, *dāl-he*), and he then proceeds to clarify on which manuscripts he relied to ascertain the correct version of the lines he is commentating.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As stated by MR himself in Anvari 1959-61, 2: 162. It is not unusual for editions of classical poetry printed in Iran to be bowdlerised. How satire/obscene poetry (*hajv/ha-zl*) has been treated by editors is described in Zipoli 2016, XXXI-XXXL.

<sup>6</sup> De Blois apparently did not know about Tehran, *Ketābxne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi*, 86666, dated 680 h.q./1281-82 CE.

<sup>7</sup> No complete list of the known manuscripts of Anvari's *divān* exists. Partial ones, sometimes with very brief descriptions, can be found in de Blois 2004, 221-5; Monzavi 1971, 2235-42 and Derāyati 1389, 5: 58-68, as well as in the editors' introductions to the two printed editions. Dublin, Chester Beatty, Per. 103 is extensively described in Arberry, Minovi, Blochet 1959, 4-11. London, British Library, Or. 3713 is also extensively described, in Rieu 1895, 141-3. Brief descriptions of the two Istanbul manuscripts, Istanbul, Fāteḡ, 3784 and Istanbul, Fāteḡ, 3786 can be found in Ritter, Reinert 1986, 119-20.

<sup>8</sup> This book is *de facto* a traditional commentary written in the twentieth century. Šahīdī relies heavily on the classical commentaries of Farāhānī and Šādiābādī, and nearly always concerns himself with the explanation of individual lines, with a particular focus on lexicon, while never analysing poems as a whole.

<sup>9</sup> He relied on:

1. An incomplete manuscript of which M. Minovi gave him a reproduction, to which he refers to as *nosxe-ye minow*. Thirteenth-fourteenth century CE; it corresponds to Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 4113.

Šafi'i Kadkani, as part of a series of annotated anthologies meant to enable modern day students to read classical poetry, published a selection of Anvari's poems, with an introduction and many annotations (Šafi'i Kadkani 1993). He also did not follow MR's text, but many times preferred the readings given by old, unused manuscripts.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years a number of articles were written by Iranian scholars (Karami, Amini, Kowṭari 2014; Ḍabiḥi 2016; Nurāyi, Aḥmadpur 2016),<sup>11</sup> all of them stating the need of a new edition of Anvari's *divān*. This is mainly justified by enumerating the multiple old manuscripts that were not used by MR,<sup>12</sup> the five main and oldest ones being:<sup>13</sup>

- Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615, not dated.
- Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 4113, not dated.
- Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 86666, dated 680 Q./1281-82 CE. It is the oldest known dated copy of Anvari's *divān*.<sup>14</sup>

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2. Another incomplete manuscript owned by A. Afšār Širāzi, to which he refers to as *nosxe-ye afš*. Thirteenth-fourteenth century CE; it corresponds to Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615.
  3. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 86666; dated 1281-82 CE.
  4. MR's printed edition.

He ignored Nafisi's edition, as he considered it *maḡluṭ* (faulty). For a brief description of these manuscripts see "Appendix 2".

**10** As stated in Šafi'i Kadkani 1993, 10. No specific manuscripts are mentioned. In Šafi'i Kadkani 1993, 69 note 69, the author refers to Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 4113.

**11** Each of these articles gives a different list of manuscripts that should be used for the new edition. No one tries to outline a criterion on the basis of which manuscripts should be selected. For the lists of manuscripts given in those articles, see appendix 2.

**12** Karami, Amini, Kowṭari 1392 clearly states the need of a new edition with similar arguments to the ones made in this paper; the authors also quote MR's claim to have registered only the "important and necessary" variant readings and take note of the lack of a proper method. However, their approach is not consistent. They state the impossibility of working only on the newly found codices (138), but then they proceed to mention among the *nosax-e mowred-e estefāde dar tašḥih-e tāze-ye qašāyed-e Anvari* (witnesses that ought to be used in the new edition of Anvari's panegyrics) only manuscripts that MR has not used. Moreover, in spite of what was written earlier about MR's work, in the lines edited as samples of their method, the editing is made *bā tava-jjoh be nosxebadal-e divān o nosax-e xaṭṭi-ye yādšode* (referencing the variant readings of the *divān* [edited by MR] and the aforementioned manuscripts [not used by MR]). Ḍabiḥi 2016 states the need of a new edition, lists both manuscripts used and unused by MR, but does not discuss neither MR's edition (except by alluding in the abstract to *naqš dar qerā'at-e nosxehā-ye estefāde šode* 'mistakes in reading the utilised witnesses') nor any methodological issues.

**13** Brief descriptions of these codices can be found in "Appendix 2".

**14** The last page is damaged and the day and month of completion are not readable, only the year is.

- Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye Sepahsālār, 209, not dated.<sup>15</sup>
- Dublin, Chester Beatty, Per. 103, dated 699 Q./1300 CE.

Among western scholars similar statements were made by A.L. Bee-laert, who, after discussing the manuscripts not used by MR, wrote: “Anvari's *Divān* is badly in need of a new edition” (2017).

## 2 Modarres-e Reḡavi's Method

To begin a discussion on why MR's edition, and especially its *apparatus*, should be used by scholars with caution, it is first necessary to summarise what MR says about the method he followed (as stated in Anvari 1959-61, 1: 15-22).

1. He made a list of poems “on the basis of some witnesses”.
2. He ordered the poems alphabetically, by rhyme.<sup>16</sup>
3. He wrote down the whole *divān* on the basis of this list, then he added the poems present in “a number of witnesses” to have a complete version of the *divān*.
4. He compared the *divān* thus obtained with everyone of the selected witnesses,<sup>17</sup> then choosing Istanbul, Fāṭeh, 3784<sup>18</sup> as his base manuscript (*siglum* ‘*lām*’ in the *apparatus*), describing it as: “older and more solid than the other witnesses”.
5. He states that: *extelāfāt-e nosax-rā ke dar natije-ye moqābele peydā šod ānče-rā ke mohemm o lāzem did dar deyl-e šafhāt yāddāšt kard* (Among the differences between manuscripts [i.e. variant readings] that became evident during the process of comparison [i.e. collation] *the ones that seemed important and necessary* were recorded in the footnotes [i.e. the *apparatus*]).<sup>19</sup>
6. He adapted the text to the modern orthographical standard.
7. He compared the text with “thirty old witnesses and anthologies”,<sup>20</sup> and included the poems found in them that were not already present in his text.

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<sup>15</sup> *Non vidi*.

<sup>16</sup> Tackling the highly complex issue of what part of a line precisely is to be considered its *qāfiye* (rhyme) is far beyond the scope of this paper. MR simply ordered the poems alphabetically, considering the letters of the first line in reverse order, beginning from the last. The expression ‘by rhyme’ will be used for simplicity.

<sup>17</sup> By this he means the manuscripts selected to be used for the edition.

<sup>18</sup> Dated 1309 CE. For a brief description see “Appendix 1”.

<sup>19</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> The word *jong* properly refers to illustrated anthologies of prose and poetry. See Simpson 2015.

8. He compiled the glossary and the indexes.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the editor states that he checked the form in which Anvari's lines were quoted in classical dictionaries, such as the *Jahāngiri*. Another important information is provided in the methodological additions in the introduction to the second volume (Anvari 1959-61, 2: 158-63):<sup>22</sup> even when all manuscripts were clearly wrong (e.g. a line did not fit the metre), MR never included personal conjectures in the text, but always chose between what he found in the manuscripts. This is probably also true for the headings. Many poems have a heading mentioning a clearly wrong addressee (as the name of another patron is mentioned in the poem itself). MR simply chose one of the titles mentioned in the manuscripts, even if he knew they were wrong.<sup>23</sup>

In regard to the outlined method, a series of remarks must be made.

- a. The editor's starting point was a text he himself compiled (from unidentified sources), not a specific copy to which he subsequently collated other witnesses. This makes the starting point inevitably biased. No criterion that guided the selection of witnesses is ever given, nor the editor explains how he chose between variant readings. MR also does not give any information on how manuscripts could be related to each other.
- b. In many manuscripts used by the editor<sup>24</sup> poems are not arranged 'by rhyme' (according to the last letters of each *beyt*) as it happens in other manuscripts and most modern editions. They are instead ordered in a much different way, loosely grouped by addressee or theme (de Blois 1995).<sup>25</sup> In listing and describing the manuscripts he used, MR does not systematically give information on how poems were arranged,<sup>26</sup> nor

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**21** He describes the process in detail; this part is summarised since it is not relevant to the present discussion.

**22** In particular 160.

**23** This is shown, e.g., by *qaṣide* 'panegyric' 67: the title mentions abu al-Ḥasan 'Emrāni, but MR states in his introduction that it is clear 'Emrāni is not the addressee of the poem (Anvari 1959-61, 2: 26-7).

**24** E.g. 'eyn, *te* and *kāf*, see "Appendix 1".

**25** For the specific instances of Sanā'i's and Nezāri's poems see de Bruijn 1983, 91-112 and Čangiz Golām-'Ali Bāy Burdi 1370, 20-5. Manuscripts of Anvari's *divān* ordered in this way include: Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 86666; London, British Library, Or. 3713; Dublin, Chester Beatty, Per. 103; Istanbul, Fāteḥ, 3786; Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye malek, 5267; Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye Dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615; Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 4113 and Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 86544.

**26** Except for Istanbul, Fāteḥ, 3784, *siglum* 'lām', in which "[poems are] ordered accordingly to the last *ḥarf* of each line, excluding the *radif*" and Istanbul, Fāteḥ, 3786, *siglum* "eyn", in which: "[poems] are not ordered according to the last letters of each line,



any indication to where a poem is situated in manuscripts not arranged 'by rhyme' is provided anywhere. This could have been useful not only to understand the criterion by which poems were originally organised, but also to know which poems were traditionally thought to be linked together. This information could prove important in understanding the poems themselves.

- c. Istanbul, Fāteḡ, 3784, *siglum* 'lām', was chosen as the editor's *nosxe-ye aṣli* (base witness) partly on the false assumption it was the oldest among the collected manuscripts. London, British Library, 3713, *siglum* 'te', is older,<sup>27</sup> but it was at first described imprecisely by MR, who states: "This is a photographic reproduction (*nosxe-ye 'aksi*) of a collection of *divāns* of different poets kept in the Paris national library" (Anvari 1959-61, 1: 18); he also probably did not know the date.<sup>28</sup> This mistake was fixed in the introduction to volume II,<sup>29</sup> but the choice of *lām* as *nosxe-ye aṣli* had already been made.  
This is not the only instance of MR giving misleading information on a manuscript: he mentions the date 753 Q./1352 CE for Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye bayāni, 54/2, *siglum* 'dāl' (Anvari 1959-61, 1: 17), although the scribe's *subscriptio* clearly mentions 768 Q./1367 CE.<sup>30</sup>
- d. The editor did not record every variant reading in the *apparatus*, but only the ones he deemed "important and necessary". Even trusting the editor not to have excluded any potentially correct variant reading, this makes it impossible to forward any hypothesis on the relation between manuscripts using only MR's *apparatus*.
- e. The "thirty old witnesses and anthologies" to which the editor compared his almost finished work are never described, nor any *siglum* is assigned to any of them in the introductions. The use of these unidentified witnesses could explain

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but it seems that another order is being observed. Panegyrics dedicated to a patron follow each other, and in the same way *qet'es* addressed to that patron follow the panegyrics". In the descriptions of some of the other manuscripts the editor quotes the *matla'* 'opening couplet' of the first *qaṣide*, from which the order of the poems can be guessed.

**27** Dated 693 HQ/1293 CE. For a brief description see "Appendix 1".

**28** At first he only probably had, or looked at, a reproduction of the *folia* in which Anvari's *divān* is written (ff. 36v-125r), that has no date. The date of completion is written after Moxtāri's *divān*, on f. 173v.

**29** MR quotes Minovi's correct description of the manuscript, including its date, in Anvari 1959-61, 2: 146-8.

**30** As evident from the copyist's *subscriptio* as transcribed by MR himself, Anvari 1959-61, 2: 144. The exact day is given, 16th of *du l-hijjah* 768 HQ/21st of August 1367. This was noted in de Blois 2004, 224. The correct date is also stated in Monzavi 1971, 2235, item 21663.

the presence in the *apparatus* of *sigla* such as 'sin', to which no witness corresponds; it seems that some of those witnesses were assigned a *siglum* by the editor during his work, but he did not state them anywhere.<sup>31</sup>

### 3 The Apparatus

As widely known, the most important part of a critical edition is the *apparatus*. Even if some of the variant readings chosen by the editor are proven to be wrong, a well built *apparatus* allows any scholar to study the textual tradition of the edited work independently of the editor's opinion. In a case such as Anvari's *divān*, where the relationship between manuscripts has not yet been studied, it is even more important to be able to systematically compare the variant readings given by different witnesses.

In this perspective, a sample analysis was conducted on *qašides* 80 and 84, by comparing their text as given by the four oldest manuscripts used by MR with the printed text and the *apparatus*. In appendix 3 every variant reading given by those manuscripts that has not been recorded in MR's *apparatus* is given.<sup>32</sup>

The chosen manuscripts are:

1. Istanbul, Ketābxāne-ye Fāteḥ, 3784, *siglum* 'lām'. *Qašide* 80 is present in ff. 28r-29r, *qašide* 84 in ff. 35r-36r.<sup>33</sup>
2. Istanbul, Ketābxāne-ye Fāteḥ, 3786, *siglum* 'eyn'. *Qašide* 80 is present in ff. 60r-61r, *qašide* 84 in 58v-60r.
3. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye Malek, 5267, *siglum* 'kāf'. *Qašide* 80 is present in ff. 38r-38v, *qašide* 84 in ff. 43r-44r.
4. London, British Library, Or. 3713, *siglum* 'te'. *Qašide* 80 is present in ff. 58v-59r, *qašide* 84 in 58r-58v.

A brief description of these four manuscripts is given in "Appendix 1". According to their descriptions as given in both introductions, MR seems to have heavily relied on them; this is especially true of the two Istanbul manuscripts *lām* and *'eyn*.

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<sup>31</sup> 'sin' is present, for example, in the *apparatus* of *qašides* 71 and 77.

<sup>32</sup> Since the editor, at times, records in the *apparatus* every kind of non merely graphical variant reading (e.g. the difference between spellings كى and ك for *ke*), including the presence or absence of the conjunction *o* and the confusion between the demonstratives *ān* and *in*, every non merely graphical variant reading has been taken into consideration.

<sup>33</sup> Istanbul, Fāteḥ, 3784 has pencil written numbers on the upper left corner every 10 ff. The count appears, from 20 onwards, to be off by 1 (20 is 19, 30 is 29 and so on). This seems to be a simple miscounting issue, I could not find a place where a page might have fallen among the first 20.

The two *qašides* are addressed to the same patron, Šadr al-din Moḡammad, likely a great-grandson of the famous vizir Neẓām al-Molk (Anvari 1959-61, 2: 67-8). They share the same rhyme, metre and general structure; moreover, in both prologues the poet describes his love sickness (in 80 his beloved, *ma'suq*, is far away, in 84 the poet chooses to depart from him) from which he finds comfort at his patron's court. The transitional lines, *gorizgāh*, are also very similar.

This comparison has shown that many variant readings were not reported in the *apparatus* by the editor: e.g. *qašide* 80, l. 8, the variant reading *nāle*] *nowḡe* is recorded only as given by witnesses *tā* and *mim*; this variant reading is also present in *lām* and *te*; *qašide* 84, l. 42, *šaxs-e ajal*] *a'dā-t-rā* in 'eyn is not recorded at all. Recording the presence of variant readings only in some of the manuscripts in which they are actually present can cause the reader to underestimate their importance and diffusion.

Even things as potentially relevant as absent or misplaced lines are at times not recorded properly: e.g. in *qašide* 80 ll. 6-10 appear in a completely different order in *lām* and *te*, 8>6>9>7>10; this is not recorded at all. Of course any formal analysis of a poem cannot ignore the order of the lines. In regard to *qašide* 80, l. 14, MR adds a note saying that in witness *te* only the first 14 lines are present: this is not true, in *te* the whole poem can be read. The presence of *qašide* 84 in manuscript *te* is ignored altogether; the manuscript is not listed in the *apparatus* among the ones in which this poem is present.

Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye malek, 5267, has many interlinear corrections (in which a word perceived to be wrong is corrected by writing the 'correct' one above it, between two lines of text) and additions: lines that were thought to be missing were added outside the main body of text, in the margins. This is clearly signalled in the manuscript itself since before both *qašides* 80 and 84 the Arabic letters صح are written near their headings, indicating that the text was 'corrected' (Arabic *ṣaḡḡa*) by comparing it with another copy (Déroche, Sagaria Rossi 2012, 216-22). MR's approach to these additions is not coherent: sometimes the editor acknowledges them, sometimes he records the variant readings present in these interlinear corrections or added lines without mentioning that they do not belong to the main body of text, some other times he just ignores them.

For *qašide* 84, l. 7, MR records: '*azm*] *dar ḡāšīye-ye kāf* (in *kāf*'s additions): '*ogr*. This shows that MR was aware of the issue. For *qašide* 80, ll. 19-20, MR records *eḡkām*] *farmān* and *farmān*] *ta'id* in *kāf*. These two lines are actually absent from *kāf*'s main text, and are added in the margins; it is in these additions that these variant readings are present. Examples of the editor not recording these corrections and additions are plenty, see "Appendix 3".

Even though proposing a new text is not the aim of this paper, the editor's choices do appear at times questionable: e.g. in *qašide* 80, l.

3, *havā siyāh be kerdār-e qirgun xaftān // falak kabud nemudār-e nil-gun meḡfar* (The air [was] as black as a tar coloured kaftan, the sky [was] as blue as a Nile coloured helmet),<sup>34</sup> MR chooses *nemudār* instead of another *be kerdār* in the second *meṣrā'*, even with *be kerdār* being present in all four witnesses above mentioned and maintaining a perfect parallelism between the two *meṣrā'*s.<sup>35</sup> In *qaṣide* 84, l. 7, *bahāne-ye safar o 'azm-e raftan āvardi // del-at ze ṣoḡbat-e yārān malul gašt maḡar* (You have brought forward excuses for a voyage and the intent to go, has your heart grown tired of the company of friends?), MR chooses 'azm (intent) over 'oḡr (forgiveness/pardon), which is present in all four witnesses above mentioned.<sup>36</sup> In *qaṣide* 84, l. 23, *če dast-e u be saxā dar če abr dar neysān // če ṭab'-e u be soxan dar če baḡr-e bi-ma'bar* (His hand in generosity [i.e. his generous hand] resembles a cloud in the month of Neysān, his aptitude for speech resembles a sea without crossings),<sup>37</sup> MR chooses *abr dar neysān* (the cloud in the month of Neysān) over *abr-e bi-noqṣān* (the cloud without fault): this second reading, present in *te* and *lām* (MR's *nosxe-ye aṣli*),<sup>38</sup> preserves a closer parallel between the two *meṣrā'*s, with both the patron's hand and his aptitude for speech compared to a noun described by an adjective build with the prefix *bi-*, 'without'.<sup>39</sup>

**34** 'Nile coloured helmet' indicates the deep and shining blue-gray of the night sky. The translation of *meḡfar* is at times problematic, for it can indicate both the helmet and the mail or network of steel worn under it.

**35** In the *apparatus* he records *be kerdār* as a variant reading present in *lām*, his base witness, but not in the other three, see "Appendix 3". The correctness of the second *be kerdār* is reinforced by Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615 and Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 4113 which both have this reading. The meaning or translation of the line does not drastically change.

**36** This might have happened because MR did not record 'oḡr as a variant reading present in *lām*, 'eyn and *te*. See "Appendix 3". The correctness of 'oḡr is reinforced by Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615 and Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 4113, which both have this reading. The line thus reads "You brought forward excuses for a voyage and [asked for] forgiveness for going away...".

**37** Meaning the patron's hand is as generous as a spring cloud gifting rain and his aptitude for speech is as wide as an immeasurable sea (the cloud being an established symbol of generosity, the sea, with its width and richness of pearls, an established metaphor associated with speech). The Persian construction with two *čes* per *meṣrā'* was translated quite freely.

**38** This is not acknowledged in the *apparatus*, where only *čo abr dar neysān*] in *ṭā* and *če: čo abr-e bi-noqṣān* is recorded.

**39** Moreover *Neysān*, the month traditionally associated with spring, of common use in spring descriptions, is identifiable as *lectio faciliōr*. The reading *bi-noqṣān* is also present in both Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615 and Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 4113. Furthermore, the juxtaposition between *abr-e bi-noqṣān* and *baḡr-e bi-ma'bar* is also present in other lines of Anvari's *divān*, e.g. *qaṣide* 81, l. 11 (Anvari 1959-61, 1: 199). The *beyt* would thus read: "His hand in generosity [i.e. his generous hand] resembles/it is more generous than the cloud without fault, his aptitude for speech resembles/it is more rich than the sea without crossings".

Crucial information about manuscripts, even key ones, seems to be lacking: e.g. Istanbul, Fāteḡ, 3786, one of MR's main witnesses, is never mentioned to be in disorder, as shown by facts such as *qaṣide* 59 beginning on f. 5v, being interrupted and then continuing on what is now f. 40r. In this manuscript, also, *qaṣide* 68 is written twice: ff. 33v-34v have the first 24 lines while ff. 126r-127v have the whole text, albeit with a completely different *maṭla'*, *duš čun čašme-ye x<sup>w</sup>oršid-e sepehrdāvār // gašt az časm nehān dar pas-e parde šab-e tār* (Last night, when the sun's disk became invisible to the eyes beneath that veil that is the dark night...). The *maṭla'* printed in the edition is: *di čo beškast šahanšāh-e falak nowbat-e bār // v-az sarāparde-ye šab gerd-e jahān kard hešār* (Yesterday, when the king of kings in the sky [i.e. the sun] interrupted court time [i.e. set] and the world became encompassed by night's veil...).<sup>40</sup> Neither the double presence of this *qaṣide* nor the different *maṭla'* are recorded in the *apparatus* (Anvari 1959-61, 1: 154).

#### 4 Conclusions

MR's edition has been used for many years without taking into account or discussing its multiple problems, especially among western scholars.<sup>41</sup> This is somewhat surprising since another of MR's editions of medieval Persian poetry, Sanā'i's *Ḥadīqatu l-Ḥaḡīqah* (in Arabic, *The Garden of Truth*), was the object of a very harsh review by H. Ritter, who wrote:

As praiseworthy as this edition is, this preface already makes clear that the editor, much differently from the great master Muḡammad Qazvini, is one of those Persian scholars who do not give much value to precision and proper documentation. (Ritter 1952, 190)

Ritter proceeded to point out to multiple instances of poorly described manuscripts, the absence of any criterion in the evaluation of variant readings and, judging from the facsimile reproductions of the *folia* of some manuscripts printed in the edition, many inaccuracies in the recording of variant readings in the *apparatus*.

I hope to have shown that anyone who wishes to study Anvari's *divān* has to take into account how MR's edition was made, and

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<sup>40</sup> Both *maṭla'*s are temporal clauses, linked by *enjambement* to the following line (*ruy benmud mah-e 'id...* "Id's moon showed its face..."). An *eżāfe* particle seems to have fallen for metrical reasons between *parde* and *šab* (or *parde* is to be considered an apposition of *šab-e tār*).

<sup>41</sup> Up until now: still in de Bruijn 2019 Anvari's poems are quoted *verbatim* from MR's edition, without saying anything about it.

proceed accordingly. Although MR's work is still the essential starting point for any research on Anvari and certain aspects of it still are very valuable, especially the learned and extensive introduction, the text and the *apparatus* must always be closely scrutinised, not only by reading old manuscripts not used by MR, but also by double-checking the ones used by the editor. This is especially important for future philological works on Anvari's poetry, which is highly necessary.

## Appendix 1<sup>42</sup>

Manuscripts that are not ordered alphabetically, by rhyme, are all organised in approximately the same way: they begin with *qaṣide* 60, addressed to Sanjar, and tend to group together poems (both *qaṣides* and *qeṭ'es*) addressed to the same patron. This tendency, however, is not always followed: more than one block of poems having the same addressee can be found in the same manuscript while poems addressed to a different patron are, at times, inserted in the 'wrong' block; moreover, some texts seem to be grouped by 'theme' (e.g. *qeṭ'es* of similar subject).

It is to be noted that the order of poems in these manuscripts is never exactly the same.

The four manuscripts used for the sample collation of *qaṣides* 80 and 84 are:

1. *lām*: Istanbul, Fāteḥ, 3784. Copied by Moḡammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Moḡammad al-Ḥāfeḡ and completed in *avāxer-e māh-e Šavvāl* 708 Q. (late Šavvāl 708 Q.)/April 1309 CE.

Layout of the page: two columns, 29 lines per page. Poems are ordered alphabetically, by rhyme (*radif* excluded). The first poem is *qaṣide* 18, *maṭla' agar moḡāvel-e ḡāl-e jahāniyān na qaḡā-st // čerā majāre-ye aḡvāl bar xelāf-e reḡā-st* (if the constant turning [i.e. changing] of the mortals condition is not [dictated by] Fate, why the flowing of events is different from what is wanted [by humans]?).<sup>43</sup> MR declares it to

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<sup>42</sup> For all the following manuscripts, references to Monzavi's catalogue, Monzavi 1971, have been added when possible. To avoid repetitions manuscripts will be ordered sequentially across appendixes 1 and 2; when a manuscript appears in more than one list, the number of its first mention will be referenced, where it will have been briefly described.

<sup>43</sup> Literal translation. The line means: If the state of things/the world does not change according to *qaḡā* (Fate, divine decree), why does not it change in the way that humans want? It is a rhetorical question, of course things change per divine decree, and so things do not go how mortals want them to go. This conventional wisdom theme is developed throughout the *qaṣide*'s prologue.

be his *nosxe-ye aṣli*. Corresponds to item 21660 in Monzavi (1971, 2235).

2. 'eyn: Istanbul, Fāteḥ, 3786. Neither the name of the scribe nor the date are present since it lacks the final pages and with them the copyist's *subscriptio*. MR dates it to the end of seventh Q.-beginning of eighth Q./end of thirteenth-beginning of fourteenth century CE.

Layout of the page: two columns, 19 lines per page, one *meṣrā'* per column. Poems are not ordered by rhyme. The first poem is *qaṣide* 60, *maṭla' gar del o dast baḥr o kān bāšad // del o dast-e xodāyḡān bāšad* (If a heart and a hand were a sea and a mine they would be the sultan's heart and hand). It seems to be an unfinished product, f. 110v is the last page for which the *jadval* has been traced; many headings are not written. Some *folia* are not in the original order and some seem to have fallen. Corresponds to item 21659 in Monzavi (1971, 2235).

3. *kāf*: Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye malek, 5267. Neither the name of the scribe nor the date are present since it lacks the final pages and with it the copyist's *subscriptio*. MR considers it very old, written in the seventh Q./thirteenth century CE. This dating is also given in the catalogue (Afšar et al. 1975-76, 264).

Layout of the page: two columns, 20 lines per page, one *meṣrā'* per column. Poems are not ordered by rhyme. The first poem is *qaṣide* 60, *maṭla' gar del o dast baḥr o kān bāšad // del o dast-e xodāyḡān bāšad* (If a heart and a hand were a sea and a mine they would be the sultan's heart and hand). MR describes it as 'full of mistakes'. It was compared with another manuscript and there are many corrections, in which the correct word is written above the perceived mistake, between the lines; lines that were thought to be missing were added in the margins. Corresponds to items 17451 and 21658 in Monzavi (1971, 1847 and 2235 respectively).<sup>44</sup>

4. London, British Library, Or. 3713. Collection of seven *divāns*, Anvari's is the fifth, ff. 36v-125r. Copied by Moḡammadšāh b. 'Āli b. Maḥmud al-Eṣfahāni,<sup>45</sup> completed on the 6th of Rabi' II 693 Q./13th of March 1294 CE.

Layout of the page: four columns, 31 lines per page, one *meṣrā'* per column, two consecutive *beyts* (couplets) per line. Poems are not ordered by rhyme. The first poem is *qaṣide* 60,

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<sup>44</sup> Both in the margins and between the two columns of text, vertically. In Mozavi 1971 the first time is mentioned under *kollyāt-e Anvari* the second under *divān-e Anvari*.

<sup>45</sup> He was not the only one to work on this manuscript. According to Rieu (1895, 143), Hamgar's quatrains were copied by Eṣḡāq b. Qevām Moḡammad Hamgar, the poet's grandson.

*maṭla' gar del o dast baḥr o kān bāšad // del o dast-e xodāygān bāšad* (If a heart and a hand were a sea and a mine they would be the sultan's heart and hand).

## Appendix 2

The following section lists the manuscripts mentioned by the three above quoted papers arguing the necessity of a new edition.

Karami, Amini, Kowṭari 2014

5. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615. The original was part of the private collection of Afšār Širāzi. The final page was lost and with it the copyist's *subscriptio*. Neither the name of the scribe nor the date are present, it could date back to the seventh Q./thirteenth century CE.<sup>46</sup>

Layout of the page: two columns, 17 lines per page, one *mešrā'* per column. Poems are not ordered by rhyme. Lines that were thought to be missing have been added at times in the margins. The first poem is *qašide 60, maṭla' gar del o dast baḥr o kān bāšad // del o dast-e xodāygān bāšad* (If a heart and a hand were a sea and a mine they would be the sultan's heart and hand). It is Šahidi's '*nosxe-ye afš'*' and it seems to be now lost (Beelaert 2017). Corresponds to item 21710 in Monzavi (1971, 2238).<sup>47</sup>

6. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 86666.<sup>48</sup> Dated 680 Q./1281-82 CE, it is the oldest known dated copy of Anvari's *divān*. The last page is badly damaged, and much of the copyist's *subscriptio* is not readable, including the copyist's name and the day and month in which the manuscript was completed.

Layout of the page: two columns, 19 lines per page, one *mešrā'* per column. Lines that were thought to be missing have been added at times in the margins. Poems are not ordered by rhyme. The first poem is *qašide 60, maṭla' gar del o dast baḥr o kān bāšad // del o dast-e xodāygān bāšad* (If a

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<sup>46</sup> Described by Nafisi in the introduction to his edition of Anvari's *divān*. He considers it written in the thirteenth-fourteenth century.

<sup>47</sup> The date Monzavi refers to, 1086 h.q./1675-76 CE, is on the new last page, clearly added later when the manuscript was restored.

<sup>48</sup> This number is the *šomāre-ye tabt*. The *šomāre-ye fehrest* is 13503.



- heart and a hand were a sea and a mine they would be the sultan's heart and hand).
7. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye Sepahsālār, 209. Lacks both the initial and the final part. Neither the name of the scribe nor the date are present, Ḍabiḥi states that it is "clearly is from seventh century Q./fourteenth century CE" (Ḍabiḥi 2016, 70).  
Layout of the page: two columns, 19 lines per page, one *meṣrā'* per column. Corresponds to item 21657 in Monzavi (1971, 2235).<sup>49</sup>
  8. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 86544.<sup>50</sup> Copied by Aḥmad b. 'Āli b. Aḥmad Širāzi, completed on the 20th of Šafar 785 Q./2nd of May 1383 CE.  
Layout of the page: two columns, 19 lines per page, one *meṣrā'* per column. The first poem is *qaṣide* 60, *maṭla' gar del o dast baḥr o kān bāšad // del o dast-e xodāyḡān bāšad* (If a heart and a hand were a sea and a mine they would be the sultan's heart and hand).
  9. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 1260.<sup>51</sup> *nasta'liq* writing of the seventh Q./fourteenth-fifteenth century CE.<sup>52</sup>
  10. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 85326.<sup>53</sup> Copied by Ḥasan b. 'Āli Suzi Sāvaji,<sup>54</sup> completed on the 20th of Rabi' II 988 Q./14th of June 1580 CE. Corresponds to item 21674 in Monzavi (1971, 2236).<sup>55</sup>
  11. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 212281.<sup>56</sup> Written in *nasta'liq*, tenth-eleventh Q./sixteenth-seventeenth century CE.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Non vidi*. The description is taken from Karami, Amini, Kowṭari 1392; Ḍabiḥi 2016; Monzavi 1971. The order of the poems is not noted, nor with which composition Anvari's *divān* begins. Ḍabiḥi considers it one of the oldest and 'most complete' copies of Anvari's *divān*, but adds that there are many mistakes.

<sup>50</sup> This is the *šomāre-ye ṭabt*, the *šomāre-ye fehrest* is 13582.

<sup>51</sup> This number is the *šomāre-ye nosxe*, the only given.

<sup>52</sup> *Non vidi*. No further information is provided by the authors.

<sup>53</sup> This number is the *šomāre-ye ṭabt*. A '*šomāre-ye nosxe*' is given as 910, no mention of the *šomāre-ye fehrest*.

<sup>54</sup> This is the copyist's name as given in Monzavi 1971, 2236 and Nurāyi, Aḥmadpur 2016. The one given in Karami, Amini, Kowṭari is Luzi b. 'Āli al-Sāvaji. As shown by the *šomāre-ye ṭabt* and the date, however, the manuscript is the same.

<sup>55</sup> *Non vidi*. Information taken from Karami, Amini, Kowṭari 1392; Nurāyi, Aḥmadpur 2016; Monzavi 1971. No further details are given.

<sup>56</sup> This number is the *šomāre-ye ṭabt*. The *šomāre-ye fehrest* is not given. A *šomāre-ye nosxe* 98, *sorud*, is mentioned.

<sup>57</sup> *Non vidi*. No further information given.

12. Širāz, Ketābxāne-ye ḥeḡrat 'Alā al-din Ḥoseyn, 1214. Dated 1248 Q./1832-33 CE.<sup>58</sup>
13. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 8431.<sup>59</sup> Copied by Moḡammad 'Ebrat Nāyebi and finished in 1242 Q./1826-27 CE.<sup>60</sup>

### Dabihi 2016

The author gives two lists, one with manuscripts MR has not used, another with some MR has used.

Manuscripts not used by MR:

14. Tehran, *Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh Tehrān*, microfilm 4113. It lacks both the initial and the final part, some ff. seems to have fallen inside also. Neither the name of the scribe nor the date are present, estimated to have been copied at the end seventh-beginning eighth Q./end thirteenth-beginning fourteenth century CE. It is Šahidi's '*nosxe-ye minow*' (see Beelaert 2017) and it is also the witness used by Šafi'i Kadkani (1993, 69, fn. 69). Layout of the page: two columns, 17 lines per page, one *mešrā'* per column. Poems are not ordered by rhyme. It begins with the last 5 couplets of *qašide* 160. A heading found in f. 128v, *in bāb aš'ār o moqatta'āt-e parākande dar ḡaqq-e x<sup>w</sup>āje Tāher bā ḡamm-e šā'eri o estegfār az u* (This part: scattered poems in honour of lord Tāher and chastising poetry, and asking for forgiveness)<sup>61</sup> could suggest that this manuscript was put together by copying multiple antigraphs. = 6)
15. Dublin, Chester Beatty, Per. 103. Dated 699 Q./1300 CE. Collection of 10 *divāns*, Anvari's is the tenth, ff. 306v-401v. Copied by abu Našr Moḡammad b. Aḡmad b. Moḡammad b. 'Āli ibn رحو b. No'mān al-Yamāni<sup>62</sup> and Moḡammadšāh b. 'Āli b. Maḡmud b. Šādbaxt al-Ešfahāni.<sup>63</sup> The first copied ff. 2-160 and 286-305, the second ff. 161-285, 306-13 and 351-401.

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**58** *Non vidi*. No further information given.

**59** This number is the *šomāre-ye taḡbt*, the *šomāre-ye fehrest* is not given. A *šomāre-ye nosxe* 5845 is mentioned.

**60** *Non vidi*. No further information given.

**61** The last words are very difficult to read, the reported text is somewhat conjectural. '*az u*' can be interpreted both as 'asking for forgiveness for the fact of being a poet' and 'asking for forgiveness to Tāher'; being that '*ḡamm-e šā'eri*' is mentioned immediately before, the first option seems better.

**62** Thus in Arberr, Minovi, Blochet 1959, 10.

**63** The same scribe who copied London, British Library, Or. 3713.

Layout of the page: four columns, 29-31 lines per page, one *meṣrā'* per column, two consecutive *beyts* per line. Poems are not ordered by rhyme. The first poem is *qaṣīde* 60, *maṭla' gar del o dast baḥr o kān bāšad // del o dast-e xodāygān bāšad* (If a heart and a hand were a sea and a mine they would be the sultan's heart and hand). Corresponds to item 21657 in Monzavi (1971, 2235).<sup>64</sup>

16. Tehran, *Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān*, microfilm 170/1. The original is part of the private collection of Ḥakim Oḡlu Pāšā. Neither the name of the scribe nor the date are present, though it is said to have been written in the eighth/ninth Q./fourteenth-fifteenth century CE. Collection of 12 *divāns*, Anvari's is the first, ff. 1-100.

Layout of the page: columns, 35 lines per page. Corresponds to item 21797 in Monzavi (1971, 2242).<sup>65</sup>  
= 7)

17. Tehran, *Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh Tehrān*, microfilm 240/2.<sup>66</sup> Copied by Ḥoseyn b. Moḥammad b. Moḥammad b. abi al-Qāsem Madini in 759 Q./1357-58 CE.

Layout of the page: 19 lines per page. Corresponds to item 21662 in Monzavi (1971, 2235).<sup>67</sup>

18. Tehran, *Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān*, 8527. Neither the name of the scribe nor the date are present. Ḍabiḥi states it is: "clearly from the eighth-ninth century Q./fourteenth-fifteenth century CE".<sup>68</sup>

#### Manuscripts used by MR

= 4)

= 1)

19. Mašhad, *ketābxāne-ye Āstān-e qods-e reḡavi*, 11851 *siglum 'tā'* in MR's edition. Neither the name of the scribe nor the date are present; about it MR says: "it is relatively old and

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<sup>64</sup> Described in great detail in Arberry, Minovi, Blochet 1959, 4-11.

<sup>65</sup> *Non vidī*. The description is taken from Ḍabiḥi 2016 and Monzavi 1971. The order of the poems is not noted, nor with which composition Anvari's *divān* begins. Corresponds to item 21797 in Monzavi 1971, 2242.

<sup>66</sup> *Non vidī*. The description is taken from Ḍabiḥi 2016. The exact date is not given, nor is any information on the order of the poems. The number of columns is also not stated. Monzavi 1971 gives a different reference: *2/496 nasx-e Ḥoseyn farzand-e Moḥammad abu al-Qāsem Madini. 9 j. 1/759. film-e ān dar dānešgāh-aš* [the author means the *Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān*] *420 hast. [filmhā: 441]*. Since the scribe and the date are the same, I suppose the number was changed.

<sup>67</sup> *Non vidī*. Description taken from Ḍabiḥi 2016 and Monzavi 1971. No further information is provided.

<sup>68</sup> *Non vidī*. The description is taken by Ḍabiḥi 2016. No further information is given.

its writing is more or less of the eighth century Q./fourteenth century CE" (Anvari 1959-61, 2: 146).<sup>69</sup> Layout of the page: two columns, 15 lines per page. It begins with what in MR's edition is l. 17 of *qaṣide* 16 *z-ānke emruz az ulū l-amr-i*<sup>70</sup> *o yazdān dar nobi // hamčonin gofta-st o haqq in-ast o digar torrahāt* (since today you are among the *ulū al-amr*, thus has God spoken in the Quran, this is the truth, all other things are insignificant).<sup>71</sup>

= 3)

= 2)

Nurāyi, Aḥmadpur 2016

= 5)

= 6)

= 8)

= 19)

= 7)

20. Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye majles-e šurā-ye eslāmi, 86834.<sup>72</sup> It is an anthology containing a selection of poems from 17 different poets, including Anvari. It has no date, it is said to have been written at the end of sixth Q./end thirteenth-beginning fourteenth CE.<sup>73</sup>

= 10)

It is to be noted that although all three papers underline the necessity of a scientific method in compiling a new edition, no such method is described. This can already be seen by the different lists of manuscripts suggested by the authors: a criterion on the basis of which manuscripts should be selected is never stated, nor a philological argument to justify using a witness over another is ever made; witnesses are included or excluded seemingly at random.

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**69** When it was first described, in the preface to the first volume (Anvari 1959-61, 1: 18), no date was given.

**70** Arabic, quote from Quran IV, 59. The line is connected by *enjambement* to the preceding one.

**71** *Non vidi*. The description is taken from Anvari 1959-61, 2: 146 and Ḍabiḥi 2016. The order of the poems is not noted. It is to note that it must have been acquired by the *Ketābxāne-ye Āstān-e Qods-e Reḡavi* quite recently: MR describes it as part of the private collection of a friend of his, *āqā-ye Šahrām*, and is not mentioned in de Blois 2004 among the manuscripts of Anvari's *divān* present in that library.

**72** This number is the *šomāre-ye tabt*, the *somāre-ye fehrest* is not given.

**73** *Non vidi*. Description taken from Nurāyi, Aḥmadpur 2016. No further information is given.

Furthermore, when discussing the process of selecting between different variant readings, none of those papers try to set any fixed rule. A scholar wanting to follow a 'scientific method' needs to be guided by a series of established (and philologically justified) criteria, the eventual infringement of which must be explicitly justified case by case.<sup>74</sup>

### Appendix 3

Line by line list of the differences between Modarres-e Reḡavi's text of *qaṣīde* 80 and 84 and manuscripts Istanbul, Fāteḥ, 3784 (*siglum* 'lām'), Istanbul, Fāteḥ, 3786 (*siglum* 'eyn'), London, British Library, Or. 3713 (*siglum* 'te') and Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye malek, 5267 (*siglum* 'kāf').

Every variant reading *not recorded* in the *apparatus* is given here. Witnesses are referred to using MR's *sigla*.<sup>75</sup>

Even being aware of the importance of distinguishing between corrections and additions made by the original scribe and the ones made by later readers, and how difficult it can be at times to tell them apart, given the editor's inconsistent approach to *kāf*'s corrections and addend lines, every variant reading regarding those additions and corrections is also recorded here.

#### Qaṣīde 80

l. 1b *be-d-ān*] in *lām* and *te*: *bar ān*.

l. 2a *čenān šab-i*] in 'eyn and *te*: *šab-i čenān; bezāyad*] in *kāf*: *bar ārad*. This variant reading is recorded in the *apparatus*, but it is not mentioned that *bezāyad*, MR's chosen reading, is written above *bar ārad*.

l. 3a *be kerdār*] in *lām*: *bekard az*;<sup>76</sup> *nemudār*] in 'eyn, *kāf* and *te*: *be kerdār*.

l. 4b *do ṣad*] in 'eyn: *hazār*.

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**74** An excellent methodological example in the field of Iranian studies is Xāleqi Moṭṭāq's edition of Ferdowsi's *Šāhnāme*, his method clearly explained in Ferdowsi 1988: *nuzdah-sioyek*. It is to be noted that, due to the continuous contamination between written and oral tradition in the textual transmission of the *Šāhnāme* and the very large number of surviving manuscripts, Moṭṭāq's work was arguably much harder.

**75** Some of those variant readings and/or omissions are noted in the *apparatus* as present in only some of the witnesses in which they are present. At times MR records a variant reading as attested in a manuscript even when it is not.

**76** The dot above *ze* is clearly visible.

l. 5a *rox-am*] *zax-am* in *te*;<sup>77</sup> *jān*<sup>2</sup>] in *kāf*: *del*. This variant reading is recorded in the *apparatus*, but it is not mentioned that *jān*, MR's chosen reading, is written above *del*.

ll. 6-7 omitted in 'eyn and *kāf*. MR only records the absence of l. 7 from 'eyn. In *kāf* both lines are absent from the main text but they are added outside of it, l. 6 on the left margin and l. 7 on the right one, without any variant reading.

ll. 6-10 The order of these lines is different in *lām* and *te*: 8-6-9-7-10. l. 6b *ze*] in *lām*: *dar*.

l. 8a *faza'*] in *te*: *foru'*; l. 8b *nāle*] in *lām* and *te*: *nowḡe*.

*kāf* has the same reading as MR's text, *nāle*, but *nowḡe* is written above *nāle*. This is not noted in the *apparatus*.

l. 10b *z-āh-e nāle*] in *lām*, 'eyn, *kāf* and *te*: *z-āh o nāle*.

l. 11b *ze*] in *kāf*: *zad* (*dāl* was later elided).

l. 12a The conjunction *o* is added after *derāz* in *lām*, 'eyn and *te*: *do čašm-am*] in *kāf*: *ze čašm-am* (*do*, MR's chosen reading, is written above *ze*); *ze nowk*] in 'eyn and *te*: *be nowk*; *hami*] omitted in *lām*.

MR's *apparatus* records *ze nowk*] in *kāf*: *do nowk*, but it does not show that in this manuscript *be nowk* is written above *do nowk*.

l. 13b *bar*] in *lām* and *te*: *dar*.

MR's *apparatus* shows *aṭar*] in *kāf*: *xabar*. It does not show that *aṭar*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written both above *xabar* and in the left margin.

l. 14a 'ešve] in *lām* and *te*: 'ešq; *be dast-e ešve hame šab gerefte dāman-e del*] in 'eyn: *be dast-e 'ešq gerefte omid dāman-e del* (MR's *apparatus* shows the variant reading *dast-e ešve hame šab gerefte dāman-e del*] in *kāf*: *be dast-e 'ešq gerefte omid dāman-e del*, but not that the editor's chosen text is added above the line).<sup>78</sup>

Referencing this line, in footnote 8 of the *apparatus*, MR writes: "Witness *te* does not have more than the first 14 lines of this *qašide*, which, from here onwards, has fallen from this witness" (Anvari 1959-61, 1: 196). This is not true. In fact, in manuscript *te*, *beyt* 15 follows *beyt* 14 in the very same line of text, with the first *beyt* occupying columns 1-2 and the second columns 3-4. Together they make up the last line of f. 58v, the poem continuing without any interruption on the next page.

l. 16a *xodāy*] in *lām*: *xodā*.

l. 18. The four conjunctions *o* are omitted in *lām*, *kāf* and *te*.

l. 19a *eḡkām*] in *te*: *farmān*; l. 19b *farmān*] in *lām*: *peymān*, in *te*: *ta'id*. Lines 19-20 are omitted in *kāf*, where they are added in the margins; MR's *apparatus* records for l. 19a *eḡkām*] in *kāf*: *farmān*, as well as l. 19b *farmān*] in *kāf*: *ta'id*, but not that these two variant readings are

<sup>77</sup> Conjectural transcription. In Arabic script the dots above *xe* and *ze* are clearly visible, زخه; cannot be read *zaxm* 'wound' because of the metre.

<sup>78</sup> MR's *apparatus* only notes 'ešve] in 'eyn: 'ešq, without reporting the full variant.

only present in the added lines, not in the main text. Also, in those added lines, l. 19a *be nik] bar nik* is not noted in the *apparatus*.<sup>79</sup>

l. 21a *qaḡā*] in 'eyn: *falak*; l. 21b *qadar*] in *kāf*: *qamar*, with *qadar*, MR's chosen variant reading, written over *qamar*.

The *apparatus* notes l. 21a *towfiq*] in *kāf*: *towqi*'. In *kāf* *قبيع* is written above *be towfiq*, showing that, according to whoever made the correction, the correct reading was *be towqi*'. However, this footnote does not show that MR's chosen variant reading is actually part of *kāf*'s main text. Also, the *apparatus* notes *qaḡā*] in *kāf*: *falak*, but not that *qaḡā*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written above *falak*.

l. 22a *qaḡā*] in *kāf*: *qadar*, with *qaḡā*, MR's chosen variant reading, written above *qadar*; l. 22b *qadar*] in 'eyn: *falak* (MR's *apparatus* erroneously records *qadar*] in 'eyn: *qaḡā*).

MR's *apparatus* records *qadar*] in *kāf*: *falak*, but not the full variant reading: *qadar bepičad*] in *kāf*: *falak betābad*, with *qadar bepičad* written above the writing line.

l. 24 *konand*] in *lām*: *كنند*, in both *mešrā*'s;<sup>80</sup> l. 24b *v-az ān*] in *kāf*: *v-az in*, with *v-az-ān*, MR's chosen variant reading, written over *v-az in*.

MR's *apparatus* records l. 24a *k-az-in*] in *kāf*: *az ān*, but not that *k-az-in*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written above *az ān*;

l. 25b *navāl-aš*] in 'eyn and *kāf*: *navāz-aš* (in *kāf* *لش*, *l-aš*, is written over *navāz-aš*, showing that, according to who made the correction, the correct reading was *navāl-aš*).

MR's *apparatus* records l. 25a 'etāb-aš] in *kāf*: *nehib-aš*, but not that 'etāb-aš, MR's chosen text, is written over *nehib-aš*.

l. 26a *ān*] in *lām* and *te: in; in*] in *lām*, 'eyn and *te: ān; baxur-e 'abir*] in *lām*: *baxur o 'abir*; l. 26b *in*] in *lām* and *te: ān; ān*] in 'eyn and *te: in*, omitted in *lām* (where *in* is added in the margin); *boxār-e šarar*] in *lām*, *kāf* and *te: boxār o šarar*.

ll. 27 and 28 omitted in *kāf*, where they are added in the margins. MR's *apparatus* records l. 27b *ke*] in *kāf*: *čo*, without mentioning that this variant reading is only present in the added line, not in the main text. In l. 28a the variant reading *va gar] agar*, present in the added text, is not recorded. In the same added line the variant reading *gah] gar* could also be present.

l. 27a *baḡr-e saxā*] in *te: baḡr o saxā; hami*] omitted in *te*; l. 27b *ke*] in *te: čo*.

l. 29a *ze sim o zar*] in 'eyn: *ze sim-e zar; deram*] in *lām: gohar*.

MR's *apparatus* also does not record that in *kāf gohar* is written over *deram*. The variant reading *deram*] in *te: gohar* is recorded, which

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**79** In *kāf* the end of the added l. 20 could have the variant reading *bebaste kamar] na baste magari*, but the text is small and partially erased, making it very difficult to read.

**80** Maybe to be read *gonbad* (dome). The variant reading *konand*, chosen by the editor, gives a much better meaning.

makes the editor's statement in footnote 8 of the preceding page, here quoted in regard to l. 14, even more puzzling.

l. 30b *be raf'at o hemmat*] in *lām* and *te*: *be hemmat o raf'at*.

The variant reading *baxšeš*] in *kāf*: *raf'at* is recorded in the *apparatus*, but it is not shown that *baxšeš*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written over *baxšeš*.

l. 31 omitted in 'eyn and *kāf*; in the latter it is added in the margin.

l. 32 *ma-rā*] in *kāf*: *to-rā*. The situation in *kāf* is peculiar: l. 31 was originally omitted, but afterwards someone tried to integrate l. 31 by writing some words above l. 32, the first *mešrā'* of which has been written between the two columns. In the manuscript the line reads *to-rā saẓad ke bovad gāh-e naẓm-e medḡat-e to // bayāḡ ruz o siyāhi šab o qalam meḡvar* with *tā'at o farmān* written above the first *mešrā'*, *marā saẓad ke bovad gāh-e naẓm-e medḡat-e to* written vertically between the two writing columns and *falak ḡolām qaḡḡa bande qadar čākar* written above the second *mešrā'*.

l. 33a *meh az jahān aḡar andar jahān*] in *te*: *hazār jān be jahān dar aḡar*;<sup>81</sup> *aḡar andar jahān*] in *lām*: *be jahān dar aḡar*; *andar jahān*] in *kāf*: *andar u* (*be jahān dar aḡar* is written above the line);<sup>82</sup> l. 33b *be-d-u andar*] in *te*: *be-d-u-yi dar*

MR's *apparatus* records l. 33b *be-d-u andar*] in *lām*: *be-d-u dar*. This is incorrect. This manuscript, like *te*, has the variant reading *be-d-u-yi dar*, which, in opposition to the recorded *be-d-u dar*, fits the metre. MR records the variant reading *be-d-u dar* also for witness *kāf*. This is also incorrect: *kāf*'s main text reads *be-d-u andar*, the variant reading chosen by MR, with *be-d-u-yi dar* written over it.

ll. 34-7. MR records the omission of these lines in *kāf*, but not that they are all added in the margins.<sup>83</sup>

ll. 35-9. Line 38 directly follows l. 35 in *lām*, where the order is: 35>38>36>37>39.

l. 35b *diyār*] in *lām*: *zamāne*. This variant reading could also be present in *kāf*'s added lines.

ll. 36-7 omitted in *te*.

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<sup>81</sup> *hazār* not dotted, هزار جان.

<sup>82</sup> MR's footnote 14 at page 197, recording *aḡar andar jahān kasi*] in *kāf*: *be jahān dar aḡar kasi*, is wrong.

<sup>83</sup> The text is small and hard to read, the conjunction *o* seems to have been omitted both after *ḡekmat* and *ḡešmat*, in the first and second *mešrā'* of l. 34 respectively, as does the *o* after *ḡešmat* in l. 35b. *to* in l. 37a seems also to be omitted.



l. 38a *saxā bi*] in *te*: *saxā-ye*.<sup>84</sup> Footnote 21 at page 197 of MR's edition, likely<sup>85</sup> recording l. 38b *dar vojūd bi*] in *kāf*: *bi vojūd dar*, is wrong, in *kāf* the text is the same as MR's edition.

l. 39a *xašm*] in *kāf*: *xašm*.

l. 40a *xašm*] in *lām* and *kāf*: *qahr*.

The variant reading in l. 40b *nasreyn-aš*] in *kāf*: *nasreyn* is recorded, but it is not shown that it seems to have been corrected by the presence of *بینش*, *eyn-aš*, above *nasreyn*.

l. 41a *x<sup>w</sup>ori*] in *'eyn*: *x<sup>w</sup>oram*.

l. 42a *tiḡ-e to*] in *lām* and *te*: *xašm-e to*.

MR's *apparatus* also does not record that in *kāf* the variant reading *xašm* is written above *tiḡ*.

l. 44a *xāk o čō bād*] in *lām* and *te*: *bād o čō xāk*; l. 44b *dāvar*] in *kāf*: *yāvar*.

l. 45 omitted in *'eyn*.

#### Qašide 84

MR does not mention at all that this poem is also present in manuscript *te*. All the variant readings from this manuscript are recorded here.

l. 1a *čo*] in *kāf*: *ke*, with *čo*, MR's chosen variant reading, written above *ke*.

l. 4a *čo andar ātaš 'ud*] in *'eyn* and *te*: *čo ātaš andar 'ud*.

l. 5b. The variant reading *nadāram*] in *kāf*: *natābam* is recorded in the *apparatus*, but that *nadāram*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written above *natābam*, is not.

l. 6b *nāraside*] in *te*: *nāgoḡašte*.

l. 7a *'azm*] in *'eyn*, *lām* and *te*: *'oḡr*.

In *kāf* *'oḡr* is written over *'azm*, MR's chosen variant reading. This seems to be one of the few instances in which the editor explicitly acknowledges the existence of *kāf*'s additions in the *apparatus*, recording: *'azm*] in *kāf*'s *additions* (*ḡāšīye*): *'oḡr*.

l. 8a *raftan*] in *kāf*: *ḡeybat* (*raftan*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written above *ḡeybat*); *kardan*] in *kāf*: *raftan* (*kardan*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written above *raftan*). MR's footnote 4 (Anvari 1959-61, 1: 209), recording the variant reading *vaqt-e raftan o*

<sup>84</sup> This variant reading could be also present in *'eyn*, but it is not easy to see if the copyist actually wrote the *be*'s body (*سَخَا* vs. *سَخَاي*).

<sup>85</sup> Line 38 has two '20's written above it, referencing footnotes. The second, after *bi* in the second *mešrā'*, is probably a misprint for '21', since footnote 20 records the variant reading *jud o saxā-ye kaf*, corresponding to the first 20 of l. 38, written after *kaf*, and no '21' is present above any of page 197 lines despite the presence of a footnote with this number.

*hengām-e safar*] in 'eyn: *ferqat o hengām-e raftan* is wrong, 'eyn's text is the same as the printed edition.

l. 9b. The variant reading *x<sup>w</sup>ištān* in *kāf*: *dustān* is recorded in the *apparatus*, but it is not shown that *x<sup>w</sup>ištān*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written above *dustān*.

l. 11a *x<sup>w</sup>āhi ānjā mānd*] in *te*: *ānjā x<sup>w</sup>āhi mānd*; l. 11b *be yekdigar*] in *te*: *be hamdigar*.<sup>86</sup>

l. 12a *begoft bebar dar gereftam-aš*] in 'eyn: *begoftam dar bar gereftam-aš*.

l. 13a *āstān-e jāh*] in 'eyn, *kāf* and *te*: *āstān-e xaṭar*; l. 13b *māl*] in 'eyn: *molk*; *ustād*] in 'eyn: *ostād*.

l. 14a. In *kāf* the variant reading *xabar* is written above *xaṭar*, MR's chosen variant reading.

l. 15 omitted in *kāf* and *te*, in *kāf* it is added in the margin without any variant reading.

l. 16a *xāk*] in 'eyn: *māh*.

l. 19a *xodāy*] in *kāf*: *xodā*.

l. 20a. MR's *apparatus* records *mellat o molk*] in *kāf*: *mamlakat o din*. This is wrong. The variant reading present in witness *kāf* is *molk-at o din* that, contrary to *mamlakat o din*, fits the metre (also, *mellat o molk*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written above *molkat o din*); l. 20b *ebtedā be 'adl*] in *kāf*: *ebtedā-ye 'adl*, with *be 'adl* written above it, indicating that, according to the person who made the correction, the section was to be read *ebtedā be 'adl*. MR's *apparatus* notes *ebtedā be 'adl*] in 'eyn: *ebtedā-ye 'adl*; this is also wrong, witness 'eyn has *ebtedā be 'adl*.

l. 22 omitted in 'eyn and *kāf*; l. 22b *basāyat*] in *lām* and *te*: *basāṭat*. In *kāf* this line is added in the margin, with the variant reading *basāyat*] *basāṭat*.

l. 23a *dar neysān*] in *lām* and *te*: *bi-noqšān*; l. 23b *baḥr*] in *te*: *rud*.

l. 24b *be taqviyat*] in 'eyn: *ze taqviyat*, in *kāf*: *ze tarbiyat*.

l. 25b *šur o fetne*] in *lām*, 'eyn, *kāf* and *te*: *šur-e fetne*.

MR's *apparatus* records *šur o fetne*] in 'eyn: *suz-e fetne*. This is probably wrong, as the dot of the supposed *ze* most likely refers to *jāh*'s *jim* in the line above, and the relevant word is to be read *šur*, albeit with no dots over *šin*.

MR's *apparatus* also records l. 25a *vasan*] in *lām*: *rasan*. Due to the way the scribe writes *res* and *vāvs*, it is possible that this variant reading does not exist.

ll. 26-7. The order of these two lines is reversed in *lām* and *te*.

l. 26a *če šir o če gorg*] in *lām* and *te*: *če kabk o če كرك*.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> In *lām* there seems to be a dot above *mānd mim*, but *nānd* does not exist.

<sup>87</sup> I am not sure *كرك* is to be read *gorg* 'wolf', as in MR's edition. Even if it is not an animal frequently mentioned by Persian poets (although it appears in Ferdowsi's *Šāhnāme*,

- ll. 27-31 MR's *apparatus* records that these lines are omitted in *kāf*, but it does not show that they are added in the margins, except l. 31.
- l. 28b *xāre]* in *kāf*'s added lines: *xarāre*.<sup>88</sup>
- l. 29a *mehrgiyā]* in *kāf*'s added lines: *mehrgiyāh*.
- l. 30 *qadr]* in 'eyn omitted. MR records the addition of *čarx* in the same *mešrā'* but not this omission, which makes the line fit the metre.
- l. 32a *bā setāre sude]* in *lām* and *te*: *sude bā setāre*; l. 32b *gašte]* in *lām* and *te*: *bude*.
- l. 33a *farzānegān]* in 'eyn: *x<sup>w</sup>oršid o mah*.
- l. 34b *jašn]* in *lām* and *te*: *bazm*.
- ll. 35-6. The order of these two lines is reversed in *lām* and *te*.<sup>89</sup>
- ll. 38-42. MR's *apparatus* records in different footnotes that ll. 38, 40, 41 and 42 are omitted in *kāf*. All lines from 38 to 42 are not present in *kāf*, including l. 39.
- ll. 39-41 Omitted in 'eyn.
- l. 39b 'elm] in *lām*: *ǧalm*.<sup>90</sup>
- l. 42a *ḥesām-e qahr-e to šaxš-e ajal zanad be do nim]* in 'eyn: *ḥisām-e qahr-e to a'dā-t-rā zanad be do nim*.<sup>91</sup>
- l. 43a *qahr-at]* in 'eyn and *kāf*: محنت; in manuscript *kāf qahr-at*, MR's chosen variant reading, is written above محنت.<sup>92</sup>
- l. 44a *dāruy o taryāk]* in *lām*, 'eyn and *te*: *dāruy-e taryāk*, in *kāf*: *dāru va taryāk*;

in Farroxi's poetry and in other lines of Anvari's *divān*), reading *karg* 'rhinoceros' might be correct: "When his [the patron's] falcon is hunting, what's a partridge and what's a rhinoceros? (He catches both preys, even if one is easy and the other should be impossible.) When his horse is advancing on his path, what is a sea and what is a plain? (He traverses both, even if one is easy and the other should be impossible)". Furthermore, the rhinoceros is mentioned as the *mamduḥ*'s prey, being very difficult to capture, in Farroxi's poetry; see de Fouchécour 1969, 152. The line has a comprehensible meaning also by reading *gorg*, but the hyperbole and the symmetry between *mešrā*'s do not work as well (and, to the extent of my knowledge, the very commonly mentioned wolf is never a prey of the *mamduḥ*'s hawk, see de Fouchécour 1969, 156).

The unusual mention of a small prey, the partridge, alongside a very big one, the rhinoceros or the wolf, could explain why *kabk* 'partridge' present in many old manuscripts (*lām*, *te*, Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 2615 and Tehran, Ketābxāne-ye dānešgāh-e Tehrān, microfilm 4113), was changed to *šir* 'lion' by copyists who did not understand the line and mechanically replicated the hendiadys *šir o gorg* 'lion and wolf'. It is likely that the reading *šir*, chosen by MR, is not the correct one.

**88** Small and difficult to read, the extra letter, that makes the line not fit the metre, is surely a mistake.

**89** In l. 37, in MS *lām* there seems to be a meaningless dot below کرد.

**90** *ǧalm* is an Arabic *mašdar* meaning 'being lustful', nearly never used in Persian. This dot is very likely a mistake.

**91** *ḥisām* does not exist and it is not metrically possible, but the *yā*'s two dots are clearly written.

**92** Both *mehnat* 'toil' and *maḥn-at* 'your striking/your strike', are in theory possible readings. (With that scorpion's stinger of toil/that is toil, or with that scorpion's stinger that's your striking/strike.)

Also, in *kāf* the variant reading *nax<sup>w</sup>āhad* is written as a correction above *nayārad*.

l. 45 omitted in 'eyn and *kāf*; l. 45b *ze dast*] in *lām* and *te*: *be dast*.

l. 46a *bāre-i-st*] in *kāf*: *bāre-ast*; l. 46b *manzel-i-š bud*] in *lām* and *te*: *manzel-i bud-aš*.

l. 48a *čarx*] in *te*: *bād*; *b-āvāz-e ra'd*] in *kāf* and *te*: *b-ārām-e xāk*, with *b-āvāz-e ra'd*, MR's chosen variant reading, written above *b-ārām-e xāk* in manuscript *kāf*; *jastan*] in 'eyn and *te*: *jonbeš*; l. 48b *be qadd-e kuh o tan-e pil*] in 'eyn: *be qadd-e pil o tan-e kuh*.

MR's *apparatus* records *jastan*] in *kāf*: *jonbeš*, but it does not show that *jastan*, the editor's chosen variant reading, is written above *jonbeš*.

l. 50a *gah*] in 'eyn, *lām* and *te*: *bar*.

l. 51a *sang*] in 'eyn: *la'l*; l.51b *axtar o axgar*] in *kāf*: *axgar o axtar*.

l. 53b *bar*] in 'eyn: *dar*.

l. 54a *be-d-ān*] in *lām*, 'eyn, *kāf* and *te*: *bar ān*; <sup>93</sup> *nanehad*] in *kāf*: بنهند, with the variant reading *benehad* written above the writing line; <sup>94</sup> l.

54b *be ḡanjaram*] in 'eyn and *kāf*: محنجرم, in *te*: محجرم. <sup>95</sup>

l. 56a *madiḡ*] in *lām*, 'eyn and *te*: *be madḡ*. In *kāf* the variant reading *be madḡ* is written above *madiḡ*, MR's chosen variant reading.

l. 58a *ze xākhā*] in *kāf*: *ze xārḡā*, with *ze xākhā*, MR's chosen variant reading, written above *xārḡā*. MR's *apparatus* records *ze xākhā*] in 'eyn: *ze xārḡā*. This is wrong, 'eyn has *ze xākhā*, just like the printed edition.

l. 59a 'olovv o raf'at] in *kāf* and *te*: 'olovv-e raf'at; l. 59b *šerešk o čehre*] in *kāf*: *serešk-e dide*, with *o čehre*, MR's chosen variant reading, written above *dide*.

l. 60b *kamar*] in *te*: *magar*/حكر. <sup>96</sup>

l. 62a *na bix o na šāx*] in 'eyn and *kāf*: *na šāx o na bix*; l. 62b *bār*] in *lām* and *te*: *barg*.

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<sup>93</sup> In *te* both *be-d-ān* and *bar ān* could be read.

<sup>94</sup> No diacritical dot is present on the first letter, so both *nanehand* and *benehand* are possible readings. In the correction written above the writing line a dot is placed under the first letter, pointing to the reading *benehad*.

<sup>95</sup> Could be read *moḡanjer*, a rare Arabic word for 'throat', mentioned for example in the *Majma' fī biḡār al-anwār*, a sixteenth-century dictionary by Muḡammad al-Fattinī (s.v. *ḡanjār*, consulted online through the website [arabiclexicon.hawramani.com](http://arabiclexicon.hawramani.com), available at <http://arabiclexicon.hawramani.com/>).

<sup>96</sup> The first letter could be a *mim* with a large head as well as a *ḡe* (e.g. *jegar*). In any case the correct reading is *kamar*, the one chosen by MR.

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# «Il racconto rimase così, appeso alle labbra»: il finale del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši Bāfqī

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**Abstract** For centuries, the *maṭnavī Farhād va Širin* by Vaḥši Bāfqī (d. 1583-84 AD) has been read in the light of the idea, credited by most *taḍkerē* authors, that it was an unfinished poem. Mir Taqī od-Din Kāšāni, who authored the *taḍkerē Xolāṣat ol-aš'ār va zobdat ol-afkār* between the second half of the sixteenth century and the early years of the seventeenth, was of a different mind. The quality of the mise en page of text, illuminations and illustrations of some manuscripts of Vaḥši's *Farhād va Širin*, in this case the copy from The Berenson Collection at I Tatti, raises the idea that the poem was regarded as concluded. There is, indeed, a stark contrast between the claims made by *taḍkerē* authors and luxury copies of the *maṭnavī* that reached us. A close reading of the poem, and in particular of its concluding section, supports the thesis that Vaḥši brought his *maṭnavī* to an end.

**Keywords** Vaḥši Bāfqī. Farhād va Širin. Taḍkerē. The Berenson Collection. Close reading.

**Sommario** 1 Introduzione. – 2 Vaḥši e la sua opera al vaglio degli autori di *taḍkerē*. – 3 I manoscritti del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši. – 4 Il *maṭnavī Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši. – 5 Conclusioni.



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## 1 Introduzione

Sebbene Vaḥši Bāfqi (m. 1583-84 d.C.) goda di una discreta fama presso i cultori e gli studiosi della poesia persiana, non si può certo dire che abbondino gli studi rigorosi e approfonditi dedicati all'autore e alla sua opera (Masarrat [1392] 2013). Nell'ambito degli studi letterari, si distinguono tra tutti la voce enciclopedica compilata da Paul Losensky per l'*Encyclopædia Iranica*, l'articolo pubblicato da Theodore S. Beers sui problemi della tradizione biografica riguardante Vaḥši e l'articolo di Mahmood Fotoohi Rudmajani, che rivaluta il ruolo del contributo di Vaḥši alla poetica della *vāsuxt* (screzio) (Losensky 2004; Beers 2015; Fotoohi Rudmajani 2014). Altri due contributi, a firma di Chad Kia e Melis Taner, giungono dall'ambito degli studi codicologici e di storia dell'arte e sono dedicati al manoscritto del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši della collezione Berenson, conservata presso The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies di Villa I Tatti a Fiesole, in Firenze.

Ciò che accomuna questi studi è la mutua convinzione che il *maṭnavi* (poema in distici in rima) composto da Vaḥši sia un'opera incompleta. Questa posizione, sostenuta anche da studiosi di generazioni precedenti, come Browne, Rypka, Bausani e Şafā,<sup>1</sup> è corroborata dalle notizie biografiche trādate dai compilatori di *taḍkerē* (compendio bio-bibliografico) dell'inizio del diciassettesimo secolo e, in special modo, da Taqi od-Din Awḥadi Balyāni, il quale nella *'Arafāt ol-'āşeḡin va 'araşāt ol-'ārefin*, portata a termine ad Agra nel 1615, afferma di avere curato personalmente l'edizione delle opere complete (*kolliyāt*) di Vaḥši (Şāḥebkāri; Faxraḥmad; Qahremān 2010, 4581). L'impegno assunto da Awḥadi, di raggruppare tutto il materiale letterario composto da Vaḥši e di presentarne l'edizione seicentesca definitiva, lo eleva al rango di persona degna di fede agli occhi dello studioso contemporaneo. Tra l'altro, la posizione sull'incompletezza del *Farhād va Širin* che Awḥadi fa propria è mutuata da compositori di *taḍkerē* a lui coevi, compilatori di biografie del poeta redatte sia in persiano che in ciagatai (Beers 2015, 200-16) Esistono tuttavia almeno tre elementi che ci dovrebbero far dubitare della posizione assunta in merito al *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši dai compilatori di *taḍkerē* del diciassettesimo secolo: la notizia biografica riguardante Vaḥši compilata da Taqi od-Din Kāşāni; la diffusione di manoscritti di pregio, illuminati e illustrati, del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši; una lettura attenta del poema, in special modo della sezione conclusiva.

<sup>1</sup> Si veda Browne 1997, 238-40; Bausani 1968, 488; Rypka 1968, 297-8; Şafā [1369] 1990, 760-77.



## 2 Vaḥṣi e la sua opera al vaglio degli autori di *taḍkere*

Taqi od-Din Kāšāni lavora a lungo alla *taḍkere* *Xolāṣat ol-aš'ār va zobdat ol-afkār* e ne scrive il prologo nel 1567-68, continuando ad aggiornarne il contenuto fino al 1607-08. La notizia biografica riguardante Vaḥṣi si trova nella sezione della *taḍkere* dedicata ai letterati attivi nella regione di Yazd. Kāšāni decide di non antologizzare nella propria *taḍkere* versi estrapolati dai *maṭnavi* dei poeti trattati e, anche se altrove nella raccolta compie dichiaratamente delle eccezioni, non riporta estratti del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥṣi. Ciò nonostante, non si esime dall'offrire un commento sul componimento:

[Vaḥṣi] ha composto un *maṭnavi* in risposta al *Xosrow va Širin* di Neẓāmi, che si intitola *Farhād va Širin*. Di fronte a esso l'intelletto dei conoscitori puntuali viene colto da stupore. Tante sono le sezioni di quel poema magistralmente composte, che un'eventuale integrazione è cosa che non si riesce nemmeno a immaginare. (Mirafzali 2017, 3-4)

Quest'affermazione è passibile di una doppia lettura. Volendo prenderla alla lettera, Kāšāni sembra indicare che il poema è un capolavoro concluso e che si presenta talmente armonioso ed equilibrato, che non c'è niente da aggiungervi; volendo invece dare risalto alla questione, sollevata da Kāšāni stesso, dell'integrazione del poema, sorge il sospetto che il componimento non sia stato portato a termine e che nessuno sia in grado di replicare la maestria messa in atto da Vaḥṣi. Vero è che la maggior parte degli autori di *taḍkere* hanno avallato la seconda ipotesi. Ciò non di meno:

'Ali Shir Nava'i (d. 1501), in the beginning of his Chaghatai Turkish version of the *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, whose main character is Farhad rather than Khusraw, criticises earlier poets who have tackled the same theme. According to 'Ali Shir, a good literary work should not only be beautiful and admired by its readers, but should also be original and not repeat the very same words used by earlier authors. Even Nizami, whose *Khusraw u Shīrīn* is among the most famous works in Persian Islamic literature, tells in the beginning of his *Masnavī* that since it is not rightful to retell the story in the words in which it was already told, he did not repeat Firdawsi's account and added some emotional details to the story that Firdawsi had omitted. (Bağcı 2000, 163)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Sarà opportuno precisare che 'Ali Šir Navā'i non compone un *Xosrow va Širin*, bensì propriamente un *Farhād va Širin*, esattamente come farà dopo di lui Vaḥṣi. L'esposizione di Bağcı è in sintonia con le idee espresse dal comparatista Claudio Guillén riguardo al

Nella sua notizia biografica, Kāšāni fornisce anche delle preziose coordinate temporali, suggerendo che il *Farhād va Širin* è stato composto quando Vaḥši si trovava ancora a Kashan, prima di fare ritorno alla regione di Yazd, dove trascorrerà il resto della propria vita:

È indubbio, ed è tra l'altro cosa ben risaputa, che, mentre [Vaḥši] risiedeva a Kashan, furono numerosi i personaggi d'alto rango che lo sostennero mostrandogli affetto e considerazione, educandolo e incoraggiandolo: fu così che egli poté eccellere nell'arte della verificazione e padroneggiare ogni aspetto della poesia, arrivando a offrire ai propri contemporanei ottimi componimenti, nonché i versi ai quali anelavano. Tra questi ricordiamo il *maṭnavi* che Vaḥši ha composto in risposta al *Xosrow va Širin* di Nežāmi, intitolato *Farhād va Širin*. [...] Quando la melodia del suo canto ebbe riecheggiato per tutto il mondo, si trasferì a Yazd. (Mirafzāli 2017, 3-4)<sup>3</sup>

Il *Farhād va Širin* sarebbe dunque uno dei poemi che portano Vaḥši alla ribalta durante gli anni di permanenza a Kashan e risulta altamente improbabile che un poema incompiuto gli possa aver fatto guadagnare il successo menzionato da Kāšāni.

La notizia riguardante i componimenti redatti da Vaḥši riportata da Awḥadi nel *'Arafāt ol-'āšeḡin va 'araṣāt ol-'ārefin* si articola invece come segue:

Quest'umile [Awḥadi] ha raccolto l'opera completa [di Vaḥši], che ammonta a novemila versi e comprende splendide *qaṣide*, *ğazal*, *tarij' band*, *tarkib band*, odi e satire (*madāyeḡ va ahāji*), *qeṭ'e*, *robā'i* e *maṭnavi*. Tra i *maṭnavi* ricordiamo il *Nāzer va Manzur*, il *Xold-e barin*, che [Vaḥši] ha portato a conclusione (*ke tamām karde*), e il *Farhād va Širin*. Quest'ultimo, pur avendo conquistato il mondo intero, è rimasto incompleto (*nātamām ast*) e consta di 1150 versi. (Şāhebkāri, Faxraḡmad, Qahremān 2010, 4581)<sup>4</sup>

rapporto tra forma e genere letterario: «The important corollary, as far as genres are concerned, is the fact that a preexistent form can never be simply 'taken over' by the writer or transferred to a new work. The task of form-making must be undertaken all over again. The writer must begin once more to match matter to form, and to that end he can only find a very special sort of assistance in the fact that the fitting of matter to form has already taken place. To offer this assistance is the function of genre» (1971, 111).

<sup>3</sup> Per le ipotesi sulle motivazioni che spinsero Vaḥši a lasciare Kashan si veda Bers 2015, 204.

<sup>4</sup> Nella notizia biografica riguardante Vaḥši compilata da 'Abd on-Nabi Faxr oz-Zamāni Qazvini (m. 1636 c.), autore della *taḡkerē Mayxāne*, viene specificato che, oltre al *Farhād va Širin*, anche il *maṭnavi Xold-e barin* sarebbe rimasto incompleto. 'Abd on-Nabi sostiene di avere avuto modo di esaminare personalmente l'opera omnia di Vaḥši e sostiene che sia composta di seimilacinquecento versi. Non viene fatta menzione del *maṭnavi Nāzer va Manzur*. Si veda Golčīn-e Ma'āni [1340] 1961, 181-4.

Nell'edizione critica del *divān* (canzoniere) di Vaḥši compilata da Āḍarān Naxa'ī, il *Farhād va Širin* ha una lunghezza di 1123 versi, poco meno di quanto viene indicato da Awḥadi, che probabilmente ne arrotonda il numero (Āḍarān Naxa'ī 2013). Parlando del *Farhād va Širin*, Awḥadi fa uso del termine *nātamām*, che può significare sia 'inconcluso' che 'incompleto'. Anche qui, dunque, interviene la possibilità di una doppia lettura: Awḥadi non chiarisce se il poema abbia effettivamente un inizio e una fine, ma presenti delle lacune nel corso del suo svolgimento, o se invece manchi del tutto di una conclusione. Come avremo modo di discutere più avanti, la lettura ravvicinata del poema di Vaḥši preclude la possibilità che il *Farhād va Širin* manchi della chiusa. Al di là delle ambiguità che si rilevano nel vocabolario impiegato da Awḥadi, l'opinione da lui espressa riguardo al *Farhād va Širin* è quella condivisa dalla maggior parte dei compilatori di *taḍkere*, sia quelli che lo avevano preceduto che quelli a lui coevi (Beers 2015, 200-16). A questa posizione di predominanza va aggiunto il fatto che Awḥadi è colui che ha raccolto e ordinato l'opera di Vaḥši nel tentativo di offrirne un'edizione seicentesca autorevole. Questo fa presupporre che avesse una grande familiarità con le carte dell'autore e con le svariate copie della sua opera che circolavano tra la fine del sedicesimo e l'inizio del diciassettesimo secolo. Awḥadi risulta dunque agli occhi dei propri lettori, tra i quali figura anche lo studioso del ventunesimo secolo, una delle massime autorità in materia. Perché mai mettere in dubbio quanto sostiene sul *Farhād va Širin*, tanto più che non fa che avallare l'opinione più diffusa tra i conoscitori di poesia?

Per due secoli e mezzo nessuno oserà riprendere la narrazione dal punto nel quale l'aveva interrotta Vaḥši. Saranno due poeti vissuti sotto la corona Qajar, Veṣāl Širāzi (m. 1846) e Šāber Širāzi (m. 1868-69), a cimentarsi nell'impresa di un completamento. Veṣāl morirà prima di poter porre fine alla propria narrazione e sarà Šāber a riprenderla e a dare una conclusione al poema, chiudendo così il cerchio tenuto aperto per secoli dall'opinione diffusa dai compositori di *taḍkere*, persografi e non. Seppure non ci è dato sapere con certezza cosa Awḥadi intendesse con il termine *nātamām*, abbiamo la fortuna di poter apprezzare l'idea che se ne sono fatti i letterati di epoche successive, i quali hanno sentito la necessità di proseguire la stesura del *maṭnavi*, riportandolo sul tracciato narrativo indicato da Neẓāmi nel *Xosrow va Širin*.<sup>5</sup>

Per quale motivo dovremmo dunque voler prendere in considerazione l'ipotesi alternativa offerta dalla lettura di Kāšāni, dato che ci

<sup>5</sup> Gli approcci adottati da Veṣāl e Šāber nella composizione dei rispettivi *maṭnavi* meritano una discussione articolata e puntuale, che non è possibile affrontare in questa sede, ma sarà oggetto di uno studio futuro.

troviamo di fronte a una tradizione consolidata, che legge il *Farhād va Širin* come l'opera ineguagliabile, ma incompleta, di Vaḥšī?

### 3 I manoscritti del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥšī

La risposta va cercata, tra le altre cose, nella produzione libraria e, nello specifico, nella qualità della *mise en page* di testo, illuminazioni e illustrazioni:

For example, there are a number of illuminated manuscripts of Vahshi's *Farhād va Shīrīn* datable to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, among which is a copy by the famed seventeenth-century Safavid calligrapher 'Alī Rīza 'Abbāsī. In addition, at least two other illuminated and illustrated copies of Vahshi's *Farhād va Shīrīn* from the seventeenth century are known. (Taner 2021, 177)

La copia illustrata, illuminata e calligrafata del *Farhād va Širin* della collezione Berenson ha avuto diversi proprietari: il primo è Moḥammad Šāleḥ, genero di Mir Zayn ol-'Ābedīn, che il 18 marzo 1618 dona il volume a una persona a noi sconosciuta; in seguito, il volume entrerà in possesso del regnante Mughal Awrangzeb (m. 1707), il quale lo marchierà con la formula dell'ispezione (*'arzdide*); il 5 marzo 1803 il manoscritto si trova a Kabul, presso Raḥmatollāh Xān, e successivamente, tra il dicembre del 1866 e il gennaio del 1867, viene acquisito da Solṭān Oveys, prima di passare infine nelle mani del Berenson (Taner 2021, 193). Nel corso della sua esistenza il manoscritto è stato dunque un degno presente, parte della collezione di un sovrano e ambito oggetto da collezione, che ha viaggiato tra l'Iran, il Subcontinente indiano, l'Afghanistan e l'Italia. Ciò che lascia perplessi è il fatto che un poema incompiuto possa tradursi materialmente in un manoscritto di tale pregio:

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this acclaimed romance by Vahshi, which recasts fundamental questions about the production of the Berenson manuscript, is that the work was never finished. In fact, it may be more accurate to state that Vahshi, who died of alcoholism in 1583, had barely begun writing the story. (Kia 2021, 165)

Una lettura accurata del poema, soprattutto della sua sezione conclusiva, è l'elemento essenziale per rivalutare il *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥšī e per apprezzare il quadro narrativo costruito dall'autore, che conclude a tutti gli effetti il proprio poema, nonostante decida di troncarlo laddove sia i coevi conoscitori di poesia che i loro successori non se lo sarebbero aspettato.

#### 4 Il *maṭnavi* *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši

Il *maṭnavi* di Vaḥši ha una struttura tripartita. Si apre con la sezione proemiale: la lode a dio, un appello rivolto alla divinità dispensatrice di ogni cosa, una digressione sulla testimonianza (*šahādat*), la lode rivolta al profeta Moḥammad, la descrizione del suo viaggio notturno (*me'rāj*), l'elogio delle qualità meritorie dell'imam 'Alī. Dopodiché Vaḥši, nella seconda parte del poema, articola due estesi discorsi: uno sui pregi della parola/poesia (*soxan*), l'altro sull'amore (*'ešq*) e la riservatezza, le difficoltà che sorgono dall'amore, il rapporto che intercorre tra amore e verità, e le incompatibilità che emergono dall'interazione delle varie nature umane. In coda alla seconda parte si trova l'introduzione alla narrazione delle vicende di Farhād e Širin, che funge da elemento di congiunzione tra il discorso sull'amore e lo svolgimento della storia dell'incontro tra i due amanti. La terza parte infine è quella in cui ha effettivamente luogo la narrazione delle vicende di Farhād e Širin, che Vaḥši chiama prologo al mistero (*dibāčē-ye rāz*).<sup>6</sup> Il *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši ha un'impostazione diversa dalla storia narrata nel *Xosrow va Širin* di Neẓāmi, poema entro il quale la vicenda di Farhād e Širin è soltanto un episodio, per quanto consistente e significativo rispetto alla storia nel suo complesso.<sup>7</sup> Vaḥši immagina che l'allontanamento di Širin da Ctesifonte avvenga a causa dell'amore di Xosrow per Šekar e che l'ingaggio di Farhād da parte di Širin abbia luogo quando la principessa, fuggita in preda all'indignazione dal gineceo di Xosrow, invia i propri emissari perché trovino due costruttori che si assumano l'incarico di erigere per lei un palazzo, e uno di questi sarà Farhād.<sup>8</sup> Il *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši può essere considerato, a ragion veduta, una rielaborazione (*tatabbo'*) della vicenda narrata nel *Xosrow va Širin* di Neẓāmi; tuttavia, la sua impostazione è molto diversa, ed è proprio questa diversità nell'impianto narrativo ad affrancarlo dal modello.<sup>9</sup> La storia

<sup>6</sup> Taner sostiene che: «Vahshi's *Farhād va Širin* begins with a rather long introductory section. In fact, the introduction is longer than the incomplete story itself». Si veda Taner 2021, 181. Taner considera il *maṭnavi* diviso in due sezioni invece che in tre.

<sup>7</sup> Il continuo confronto con l'episodio presente nel *maṭnavi* di Neẓāmi e un'analisi dei testi basata su congruenze e incongruenze con quello, ci distolgono dal cogliere la specificità dello stretto rapporto che intercorre tra le sezioni del *maṭnavi* di Vaḥši. Si veda l'analisi comparativa condotta da Nātel Xānlari [1396] (1990).

<sup>8</sup> Si veda Āḡarān Naxa'i [1392] 2013, 123. La linea narrativa del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši si discosta sia da quella adottata da Xosrow Dehlavi nel *Širin va Xosrow*, che da quella seguita da 'Alī Šir Navā'i nel *Farhād va Širin*. Tuttavia, è proprio in questi due *maṭnavi* che il personaggio di Farhād viene rielaborato, assumendo una rilevanza sempre maggiore rispetto al ruolo accordatogli nel *Xosrow va Širin* di Neẓāmi. Si veda Toutant 2016, 399-419.

<sup>9</sup> Non ci si può dimenticare che quella del *tatabbo'* è spesso una pura convenzione letteraria e che gli autori non si preoccupavano troppo dei loro modelli se non

di Farhād e Širin narrata da Vaḥši è la realizzazione di ciò che viene esposto nella seconda parte del poema, dedicata alla parola/poesia e all'amore: il confronto che va operato è dunque interno, tra le sezioni del poema di Vaḥši, e non tanto esterno, tra il poema cinquecentesco e il suo riferimento duecentesco.<sup>10</sup> Letto in quest'ottica, il *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši si presenta come un poema, certo, dal finale filosoficamente aperto, ma in sé compiuto.<sup>11</sup> L'operazione di Vaḥši dev'essere parsa una riduzione estrema ai letterati e ai conoscitori di poesia suoi contemporanei. Tali letterati, non potendo negare l'abilità versificatoria con la quale l'operazione è stata condotta da Vaḥši, provvederanno ad arginare l'innovazione per mezzo della normalizzazione, riducendo lo scarto a un fattore di incompletezza. Rimarcando le condizioni disonorevoli che caratterizzano la morte di Vaḥši a causa dell'assunzione di vino e distillati, i compilatori di *taḍkere* agevoleranno la trasmissione della narrazione normalizzata, dando forma all'immagine dell'infelice che causa la propria morte indulgendo negli eccessi, suggerendo l'idea che la stesura del *Farhād va Širin* sia rimasta in sospeso a causa dell'improvviso decesso del poeta.<sup>12</sup>

La sezione conclusiva del *Farhād va Širin*, di cui viene riportata di seguito la traduzione, riapre la discussione su questo punto, avvalorando a nostro avviso la tesi secondo cui Vaḥši pone la parola fine al proprio *matn*avi:<sup>13</sup>

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per legittimare il proprio scritto. Ringrazio la professoressa Meneghini per questa puntualizzazione.

**10** Si tenga presente che, come sostiene Orsatti: «[O]nly rarely literary characters do represent a simple and unanalysable phenomenon; most often they are composed of a set of narrative features (partially coinciding with the themes and motifs of the traditional typological analysis of the plots) which contribute to the outline of the character itself. In the different texts the various features of a figure [...] may be put together in different ways, with emphasis on one or more features rather than on others; and can migrate from one character to another. Every new assemblage of narrative features may give birth to new characters and narrative developments, or to variants of the same character» (2019, 13).

**11** Per filosoficamente aperto si intende che Vaḥši conclude il poema *ex abrupto*, invitando però il lettore/ascoltatore ad approfondire la riflessione sul rapporto che intercorre tra le centinaia di modi musicali possibili e l'unica gamma di combinazioni sono consentite dalle corde della cetra. Si vedano più avanti i versi 1119-23.

**12** Si veda Beers 2015, 205. Questa tesi è in contrasto con la notizia riportata da Kāšāni, che sostiene che Vaḥši aveva composto il *Farhād va Širin* a Kashan, prima di trasferirsi a Yazd, dove morirà anni dopo.

**13** L'edizione di riferimento è Āqarān Naxa'i [1392] 2013, 791-856. Trad. dell'Autore.

**Il corteggiamento dell'infelice Farhād da parte di Širin e il botta e risposta dei due alla maniera del mistero e della sua soluzione, avente luogo dietro la tenda che cela l'incontro<sup>14</sup>**

1045. Lieto sia l'amore che ha un felice principio e una felice soluzione, inappagante nel suo complesso, ma al contempo anche fondamento di ogni appagamento;

1046. Lieto sia l'amore e lieto sia il patto d'amore, lieto sia il principio dell'ardore che anima il fuoco d'amore;

1047. Possa non affievolirsi mai, nonostante sia al contempo fuoco e vampa che alimenta il fuoco, poiché è un ben lieto ardere quest'ardere;

1048. Che magnifico patto è il patto del gioco d'amore, specialmente quando l'anima inizia appena a sciogliersi;

1049. Tutta la gioia che può essere contenuta nel tempo è stata presa dalla periferia e raccolta nel centro;

1050. E poiché tutta in un luogo è stata ammassata quella gioia generale, è stata denotata come principio dell'amore, nonché dell'innamoramento;

1051. Quando in principio v'è la fedeltà, gli idoli valenti diventano adorati compagni e gli indaffarati onestuoomini buoni compagni;

1052. Ma poi è in un solo momento che si compie la disgrazia, e il fresco amore si fa antica istituzione;

1053. Quando Širin da lontano scorse il nuovo amante, si avvicinò galoppando con grazia, col volto disteso, acceso di vivida tinta;

1054. Mentre si avvicinava al galoppo, al posto della polvere, da terra si sollevava una nube di seduzione;

1055. Tutte le energie del corpo di quell'uomo, nel quale intanto cresceva lo stupore, erano concentrate nell'occhio, che seguiva il moto di quella nube di polvere che scivolava quieta come una piroga;

<sup>14</sup> Le titolature dei brani vengono riportate così come compaiono nell'edizione critica di riferimento e non rispecchiano necessariamente i titoli apposti alle singole sezioni nei diversi manoscritti visionati.

1056. Quell'idolo ebbro allentò la presa sulle redini, di modo che la mano di quello sventurato potesse raggiungerla con più facilità;

1057. Quel sorriso mostra come un atto meritorio ciò che è in realtà inganno, poiché resta pacato e posato, nonostante stia portando a termine la razzia;

1058. L'enfasi adoperata nel discorso corrisponde all'atto del furto del cuore, gli sguardi vanno scaldandosi man mano che le parole che permettono la reciproca conoscenza vengono scambiate;

1059. Ogni passo compiuto in quello stato d'animo che tinge il volto con i colori accesi della rosa è un passo verso un nuovo bisogno, e pertanto verso una nuova prigionia;

1060. Per fare fronte a tutti gli assalti mossi dalla seduzione, hai fatto uscire allo scoperto i battaglioni del bisogno d'attenzioni;

1061. Da entrambe le parti sono salde le braccia che tirano a sé la persona desiderata, i piatti della bilancia si parificano quando c'è da quantificare l'affetto;

1062. Da una parte se ne sta la bellezza che mette alla prova la forza, dall'altra l'amore intento ad azzannare le catene;

1063. Da una parte se ne stanno i gesti che invitano ad avanzare, dall'altra l'impotenza che afferma di non aver piedi per incedere;

1064. Da una parte se ne sta la soggezione che impugna la seduzione come fosse una spada, dall'altra la testa poggia su mani già pronte a offrirla in pegno;

1065. A ogni passo compiuto si rinnova in te un desiderio del quale celi l'espressione alle labbra;

1066. L'eccitazione dal piede leggero si muoveva con rapidità, la temperanza muoveva i propri passi con la bocca traboccante di discorsi sconvenienti;

1067. Quando quell'essere dalle molli briglie si fece fin troppo vicino, quell'altro, seguace dei precetti della fedeltà, cadde ai suoi piedi;

1068. Dalla testa ai piedi si fece soffio vitale pronto a essere disperso, il suo corpo era come se si fosse fatto tutto testa, per potersi meglio prostrare;

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1069. Mescolò preghiere benedicienti al bisogno d'amore che sentiva, riversandole tutte, sottovoce, sulla compagna;

1070. Sporse in avanti la testa come quando si è schiavi, ferendosi la fronte nell'impeto di mostrarsi obbediente;

1071. Lo sguardo se ne stava nella sede degli occhi paralizzato dallo stupore, in cerca di una scusa per potersi alzare a guardare;

1072. L'interezza di quell'esistenza era scossa per via dell'amore e quelle stesse labbra non riuscivano ad articolare la novella d'amore;

1073. Quel volto di fata reggeva ormai con mano malferma le redini, ebbri lo sguardo e l'occhio e lei stessa;

1074. L'inganno, proiettato dagli angoli dell'occhio e delle sopracciglia, si lanciò in avanti in un saluto entusiasta;

1075. Lo sguardo, scrutando interrogativo lo stato d'animo del destinatario, era pronto alla discussione, ma né l'orecchio, né le labbra ne erano consapevoli;

1076. La timidezza, un po' per consuetudine, un po' per complimento, adornò con l'impaccio sia il principio che la conclusione [dell'approccio];

1077. Rivelò così [Širin] la propria ubriachezza, anche se rimaneva legato il laccio del velo che le copriva il volto;

1078. Rinunciando a celare l'ebbrezza rinnovò l'incanto della seduzione e seppe ridere delle proprie parole accogliendole con un sorriso composto sul volto;

1079. Grazie al sorriso offrì un assaggio di dolcezza al discorso, che si apriva con la felice formula: «Ben trovato artista»;

1080. «Dimmi soltanto qual è il tuo nome e da dove vieni, poiché mi sembra di conoscerti da anni»;

1081. Egli le rispose: «O luna vestita di lino, non voler scordare coloro che vestono ruvide stoffe»;

1082. «Cento infelici come me sentono sciogliersi i legami con la vita di fronte a te, possa tu sempre soddisfare i bisogni di questi infelici»;

1083. «Sono un infelice che proviene dalla Cina e il mio nome è Farhād, sono un tuo schiavo, ma sono libero dai lacci del mio io»;

1084. «Mettili un anello all'orecchio della mia speranza e ammira per l'eternità l'esercizio della schiavitù»;

1085. «Tieni, aggiungi questo schiavo alle tue compravendite, e se ne rimarrai delusa affrancalo»;

1086. Parlando con toni delicati, Širin dalle dolci labbra formulò un tranello, camuffandolo con sguardi ammiccanti;

1087. «Lo schiavo che voglio per me stessa deve ben sapere cos'è la fedeltà e non deve darsela a gambe, nemmeno di fronte a centinaia di dispiaceri»;

1088. «Entrare in servizio presso di me è ardua impresa, le regole differiscono dal servizio prestato altrove»;

1089. «Ci vuole un cuore di duro metallo e un'anima di impene-trabile pietra per poter anche solo pensare di dedicarsi al servizio»;

1090. «Se disponi di questo cuore e di quest'anima fatti pure avanti, ma se così non fosse resta pure libero così come sei»;

1091. Disse lui: «Questo cuore e quest'anima sono i luoghi dell'amore, la mia esistenza è la piana nella quale echeggiano i lamenti d'amore»;

1092. «Sia pure il servizio a te prestato un continuo rinnovarsi di prove, possa essere il mio cuore ricco di sopportazione e la mia anima ricolma di capacità»;

1093. «Se calerai sul mio capo la lama dell'ostilità, possa nelle mie gambe mancare la forza necessaria alla fuga»;

1094. «Dammi pure dispiaceri finché puoi e ammira la mia fedeltà e la mia forza d'animo»;

1095. «Dal giorno in cui la saetta della speranza mi ha colpito e mi è bruciata dentro, ho forgiato con l'acciaio il mio cuore e la mia anima»;

1096. «Fai accendere una fornace per saggiare la mia materia e scopri di quale acciaio è fatta la mia anima»;

1097. Disse lei: «Temo che quest'anima come acciaio, della quale

non ti stanchi di menzionare la durezza»;

1098. «Possa cedere alla fiamma, anche se fosse rinforzata con l'ignifugo rubino, quando le mie calde gocce di sudore andranno ad alimentare la furia del fuoco»;

1099. Egli, ormai pervaso dal fuoco, le rispose con impeto accalorato: «Dai fallo! Fai innalzare dal raccolto della vita il denso fumo nero»;

1100. «Sarà mai la vita degna di essere anche solo menzionata in quella piana calpestata dal passo del desiderio del cuore?»;

1101. «Saremo io e il desiderio di te: di fronte al desiderio di te cos'è mai la vita? Giuro di non volerti vedere mai più vita. Chi sei vita?»;

1102. Lei con le sue dolci labbra rispose: «Da dov'è sorto questo desiderio?», egli replicò: «Dalle poche parole scambiate nell'attimo della nostra conoscenza»;

1103. Disse lei: «E quali sono state le parole che hai colto in quei discorsi?», replicò lui: «Quelle dalle quali traspariva quella lieta novella che è la fedeltà»;

1104. Disse lei: «È mai capitato che alcuno abbia fatto esperienza di fedeltà con coloro che hanno volti fini, delicati e cangianti come fiori?», replicò lui: «Il solo desiderio di ciò è sufficiente all'innamorato»;

1105. Disse lei: «E chi sarebbero coloro che giocano all'amore, quelli che menzioni?», replicò lui: «Sono un popolo totalmente devoto all'affetto»;

1106. Disse lei: «E quanto dura quest'affetto?», replicò lui: «Rimane in esistenza finché essi stessi non si disgregano»;

1107. Disse lei: «E cosa accade quando gli innamorati si disgregano?», replicò lui: «Nonostante ciò, anelano ancora all'affetto»;

1108. Disse lei: «La palma dell'anelito è forse albero da frutto?», replicò lui: «Certo, ma i giorni di magra superano quelli in cui se ne gusta la polpa»;

1109. Disse lei: «E cos'è che permette di resistere nei giorni di magra?», replicò lui: «I lamenti che si levano a causa dei dolori causati dall'indigenza»;

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1110. Disse lei: «L'autocelebrazione in amore e il lamento stridono, posti l'una accanto all'altro», replicò lui: «Il dolore causato dalle mancanze prevede che ci si lamenti a causa sua»;

1111. Disse lei: «Devi costruirti un'alternativa con il materiale della sopportazione», replicò lui: «Il gioco d'amore non prevede sopportazione»;

1112. Disse lei: «Qual è la meta verso la quale si dirige il gioco d'amore?», replicò lui: «L'affrancamento sia dall'essere che dal non essere»;

1113. Disse lei: «È lecita l'unione con la persona amata?», replicò lui: «Certo, sempre che ci si riesca ad affrancare da sé stessi»;

1114. Disse lei: «È migliore l'unione con la persona amata o la separazione da essa?», replicò lui: «Migliore è ciò che la persona amata desidera»;

1115. Per ogni nodo sciolto da Širin, Farhād aveva una perla da infilare ai capi del filo;

1116. La sorte non ha però arreso alle redini incalzanti della seduzione e sciolta è la presa di colei che necessita di attenzioni;

1117. Quando amore e bellezza occupano quel campo di battaglia che è la seduzione, entrambi, con la stessa intensità, movimentano le briglie nell'impeto dell'assalto;

1118. Da ogni lato si fecero allora avanti i soldati della guardia personale e quei due uccelli che levavano le loro voci a intonare una sola melodia tacquero;

1119. Il racconto rimase così, appeso alle labbra, senza giungere a conclusione, si ruppe il ferro appuntito e la perla restò forata a metà;

1120. [Farhād e Širin] scostarono un'altra delle cortine del discorso e, cambiando i toni, presero a modulare una nuova melodia;

1121. Nonostante all'apparenza la forma si mostrasse differente [nel tema e nel tono], ciò che veniva detto in sordina superava la disposizione delle forme;

1122. Il modo musicale di coloro che giocano all'amore è un modo magnifico, e ogni attacco è adeguato al percorso di note che lo compone;

1123. Nonostante siano centinaia i modi che si levano da questa cetra, se guardi bene è una soltanto la gamma di combinazioni sonore consentita da queste corde tese.

Širin e Farhād, che fino a questo punto avevano parlato soltanto tramite intermediari, si incontrano di persona e riconoscono il reciproco sentimento d'amore che li lega. Širin ingaggia un duello verbale con Farhād. Lo scambio si fa incalzante, fino a trasformarsi in un botta e risposta che ha una forte somiglianza, data la natura delle domande che si scambiano i due personaggi, con quello che in Neẓāmi avviene tra Xosrow e Farhād (Meneghini 2017, 159-60). A questo punto un accalorato affanno monta tra i due amanti. La guardia personale di Širin è allarmata dal crescendo di tensione erotica e interviene, irrompendo sulla scena e troncando così il loro discorso.<sup>15</sup> È questo il momento in cui termina, *ex abrupto*, il poema di Vaḥši. Il verso 1119 è chiaro a riguardo: Vaḥši dichiara il discorso tra Širin e Farhād irrimediabilmente sospeso, una perla forata a metà.

L'idillio risulta ormai spezzato e i due amanti, cambiando repentinamente il tema del discorso, ne mutano inevitabilmente, insieme al corso, anche il tono. Al verso 1120 questo evento viene descritto da Vaḥši, attraverso un *tajnis* (calembour), come l'abbandono del discorso d'amore attraverso lo scostamento di una delle cortine (*parde*) del discorso e un cambio di tono musicale (*parde*). I due amanti riescono a sfuggire alle guardie con le parole, sviando il discorso, ma la presenza dei soldati ripristina in maniera indifferibile i ruoli sociali di Širin come principessa e di Farhād come uomo libero al servizio della dama. Dal verso 1121 apprendiamo che Širin e Farhād continuano a dialogare, ma sono costretti a camuffare il discorso d'amore confendogli tutt'altro tenore. Sebbene l'intesa tra i due amanti non risulti compromessa, lo è però inesorabilmente il loro scambio di effusioni, non soltanto sul piano tematico, cioè delle parole che si scambiano i due amanti, ma anche sul piano fonico, cioè del tono musicale e dell'incedere del discorso stesso. In presenza delle guardie i due amanti scandiscono i propri discorsi in maniera diversa, abbandonando gli scambi concitati e assumendo toni più pacati e confacenti.

Quando anche il tono musicale (*parde*) del discorso d'amore tra Širin e Farhād è compromesso dal loro improvviso cambio di registro, a Vaḥši, che si propone di cantare il discorso amoroso che prende forma tra i due amanti (come si vedrà più avanti, in particolare al verso 606), viene a mancare la parola per proseguire il racconto

**15** Questo passaggio ricorda l'episodio del *Xosrow va Širin* di Neẓāmi in cui Xosrow, travolto dalla passione suscitata in lui dallo scambio di *ġazal* recitati da Bārbod e Nekisā, si precipita verso la tenda di Širin, ma viene trattenuto da Šāpur. Si veda Meneghini 2017, 234-55. Come nota Meneghini, nel *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši è invece Širin a lasciarsi trasportare.

(*hekāyat*). L'intervento delle guardie priva d'un tratto Vaḥši non solo delle parole, ma anche dell'accompagnamento musicale adeguato a poterle modulare, giacché il canto all'unisono è ormai venuto meno del tutto. L'irruzione, che nel poema interrompe bruscamente Širin e Farhād, agisce dunque inesorabilmente anche sul poeta in carne e ossa, obbligandolo a tacere. A rimanere in sospenso non è soltanto il discorso tra Širin e Farhād, ma appunto anche quello di Vaḥši. A questo punto al poeta non resta che congedarsi e lo fa con una metafora musicale, sostenendo che il discorso d'amore è un canto che può essere modulato in svariati modi (nel caso di Širin e Farhād, sia gorgheggiando a pieni polmoni, che ammiccando in maniera sottile) e, benché i canti siano molteplici, la gamma di note che possono essere suonate sulle corde di una cetra è una soltanto. In questo modo Vaḥši suggerisce che ogni canto d'amanti ha origine nell'amore e null'altro.

Per corroborare quest'analisi del testo e avvalorare l'ipotesi avanzata, leggeremo ora il passo che congiunge la seconda e la terza sezione del *maṭnavi*, ovvero quella parentesi metanarrativa in cui Vaḥši afferma, innanzitutto, di fondare il proprio canto sul legame che unisce Širin e Farhād e, in secondo luogo, di identificarsi con Farhād stesso. È in questo passaggio che Vaḥši specifica anche che Farhād e Širin sono per lui un pretesto per dare forma alla parola/poesia (*soxan*) e che tutto il resto non è che una leggenda (*fasāne*). Vaḥši fa riferimento alla sezione narrativa del proprio poema chiamandola *dibāčē-ye rāz*, ovvero prologo al mistero. Il *maṭnavi* viene così ad assumere un carattere quasi trattatistico, giacché lo svolgimento della narrazione non sarebbe che un'esemplificazione che ci conduce a una migliore comprensione dell'assunto finale, ovvero il momento in cui il segreto d'amore viene svelato.<sup>16</sup>

**16** Si veda il verso 617. Vaḥši sembra considerare tutti gli eventi che preludono all'incontro di Širin e Farhād come una *fasāne*, del cui racconto il poeta si serve per dare forma al tema che ha deciso di enucleare, cioè l'amore e i suoi caratteri. Gli eventi che conducono all'incontro tra Širin e Farhād costituirebbero il *dibāčē*, la narrazione nota ai più, mentre il dialogo tra i due amanti è il *rāz*, episodio che Vaḥši elabora in maniera innovativa e sul quale invita il lettore/ascoltatore a soffermarsi.

### Discorso introduttivo al racconto, che illustra le caratteristiche dell'amore

606. Canto il dialogo d'amore che sorge dal legame che unisce Širin e Farhād;

607. È un anelito d'amore, è un commento al legame d'amore, è l'esplosione del dolore d'amore e dei suoi crucci;

608. Canto una bugia che somiglia al vero e metto in relazione amore e legame;

609. È per questo che, per ogni nuovo fiore che l'amore mi pone innanzi, io modulo un canto alla mia maniera;

610. La voce la levo sulla melodia fatta risuonare dal musico;

611. Sono io Farhād, e Širin è quel dolce labbro increspato dal sorriso che solo mi lega alla vita, per separarmi dal quale è necessario che mi si divella come la pietra dai monti;<sup>17</sup>

612. Ma sia Farhād che Širin non sono che pretesti, questa è parola e tutto il resto è leggenda;

613. O frangirocce, fatti avanti impugnando il piccone appuntito, poiché Širin la dolce ha un compito da affidarti;

614. Poiché è stata la dolcezza ad assegnarti il compito, fatti avanti con baldanza e tieniti pronto a eseguirlo;

615. Se non scorgi pretendenti che bramino la dolcezza di Širin, abbandona i suoi quartieri intonando il canto della vittoria;<sup>18</sup>

616. Poiché il piccone è sorretto ora dal braccio di un pertinace che metterà al mondo un racconto;

617. Ascolta dunque, in questa prefazione al mistero, come se ne andò Širin in cerca di affetto;

618.

<sup>17</sup> Colui che divelle la pietra dai monti (*kuhkan*) è l'appellativo con il quale è noto Farhād. Sul Farhād costruttore si veda Orsatti 2019, 24-35.

<sup>18</sup> In *parvizgu*, composto che significa 'che intona il canto della vittoria', è presente un'allusione al nome dell'altro pretendente di Širin, il re Xosrow Parviz.

619. Sono la bellezza e la bontà a decretare che l'eccitazione risiede nel muovere, ritmici, i passi;

620. Quando l'occhiata, suadente, desidera conficcarsi nell'anima, bisogna che qualcuno si faccia avanti ed esponga la propria;

621. E se a volte lo sguardo fugge e va altrove, potrebbe anche imbattersi in una schiera di cuori;

622. Ma se in un amore non si scorge traccia di bellezza, possa la carovana della seduzione sostare lontana.

È questo breve passaggio lo snodo che collega la seconda e la terza sezione del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši, il punto che fornisce la chiave di lettura del poema e che mette in chiaro come e perché il passo letto in precedenza metta fine alla narrazione. Vaḥši esordisce dichiarando che è il dialogo amoroso tra Širin e Farhād l'argomento dal quale prende le mosse il suo canto. Il dialogo al quale Vaḥši accenna compare solo molti versi dopo nel poema. Ciò che prelude al momento dell'effettivo scambio di battute tra Širin e Farhād viene chiamato dal poeta stesso, al verso 617, prologo al mistero (*dibāčē-ye rāz*). Il tema sul quale Vaḥši si sofferma è quello del rapporto tra amore (*'ešq*) e legame (*nesbat*): il legame che unisce Farhād e Širin, il commento di Vaḥši al legame d'amore, il legame tra canto e melodia, il dolce labbro increspato dell'amata che lega Vaḥši/Farhād alla vita. Vaḥši non solo si autoritrae come il poeta che prende vita intonando le dolci parole che egli stesso intreccia, dando forma a dei racconti verosimili che illustrano il legame d'amore (in questo caso con il pretesto dell'amore tra Farhād e Širin), ma si specchia addirittura nel proprio canto, immedesimandosi in Farhād. Dal verso 611 in poi è come se la narrazione avvenisse in prima persona, prendendo forma al contempo sia dalla voce di Vaḥši, che da quella di Farhād. È questo il luogo in cui sconfinano l'una nell'altra realtà e finzione, è attorno a questa saldatura dei ruoli di cantore e cantato che si stringe il nodo che lega a doppio filo le voci del poeta e del poema. A dare inizio alla narrazione è l'incedere ritmato di Širin, la quale è materia poetica viva nella voce di coloro che levano il canto d'amore. In questo passaggio, che prelude alla sezione narrativa, si possono già apprezzare diversi riferimenti al canto e alla musica, che verranno ripresi nella chiusa del poema.<sup>19</sup> Sebbene all'ascoltatore/lettore Širin appaia dematerializzata nel canto del poeta/amante, il suo ruolo non risulta essere quello passivo di personaggio agito, ma pare proprio che sia lei a dettare il

<sup>19</sup> Come nota Meneghini, anche questa attenzione al canto e alla musica richiama in causa il modello di Neẓāmi.



corso degli eventi riportati dai narratori. Così come ha dato inizio alla narrazione muovendo i propri passi, Širin darà inizio anche al dialogo d'amore porgendo il saluto all'artista, termine che ben si addice sia al maestro scultore Farhād, che al maestro versificatore Vaḥši. Giungiamo così all'atteso dialogo d'amore, preannunciato da Vaḥši al verso 606, e all'epilogo del poema. Come discusso sopra, l'intervento delle guardie, che spezza al contempo sia il canto d'amore nel quale sono uniti Farhād e Širin che quello di Vaḥši, trasferisce sul piano della realtà una cesura che ha luogo a livello della narrazione. Ne risulta che, sebbene il legame tra Farhād e Širin non si dissolva, perché il loro dialogo continua pur mutando forma, il compito che si era prefisso Vaḥši viene meno, perché quel dialogo d'amore che ha suscitato il suo canto non ha più luogo. Perdipiù, se Širin e Farhād non cantano più gioiosamente in versi, ma parlano e alludono, non c'è più ragione che la musica li accompagni. Tacendo Vaḥši lascia aperto il finale del proprio poema, garantendo continuità all'amore tra Farhād e Širin e schiudendo l'orizzonte delle possibilità per i due amanti.

Vi è inoltre un altro aspetto degno di nota nell'identificazione di Vaḥši con Farhād. Sia nel *maṭnavi* di Neẓāmi che in quello di Xosrow-e Dehlavi, il personaggio di Xosrow interviene per far desistere Farhād dall'amare Širin, ma senza successo. Messo con le spalle al muro, Xosrow ricorre a uno stratagemma e chiede a Farhād di aprire un varco attraverso il rilievo granitico della cima di Bisotun. Farhād accetta, a patto che, una volta portato a termine il lavoro, Xosrow lo sciolga da altri vincoli e rinunci una volta per tutte a Širin. Dal momento che Xosrow ritiene di avere affidato al proprio rivale in amore una missione impossibile, accetta i termini del patto e congeda Farhād. Xosrow aveva però sottovalutato le capacità di Farhād e quando viene a sapere che il rivale è in procinto di terminare il lavoro affidatogli, manda presso di lui un emissario che lo tragga in inganno annunciandogli la morte di Širin. Nell'udire le parole dell'emissario, Farhād precipita dalla parete della montagna e muore nella speranza di potersi ricongiungere alla sua amata nell'aldilà, lasciando incompiuta la propria opera (Meneghini 2017, 159-61, 170-3; Ašrafi [1362] 1983, 324-30). Essere un Farhād implica per antonomasia che il compito che ci si è proposti di portare a termine sia svolto con maestria, ma che resti incompiuto. Identificandosi con Farhād, Vaḥši suggerisce che il suo poema non potrà che risultare un capolavoro incompleto. Ma essere un Farhād implica anche l'essere maestro sia nell'arte che nell'amore: per questo ciò che resta del poeta (e del poema) nella chiusa del *maṭnavi* sono la cetra e l'arte di comporre canzoni, strumenti indispensabili per dare voce al legame d'amore.<sup>20</sup>

**20** Anche Neẓāmi accenna a ciò che Farhād lascia dietro di sé morendo, i rilievi di Bisotun (la propria arte) e la scure d'acciaio dal manico di melograno (il proprio strumento).

## 5 Conclusioni

Alla luce di quanto discusso sopra, ci troviamo dunque a ipotizzare che l'accusa di incompiutezza rivolta dai compilatori di *taḍkerē* al *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši non sarebbe da ritenersi riferita alla mancanza di una chiusa, quanto piuttosto, eventualmente, a delle lacune riscontrate nello svolgimento della narrazione. Un'ipotesi più azzardata, ma che potrebbe servire da spunto per future riflessioni, è che i compositori di *taḍkerē*, da raffinati conoscitori dell'arte poetica, comprendessero il progetto artistico intrapreso da Vaḥši, riconoscessero che l'opera d'arte plasmata da un Farhād non può che risultare in un capolavoro incompleto, e considerassero una contraddizione in termini il fatto di dichiararlo un poema compiuto. Alla luce di questa ipotesi, la necessità manifestata da Veṣāl e Šāber di 'completare', a distanza di secoli, il *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši è passibile di due diverse letture: la prima è che il tempo funga da ostacolo ai due poeti ottocenteschi, impedendo loro di comprendere quale fosse la sottile lettura che i compositori di *taḍkerē* seicenteschi e settecenteschi davano del poema di Vaḥši; la seconda è che Veṣāl e Šāber abbiano colto al balzo l'opportunità offerta dal finale aperto del *Farhād va Širin* di Vaḥši e si siano cimentati nel completamento dell'opera, cercando di reintrodurla nel discorso letterario contemporaneo in una veste più confacente ai modelli a loro noti.

La ricezione del commento critico, nei secoli a venire, da parte di Veṣāl e di Šāber, è testimone del fatto che un vasto consenso e il sedimentarsi di una data sensibilità nei confronti del discorso letterario possono facilmente prevalere sulle ricostruzioni filologiche, come quella qui proposta, e sulla ricezione dei testi. Rimane aperta la riflessione sulle ragioni del perché l'opinione di Kāšāni che, pur discostandosi da quella di tutti gli altri, resta l'espressione di un'autorità tra i compilatori di *taḍkerē*, non sia mai stata ripresa, nel corso dei secoli, da nessun letterato e da nessuno studioso.<sup>21</sup> È certo vero che la larga diffusione dell'opinione sull'incompiutezza del *Farhād va Širin*, avallata peraltro dall'editore seicentesco dell'opera del poeta, pare offrire validi presupposti per archiviare il caso.

In questo frangente è la materialità del libro manoscritto, ovvero la presenza di edizioni di pregio del *maṭnavi* di Vaḥši, a permetterci di ipotizzare una riformulazione dei quesiti fondamentali riguardanti l'opera. Difficilmente di un'opera la cui stesura sia rimasta in sospeso si produrranno copie di pregio. Ma si può anche ipotizzare che i committenti e gli acquirenti del manoscritto della collezione

<sup>21</sup> Quando Losensky e Beers scrivevano i rispettivi articoli, non era ancora disponibile l'edizione critica a stampa della *taḍkerē Xolāṣat ol-aš'ār va zobdat ol-afkār* di Kāšāni della quale mi sono servito.

Berenson leggessero il poema diversamente da come ne scrivevano i compilatori nelle *taḍkere*.

La lettura ravvicinata del *Farhād va Širin* fornisce gli elementi per constatare che Vaḥši offre al lettore gli strumenti necessari a orientarsi prima di dare inizio alla narrazione, per poi sconvolgerlo troncando il finale. L'espedito di identificarsi con Farhād gli consente di assottigliare fino al limite ultimo la linea tra finzione e realtà e, nonostante egli stesso affermi che la storia dei due amanti non è che un artificio per dare corpo alla parola (*soxan*), ciò non di meno la loro sorte ha conseguenze tangibili che alterano inesorabilmente la realtà, rappresentata in questo caso dal venir meno della recitazione del poeta. Ciò che rimane del poema è una perla senza pari, perché non potrà essere infilata e accostata ad altre, in quanto forata per metà. Potrà soltanto essere incastonata nell'orecchino della schiavitù d'amore, ornamento di ogni Farhād.

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# The Fire of India Poetics, Translation and Imitation in the Indian *Maṣnavīs* of 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī'

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**Abstract** 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī' (c. 1026-1108 AH, c. 1617-1696 AD) is a seventeenth-century Indo-Persian poet, historian and statesman who authored a *dīvān*, some mystical treatises, a historical chronicle and a number of *maṣnavīs*. This paper focuses on two of his *maṣnavīs*, *Mihr-u māh* (1065 AH, 1654/55 AD) and *Sham'-u parvāna* (1064 AH, 1658/59 AD), which are adaptations/translations in Persian of two Neo-Indo-Aryan narrative poems written in Awadhī during the sixteenth century. The aim is to understand how 'Āqil Khān adapted/translated these two South Asian texts in Persian. In order to achieve this objective, this study concentrates on the imagery of fire in the prologues and in the conclusions of the compositions. The intertextual elements are analysed, unveiling the literary process devised by 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī' to compose a complex layered text that could be enjoyed by the multilingual readership of seventeenth-century South Asia.

**Keywords** Persian. Persian literature. Indo-Persian literature. Neo-Indo-Aryan literatures. Mughal Empire. South Asia. Seventeenth century.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 1.1 Literary Imitation and Creation in Classical Persian Literature. – 1.2 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī': His Life and Work. – 2 'Āqil Khān's Persian Adaptations: The Building of a Literary Tradition and the Imagery of the *Satī* in Classical Persian Poetry. – 2.1 The Literary Field of Indo-Persian Adaptations of Hindavi Romances: The Creation of a Genre. – 2.2 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī' and the Imagery of the *Satī* in the Indo-Persian Literary Tradition of the Sultanate Period: Between Persian and Vernacular Literatures. – 2.3 The *Satī* in 'Āqil Khān's *Maṣnavīs* and Poetic Modernity. – 2.4 *Satī* and Burning Passions: Love and Self-destruction in the Vernacular Intertext of *The Sun and the Moon* (*Mihr-u māh*). – 3 India and Fire: The Importance of Faiḏiān and His Quest for Poetic Novelty in India. – 3.1 India and Its Warm Climate: A Poetic Conceit. – 3.2 India as the Future of Poetry. – 3.3 The Pen-Identity of 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī': A Synthesis of the Indo-Persian Literary Repertoire. – 4 Conclusion.



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Si vous voulez, je peux définir mon écriture comme une espèce de parcours – il y a une très, très belle phrase de Michaux qui dit “J’écris pour me parcourir” –, comme une espèce de parcours, une espèce d’itinéraire que j’essaie de décrire à partir, disons, d’une idée vague, d’un sentiment, d’une irritation, d’un refus, d’une exaltation, en me servant, non pas de tout ce qui me tombe sous la main, mais d’un acquis culturel qui existe déjà. À partir de là, j’essaie, si vous voulez, de dire tout ce que l’on peut dire sur le thème d’où je suis parti. C’est ce que les rhétoriciens appelaient les lieux rhétoriques.

(Georges Perec, *Conférence sur les pouvoirs et limites du romancier français contemporain*, 1967)

## 1 Introduction

In this passage from a speech given at the University of Warwick in 1967, the great novelist and poet Georges Perec (1936-1982) attempts to define his relationship with writing and literary creation. He describes it as a process (a ‘path’) that stems from a feeling but matures only, in the writing process, through reference to a given cultural tradition and to the established literary *loci* or themes (*lieux rhétoriques*) that he tries to expand upon. If we invert the process, it means that, in order to understand the place of a text in literary terms (that is, the literary project of the author), one has to understand the other, older texts that it borrows from, engages with and refers to.

Classical Persian poetry does not differ in that respect: every Persian composition exists in a network of literary interactions that we can unweave following the threads of the rhetorical *topoi* outlining the framework of the composition. Investigating this network allows us to fully grasp the context and the substance of a particular work. In that regard, scholars have repeatedly emphasised the importance of imitation (*istiqbāl*), rewriting (*naẓīra-gōʿī*) and literary response (*javāb-gōʿī*) in the classical Persian poetic milieu.<sup>1</sup> Such referential

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This article will rely on the transcription system used in the *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* of Steingass (1892) with the following changes: ﺱ is transcribed s and not š; ﺽ, when *majhūl*, is transcribed ē and not e; ﺞ is transcribed v and not w and, when *majhūl*, is transcribed ō and not o (except when metrically short in words such as *tō/to* or *dō/do*). Neo-Indo-Aryan languages are transcribed in IAST. The schwa has been deleted when unpronounced.

**1** The preferred field of these studies is the ‘New Style’ (*ṭarḥ-i tāza* also called the ‘Indian Style’, *sabk-i hindī*) of Safavid-Mughal poetry: Losensky 1998; Akbarī 2000; Ḥāʾirī, Kalāntar 2012; Āzar 2008. However, many interesting studies were also produced for

devices are a mean for a poet to assert his position in a particular literary field, to pay homage to his predecessors and to attract praise and attention from his target readership. In this paper, I will attempt to locate the position in the Indo-Persian literary sphere of two seventeenth-century *masnavīs* written by ‘Āqil Khān ‘Rāzī’, being adaptations in Persian of romances originally composed in Hindavi,<sup>2</sup> using the elements of poetic referentiality scattered throughout the prologues and the conclusions of both poems.

## 1.1 Literary Imitation and Creation in Classical Persian Literature

This study is located in the scholarly framework of stylistics and literary history. The first concept that I will refer to is that of ‘style’ (*sabk*) as inaugurated by Muḥammad Taqī Bahār ‘Mālik ul-Shu‘arā’ (1943). This concept replaces, in the writing of modern Iranian scholars, the premodern concepts of *shēva*, *ṭarz* and *ravish* (words all referring to the style of a particular poet or school of poetry) since it adds to the traditional mode of analysis of literature the criteria of historicity. *Sabk* redefines style as a historical phenomenon and, as a result, *sabk-shināsī* ‘stylistics’, makes ample use of cultural studies and historical linguistics (Īrānzāda 2016).<sup>3</sup> Following this methodology, this study will try to focus on the particularities of ‘Āqil Khān’s style both on a personal level (choice of words and themes, use of compounds) and on a broader historical level (Mughal-era Indo-Persian literature).

The core concept on which this study relies on, however, is that of poetic imitation in the context of classical Persian literature. The work of Marc Toutant on ‘Alī Shēr Navā’ī demonstrated that imitation plays a central role in Tīmūrid aesthetics (Toutant 2016) and, following the footsteps of senior scholars, I will attempt to demonstrate that imitation was similarly cultivated during the Mughal period. Riccardo Zipoli (1993) in a well-known article and Paul Losensky (1998, 107-13), in his work on Bābā Fighānī and his imitators, elaborate on a number of technical terms used by the classical poets and literary critics to refer to the poetic devices of imitation, emulation and response in the Persianate literary milieu. First, we have the word

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other branches of classical Persian poetry: Zipoli 1993; Murshidī 2012; Toutant 2016, 245-314; Ingenito 2020.

**2** In this article, I will use this Persian word to refer to Central/Northern Neo-Indo-Aryan literary languages commonly used and cultivated at the Mughal central and provincial courts, such as Braj Bhāṣā, Awadhī or Deccanī.

**3** One of the most cutting-edge study on *sabk-shināsī* in that regard is most probably: Āqābābā’ī 2020.

*istiqbāl* (poetic imitation), which is intended as a tribute or a response to a revered model. Then come the very important terms *mu'āraza* and *tatabbu'*, usually meaning a poetic response to an earlier poem in the same meter and in which rivalry plays an important part. The word *javāb-gō'ī* (a literary answer or response) implies a more peaceful relationship to the model whereas *naẓīra-gō'ī* and *iqtidā'* are general, neutral designations for the practice of *imitatio*.

In this paper, I will further argue that *tarjuma* (adaptation/translation) is also an integral part of the poetics of *istiqbāl* and holds a special place in the multilingual South Asian world. Successfully identifying these devices will allow us to grasp the literary tradition in which we have to locate 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī's *maṣnavīs*. In order to do so, I will focus on the imagery of fire and burning as it appears in the two poems, mainly in their prologues and in their conclusions.<sup>4</sup> Fire plays a decisive part in the Indo-Persian poetics of the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Sharma 2010) and this intricate fire imagery, through the practice of imitation, reuse, reference and adaptation, made its way into the poetry of later authors, such as Mīrzā Asadullāh 'Ghālib' (1797-1869) (Schimmel 2007, 62-95). This study thus aims at bringing a contribution to the history of the evolution and transformations of poetical *topoi* in Persian literature and their relationship with patronage, historical taste and poetic creativity.

## 1.2 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī': His Life and Work

'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī's original name is Mīr 'Alī 'Askarī Khwāfī (Ārzū 2006, 84). He is the son of Muḥammad Taqī and the grandson of Muḥammad Qāsim al-Khwāfī.<sup>5</sup> He was very probably born in India and he himself greatly insists on his Iranian origins, as his family hailed from the city of Khwāf in Khurāsān.<sup>6</sup> He died in 1696<sup>7</sup> and lived for 82 years ('Āmir 2005, 20). We can thus infer that he was born around 1617, during the reign of Nūr ul-Dīn Muḥammad Salīm 'Jahāngīr' (r. 1605-27). He was

<sup>4</sup> In order to grasp, as faithfully as possible, the content of the literary project of 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī' (its roots and its possible outcomes in later literature), this paper focuses mostly on the prologues and on the concluding remarks of the poems, since it is the space *par excellence* in which Persian *maṣnavī* composers present their references and sources of inspiration, the core imagery of the text and their literary intentions.

<sup>5</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Samarāt ul-ḥayāt*, f. 1v.

<sup>6</sup> See for example this *bait* from Rāzī's *Mīhr-u māh* (Rāzī 2010, 44):

*ba hindustān agar hastam sukhan-bāf | tār-u pūdam hast dar Khwāf*  
Although I compose poetry in India, my warp and weft are in Khwāf.

<sup>7</sup> *Rabī' ul-ṣānī* 1108 AH. 'Āmir 2005, 21. M.A. 'Āmir explains that it is also claimed in some sources that he died in 1107 AH. His monography on 'Āqil Khān is very good. Another very helpful work on Rāzī is the book of Jāvéd (1999).



the disciple of Shaikh Burhān ul-Dīn 'Rāz-i Ilāhī' of the Shattārī order (1589/90-1672/73) and collected his discourses in a compilation entitled *Samarāt ul-ḥayāt* (1643-44).<sup>8</sup> The *takhalluṣ* of Mīr 'Alī 'Askarī, 'Rāzī', is a reference to his Shaikh's second name: 'Rāz-i Ilāhī'.

In his youth, he was a member of the personal entourage of Muḥī ul-Dīn Aurangzēb, the future emperor 'Ālamgīr (r. 1658-1707) while he was in the Deccan (Shāh Navāz Khān 1890, 821).<sup>9</sup> He composed his first *masnavī*, *The Sun and the Moon* (*Mihr-u māh*), in 1654-55 ('Āmir 2005, 68). This is a Persian rendition of Mīr Mañjhan Rājgīrī's *Madhumālātī*, a romance originally written in Awadhī in 1545 and was most probably composed in Burhānpūr or in the newly renamed city of Aurangābād.<sup>10</sup> When Aurangzēb acceded to the throne in 1658, Mīr 'Alī 'Askarī received the title of 'Intelligent Khan' (*'Āqil Khān*) and a promotion (Shāh Navāz Khān 1890, 821). In the same year, he composed *The Candle and the Moth* (*Sham'-u parvāna*), his second *masnavī*. This is a Persian rendition of another Awadhī romance, Malik Muḥammad Jāyīs's *Padmāvat*, written in 1540.<sup>11</sup> During his life, 'Āqil Khān held varied positions in Mughal administration. In 1663-64 he was employed as a 'police' officer (*faujdar-i Dō'āb*) in Awadh; then, he worked as superintendent of the private apartments of the emperor (*dārōgha-yi ghuslkhāna*, 1658-59), general superintendent of the postal service (*dārōgha-yi ḍākchaukī*, 1666-67), military administrator (*bakhshī-yi tan*), and finally governor of Delhi (*ṣūbadār-i Shāhjahānābād*, 1680-81) ('Āmir 2005, 25-32).

'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī' composed a number of other works in the fields of History (Rāzī 1936), Mystics and Poetry, including a fully edited *dīvān* (Rāzī 2010). Many premodern and modern scholars have noted the similarities of his style with that of Maulānā Rūmī, Nizāmī or Sa'dī and his remoteness from the more contemporary and intricate Indian style (Ārzū 2006, 84-5; Rāzī 2010, 17-28). I will now examine these claims more in depth.

<sup>8</sup> On this figure, see Burhānpūrī 1951. Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Samarāt ul-ḥayāt*.

<sup>9</sup> He was, more precisely, the *bakhshigārī-yi duvvum* (second superintendant for the wages) of the Prince.

<sup>10</sup> For a critical edition of the work, see Mañjhan 1961. For an English translation see Behl, Weightman 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Critical edition: Jāyīs 1951.

## 2 'Āqil Khān's Persian Adaptations: The Building of a Literary Tradition and the Imagery of the *Satī* in Classical Persian Poetry

### 2.1 The Literary Field of Indo-Persian Adaptations of Hindavi Romances: The Creation of a Genre

The literary context in which we have to locate Rāzī's two *masnavīs* is that of the Persian renditions of South Asian tales ('Ābidī 1966) and, more precisely, of the Persian adaptations of vernacular Awadhī romances.<sup>12</sup> The lost translation of the *Candāyan* (an Awadhī romance written by Maulānā Dā'ūd in 1379) by the Chishtī Shaikh 'Abd ul-Quddūs Gangōhī (1455-1537) (Behl, Doniger 2016, 62) and the *Rājkunvar*, a Persian translation of Quṭban Suhrawardī's *Mirigāvatī* composed for the young Prince Salīm in the beginning of the seventeenth century (Orsini 2017),<sup>13</sup> are two early examples of the genre. It is, however, *The Poem on Chastity* ('*Ismatnāma*, an adaptation of the *Candāyan* story) composed by Ḥamid Kalānaurī in 1607-08 that truly inaugurates the poetic framework in which 'Āqil Khān asserts himself (Kalānaurī 1985). Indeed, as Kalānaurī's *Poem on Chastity*, both *The Sun and the Moon* and *The Candle and the Moth*, are *masnavīs* in form and style that take considerable liberty with the original text. The storyline is frequently modified, some events are added, other suppressed, the name of some characters are altered (or erased) and the poetical imagery entirely conceptualised anew.

Another good example of this genre is the *Rat Padam* (1628-29) by Mullā Muḥammad Samī 'Abd ul-Shakūr Bazmī, a translation of *Padmāvat* (Bazmī 1971). In the prologue of the work, Bazmī gives us an important clue about the context in which such *masnavīs* were composed. He narrates the visit his father paid to him, and the piece of advice he gave him:

*guftī ghazal-u qaṣīda bisyār  
gū masnavī ba tāza guftār*

*'ishq-i Ratan-u Padam bayān kun  
afsāna ba pārsī zabān kun*

*dar jōsh bikun khum-i kuhan rā  
nau rang bidih may-i sukhan rā*  
(Bazmī 1971, 49)

<sup>12</sup> *Pemakathās* 'love tales', or *premagāthā/premākhyān* 'love poems', in Hindi literary criticism. Pandey 1982; Orsini 2017, 25-6.

<sup>13</sup> For more details on *Rājkunvar*, see Orsini 2023, 65-71.

You have composed many *ghazals*, many *qaṣīdas*,  
do compose a *maṣnavī* in the modern style,

Narrate the love of Ratan and Padam,  
tell the story in Persian.

Make this old pot boil again,  
add new colours to the wine of poetry.<sup>14</sup>

Bazmī's father's advice is to try out different forms in poetry: the adaptation in Persian of the story of *Padmāvat* is conceived, in that regard, as a fitting exercise.<sup>15</sup> In the case of Bazmī as in the case of Rāzī, the process of translation is indeed not merely understood as a simple literal and faithful translation, but as a full reproduction of the content of the original story into the framework of classical Persian poetry. Very often, this takes the form of an emulation of a revered model:

*chūn ḥarf-i Ratan shumār kardam*  
*Rat az Ratan ikhtiṣār kardam*

*z'ān rū ki miyān-i hindī ash'ār*  
*ma'nī-yi rat ast 'āshiq-i zār*

*ṣad shu'la ba khūn-i dil sirishtam*  
*tā nāma-yi Rat Padam nivishtam*  
(Bazmī 1971, 50)

When I scanned the word 'Ratan',  
I shortened Ratan to Rat,

Because, in poetic Hindī,  
the meaning of 'Rat' is afflicted lover.

I added a hundred sparkles to the blood of my heart  
to write the story of the Rat of Padam.

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<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the Author.

<sup>15</sup> To 'translate' or 'adapt' such Indian stories in Persian, to train one's pen must have been a rather frequent occurrence: Shaikh Aḥmad 'Alī Khān Hāshmi Sandilavī, speaking about 'Āqil Khān in his *tazkira*, sadly remarks that his Indian stories "were deficient in style and did not gain any fame" perhaps because "the composition of the stories happened during the first exercises of poetic writing" (*Chūn az faṣāḥat uftāda chandān shuhrat nayāfta. Shāyad dar avā'il-i mashq-i shī'r ba nazm āvardan-i ān qiṣṣahā vāqī' gashṭa*) (1970, 178).

Bazmī refers here to the Hindavī word *rat* (skt.: *rata* ‘root’: *ram*, *ramate*) meaning ‘enamoured, fondly attached to’ (Platts 1884). The title of Bazmī’s work is, grammatically, an Arabic title: *Rat Padam*[i]: “The Rat (the ‘mad lover’) of *Padam*”. It mirrors the title of the famous Arabic story of Lailā and Majnūn: *Majnūn Lailā*, “The Mad Lover of Lailā”.<sup>16</sup> Even more telling than this pun is the meter chosen for the poem: it is the same as the one selected by Niẓāmī for his famous Persian adaptation of the story (*hazaj-i musaddas-i akhr-ab-i maqbūz-i maḥzūf*). Here we have a clear case of poetic imitation and response to a revered original poem in the same meter. Bazmī is indulging here in an intertextual *exercice de style*: his aim is to give an ‘Indian’ rendition of a highly respected Persian piece of literature.

## 2.2 Āqil Khān ‘Rāzī’ and the Imagery of the *Satī* in the Indo-Persian Literary Tradition of the Sultanate Period: Between Persian and Vernacular Literatures

This literary scheme is extremely important for our topic: the practice of *istiqbāl* is a way for Indo-Persian poets to introduce Indian stories and themes inside the classical canon of Persian poetry. As Niẓāmī is, perhaps, the most revered and imitated Persian *masnavī* composer, many authors intentionally become his followers to emulate the literary tradition and assert their poetic personality. ‘Āqil Khān ‘Rāzī’ is, surely enough, located inside this scheme of referentiality going back to Niẓāmī. The meter he uses in *The Candle and the Moth* is the same as the one used by Niẓāmī in his masterpiece, *The Seven Portraits* (*Haft paikar*) (*khafīf-i musaddas-i makhbūn-i maqtū’*), and the meter of *The Sun and the Moon* is the same as the one selected by Niẓāmī for *Khusrau and Shīrīn* (*hazaj-i musaddas-i maqsūr*). Even if these two *masnavīs*, unlike the poem of Bazmī, are not real literary responses to the model of Niẓāmī, ‘Āqil Khān wishes to engage with the Persian classical canon in a number of ways. He says himself:

*sharar-i Hind dar dil andōzam*  
*z’ātish-i Fārs shu’la afrōzam*

*kōk sāzam ba pardā-yi ushshāq*  
*naghma-yi Hind bā navā-yi ‘Irāq*

<sup>16</sup> I cannot thank enough Pr. Thibaut d’Hubert for his help, as he was kind enough to share this intuition with me.

*ba khurāsān kunam zi Hind irsāl*  
*tuhfa-yi kārghāh-i ‘ishq-u jamāl*  
(Rāzī 2017, 94)

I gathered in my heart the sparks of India,  
I fanned the flames with the fire of the Fārs.

I tuned myself to the mode of love,  
I played the melody of India with the scale of Iraq.

I sent, from India to the Khurāsān,  
the wonders of the workshop of love and beauty.

The musical imagery that Rāzī summons here is extremely telling: his purpose is to tell an Indian story in the framework of classical Persian poetry. The theme is Indian, but the literary aspect is completely Persian. This passage also contains an important clue for our study: for ‘Āqil Khān, poetry, and especially poetry about India, is ‘fiery’. Speech is compared to fire and poetic inspiration to sparks. This is a fundamental element as it locates the poem inside a long poetic tradition associating India with heat, fire and burning. One of the first poet to associate India, fire and love stories is Amīr Khusrāu Dihlavī (1253-1325), himself a very famous imitator of Niẓāmī.<sup>17</sup> The practice of *satī* (ritual burning of a wife on the pyre of her deceased husband) is, for example, the key theme of this extract:

*na’ī kam z’ān zan-i hindū dar īn kūy*  
*ki khwud rā zinda sōzad bar pay-i shūy*  
(Khusrāu 1927, 32)

You are not inferior in this town to the Hindu woman,  
who burns herself alive to follow her husband.

The definitive introduction of the literary motif of *satī* is, however, the deed of another Indo-Persian poet, a famous friend of Amīr Khusrāu: Ḥasan Sijzī Dihlālvi (1253/54-c. 1388). Indeed, he authored a *masnavī* entitled *A Poem on Love (‘Ishqnāma)* in 1301, set in the almost contemporary context of the court of the son of Ghiyās ul-Dīn Balban, Malik Muḥammad Qa’ān (who died in 1285), and telling the story of an Indian scribe and an Indian girl (Gould 2021; Dukht Mashhūr 2010). The story culminates with the death of the lover on the pyre of his beloved, taken away from him by a disease. The whole poem is a response to *Lailī and Majnūn* of Niẓāmī and contains numerous

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<sup>17</sup> On this subject, see Ashraf, Muẓāhirī, Ibrāhīmī 1990 and Murshidī 2012.

references to the great Persian *masnavī*. *A Poem on Love* is extremely important because it established a new poetical theme. Therefrom, poets seeking to give an Indian flavour to their love stories regularly compose, or retell, Indian tales ending with both lovers dying together on a pyre. *Rat Padam* and *The Candle and the Moth* clearly assert themselves as members of this genre. Indeed, at the end of the *Padmāvat* story, the hero, Ratansen, is killed by the Sultān 'Alā ul-Dīn Khiljī and the death of his two wives, Padmāvati and Nāgmatī, takes place on his pyre. In the prologue of *The Candle and the Moth* (*Sham'-u Parvāna*) 'Āqil Khān refers to this fate:

*har do bā ham chigūna sākhta and  
jigar az sōz ham-gudākhta and*

*ātash-i dil chisān furōkhta and  
har do yak-dam chigūna sōkhta and*  
(Rāzī 2017, 91)

Verily, these two are made for each other!  
Their hearts were fused together by the same blaze.

The flames of their hearts reduced them to ashes,  
Indeed they both burned in the very same instant!

This passage allows us to appreciate how the literary theme of the Indian *satī* became a poetic subject ingeniously reused across centuries. Here, the 'burn' is, of course, that of the funerary pyre, but also refers to the burn of love. The flames become an image describing the intensity of the feelings of the lovers and their burning hearts. As a result, the culmination of the story is nothing but the material expression of their deeper spiritual bond. The verbs used in these two verses are quite telling in that regard. In the first verse we have *sākhtan* 'to form' and *gudākhtan* 'to melt, to intermingle', while in the second we have *furōkhtan* 'to kindle, to inflame' and *sōkhtan* 'to burn'. The Indian fire of the *satī* is a material bonding force that fuses together lover and beloved spiritually by taking away the corporal limitations preventing their souls from uniting. This poetic conceit interests Rāzī because it allows the conventional images associated with the pains of love, such as the burn of passion, the fire of the longing etc. to become actual 'physical' elements of the tale.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> I must thank the Prof. Thibaut d'Hubert, who underlined how this 'concretised metaphor' appears sometimes in visual representations too. See, for example, London, British Library, *Pēm nēm* (add. 16880), f. 138r.

Even if, in the story of Manohar and Madhumālatī, the issue is happier, 'Āqil Khān still alludes to this pyre imagery in the prologue of *The Sun and the Moon*:

*ba Hindustān chi ātash shu'la afrōkht*  
*ki bā-ham 'āshiq-ū ma'shūq sōkht*<sup>19</sup>

In India, the sparks glitter in such a blaze  
that together it burns lover and beloved.

Now, if we briefly stray away from the prologues and take a look at the conclusions of the *maṣnavīs*, another literary layer of this *satī* imagery appears. Indeed, in *The Candle and the Moth*, Rāzī uses other referential devices based on the imagery of self-immolation to identify his composition as a retelling of the Awadhī *Padmāvāt*. This tribute paid to Jāysī is quite visible in the conclusion of the work, after the depiction of the killing of Ratansen by Devapāl and of the self-immolation of the women of Chittaurgarh, the fort and city-state of the hero:

*rāz bā*<sup>20</sup> *dar jahān ba rūy-i zamīn*  
*na Ratan mānd u na 'Alā' ul-Dīn*

*na Padam mānd u nay jamāl-i Padam*  
*burd bā khwud Ratan khayāl-i Padam*

*laik az 'ishq dāstānē mānd*  
*zān vafā-pēshgān nishānē mānd*  
(Rāzī 2017, 243)

Let the secret be known in the world on the surface of the earth:  
neither Ratan nor 'Alā' ul-Dīn remained,

Neither Padam nor her beauty subsisted.  
Ratan took with him the thought of Padam.

But, of love, one story remained,  
a sign of these faithful persons subsisted.

Malik Muḥammad Jāysī writes in his own conclusion:

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**19** I am currently completing a critical edition of *Mīhr-u māj* based on several manuscripts. In this article, for convenience purposes, I will mostly refer to one manuscript: London, SOAS, *Mīhr-u māj*, f. 5r. When necessary, other manuscript references will be specified.

**20** I read *bā* as *bād[ā]* here.

*kahām ratanasena asa rājā*  
*kahām suvā asi budhi uparājā*

*kahām alāudīna sultatānū*  
*kahām rāghau jeim kīnha bakhānū*

*kahām sarūpa padumāvati rānī*  
*koi na rahā jaga rahī Kahānī*  
(Jāysi 1951, 555, stanza 652)

Where is Ratansen, such a [mighty] king?  
Where is the parrot who devised such intelligent thoughts?

Where is the Sultan ‘Alā’ ul-Dīn?  
Where is Rāghava who did the description [of the queen]?

Where is the beautiful queen Padmāvati?  
None subsists, only their story remains.

The structure of the two passages is similar: both texts give a list of characters and, playing on the semi-historical nature of the story of Ratansen, Padmāvati and ‘Alā’ ul-Dīn *Khiljī*, philosophically remark that no trace of them is to be found now on the surface of the earth. Ratansen and Padmāvati burned together on the pyre and ‘Alā’ ul-Dīn, guided by his bodily passions, his lust for Padmāvati and his vanity, was, in the same way, destroyed and lost in the abyss of time. The key verb is the same in the two versions: ‘to stay’ ‘to remain’ ‘to subsist’ (*rah-* in Awadhī, *māndan* in Persian). Both poets conclude that the power of love is the force that allowed the lovers to survive in the form of a tale after the destruction of Chittaur and the death of all its inhabitants.

The two passages share the same structure (repetitions, binary division) and the same idea (the triumph of the spirit over the body). ‘Āqil Khān is clearly borrowing Jāysi’s core ideas, both stylistically and philosophically.<sup>21</sup> This means that at least some parts of the *masnavī* were composed after a close reading and study of the vernacular poem. As a result, it is clear that India-inspired imagery is not, for Rāzī, a mere Persian literary trope used to make the setting more exotic, but a way to cleverly introduce his reader to a complex layered text, partially based on an informed reading of a written version of the Awadhī romance.

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**21** This makes this passage fall into the ambiguous category of *sariqat* (literary ‘borrowing/theft’), a technical word in Arabic and Persian sometimes used with a positive connotation and sometimes in a more derogatory way. Losensky 1998, 105-6; Grunbaum 1944.



As I will attempt to demonstrate below, this mix of references and selected imagery, aiming at localising the text inside the Persian tradition and of well-thought borrowings of ideas or style elements from the Hindavī text is exactly what defines a rendition in Persian in the ‘adaptation’ genre I defined earlier. This network is however quite intricate since, as we just saw, the Hindavī references are usually much less obvious than the Persian ones. The Persian classical elements (reprisal of a meter or of a famous storyline) indeed enjoy the status of framework, or model, and are usually claimed, more or less clearly, in the prologue or the conclusion, whereas the elements borrowed from the Hindavī appear in the text, as they feed the poet’s inspiration. I will now attempt to go back to this Persian referential structure to understand more in depth how ‘Aqil Khān framed the Awadhī romance with the tools of classical Persian poetics.

### 2.3 The *Satī* in ‘Aqil Khān’s *Masnavīs* and Poetic Modernity

If the origin of what will be later known as the *Poem on Satī* (*satīnāma*) tradition (Bābāsafarī, Sālmīyān 2008) is indeed traceable to the writings of Ḥasan Sijzī and Amīr Khusrau, and has received considerable inspiration from vernacular South Asian literature, it was also a very fashionable Persian genre in Rāzī’s lifetime. As a result, ‘Aqil Khān refers directly to works composed by almost contemporary authors in order to assert the modernity of his work. He does it quite openly in *The Candle and the Moth* by describing his poem in the following words:

*mukhtaṣar nuskha’ē zi sōz-ū gudāz*  
*jāmī’-i ḥusn-u ‘ishq-u nāz-ū niyāz*  
(Rāzī 2017, 92)

It is a condensed version of the poem *Burning and Melting* (*Sōz-u gudāz*), bringing together beauty and love, disdain and supplication.

‘Aqil Khān mentions here, in a *double entendre*, *Burning and Melting* (*Sōz-u gudāz*), a *masnavī* composed by the poet Nau’ī Khabūshānī (1562-1610) for Akbar’s son, Prince Dāniyāl (Nau’ī 1969). In the prologue of the work Nau’ī reveals that Dāniyāl Mīrzā asked him to compose a new tale as he got weary of the old stories of the moth and the candle, Shīrīn and Farhād or Lailī and Majnūn (Nau’ī 1969, 38-9). He wants something ‘unheard of’, written in a modern style, dealing with Indian topics. He is, in that regard, fascinated by fire worship and the ritual suicide of women on the pyre of their husbands in India (39-40).

Nau’ī Khabūshānī, often following the footsteps of Ḥasan Sijzī, thus devises a tale set in India, during the reign of Akbar, telling the

story of two Hindu idol-worshippers (63). Nau'ī does not linger on the details of the story, as it is clear that his goal is more poetic than narrative in nature. The idea is to fully engage with all the intricacies of a given literary topos and to elaborate on this imagery of fire, burning and Indian idol worship by resorting to classical Persian poetic devices (Sharma 2010). By doing so, Nau'ī is strongly asserting his belonging to the latest trend in Persian poetry: the new style (*tarz-i nau* or *tāza-gō'ī*) in which poets seek novelty, originality and strangeness in meaning and form by resorting to complex images without discarding their literary heritage (Losensky 1998, 195-204). In *Burning and Melting*, Nau'ī addresses God in these terms:

*khudāyā shēva-yi 'ishqam āmōz*  
*dilam z'ādash-i īn zan afrōz*  
(Nau'ī 1969, 92)

O God, teach me the ways of love,  
set ablaze my heart with the fire of that woman!

In the new style that Nau'ī pursues, poetic images become so pervasive that they reach a metapoetical status as they succeed in representing, at the same time, the feelings of the characters, the core concept of the story (the power of passion) and the poetic devices used by the poet (metaphors, similes, poetic speech). Fire is an image for the feeling of love felt by the female character who, burned inwardly by her passion, becomes capable of physically consuming her body on the sacrificial pyre. But Nau'ī makes the image of fire depart from the mere context of the story to transform it into the manifestation of the power of God in the physical world. He begs God to toss him into the fire of love depicted in the tale so that he would get poetically inspired: fire becomes an image for inspiration and a metapoetical device. This capacity of images to become complex poetic objects, metaliterary in nature and self-referential, is a defining feature of the new style. In that regard, and even if he never reaches the level of intricacy of the true poets of the new style, 'Āqil Khān is clearly a conscious follower of Nau'ī Khabūshānī and other poets of this trend:

*chūn dilam shu'la-bāz shud ba zabān*  
*shu'la-zan shud zabān ba gōsh-i jahān*

*naqsh bastam ba lauḥ-i afsāna*  
*nām-i īn nāma sham'-u parvāna*  
*har kujā sham' rukh bar afrōzad*  
*jān-i parvāna lam'a'ash sōzad*

*sham' ham dar ghamash zi girya-u sō  
z birasānad shab shitāb ba rōz  
z'ān ki yak shu'la mē-kunad khāna  
dar dil-i sham'-u jān-i parvāna*

*ham chunīn īn do 'ishq-bāz-i majāz dīda<sup>22</sup>  
az yak sharār sōz-u gudāz  
ātash-i 'ishq bar-af-rōkhta and  
har do az yak zabāna sōkhhta and  
(Rāzī 2017, 93)*

When my ardent heart lit my tongue,  
it set on fire the ears of this world.

I inscribed, on the tablet of tales,  
the name of this story: The Candle and the Moth.

Wherever a candle lights up its face,  
its splendour sets the moth's soul ablaze.

When the despaired candle ardently weeps,  
it quickly turns its nights into days.

Since but one flame dwells  
both in the candle's heart and in the moth's soul,

Similarly, these two worldly lovers  
were burned and consumed by one and only flash of sparks.

They were set ablaze by the fire of love;  
one and only flame burned them both.

Āqil Khān explains the choice of his title *The Candle and the Moth* as a reference to the poetic tradition of fire imagery in Persian classical poetry. First, he brings into play a classical comparison: the tongue, symbolising poetic inspiration, is likened to a flame. Rāzī then follows Sa'dī's footsteps and elaborates on the candle and the moth (an image of absolute love and devotion) by borrowing from him the image of the 'weeping candle'.<sup>23</sup> The originality of Rāzī is to reuse this candle and moth imagery in the context of an Indian love story culminating

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<sup>22</sup> The critical edition has only the recensions *yada* and *dīd*. This word was corrected to *dīda* to respect the meter and obtain a satisfactory meaning.

<sup>23</sup> See Sa'dī 1941, 120: *shabē yād dāram ki chashmam na khuft | shanīdam ki parvāna bā sham' guft | ki man 'ashīqam gar bisōzam ravāst | tarā girya-u sōz-bāri chirāst*.

in a self-sacrifice. Padmāvati and Ratansen, at the very end, burn in the same fire very much like the moth who, attracted by the candle, burns to his death in the flame.

Fire is also the essence of good love poetry: every poem about passion must burn the ears of its audience with its 'fiery tongue'. The high degree of recursivity and metapoeticity that Rāzī instils in his images is quite typical of the intricacies of the new style, even if the rest of the poem does not reach the imaginal complexity of other similar works.

In *The Sun and the Moon*, 'Āqil Khān also engages with very similar topics:

*dilā sōzē ki dārī ba zabān dih  
zabān-i shu'la bar nūk-i qalam nih*

*biband az shu'la nakhl in bōstān rā  
bizan dam ātash-i Hīndūstān rā<sup>24</sup>*

O heart, place your burn on the tongue,  
put the tip of your flame on the tip of your pen.

With this blaze, plant the tree in the orchard,  
blow the fire of India.

Here again, we have a close association among the burning fire of love, poetic inspiration (the pen) and 'fiery' India. Rāzī clearly follows the footsteps of Nau'ī Khabūshānī. However, in his case, the Indian fiery imagery that he develops has another point of origin in the vernacular poetics of Mañjhan and Jāysī. Indeed, as I tried to demonstrate earlier, the Persian intertext is a framework that allows the poet to claim his place in the classical repertoire, but is not the only intertextual element that 'Āqil Khān employs. If we read, for example, the prologue of *The Sun and the Moon* while keeping in mind the rest of the composition, another picture appears in which Rāzī's reading and emulation of the vernacular text plays an important part.

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24 London, SOAS, *Mīhr-u māh*, f. 4v.

## 2.4 Satī and Burning Passions: Love and Self-destruction in the Vernacular Intertext of *The Sun and the Moon* (*Mihr-u māj*)

Indeed, when, in *The Sun and the Moon's* prologue, Rāzī foregrounds fire-based imagery, he also draws attention on the very components he borrows from the Awadhī romances. Indeed, in the *Madhumālātī* fire is also a major poetical element, as it represents the inner pains of separation (*biraha*, skt.: *viraha*) and, more broadly, love and its soul-transforming powers. Separation, like the *satī*, is a voluntary self-immolation of the lover, motivated by his passion for the beloved but, contrary to *satī*, it happens only spiritually. It is beyond doubt that a part of 'Aqil Khān's readership was familiar with the Awadhī romances or, at least, with the vernacular poetics used by Mañjhan and Jāysī, including the fire-based imagery.<sup>25</sup> The universe that he devises is thus designed to resonate with both the earlier Indo-Per-sian tradition and Neo-Indo-Aryan literature.

In the case of the fire imagery, the proximity of the *satī*-related images and the descriptions of the pains of separation is very clear in Mañjhan's text. Indeed, in the *Madhumālātī* we find expressions such as: *nakha sikha uṭhī kumvara ke jvālā* (the flames [of passion] took up the Prince's [whole body], from head to toe); *eka agini dui ṭhāem bārā* (there is one fire [= love] lit in two places [= bodies]); *pema agini* (the fire of love); *aba lahi guputa jarium tehi āgī* (until now I have burned secretly in that fire); *biraha daum* (the bonfire of separation).<sup>26</sup> It is this poetical universe that Rāzī is trying to emulate in the *Mihr-u māj* when he uses expressions such as: *sōz-i dil* (the burn of his/her heart); *zi sōz-i 'ishq-i 'alam-sōz nālīd* (he cried because of the burn of love, fire raiser of the world - when Manohar is separated from Madhumālātī); *gham-i dil-sōz-i khwud kard izhār* (she expressed her heart-burning pain - when Madhumālātī is separated from Manohar). See also the following passages, where he puts such words in the mouth of Madhumālātī: *zi sōz-i hījr-i tō rōzam si-yah shud* (my days have been obscured by the burn of my separation from you), *labam khushk ast az āh-i jigar-tāb* (my lips were dried up by heart-burning sighs).<sup>27</sup>

To remain in the textual framework that I chose for this article, focusing on the introductions and conclusions of the *masnavīs*, a close

<sup>25</sup> See for example the *Present of India (Tuhfat ul-Hind)*, an encyclopaedia of the Indian sciences, including poetics, written during Aurangzēb's reign (Mīrzā Khān 1975) or the *dhrupad* poems sung in Braj Bhāṣā at the Mughal court: Delvoye 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Jāysī 1951, 62 stanza 45, 98 stanza 117, 126 stanza 151, 164 stanza 309, 164 stanza 310.

<sup>27</sup> London, SOAS, *Mihr-u māj*, ff. 19v, 29r, 33r etc.; London, SOAS, *Mihr-u māj*, f. 27v; London, SOAS, *Mihr-u māj*, f. 49r; London, SOAS, *Mihr-u māj*, f. 49r.

reading of the concluding remarks of *The Sun and the Moon* also allows us to appreciate how ‘Āqil Khān interwove his composition with the Awadhī text and how fire imagery played an important part in this literary layering. Let us first read an extract of the conclusion of Mañjhan’s *Madhumālatī*:

*pema kai āgi sahī jeim āmcā*  
*so jaga janami kāla seum bāmcā*  
(Jāysī 1951, 481, stanza 538)

The one who endured the flames of the fire of love  
enjoys in this world a life spared from death.

The next stanza adds:

*kabitā gāta jabahi lahi rahāi jagata maham nāum*  
(Jāysī 1951, 482, stanza 539)

As long as poetry’s limbs will live on, their names [Madhumālatī  
and Manohar] will subsist in the world.

The fire of love is described by Mañjhan as a mystical force that transforms the soul, purifies it with its burning flames and opens the doors of immortality to the lovers. Love poetry, similarly, carrying the story of Manohar and Madhumālatī, makes their passionate ‘burning’ legacy live on in the world. Rāzī, in his own conclusion borrows some of these ideas:

*khwushā hāl-i dil-i āzād-i mardē*  
*ki gardad banda-yi ‘ishqē-u dardē [...]*

*ba har maḥfil buvad z’ū dāstānē*  
*ba har manzil bimānad z’ū nishānē [...]*

*gar īn shu’la buland āvāza kardī*  
*ba dilhā dāgh-i ḥasrat tāza sāzī<sup>28</sup>*

Blessed is the rank of the heart of the man  
who became the slave of a passion or a pain [of love]. [...]

In every assembly his story is told,  
at every step a sign of him remains. [...]

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**28** London, SOAS, *Mihr-u māh*, ff. 14v-15r.

If you made this flame [= story] famous  
you left a new scar of suffering in the hearts.

Like Mañhan, our poet describes love and its sufferings as a pathway to immortality. The heart of the lover is free because he is liberated from the fetters of the material world and, as a result, his spiritual passion remains in the world in the form of a tale that grants him immortality. Since love is equated with the inner-burning fire of separation, the amorous *masnavī* is compared to a flame, that, if spread around, burns the hearts of the listeners when they experience the pain of love through it. Once again, Rāzī borrows the poetic ideas of his vernacular source text. He ‘domesticates’ the imagery of *satī* and separation by bringing into play Persian literary references such as works by Sa’dī or Nau’ī but, as we saw reading the prologues, he also always conscientiously focuses the attention of his readership on the ‘indianity’ of the imagery he develops. This is not merely a trick to set the stage in South Asia, but also a way to signify to his cultured readers that he wants them to identify, reading between the lines, the vernacular poetics of love-in-separation typical of Awadhī and other Neo-Indo-Aryan literatures (Vaudeville 1962).

The poetic devices and tropes that ‘Āqil Khān uses to suggest an Indian setting in his *masnavīs* rely greatly on the combined imagery of fire and self-immolation. However, love in separation and *satī* are not the only pillars of the complex imaginal world introduced by Rāzī to the reader in the prologues. Indeed, he also builds thoroughly on the warm nature of the climate in India to develop the intertext of his *masnavīs*. This image is not inherited from Nau’ī, so we must further our research to locate its origin.

### 3 India and Fire: The Importance of Faiẓī and His Quest for Poetic Novelty in India

#### 3.1 India and Its Warm Climate: A Poetic Conceit

Let us dive in a few extracts, taken from *The Sun and the Moon*:

*ba Hind īn shu'la afrōzanda-tar bīn  
dar īn iqlīm khwūr sōzanda-tar bīn*<sup>29</sup>

Look, in India the sparks glow more,  
look, in that climate the sun shines more.

And from *The Candle and the Moth*:

*bas ki dar Hind ḥusn jilva-gar ast  
ātash-i 'ishq khāna-sōz-tar ast*

*shu'la-yi 'ishq-i Hind pur-sharar ast  
z'ān ki dar Hind mihr garm-tar ast*

*sōz dar Hind sīna-sāz buvad  
naghma-yi Hind jān-gudāz buvad*  
(Rāzī 2017, 89)

When beauty reveals itself in India,  
the fire of love set houses on fire far quicker.

The flame of Indian love is full of sparks,  
because in India the sun is warmer.

In India, the burn cuts deep,  
the song of India melts the soul.

The core idea here is that, in India, love is more intense. As in the poetics of 'Āqil Khān love and fire are one and the same; the power of Indian love is characterised by its burning features. In India, the climate is warmer because the sun shines more intensively. As a result, the sparks glow brighter, and the flames burn more violently. The lovers, sick with the fever of passion, are reduced to ashes, and their souls melt one into another. This imagery, together with the theme of *satī* and of love in separation, is the backbone of 'Āqil Khān's

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<sup>29</sup> London, SOAS, *Mihr-u māh*, f. 4v.



Indian *masnavīs*. Although the mastery that Rāzī has over this *locus* is quite remarkable, it is not exactly his invention.

In fact, our poet refers here to another great piece of Indo-Persian literature which is the *masnavī Nal and Daman (Nal-u Daman)* written by Abū'l-Faiḏ Ibn Mubārak 'Faizī' in 1594-95 AD at the request of Akbar the Great (Faizī 1987, 28, 48-9).<sup>30</sup> The poetic setting for the adaptation in Persian of an Indian story that Faizī creates in the prologue of the poem is, in that regard, the unambiguous model for later authors like 'Abd ul-Shakūr 'Bazmī' or 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī'. Indeed, it is probably in this composition that we come across the image of the new Persian adaptation versus the old Indian story for the first time. Likewise, the poetic idea of the warmth of India's climate appears to be Faizī's creation, and was clearly borrowed from him by Rāzī:

*dil bā dil tan bā tan ba-ham dōst  
āmēkhtand chūn do maghz-u yak pōst*

*īn ḥusn ba 'ishq shud giriftār  
chūn bāda bā shīsha naḡma bā tār*

*īn shu'la ba Hind garm-khēz ast  
īnjā ki āftāb tēz ast*

*'ishq-i 'Arab-u 'Ajam shanīdam  
az Hind bigōyam ānchi dīdam  
(Faizī 1987, 48-9)*

Heart with heart, body with body,  
the two lovers fused together like two fleshs in one body.

Beauty tied itself to love,  
as wine to the bottle, a music to its strings.

These flames are powerful in India  
because here the sun is strong.

I heard about love in Arab lands and in Iran,  
I will relate what I saw in India.

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**30** Faizī (1547-1595) is a very important author who was the poet laureate of Akbar's court. *Nal and Daman* was meant to be part of a complete *Khamsa*, a rewriting of Nizāmī's work, and in which *Nal and Daman* was intended to be a response to *Lailī and Majnūn*. This *masnavī* tells the story, borrowed with a few alterations from the *Mahābhārata*, of King Nala and Princess Damayantī. It appears to have been extremely influential since many *tazkira* writers praise it greatly. Faizī 1987, 28-53.

This extract is important because it shows how the three elements that we have concentrated upon so far (love and fire, the *satī* and the warm climate of India) were put together for the first time by Faiḏī. At the end of the story, Daman commits suicide on the pyre of her deceased husband, Nal. Faiḏī describes how they become one, both on a spiritual and a bodily level. India is then promoted by Faiḏī to the rank of third 'great land of love', after the Arab world ('*arab*') and Iran ('*ajam*').

### 3.2 India as the Future of Poetry

The climate imagery that 'Āqil Khān resorts to is, unambiguously, a reference to a literary tradition going back to Ḥasan Sijzī and Amīr Khusrāu, in which Faiḏī is, by far, the most important predecessor for the seventeenth-century author. 'Āqil Khān 'Rāzī' is perfectly conscious of what he owes to Faiḏī and presents, poetically, the heritage he engages with in *The Candle and the Moth*:

*'ishq tā sākht naḡhma-yi ushshāq  
parda dar gasht īn navā ba 'Irāq*

*gāh Farhād shīsha bar sar zad  
gāh Khusrāu ba sīna khaṅjar zad*

*dar 'Arab tā damīd īn afsūn  
ṣad cho Majnūn fasāna shud ba junūn*

*bāz īn shu'la tā ba Hind afrōkht  
bas ki ma'shūq misl-i 'āshiq sōkht*

*Padam az ātash-i Ratan sōzad  
sōz-i Nal khirman-i Daman sōzad*

*ānchi madhumālat az Manōhar dīd  
dahdah-i mihr-u māh kam-tar dīd  
(Rāzī 2017, 89)*

When love sung the song of lovers,  
its tune reached Iraq.

There, Farhād hit himself with a bottle,  
there, Khusrāu stabbed himself with a knife.

When the spell reached Arab lands,  
a hundred men were struck by madness like Majnūn.

Then, this spark set India on fire  
and lovers and beloved burned.

Padam burned in the fire of Ratan,  
the love of Nal set ablaze the pyre of Daman.

What Madhumālātī saw in Manohar  
concealed the glitter of the sun and the moon.

In this excerpt, Rāzī stages a cosmology of love in which the “song of lovers” is dispatched throughout the world. It reaches Iran first and strikes Farhād and Khusrau, two famous lovers of the Persian literary tradition. Then the spell bewitches the Arab world and maddens the well-known Majnūn. The last country to be touched is India, where love inflames Ratan and Padam, as well as Nal and Daman. This last passage shows that ‘Āqil Khān had, without doubts, Faizī’s *Nal and Daman* present in his mind while he was writing.<sup>31</sup> Every type of love has its specificities: in Iran, self-destruction, in Arab lands, madness, and in India, self-consumption. The love of Manohar and Madhumālātī, even if it does not culminate in *satī*, takes place in that scheme; it is a ‘burning love’ because it is the story of the passion of two celestial bodies: Manohar is the sun and Madhumālātī, the moon.

The fact that Indian lovers come last in ‘Āqil Khān’s cosmology is important: he is attempting to demonstrate the newness of his subject, imitating in that regard many contemporary poets. The genius of the passage is to assert, at the same time, the mastery of Rāzī over the Persian literary tradition, and his modernity in his choice of topic. Besides, ‘Āqil Khān correlates the literary power of Indian subjects with the historical phenomenon of the mass migration toward India of Persianate elites:

*savād-i chashm-u rang-i rūy-i hindū*  
*buvad dīl-band chūn gēsū-yi hindū*

*az’ān har kas ba Hind āyad safar-sāz*  
*ba mulk-i khwēshtan kam-tar ravad bāz*

*magar tājir ki ū bē-dard bāshad*  
*u yā saiyāḥ-i ‘ālam-gard bāshad*<sup>32</sup>

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**31** India is the last step in the narrative because it is the ‘newcomer’ in the Persian tradition: Farhād and Khusrau appear in the *Shāhnāma* (eleventh century), Lailī and Majnūn in the *Khamsa* (twelfth century), and Nal and Daman in Faizī’s *maṣnavī* (sixteenth century).

**32** London, SOAS, *Mihr-u mäh*, f. 5r.

The blackness of the eyes and the colour of the face of the Hindu  
is as charming as the hair of the Hindu.

This is the reason why everybody tries his luck in India, and rarely  
goes back to his land,

Unless we are speaking of an inconsiderate merchant or of a traveller  
going all round the world.

‘Āqil Khān refers here to one of the *topoi* concerning India, which is the blackness of the Hindus and the beauty of young Hindu men (Losensky, Sharma 2011, 93). ‘Āqil Khān remarks that, as a result, everyone is eager to move to South Asia: *The Sun and the Moon* is a poetic response to this immigration of Persian elites in Hindūstān. If India is a new virgin place full of opportunities for ambitious young men, this field is also open for poetry dealing with fresh, unheard-of topics to explore, inspired by Neo-Indo-Aryan literatures. This recalls Nau’ī Khabūshānī’s literary project, aiming at novelty and renewal, stimulated by Prince Dāniyāl’s patronage. Courtly patronage plays indeed quite an important part in this literary scheme. The desire to hear and read new, contemporary productions is characteristic of Mughal cultural sponsorship policy, seeking to assert its distinctiveness in the Persianate world (Sharma 2010, 256). In that regard, the two *masnavīs* are typical of the Mughals’ imperial literary taste, at the same time deeply rooted in the classical Persian tradition and eager to develop its own novelty and originality.

### 3.3 The Pen-Identity of ‘Āqil Khān ‘Rāzī’: A Synthesis of the Indo-Persian Literary Repertoire

The will of ‘Āqil Khān to assert a distinctive Indo-Persian voice is, as a matter of facts, very explicit in *The Sun and the Moon*’s conclusion:

*basā ā’īna-yi raushan-ẓamīrān*  
*zi Hind andākh̄ta partau ba Īrān*

*ba Khusrau bīn ki māh-i kishvar-i Balkh*  
*ba Hindustān namūda ghurra’ash salkh*

*ba gōsh-i jān sukhan rā dād ta’lif*  
*zi i’jāzash zabān-i ‘ājiz zi tauṣif*

*Ḥasan rā bīn ki az ḥusn-i kalāmash*  
*chi labrēz-i ma’ānī būd jāmash*

*girāmī nukta-sanj-i dihlavī būd  
sarāsar nazm-u nasrash ma'navī būd*

*zi Faiẓī gō ki īn faiẓ az kujā yāft  
chu dar Hindūstān nushū-u namā yāft*

*savād-i Hind rā gar nukta-dānī  
sipāhī dān zi afvāj-i ma'ānī*

*ba tab'am lauḥ-i hindī chūn falak dād  
ba šābūn-i 'irāqī shust ustād<sup>33</sup>*

Many enlightened minds' mirrors  
have reflected in Iran a ray of India.

See Khusrau, the moon of the country of Balkh:  
his crescent phase completed its month in India.

He supplied poetry to the ear of the soul;  
his miracles filled the tongue of the impotent with words.

See Ḥasan: thanks to the beauty of his poetry,  
how did his cup become full with meaning!

He was a precious poet from Delhi,  
both his poetry and his prose were exceptionally deep.

As for Faiẓī: tell us where did he find this eloquence?  
- It is because he grew up in India.

If you are a connoisseur of the darkness of India,  
learn that you are a soldier from the armies of meaning.

Since the heavens have imprinted my nature with the tablet of India,  
my master washed it with the soap of Iraq.

Rāzī is stating the main components of his poetic identity: he was born and raised in India, appreciates Hindavī poetry, is highly literate in Persian and admires the great Indo-Persian authors. Rāzī builds a chain of poets starting with Khusrau and Ḥasan Sijzī and going through Faiẓī in order to, finally, include him. As I attempted to demonstrate earlier, Amīr Khusrau, Ḥasan of Delhi and Faiẓī all

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**33** I follow here the recension of another manuscript: Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Mihru māh*, f. 58r-58v.

brought a contribution to the imagery of fire in an Indian setting by developing poetically the theme of *satī*, of love in separation or of the heat of the climate in South Asia. ‘Āqil Khān, closing his *masnavī*, obviously wishes to make his identification with this literary universe clear to his reader.

However, the literary connection binding together those poets runs even deeper than their mere identity of Indo-Persian poets speaking from South Asia to the Persianate cosmopolis. Indeed, as we saw in some of the chosen extracts above, Rāzī developed in his two *masnavīs* a complex intertextual structure, sometimes straying away from the original poem, sometimes getting closer and closer to it, borrowing ideas and expressions from the Awadhī text. This method of layering or ‘palimpsest’, in the words of Gérard Genette (1982), of the text, adding elements inspired by Indo-Aryan literatures to the Persianate framework, is in itself a tribute to the literary tradition in which Rāzī locates himself.

Ḥasan Sijzī Dihlavī is, perhaps, the first to have included in his *Tale of Love* major South Asian themes, while referring to Niẓāmī on many instances (Gould, Tahmasebian 2021).<sup>34</sup> As for Amīr Khusrau, he is famous for having opened his *divān* with the verse “The cloud rains and I am separated from my friend” (*abr mē-bārad u man mē-shavam zi yār judā*) (Schimmel 1992, 203), a clear reference to the twelve-month separation of the lover from the beloved (*bārahmāsa*) as described in many Neo-Indo-Aryan poems (Vaudeville 1965). Abū’l-Faiẓ ‘Faizī’, literate in Hindavī, Persian and Sanskrit, is the last member of this literary tradition and the most important one for Rāzī, since Faizī’s literary project is his main model. Indeed, in *Nal Daman*, Faizī strays away from the storyline found in the Mahābhārata (Desai 1958) and recomposes the tale in Persian, in the framework created by Niẓāmī, while discreetly following some of the conventions and tropes of the Awadhī *pemakathā* genre. Many passages do conceal a subtle intertext pointing at Awadhī works such as the *Padmāvati* and the *Madhumālātī*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The final *satī* scene is the most obvious element, but, moreover, at some point in the story, the beloved woman tells her lover that she will give herself to him while her husband is away on a business trip (Gould, Tahmasebian 2021, 84), which is a typical element of Indic literatures. See for example the *Śukasaptatī* in which Prabhāvati, the wife of Madana Sena the Brahmin, plans to take a lover while her husband is away on a business trip. See Haksar 2000.

<sup>35</sup> For example, in a scene that recalls the *Madhumālātī*, the birth of love in *Nal’s* heart causes a sickness for which the doctors cannot find a cure. *Daman* is said to be from the Deccan – the dancers that captivate the hero in the beginning of *Madhumālātī* are also from the Deccan – and is described to the hero in a way that would perfectly correspond, albeit in a deeply persianised way, to a head-to-toe description, a classical element of the *pemakathā* genre. The lovers, burning with the fire of separation, write each other letters that resemble the messages exchanged by the protagonists of

It is this type of literary palimpsest that ‘Āqil Khān is trying to emulate: his claim of belonging to an Indo-Persian literary tradition and his use of fire imagery to reinforce this pen-identity are ways to signify to his reader that he writes ‘in’ the Persian classical repertoire while subtly infusing Hindavī tropes in between the lines. When Rāzī speaks, like Faiẓī does in his own prologue, about the “Indian imprint” of his nature he is not merely indulging in a display of stylistic mastery, but expressing something of his own story as a litterateur. Since he was undoubtedly exposed to South Asian tales in his life, including some belonging to the Awadhī *pemakathā* genre, some of the poetical material that fills his mind (both narrative patterns and images) is Indian in nature (and thus possesses, for the pun, a dark complexion). However, his literary language, the one his master taught him, is Persian: it is the poetic and scholarly tradition to which he refers and speaks, turning it into the ‘soap’ with which he ‘washes away’ the darkness of his Indian mind filled with Neo-Indo-Aryan pieces of literature.<sup>36</sup>

This literary imagery playing with black and white contrasts presents to the reader, in a playful way, a new manner of making Persian literature prompted by the composite and multilingual nature of the cultural life in South Asia during the seventeenth century. It is true that the search for novelty in poetry during the Mughal period is largely embodied by the intricacies of the new style as practised by ‘Urfī Shīrāzī, Šā’ib Tabrēzī or, later on, Bēdil Dihlavī, who developed the complexity of poetic images to previously unseen degrees. However, as we saw in the case of the *Rat Padam*, the *Burning and Melting* and the texts of ‘Āqil Khān, the adaptor poets also laid claim to novelty and modernity, enriching their imagery system in the *masnavī* with complex intertexts, both referring to intra-Persian references but also going, in disguise, in the direction of Hindavī texts.

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Mañjhan and Jāysi’s texts (including a *fīrāqnāma*, a Persian equivalent to what would be a *barahmāsa* in Hindavī). Finally yet importantly, a bird intervenes at some point in the story as a go-between and, strangely enough, happens to be from Sarangdīp (Ceylon), exactly as is the parrot in the story of Padmāvati. One can refer to the very useful summary of the tale in Subrahmanyam, Alam 2012, 218-40.

**36** Another pun is present in that verse: the *nukta-dān* is the ‘connoisseur of the *nukāt*’ that is of the ‘subtleties’ (*pointes* in French, *acutezze*, *argutezze* in Italian) but also, literally, of the ‘dots’, the fundamental graphical element of the Perso-Arabic script made by the reed pen dipped in black ink on white paper, a conceit once again pointing at the dark appearance of Indians.

## 4 Conclusion

‘Āqil Khān is not considered to be a major poet in Indo-Persian literary historiography. His name scarcely appears in compilations and scholarly dissertations, and a large volume of his poetic compositions remains unedited.<sup>37</sup> However, his work is a matter of interest for a number of reasons. First, he is located at an interesting intersection of the Persian literary tradition. His references are deeply classical (Niẓāmī, Sa’dī, Rūmī), and he does not engage as profoundly as others in the intricacies of the new style. Nevertheless, he pays considerable attention to the modern literary accomplishments of Faiẓī or Nau’ī. ‘Āqil Khān rarely comes up with new images or poetic conceits himself, as he prefers to borrow them from other compositions and to build in the framework of Persian Indian-themed romances. He is, second, particularly good at manipulating these traditional images and uses the Indian fire imagery in very resourceful ways, in the two *masnavīs*, using his knowledge of vernacular South Asian literature to enrich his compositions. In that regard, our two texts are not only literary responses to Faiẓī’s *Nal and Daman* but also imitations of Mañjhan and Jāysi’s *Madhumālātī* and *Padmāvat*. As Rāzī explains, his literary purpose is to tell these Indian stories in an Iranian mode, that is, to disguise them but, like any disguise would, he still lets the cultured reader get a glimpse of the original poem in between the lines. The fire-inspired *topoi* to which he resorts are a mean of locating his *masnavīs* in a distinctly Persian poetic context while maintaining a creative ambiguity *vis-à-vis* the original thematic framework of the two Avadhī *pemakathās* (for example, fire imagery can also refer to the vernacular theme of separation). The inner dynamism of these two poems is provided by Rāzī’s deep engagement with the concept of love. The imagery and the style are infused with mystic and philosophical ideas about passion, intertwined with the fire-imagery, that are, in themselves, a form of *istiqbāl* pointing at a number of features of Niẓāmī’s or Faiẓī’s poetry as well as the key-concept and core-imagery of love (*pema*) as depicted in the Avadhī *pemakathās* (Pandey 1982). In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that the study of stylistic features and intertextuality are two essential and inter-linked fields as far as Indo-Persian poetics are concerned. Unknotting the grid of references and poetic images spread in ‘Āqil Khān’s two Indian *masnavīs* allowed me to locate this author more precisely in the literary field of his time and to appreciate the intricacies of his multilingual poetic culture. As Georges Perec would put it, writing was for ‘Āqil Khān a process stemming from deep feelings (love

<sup>37</sup> Such is the case of *Mīhr-u Māh* but also, for example, of *Kashkōl* or *Naghmāt ul-‘ishq*, two mystical treatises. See the list of his works in Jāved 1999, 61.



and passion) that reached maturity through the cultivation of his composite cultural heritage (both Persian and Hindavī) and through the exploration of the *loci poetici* cherished by former generations of poets. Much remains to be done in the field of the Indo-Persian translations/adaptations of Awadhī romances and many of them still lie unedited in manuscript format, but I would like to suggest, as a concluding remark, that a fruitful approach could be to look deeper into the palimpsests that they offer, seeking to retrace how early-modern Persian-speaking authors read and reinterpreted texts from Neo-Indo-Aryan literatures before turning them into *masnavīs*. Such a work could bring significant contributions to the literary and cultural history of the Mughal Empire by shedding light on the reading and writing practices of Persianate intellectuals during the seventeenth century and beyond.

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# La cosa del pensiero in Gaṅgeśa Il Navya-Nyāya sull'oggetto, il pensiero e l'oggetto pensato

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**Abstract** Through the distinction between being and presence, Heidegger investigated the history of philosophy and questioned the relation between thought and its object. Such inquiries about the *thing* of thought are directed here to Gaṅgeśa, a leading figure in the New Logic (Navya-Nyāya). A composite picture emerges, through this decontextualising lens, that does not forget an ontological difference, in a self-reflexive, epistemologically rigorous, and ontologically articulate account capable of not distancing the *thing* from the thought that thinks it while also abandoning the forced alternative between naïve realism and subjective idealism.

**Keywords** Navya-Nyāya. Realism. Veridicality. Cognition. Epistemology.

**Sommario** 1 La cosa stessa. – 2 Essere e presenza nel Nyāya. – 3 Pensare l'essere. – 4 La questione del vero. – 5 Conclusioni.



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## 1 La cosa stessa

L'indagine filosofica di Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) ha interpretato il destino del pensiero d'occidente come costitutivamente dimentico della differenza ontologica tra 'essere' (*Sein*) ed 'ente' (*Seiende*; cf. Heidegger 2009) poiché programmaticamente dedicato allo studio dell'ente, rappresentato nella teoresi (*Vorstellung*) come semplice 'presenza' (*Anwesenheit*).

La metafisica pensa l'ente alla maniera del rappresentare fondativo. [...] Ciò che contraddistingue il pensiero metafisico [...] sta nel fatto che esso, partendo da ciò che è presente, rappresenta quest'ultimo nella sua presenza e così lo espone a partire dal suo fondamento come fondato. (Heidegger 2007, 73-4)

A conclusione di questa parabola storica, raggiunti gli esiti ultimi della fine della filosofia, il compito che si impone al pensiero consiste secondo Heidegger nel cercare di tornare 'alla cosa stessa' (*zur Sache selbst*), come già avevano dichiarato Hegel e Husserl, ripensando non più metafisicamente la questione dell'essere.

Se ci stiamo interrogando sul compito del pensiero, nell'orizzonte della filosofia questo vorrebbe dire determinare ciò che riguarda il pensiero, ciò che per il pensiero è ancora conteso, il caso oggetto di disputa. Questo è il significato della parola tedesca *Sache*, cosa. Essa nomina ciò con cui nel presente caso il pensiero ha a che fare - nelle parole di Platone: *to pragma auto*.<sup>1</sup> (80)

Se la questione dell'essere (*Sein*) non può essere ridotta alla presenza (*Anwesenheit*) dell'ente, neppure la nozione di 'svelatezza' o 'non-ascosità' (*aletheia*; *Unverborgenheit*) - consentita da quell'apertura originaria che Heidegger chiama 'radura' (*Lichtung*) - può coincidere *tout court* con quella di verità (*Wahrheit*), poiché di certo eccede ogni impresa tassonomica e definitoria (*certitudo*) o il mero adeguarsi (*adaequatio*) del pensiero al suo oggetto.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Il passo citato si riferisce a Platone (V-IV AEV), *Lettera VII*, 341 c7 (1988, II: 695; corsivo aggiunto): «Su tali argomenti anzi non c'è né vi sarà un mio scritto. Di quello che è il loro 'oggetto' non si deve parlare, come si fa per le altre scienze». Riguardo ai precedenti della locuzione *zur Sache selbst*, cf. Hegel (1807) 1995, 49 e Husserl (1911) 1994, 105.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger (1964) 1980, 184: «L'*Aletheia*, la non-ascosità (*Unverborgenheit*) pensata come *Lichtung* dove si dispiega la presenza (*Anwesenheit*) non è ancora la verità (*Wahrheit*). È dunque l'*Aletheia* qualcosa di meno della verità? O è qualcosa di più, poiché soltanto essa concede la verità come *adaequatio* e *certitudo*, poiché non può darsi presenza e presentificazione fuori dal dominio della *Lichtung*? [...] Perciò non era appropriato, anzi poteva indurre in errore, chiamare l'*Aletheia* nel senso della *Lichtung* 'verità'. Cf. anche Heidegger (1930-31; 1942) 1975, 48-50; (1964) 2007, 90-1. Riguardo al passo in

## 2 Essere e presenza nel Nyāya

Seppure con metodi ed esiti diversissimi da quelli heideggeriani, la questione dell'essere, in forma perfettamente compiuta e secondo traiettorie parallele e indipendenti dalla corrispettiva matrice greca, è stata dibattuta in profondità nel contesto culturale sudasiatico anche da Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya (XIV secolo), figura di spicco della corrente filosofica detta Nuova Logica (Navya-Nyāya), in particolare nella sezione dedicata al *Discorso sul carattere della conoscenza (pramā-lakṣaṇa-vāda)* del suo testo capitale, la *Gemma della Riflessione sulla Verità (Tattvacintāmaṇi; TCM)*.<sup>3</sup> Come sono stati dunque pensati l'ente e l'essere che lo fa essere nell'argomentare di Gaṅgeśa e del Navya-Nyāya? Nelle linee a seguire proveremo ad accostare queste due voci, distantissime nel tempo e nello spazio, lasciando che l'una interroghi l'altra riguardo alla 'cosa' del pensiero.

Nel linguaggio dei Naiyāyika e più in generale della trattatistica (*śāstra*) sudasiatica, l'esistenza in quanto presenza e disponibilità dell'ente è esprimibile come *astitva*, la proprietà occorrente in enti determinati che si danno come esistenti e presenti, per l'appunto, qui e ora. Nel descriverla, la 'condizione [di ciò che] è' (*asti-tva*) apre di necessità alla dimensione temporale. Nel suo *Commento al Nyāya-sūtra* (cf. nota 3), Vātsyāyana (V secolo) descrive la connessione tra esistenza e temporalità con uno stringente ragionamento per assurdo:

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cui figura il termine *aletheia*, cf. Parmenide (IV-V AEV), framm. 1 (2000, 25) e Heidegger (1964) 2007, 88. Sulle traduzioni 'radura/luco' e 'svelatezza/non-ascosità', si vedano rispettivamente Galvan 2012, 159 nota 135; 179-82 note 161-2. Riguardo alla definizione scolastica di verità come adeguazione, cf. Tommaso d'Aquino (XIII), *Summa Theologiae* I. Q.16, A.2 arg. 2. (1992, 108-9): *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus* (La verità è l'adeguazione tra la cosa e l'intelletto). Nel medesimo passo, è lo stesso Aquinate a dichiarare di rifarsi al *De Definitionibus* di Isaac Israëli Ben Solomon (IX-X); i curatori precisano (1992, 109 nota 6) che «L'Aquinate deve aver conosciuto questa definizione in Avicenna [Ibn Sīnā; X-XI] (*Metaphys. tract. 1, c. 9*)». Riguardo invece alla nozione di *certitudo*, in quanto indice di 'determinazione', cf. per es. Tommaso d'Aquino 1982, 18-19: *Dictur [quidditas] etiam forma, secundum quod per formam significatur certitudo uniuscuiusque rei, ut dicit Avicenna in secundo Metaphysicae suae* (On l'appelle [*quidditas*] aussi *forme*, car c'est la détermination de chaque chose, comme le dit Avicenne).

**3** Sulla biografia di Gaṅgeśa, originario di Darbhanga (Mithilā, odierno Bihar), si vedano Potter 1993 e Bhattacharya 1958, 96-112. Rendo il titolo secondo la tradizione più accreditata e il termine *tattva* come 'verità', seguendo l'indicazione di Phillips (TCM 2009): «truth». Il termine e la nozione stessa di verità hanno tuttavia, in Gaṅgeśa, risonanze complesse che si renderanno evidenti nel corso del testo. Una seconda lettura del titolo, per quanto inusuale, potrebbe tuttavia essere in questo contesto: *Gemma del pensiero sulla cosa come è*. Per il lettore non familiare con queste tradizioni intellettuali, ricordiamo come Gaṅgeśa sia unanimemente riconosciuto come il fondatore della nuova (*navya*) stagione della ben più antica scuola del Nyāya, il cui testo fondante è il *Nyāya-sūtra* (NS; II-IV secolo EV) ascrivito a Gautama Akṣapāda. Il termine relativo alla scuola Nyāya, in funzione aggettivale e sostantivale, è *naiyāyika*. Sulla traduzione di *pramā-lakṣaṇa*, si veda la nota 21.

La manifestazione fenomenica è ‘acquisizione di identità’; la dissoluzione è la sua perdita. Se, [anche] privato di quell’identità, ciò che si trasforma è, [allora] non è possibile negarne la permanenza [nel tempo]. L’esistenza di ciò che si trasforma – [nonostante lo si ipotizzi] privo di quel possesso di identità – non è che permanenza [nel tempo]. [...] Ciò che esiste non perde l’identità posseduta. Esistenza [dunque, permanenza] e perdita dell’identità posseduta sono due nozioni contraddittorie e non conciliabili.<sup>4</sup>

Il nuovo Nyāya conferma l’antico e traduce il tema in termini rigorosamente gnoseologici. Sintetizza Dinakara Bhaṭṭa, nel suo subcommento *Dinakarī* alla *Kārikāvalī* di Kṛṣṇadāsa Sārvabhauma (XVI secolo):

Ci sono qui delle cose [ma nessun vaso. Nondimeno], nell’assenza di ciò che è distinto da [quella] presenza – [assenza definibile come] il tempo nullo (*śūnya*) della cognizione avente la forma della presenza come qualificatore – [nella cognizione, per esempio], ‘Non c’è un vaso’ non c’è imprecisione nell’atto di conoscenza.<sup>5</sup>

In altri termini, la presenza non può darsi se non entro la temporalità che qualifica una particolare cognizione determinata (*viśiṣṭa-jñāna*). Una puntuale coordinata temporale, sostengono i Naiyāyika, individua la cognizione che ha quell’oggetto, e non un altro, come suo qualificante: a terra un sasso, ora. Per questa ragione, a terra c’è un sasso e non un vaso. Quel vaso che non c’è definisce invece il contenuto di una cognizione che è qualificata dalla presenza e occorre in un tempo nullo, vale a dire, non occorre. Se poi, per ipotesi, immaginassimo di obliterare l’identità del sasso, allora questo non sarebbe più il sasso che è, ma altro. Tuttavia, le cognizioni che lo riguardano testimoniano che questo è ancora quel sasso: esso perdura nella forma che gli è propria, dunque, esiste; viceversa, esistendo perdura. Il tempo è allora parte in causa in ogni determinazione di esistenza e dimensione entro cui ogni ente non può che essere

<sup>4</sup> NB 1.2.6 (2009, 350-1): *vyaktir ātmalābhah | apāyaḥ pracyutiḥ | yady ātmalābhāt pracyuto vikāro 'sti nityatvapratiśedho nopapadyate | yad vyakter apetasyāpi vikārasyāstitvaṃ tat khalu nityatvaṃ iti | [...]* *yad asti na tad ātmalābhāt pracyavate | astitvaṃ cātmalābhāt pracyutir iti ca viruddhāv etau dharmau na saha sambhavata iti*. Le traduzioni dal sanscrito all’italiano sono dell’Autore; le traduzioni dal sanscrito all’inglese o francese o da altre lingue all’italiano si riferiscono all’edizione citata.

<sup>5</sup> DN, 90: *atra kecid bhāvabhinnatvasyābhāvātve bhāvatvarūpaviśeṣaṅgajñānaśūnyakāle ghaṭo nāstiti pratītyanāpatih*. Sull’errata attribuzione a Viśvanātha Pañcānana de *L’analisi del linguaggio (Bhāṣāpariccheda)* o *Collana di strofe (Kārikāvalī)* e dell’auto-commento *Collana di perle dei principi del Nyāya (Nyāya-siddhānta-muktāvalī)*, si veda Bhattacharya 1941; 1948 e Matilal 1977, 109.



(ri-)compreso. In un'immagine lapidaria di Kṛṣṇadāsa, il tempo è il 'luogo' dei fenomeni.<sup>6</sup>

Secondo la successione «genesi, esistenza, trasformazione, crescita, decadimento, annichilazione» (cf. nota 7), l'etimologo Yāska (c. V secolo AEV) precisa che l'unità lessicale «'esso è' (*asti*) indica un ente manifestatosi». <sup>7</sup> Il termine *asti-tva* 'esistenza', si accorda così col senso espresso dalla sua radice verbale, *√as* 'essere' in quanto 'esistere'. Tale radice esprime sul piano linguistico la 'funzione individualizzante' (*viśeṣa*) operata dalla determinazione temporale. Riassumendo, si può dire che 'Caitra esiste' solo se questi è entrato in relazione con la temporalità, se esiste nel tempo *t*. Dunque, il soggetto (*dharmin*) di tale individualizzazione è detto esistere proprio e solo perché è posto in relazione col tempo. Di converso, come già nel caso del vaso che non c'era di Dinakara Bhaṭṭa, ciò che non entra in questa relazione semplicemente non esiste.<sup>8</sup> Se infatti l'esistente è definito in termini di temporalità, il suo opposto non potrà che essere ciò che non si è individuato perché non ancora entrato in relazione con alcuna determinazione temporale. Per esempio, un qualsiasi effetto, quale un vaso o un panno, prima di esistere nel tempo, di certo 'pre-non è' (*prāg-a-sat*) rispetto alla propria origine o causa, semplicemente perché non è ancora. Ciò che non è si configura così come l'assente (*abhāva-pratīyogin*; il 'contropositivo dell'assenza') rispetto a ciò che invece, in un dato tempo, lo produrrà. Analogamente, un corno di lepre o il vello di tartaruga, non essendo mai entrati in relazione

<sup>6</sup> KA 45, 195: *janyānām janakah kālo jagatām āsrayo mataḥ* (Il tempo è inteso come causa di ciò che è prodotto e locus dell'universo). Cf. TD, 11: *sarvādharāḥ kālāḥ sarvakāryanimittakāraṇam ca* (Il tempo è locus di ogni ente e causa efficiente di ogni effetto); NK, 109: *astitvam* - [ka] *kālasambandhitvam* | *yathā ghaṭo 'stīty ādau ghaṭāder astitvam* (esistenza: [a] relazione con il tempo; per esempio, l'esistenza di un vaso, ecc., [viene espressa in asserti come] 'C'è un vaso', ecc.).

<sup>7</sup> NR 1.2 (1967, 29): *ṣaḍbhāvavikārā bhavanti vārṣyāyaṇiḥ | jāyate 'sti vipariṇamate vardhate 'pakṣīyate vinaśyati | [...] astīty utpannasya sattvasyāvadhāraṇam* (Sono sei le modificazioni dell'ente secondo [il grammatico] Vārṣyāyaṇi: nasce, è, muta, cresce, decade, scompare. [...] 'Esso è' indica un ente manifestatosi). DN, 78: *sann iti pratīti-viṣayo bhāvatvam eva* ('Esistere' è quella condizione di presenza che è oggetto di intenzionalità [conoscitiva]). NK, 109: *astitvam* - [kha] *as-śabdavad-asyārtho 'nusamdhēyaḥ* (esistenza: [b] il significato è da cercarsi in ciò che possiede quanto [espresso] dal termine *vas*).

<sup>8</sup> NK, 100: *as - (dhatuḥ) [ka] kālasambandhaviśeṣaḥ | yathā Caitro 'stīty ādau dhātvarthaḥ* (*as* - radice verbale; [a] specifica una relazione con il tempo; così, il suo significato [si vince in asserti come] 'Caitra è', ecc.). Riguardo alla categoria (*padārtha*) *viśeṣa*, anche in quanto nozione inevitabilmente onto-gnoseologica, cf. TrS (1930, 6); NK, 784-6; Jha 2001, 367: «particular», «differentiating factor»; Potter 1976, 142-3: «individuator». Sul tempo (*kāla*), quale una delle nove sostanze (*dravya*) del sistema Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, cf. VS 1.1.5 (1923, 17): *prthivy āpas tejo vāyur ākāśam kālo dig ātmā mana iti dravyāni* (Terra, acqua, fuoco, aria, spazio, tempo, direzione, sé, mente; ecco le sostanze); NK, 230-3; TrS (1930, 11); Wright 2021, 172-84; Guha 2016, 49-50. Si noti che in quanto sostanza, anche *kāla* sarà necessariamente occorrenza dell'universale (*jāti*) *sattā*; cf. *infra* e note 16-17.

col tempo e prevedibilmente mai entrandovi, sono esempi di non esistenti assoluti. L'inesistente è anche ciò che è inefficace, privo di efficienza causale (*arthakriyā-a-kārin*) rispetto a qualsiasi forma d'azione, poiché solo ciò che è può condurre all'effetto. In generale, il non esistente è distinto (*bhinna*) da ciò che invece è 'in possesso d'essere' (*sattā-vad*) in quanto ne è l'occorrenza.<sup>9</sup> Ciò manifesta come la non-esistenza (*asat*) non sia certo equivalente all'assenza (*abhāva*) o alla differenza. Solo nel caso di un vaso non ancora prodotto, il vaso 'non c'è prima' perché 'non è prima' (*prāgabhāva = prāgasat*).<sup>10</sup> Tuttavia, se un altro vaso 'non c'è' perché è altrove, questo è semplicemente assente e non 'non esistente'. Allo stesso modo, quello stesso vaso 'non è' un panno perché è 'diverso' da un panno, non perché radicalmente non sia. Puntualizza Gaṅgeśa come, in tutti i casi possibili, l'assenza (*abhāva*) – sia essa preliminare, annichilativa, costante o mutua – sia sempre esperita insieme col proprio contropositivo, ovvero, ciò che è dichiarato assente, diverso o negato. Se un vaso non c'è, la definizione della sua assenza dipende (*adhīna*) da questo stesso vaso. Assenza e negazione sono sempre assenza e negazione 'di' qualcosa, e non mai come un che di incondizionato, come nel caso di

<sup>9</sup> VS 9.1.1-5 (1923, 262-5): *kriyāguṇavyapadeśābhāvāt prāgasat || sad asat || asataḥ kriyāguṇavyapadeśābhāvād arthāntaram || sac cāsat || yac cānyat asat atas tad asat ||* (1. In consequence of the non-application of action and attribute, [an effect is] non-existent prior [to its production]). 2. The existent [becomes] non-existent. 3. [The existent is] a different object from the non-existent, inasmuch as action and attribute cannot be predicated of the non-existent. 4. The existent is also non-existent. 5. And that which is a different non-existent from these, is [absolutely] non-existent). Nota in proposito Śaṅkara Miśra (XV secolo), nel celebre *Ornamento del Vaiśeṣikasūtra* (*Vaiśeṣikasūtra-upaskāra*), VU 9.1.1 (1873, 264-9, 1) che un panno o un vaso, prima della loro produzione, non sono perché privi di attributi e al di fuori della catena causale; 2) che un vaso che era, a seguito dell'intervento del martello, non è più; 3) che esistenza e non esistenza sono inconciliabili, in ragione delle qualificazioni e dell'efficacia causale possedute dall'una ma non dall'altra; 4) che, per così dire, *omnis determinatio est negatio*, poiché un panno non è un vaso; 5) ciò che non rientra nei primi tre casi di non esistenza (precedente, susseguente, differenziale; cf. nota 10) non è in senso assoluto. Cf. anche NK, 102: *asat - [1] sattāvadbhinnam [...] [3] yat kālasāmānyāsaṃbandhi tat | yathā śāśaśṛṅgakūrmaromādi iti [...] [5] arthakriyā-a-kāri* (non essere - [1] distinto da ciò che è in possesso dell'essere. [...] [3] Ciò che mai è un termine in relazione con la generalità del tempo non è; per esempio, il corno di lepre e il vello di tartaruga. [...] [5] Ciò che non ha efficacia causale). Gli esempi evocati, il 'corno di lepre' (*śāśaśṛṅga*) e il 'vello di tartaruga' (*kūrmaroman*), sono, nel dibattito filosofico sudasiatico, proverbiale figure di inesistenza. Cf. per opposizione, NK, 946: [14] *arthakriyā-kāritvam sattvam* (Essere [dunque] efficacia d'azione). Jha 2001, 50: «*arthakriyā-kārin*: that which leads to a consistent behaviour». Riguardo alla traduzione di *sattva* con 'essere', cf. *infra* e note 16, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Nel contesto del sistema Nyāya, *abhāva* è concetto particolarmente complesso. Per una prima introduzione si vedano NK, 66; TrS (1930, 6); Matilal 1968; Pellegrini 2015. Basti qui ricordare come la nozione di 'assenza' venga declinata in pre-assenza o assenza preliminare (*prāgabhāva*), assenza annichilativa (*pradhvaṃsābhāva*), assenza costante (*atyantābhāva*), mutua assenza o differenza (*anyonyābhāva*).

impossibili asserti quali 'Ecco un'assenza!'.<sup>11</sup> Un principio percettivo del Nyāya vuole infatti che l'apprensione di un'assenza sia l'effettiva non-cognizione di ciò che è assente da parte di ciò che sarebbe deputato a percepirlo se questo fosse presente (*yogyānupalabdhī*). In altri termini, se qualsiasi oggetto è appreso per mezzo di un particolare organo di senso e non un altro, questo stesso percepirà contestualmente quel che l'oggetto è (ossia, la sua *jāti*; un vaso, e non un panno) insieme con la sua assenza.<sup>12</sup> Questa la sostanziale consonanza *ante litteram* di Gaṅgeśa con l'obiezione di Carnap contro Heidegger.<sup>13</sup> Cosa significa allora la comune espressione 'Non c'è nulla'? Se l'assenza è determinata da ciò che è assente e, nella cognizione, il negato è logicamente preminente rispetto alla negazione che lo nega, non avrebbe dunque torto Carnap nel dire che là fuori non c'è 'il' nulla, ma semplicemente non c'è 'qualcosa'. Tuttavia, l'argomentare dei Naiyāyika non si ferma qui. Come abbiamo visto, ciò che non esiste (*asat*) è anche ciò che è diverso da ciò che invece 'possiede l'essere' (*sattāvadbhinna*); la differenza ontologica, nel senso di Heidegger, non sembra dunque completamente dimenticata. Di più, se vale il principio percettivo descritto e il primato logico del *negatum* sulla negazione che lo nega, allora *asat* come *sattāvadbhinna* dipende doppiamente da *sattā*, ossia da quella proprietà generale (*jāti*; cf. nota 17), massimamente comprensiva, che chiamiamo 'essere'. In primo luogo, *asat* ne è distinto; in secondo luogo, *asat* dipende dalla mancata apprensione di *sattā*. L'esistenza come *astitva*, propria di un dato

<sup>11</sup> TCM (2009, 455): *sapratīyogiko 'bhāvo 'nubhūyate | ghaṭo na paṭo nety anubhāvān na tu tanmātram | ato 'bhāva-vitti-vedyatvaṃ pratīyogināḥ pratīyogi-jñānādhiṇa-jñānatvaṃ cābhāvāsyānubhāva-sākṣikaṃ gosādrśyavat* (An absence is experienced as having a countercorrelate (or 'absentee' *pratīyogin*). For, there is the awareness, 'No pot (is there on the floor)', and 'No cloth (is there)', (and so on). An absence is not experienced as a 'mere that'. Therefore, a countercorrelate is cognized in every cognition of an absence. Furthermore, experience testifies that a cognition of an absence is dependent (i.e., causally dependent) on cognition of a countercorrelate, like (cognition of) similarity to a cow (on the part of *gayal*, a kind of buffalo)).

<sup>12</sup> Kuppaswami Śāstri ricorda in TrS (1951, 177) l'adagio di scuola: *yenendriyeṇa yā vyaktiḥ grhyate, tanniṣṭhā jātiḥ tadabhāvaś ca tenendriyeṇaiva grhyate* (L'organo di senso che apprende l'individuo apprende la classe che in quello [individuo] occorre e la sua assenza). Cf. anche NK, 679; Jha 2001, 11: «*an-upalabdhī*: absence of cognition or perceptual cognition»; 332: «*yogyānupalabdhī*: non-cognition of a thing which is compatible [yogyā] to be perceived»; 333: «*yogyānupalambha*: non apprehension of an object which is fit to be perceived». Il richiamo al concetto di *anupalabdhī*, nel medesimo senso, è trasversale e non limitato al contesto Nyāya; si pensi alla diffusa analisi del buddhista Dharmakīrti (VI-VII secolo), per esempio, in NU 2.12, 26: *tatrānupalabdhir yathā na pradeśaviśeṣe kvacid ghaṭa upalabdhī-lakṣaṇa-prāptasyānupalabdher iti* (A riguardo, la non apprensione [è esprimibile in asserti] quali 'In questo particolare luogo non c'è alcun vaso', in virtù della non apprensione di un attributo idoneo all'apprensione).

<sup>13</sup> Si veda Carnap (1932) 1969, 516-19, a commento di Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?* (1929). Per esempio: «Fuori non c'è nulla. *Fu(nu)*», invece di «Non c'è (non esiste, non è presente) qualcosa che sia fuori.  $\sim(\exists x). Fu(x)$ »; laddove «la parola 'nulla' viene usata come nome [... e non] solo per formulare una proposizione esistenziale negativa».

ente, è possibile in quanto occorrenza della più fondamentale proprietà *sattā* o *bhāva*(*tva*), l'essere che fa essere tutti gli enti che sono in quanto loro ragion d'essere: quell'ente, che è qui e ora, è solo in quanto occorrenza propria di *astitva* ('essere nel tempo'; cf. *supra*), a sua volta pervasa da *sattā*. In altri termini, è la stessa *sattā* a permettere l'apprensione della propria assenza. L'apprensione di un'assenza è una cognizione 'in negativo', poiché sempre e solo condotta a partire dall'obliterazione di una positività. L'assenza è così da intendersi come dipendente dalla presenza, la non-esistenza dall'esistenza, il non-essere dall'essere. In senso proprio, ciò che radicalmente non è non può mai essere appreso, poiché neppure si mostra, «poiché – dice Gaṅgeśa – non c'è apparizione dell'inesistente» (*avastuno 'bhānāt*; TCM 2009, 220). Ovvero, come già sintetizzato dalla *Bhagavadgītā* (2.16a), *nāsato vidyate bhāvo*, «di ciò che non è non c'è presenza». <sup>14</sup>

Coerentemente, le negazioni (*abhāva*) di *astitva* – qui adottando, strumentalmente e solo momentaneamente, un impianto proposizionale secondo il quadrato aristotelico degli opposti (Aristotele 1996, 227-9), al fine di generare ogni opposizione possibile – saranno simultaneamente l'assenza' (*abhāva*), come suo subalterno e contraddittorio, più radicalmente la 'non-esistenza' (*asat*) come suo contrario e contraddittorio. Se i vasi, in quanto occorrenze della proprietà 'essere vaso', stanno in relazione col tempo, allora 'I vasi esistono'. Nondimeno, 'I vasi esistono' e il suo contrario 'I vasi non esistono' (nel senso di 'Nessun vaso esiste') non possono essere simultaneamente vere, ma solo disgiuntivamente vere o entrambe false. Così per 'I corni di lepre esistono' e 'I corni di lepre non esistono'; poiché la proprietà 'essere corno di lepre' mai entra in relazione col tempo. Per le medesime ragioni, le proposizioni sub-contrarie 'Qualche vaso esiste' e 'Qualche vaso non esiste' non possono invece essere simultaneamente false. Lo stesso vale per 'Qualche corno di lepre esiste' e 'Qualche corno di lepre non esiste'. La verità della superalterna 'I vasi esistono' implica la verità della subalterna 'Qualche vaso esiste' (poiché la proprietà 'essere vaso' è in relazione col tempo), ma non viceversa, poiché il fatto che la 'vasità' trovi occorrenza in alcune sue istanze non implica l'occorrenza di ogni possibile altra, se ulteriormente qualificata (*viśiṣṭa*; per es. dalle sue dimensioni cicliche). Così per 'I corni di lepre non esistono' e 'Qualche corno di lepre non esiste'. La verità de 'I vasi esistono' impedisce invece la verità della sua contraddittoria 'Qualche vaso non esiste'. Lo stesso vale per 'I corni di lepre non esistono' e 'Qualche corno di lepre esiste'.

<sup>14</sup> Si consideri anche Heidegger (1935) 1990, 34: «'Perché vi è, in generale, l'essente?'. L'aggiunta: 'e non il nulla?' risulta superflua non solo agli effetti di una formulazione più serrata della domanda, ma soprattutto perché essa resta, in definitiva, un'espressione che non significa niente. Infatti, che cosa c'è da chiedere riguardo al nulla? Il nulla è semplicemente nulla. Il domandare non ha qui nulla da cercare. Col menzionare il nulla non si progredisce minimamente nella conoscenza dell'essente».

Da ciò emerge che, se l'esistenza (*astitva*) è stata con precisione descritta come la relazione di un ente con la temporalità e se la sua negazione si è articolata nelle forme complesse appena descritte, la nozione opposta ad assenza e non-esistenza si rivela ancor più composta: *bhāva* sarà dunque affermazione, positività, relazione e finanche 'essere'. In primo luogo, *bhāva* si contrappone innanzitutto alla sua negazione, *abhāva*. Dunque, le prime sei categorie (*padārtha*) del Nyāya, poiché non negative sono definibili come positive, affermative e in qualche modo essenti.<sup>15</sup> Così, un fattore differenziale (*viśeṣa*) o una generalità (*sāmānya*) sono detti 'essenti', seppure non 'esistenti' in senso proprio (cf. *astitva*), come invece lo è un vaso. In un secondo senso, tale positività 'è' può intendersi *tout court* come 'essere', per *bhāva* = *bhāvatva* = *sattā* = *sattva*.<sup>16</sup> In sintesi, l'ente manifesta di certo e *in primis astitva*, nondimeno, e in maniera ancor più radicale, è anche occorrenza di *sattā*.

### 3 Pensare l'essere

Se questa, dunque, è l'articolata nozione del Nyāya relativa all'essente e alle sue negazioni, qual è, tuttavia, il rapporto tra pensiero ed essere? Nel contesto di qualsiasi cognizione determinata (*jñāna*), *sattā* è la nozione (*pratīti*) o il qualificante (*viśeṣaṇa*) più generale e comprensivo (*parasāmānya*), poiché tutte le sostanze (*dravya*), qualità (*guṇa*) e azioni (*karman*) devono essere riconosciute come sue occorrenze proprie. Ontologicamente, è la classe (*jāti*) non ricompresa in alcun'altra ed è ciò che offre il criterio per marcare il confine tra ciò che è (benché talvolta assente o diverso) e ciò che non è. E tuttavia,

<sup>15</sup> Delle sette categorie ontologiche ammesse dal Nyāya, le prime tre (sostanza, qualità, azione) sono le fondamentali e più antiche; le prime sei sono inoltre condivise con il Vaiśeṣika; la settima, l'assenza, è propria del Nyāya. Per una breve, ma efficace discussione delle differenze e affinità tra Nyāya e Vaiśeṣika riguardo alle categorie, si vedano, per es., MK 1.2, 40-1; DK, 41.

<sup>16</sup> Jha 2001, 311: «*bhāva*: positive (entity)»; Ingalls 1951, 53-4: «presence, lit. becoming». VS 1.2.7 (1923, 43): *sad iti yato dravyaguṇakarmasu sā sattā* ([Con la nozione di] 'esistente' [*sat, vas*], da cui sostanze, qualità, azioni, si intende la 'condizione di essere' [*sat-tā*]). VS 7.2.27-8 (1923, 245-6): *dravyatvaguṇatvapatīṣedho bhāvena vyākhyātāḥ || tattvam bhāvena* ([Riguardo all'inerenza] la negazione delle proprietà sostanza e qualità viene spiegata con la presenza. La realtà [dell'inerenza] con la presenza). Śaṅkara Mīśra esplicita nel commento le equivalenze terminologiche qui in esame in VU (1873, 245-6): *bhāvena sattayā dravyatvaguṇatvapatīṣedho dravyatvaguṇatvābhavaḥ* [...] *tattvam ekatvam bhāvena sattayā* (con la presenza, ossia con la condizione di essere; negazione delle proprietà sostanza e qualità, ossia della loro assenza [...]) Realtà [dell'inerenza], ossia unità [es. del tutto e delle parti]; con la presenza, ossia con la condizione di essere). Cf. anche DN, 78 nella nota successiva; NK, 622-4: *bhāvaḥ - [2] sattā (sāmānyam)* ('Presenza' - [2] la condizione di 'essere' (in quanto generalità)); NK, 946: *sattvam - sattāśabdavadasyārtho 'nusamdheyah* ('Proprietà esistere' - da intendersi come avente il [medesimo] significato della locuzione 'proprietà essere').

*sattā* non esiste e non è presente come esiste ed è presente un vaso; non è un ente in mezzo agli altri, seppure sommo. Essa piuttosto definisce gli enti per quel che sono e in quegli enti occorre (*pra-√vṛt*), per inerenza (*samavāya*).<sup>17</sup>

Ciò posto, cosa significa pensare il vero? E quindi, come si può, al limite, pensare la verità dell'essere? La questione di *prāmāṇya* - la 'validità' dei mezzi di conoscenza riguardo alla loro 'veridicità' - di necessità si impone.<sup>18</sup> L'indagine su *prāmāṇya* si apre qui nel suo senso più fondamentale di *pramātva* - la proprietà di 'essere *pramā*', una

**17** VS 1.2.4-5 (1923, 41): *bhāvo 'anuvṛtter eva hetuvāt sāmānyam eva || dravyatvaṃ guṇatvaṃ karmatvaṃ ca sāmānyāni viśeṣās ca* (La presenza [di ciò che si manifesta, di contro alla sua assenza], essendo ragione di sola ricorrenza, è solo generalità. Le proprietà 'sostanza', 'qualità' e 'azione' sono sia generalità sia specificazioni). KA 11, 83: *ghaṭādīnām kapālādau dravyeṣu guṇakarmanoh | teṣu jāteś ca sambandhaḥ samavāyaḥ prakīrtitaḥ* (La relazione di un vaso con le sue metà, ecc., di qualità e azione con le sostanze, degli universali con quelle [sostanze e azioni] è detta inerenza). DN, 78: *ata eva sāmānyādiṣv api sat iti vyavahāraḥ | na tv atirikṭā dravyādi-trika-vartinī sattākhyā jātiḥ iti* (Nel linguaggio comune, 'essere' vale 'generalità', ecc. Tuttavia, l'universale comprensivo che occorre nella triade sostanza, [qualità e azione] è denominato 'condizione di essere'). Cf. anche NK, 944-5: *sattā - dravyaguṇakarmasamavētā* ('Proprietà essere' - ciò che è inerente a sostanza, qualità e azione). Cf. anche TrS (1930, 5), nella traduzione di KŚ (1951, 18): «Generality is of two kinds - the more comprehensive and the less comprehensive [...]. In common speech *sāmānyā* means a common feature; but, in the technical language of Nyāya, it is equivalent to *jāti* and is understood to stand for a generic feature which inheres in all the individuals constituting a class and is eternal». Cf. NK, 1009-12, s.v. *sāmānyā*. Potter 1977, 133-5: «universal». Grimes 1996, 271: «*sāmānyā* - generality; class; universal feature; concept; *genus*». Cf. VS 1.2.7 (1923, 43): *sad iti yato dravyaguṇakarmasu sā sattā* (Existence is that to which are due the belief and usage, namely '[It is] existent', in respect of substance, attribute and action); VS 1.2.8 (1923, 43-4): *dravyaguṇakarmebhyo 'thāntaram sattā* (Existence is a different object from substance, attribute and action); VS 1.2.9 (1923, 45): *guṇakarmasu ca bhāvan na karma na guṇa* (And as it exists in attributes and actions, therefore it is neither attribute nor action); VS 1.2.10 (1923, 46): *sāmānyaviśeṣābhāvena ca* ([Existence is different from substance, attribute and action], also by reason of the absence of genus-species in it). Riguardo alla nozione cruciale di *jāti* nel sistema Navya-Nyāya, cf. NK, 291-3; Jha 2001, 302: «generic character/universal»; Phillips 2012, 165: «universal, natural kind, a property occurring in more than a single instance or locus»; Potter 1977, 134: «natural kind»; Ingalls 1951, 40: «generic character». Inutile dire che il senso tecnico di *jāti* non è da confondersi con significati comunemente associati con 'genere' e 'universale' nel contesto della tradizione di matrice greca. Nel testo si privilegeranno i traduttori 'classe' e 'proprietà generale'.

**18** Nel tentativo di fornire un traduttore unico per *prāmāṇya* scelgo qui 'veridicità', seppure consapevole della densità semantica del termine sanscrito e dei limiti conseguenti alla mia scelta. *Prāmāṇya* è quanto causalmente deriva da un *pramāṇa*, una valida fonte di conoscenza: In primo luogo, *prāmāṇya* è quanto accertato, garantito, (com-)misurato (*pra√mā*) da quella fonte. In seconda battuta, è il carattere veridico stesso di quanto ottenuto in quel processo di conoscenza; dunque, la garanzia epistemica, la giustificazione gnoseologica, l'evidenza causalmente e proceduralmente ottenuta. A supporto della mia scelta, cf. Jha 2001, 302: «authoritativeness, validity, authenticity»; Phillips 2012, 167: «(1) knowledge, the condition of being generated by a knowledge source, i.e., a true cognition's being generated by a genuine knowledge source, *pramāṇa*; (2) justification, truth-grounded evidence»; Phillips in TCM (2009): «veridicality» (cf. note 41, 43); Angot, NS (2009, 388-9): «autorité», «validité». Cf. anche NK, 591: *prāmāṇyam - [1]*

cognizione veridica, senza la quale quella cognizione non potrebbe essere detta conoscenza, ma solo *apramā*, errore - e non in quello derivato e processuale di *pramākaraṇatva*, la proprietà di 'essere condizione o causa di conoscenza'.<sup>19</sup> È infatti *prāmāṇya* a distinguere *pramā* da *apramā*, e non può dunque ridursi al suo senso debole di strumento pragmatico (*pravṛtṭyaupāyika*).<sup>20</sup>

Gaṅgeśa, nella sezione *pramā-lakṣaṇa-vāda* (*Discorso sul carattere della conoscenza*) della TCM, scarta ventiquattro possibili tesi riguardo alla definizione di verità.<sup>21</sup> Concentriamoci ora su alcune di queste obiezioni. Innanzitutto, Gaṅgeśa non rinuncia all'impianto teorico fondamentale del Nyāya secondo cui la veridicità di una cognizione consiste nel suo essere 'così come l'oggetto [è]' (*yathārtha*),<sup>22</sup> poiché una cognizione discordante, che dunque diverga dal suo oggetto, appare infatti come definizione appropriata all'errore e non certo alla verità.<sup>23</sup> Tuttavia, puntualizza Gaṅgeśa, la relazione di attinenza tra oggetto e cognizione, indicata dal termine *yathārtha*, non implica alcuna similarità o somiglianza (*sādrśya*). Una cognizione che abbia un vaso quale suo oggetto non è un vaso e neppure vi somiglia; poiché, un vaso è fatto d'argilla, mentre una cognizione occorre nel soggetto

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*pramātvam* | [2] *pramāṇatvam* (Veridicità: [1] lo status proprio di una cognizione veridica; [2] la condizione causa di conoscenza).

**19** Traduco *pramā* come 'cognizione veridica' e, dunque, 'conoscenza', poiché una cognizione non veridica non è che errore. Per la stessa ragione, evito locuzioni quali 'vera conoscenza' e simili in quanto ridondanze. Phillips in TCM 2009 (2009, 215) sceglie «veridical awareness». Approfondendo l'analisi, il Nyāya distingue tra l'atto di conoscere (*jñapti*) e le condizioni di produzione (*utpatti*) di quella conoscenza. Jha 2001, 163: «*jñapti*: understanding, cognition»; Jha 2001, 107: «*utpatti*: production».

**20** TCM (2009, 199-200): «*pravṛtṭyaupāyika* [...] motivator of effort». Jha 2001, 296: «*pravṛtṭyaupāyika*, cause of inducement involved». Cf. anche Mohanty 2006, 35 note 71-2.

**21** TCM (2009, 215-24, 229-36).

**22** Riguardo a *yathārtha*, NB 1.2.14 (2009, 364): *abhidhānasya dharmo yathārtha-prayogaḥ* (Le terme *dharmā* [du *sūtra*] note l'emploi de l'expression désignant dans son sens propre); per converso, NB 2.2.1 (2009, 479): *a-yathārthaḥ pramāṇoddeśa itī matvāha* (Considérant que l'énoncé des *pramāṇa* a été incorrect [l'objecteur] dit); una volta confutate le obiezioni, Vātsyāyana conclude in NB 2.2.2 (2009, 480): *so 'yam yathārtha eva pramāṇoddeśa itī* (L'énumération des *pramāṇa* est tout à fait correcte). Cf. anche TrS (1930, 23; 1951, 12, 104); Jha 2001, 327: «true experience [...]. Fact oriented apprehension or confirmable to truth»; Phillips 2012, 171: «matching or corresponding to an object, cognition 'as something is (or was)'».

**23** Cf. NK, 102: *asadarthaviṣayakatvam - viśeṣyāvṛttiprakāratvam | yathā śuktam idam rajatam itī jñānasya viśeṣyabhūtaśuktam rajatatvasyāvṛttitvena asadarthaviṣayakatvam* (La proprietà di 'possedere come contenuto ciò che non è' [è definibile come] 'il possedere un *qualificans* che non occorre nel *qualificandum*'. Si dà dunque il caso di 'possedere come contenuto ciò che non è' in esempi di cognizioni quali 'Questo è argento' laddove non vi sia che madreperla, poiché non vi è occorrenza alcuna dell'argento nella madreperla in quanto *qualificandum*).

conoscente (*ātman*) come sua qualità (*guṇa*).<sup>24</sup> Chiaramente, la mappa non è il territorio.<sup>25</sup> Neppure, la verità di una cognizione può essere definita come l'esperienza del reale (*tattvānubhavatva*), poiché l'irreale non è propriamente mai apparso e quindi mai appreso, neppure nel caso dell'errore. Si dà infatti errore solo se qualcosa appare (*bhāna*), seppure erroneo per definizione. Quell'apparire è allora a pieno titolo parte dell'esperienza e, dunque, non del tutto irreale.<sup>26</sup>

Il successo pragmatico dell'azione costituisce di certo un valido criterio di verifica, ma non è in grado di definire di per sé la veridicità di una cognizione da cui, di converso, logicamente dipende. Inoltre, ciò escluderebbe di fatto ogni cognizione vera ma disinteressata (*upekṣā*), ossia a cui non consegue alcuna azione. Inoltre, non si può escludere che un'azione efficace possa anche originare da una condizione di esplicito dubbio.<sup>27</sup> Neppure può venire in aiuto una definizione puramente internalista di verità quale esperienza non contraddetta (*abādha*). Per principio, una cognizione falsa può e deve venire contraddetta solo da una vera e la definizione in termini di non contraddizione si rivela così perfettamente circolare.<sup>28</sup> Analogamente, e in senso più forte, anche una definizione fondata sulla nozione di coerenza (*saṃvāda*) fallisce il suo scopo, poiché potrebbe darsi il caso di un sistema fallace di illusioni impeccabilmente coerenti, come nell'esempio dei desideri soddisfatti in sogno. La *folie à deux* o un'allucinazione collettiva precludono altresì il richiamo alla dimensione interpersonale.<sup>29</sup>

**24** TCM (2009, 218): *nāpi yathārthānubhavatvaṃ jñāne ghaṭatvādīnā yathā-sābdārtha-sādṛśyābhāvat | sādṛśya-mātrasya bhrame 'pi gatavāt* (Nor is the abstraction 'awareness matching the object' (or, alternatively, 'as the object, so is the awareness') the right abstract with which to characterize veridicality [*pramātvā*]. The word *yathā* ('matching' or 'as') means similarity, and there is no similarity between, for example, potness and cognition of a pot. (Potness exists in pots, and cognition is a quality of a self). Further, if it is similarity in general that is proposed (or, just any similarity), that would also obtain with non-veridical awareness).

**25** Korzybski 1933, 58: «A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness».

**26** TCM (2009, 220): *nāpi tattvānubhavatvam avastuno 'bhānāt | bhāne vā bhramasādhāraṇyāt* (Nor 'awareness of reality'. What is not a real object does not appear. Or if it does appear, then [this definition] would apply also to erroneous awareness).

**27** TCM (2009, 220): *nāpi samārtha-pravṛtti-janakānubhavatvam | upekṣā-pramāyām avyāpṭeḥ | tad-yogyatāyāḥ pramā-nirūpyatvāt* (Nor 'awareness that leads to successful activity'. This would not include those veridical awarenesses which result in an attitude of indifference (that are not acted upon). Furthermore (this characterization exhibits the fault of 'self-dependence' in that) the potentiality here (for successful activity) presupposes veridical awareness). Cf. anche Mohanty 2006, 35.

**28** TCM (2009, 219): *nāpy abādhitānubhavatvam | bādhasya viparīta-pramātvāt* (Nor 'awareness that is undefeated'. (This definition exhibits the fault of 'self-dependence') in that a defeating awareness is an opposed, confuting awareness that is itself veridical).

**29** TCM (2009, 219): *na apy saṃvādyānubhavatvam | jñānāntareṇa tathollīkhyamānavasya saṃvāditvasya bhrama-sādhāraṇatvāt* (Nor 'awareness that agrees with another



Quale dunque la corretta definizione di veridicità di una cognizione? Risponde con raffinata misura Gaṅgeśa: *tadvati tatprakāratvam*; ossia, è la proprietà di una cognizione che si esprime a un tempo nel possedere  $\phi$  quale suo qualificante e nel riferirsi a ciò che possiede  $\phi$ .<sup>30</sup> Una cognizione (*jñāna*) è per il Nyāya una qualità (*guṇa*) del soggetto conoscente, ma non una sua modificazione e neppure uno stato mentale, poiché la mente (*manas*) è solo uno tra i suoi fattori causali.<sup>31</sup> Ciò rende la cognizione un fatto irrimediabilmente privato, in quanto il medesimo *guṇa* mai può essere comune a due diversi soggetti. *Jñāna* non è neppure un'attività o un atto (*kriyā*), poiché ciò lo definirebbe in termini di movimento (*spandana*), il che non è. Una cognizione è piuttosto il prodotto (*phala*) di un processo.<sup>32</sup> Per esempio, il conoscere conduce alla conoscenza, così come il dubitare al dubbio. In quanto *guṇa* del soggetto, *jñāna* è 'priva di componenti' (*niravayava*) e, ontologicamente, senza forma (*nirākāra*; cf. Mohanty 2006, 24). Nondimeno, una cognizione determinata (*savikalpa*) costituisce un complesso logico analizzabile secondo costituenti e relazioni. Per esempio, la cognizione elementare 'vaso' - di per sé *guṇa* indiviso riferito al soggetto conoscente - è analizzabile nei termini della proprietà 'essere vaso' in quanto *qualificans* (*prakāra*, *dharma*, *viśeṣaṇa*) del vaso stesso in quanto *qualificandum* (*dharmin*, *viśeṣya*), fra loro connessi secondo la relazione di inerenza (*samavāya-sambandha*). A definire la cognizione in quanto tale e in senso proprio - sia essa *pramā* (conoscenza) o *apramā* (errore o dubbio) - è così, da un lato, la caratteristica intenzionale (*viśayatā*) di riferirsi al proprio oggetto o contenuto,

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cognition'. Agreement or conformity with another cognition insofar as it is made explicit is (potentially) common to error). Sull'esempio dei desideri soddisfatti in sogno, che qui Gaṅgeśa sembra fare proprio, cf. Śrīharṣa (XI secolo) in Phillips 1997, 164-6; TCM (2009, 219-20). Il tema dell'efficienza causale in sogno è una strategia argomentativa largamente frequentata; si pensi, per esempio, al buddhista Vasubandhu (IV-V secolo) in VM 3 (2005, 413): *deśādīnīyamaḥ siddhaḥ svapnavat* (Il vincolo di luogo, ecc., [nello stato di veglia] è stabilito essere analogo a [quello] del sogno).

**30** TCM (2009, 236): *yatra yad asti tatra tasya anubhavaḥ pramā | tadvati tatprakārakānubhavo vā | yatra yan na asti tatra tasya jñānaṃ tad-a-bhāvavati tatprakāraka-jñānaṃ vā apramā* (Veridical awareness is 'awareness of something there where it is'. Or, 'awareness with  $\phi$  [*tat*] as predication content about an object that is  $\phi$ '. [...] Another translation: veridical awareness is 'an awareness that  $\phi$ x only if  $\phi$ x', in other words, an awareness that an object is  $\phi$  only if it is indeed  $\phi$ ). Cf. anche TCM (2009, 237).

**31** Cf. TrS (1930, 5, 12-13): *rūpa-[...]-buddhi-[...]-caturvīṃśati-guṇāḥ* (Le ventiquattro qualità sono: colore, [...], cognizione, [ecc.]); *jñānādhikaraṇam ātmā* (Il soggetto è il sostrato della cognizione); *sukhādy-upalabdhi-sādhanaṃ indriyam manaḥ* (La mente è l'organo strumento di cognizione del piacere e via enumerando). NS 1.1.15 (2009, 296): *buddhir upalabdhir jñānam ity anarthānantaram* (Les termes *buddhi*, *upalabdhi* et *jñāna* ne denotent pas [dans ce traité] des objets différents).

**32** Cf. per es. Uddyotakara 1985, 235, comm. *Vārttika ad NS 1.1.23: yadi guṇaḥ sa na sādharmaṇaḥ* (Se è una qualità, [allora la cognizione, inerendo a soggetti diversi], non ha un sostrato comune); Jayanta 1936, 16: *na hi kriyāvabhāvam jñānam api tu phalāvabhāvam eva* (Invero la conoscenza non ha natura di azione, ma di risultato).

dunque di *in-tendere* epistemologicamente ad altro; d'altro canto, di essere qualificata da una particolare proprietà, a quel contenuto riferita.<sup>33</sup> Quando, dunque, una cognizione, secondo la definizione congegnata da Gaṅgeśa, può dirsi vera? Quando l'intenzionalità propria della cognizione possiede come suo qualificante una certa proprietà e, nondimeno, questo stesso qualificante appartiene al contenuto della cognizione. In tutta evidenza, la definizione è costitutivamente ancipite: una medesima proprietà è detta qualificare gnoseologicamente la cognizione, così come ontologicamente l'oggetto.<sup>34</sup> Per esempio, solo se una cognizione qualificata dalla proprietà 'essere argento' (*rajata-tva*) è riferita all'argento, in quanto occorrenza propria di quella medesima proprietà, questa cognizione può essere detta vera. Se, al contrario, fosse riferita alla madreperla, la cognizione sarebbe falsa (*apramā*, in quanto *ayathārtha*), poiché la madreperla non possiede (cf. *supra*, il suffisso *-vat*) la proprietà 'essere argento', ma per l'appunto quella di 'essere madreperla' (*śukti-tva*).

Ora, posto che questa sia la definizione di veridicità, come è possibile riconoscere che il qualificante della cognizione occorra nell'oggetto della cognizione? In altri termini, una volta riconosciuto l'argento attraverso il corretto impiego degli strumenti di conoscenza (*pramāṇa*), come valutare che ciò che è stato riconosciuto come argento lo sia davvero, se non attraverso quei medesimi strumenti di conoscenza che sono stati appena impiegati? Ipotizziamo si tratti di una cognizione vera e non di un errore simile a quello di chi veda una serpe in una corda. Pragmaticamente, la madreperla scambiata per argento non potrebbe essere fusa o modellata, così come la fune scambiata per una serpe non morde. Poiché qui il soggetto riconosce correttamente l'argento laddove c'è argento, e non madreperla,

**33** Phillips 2012, 169: «*savikalpa*: 'determinate'; determinate cognition, which is a 'propositional' cognition, verbalizable cognition, cognition of an entity as qualified by a qualifier, according to Gaṅgeśa and New Nyāya, paradigmatically a cognition of a qualificandum (*viśeṣya*) qualified by a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇa*) or property, thus having objecthood or intentionality (*viśayatā*) with the structure, *a-as-F*; opposed to *nirvikalpaka*». Cf. anche NK, 978-9. Riguardo a *nirvikalpaka*, cf. NK, 437-9; Mohanty 2006, 31-2. Riguardo alla nozione di *viśayatā*, cf. Phillips 2012, 171: «*viśayatā*: 'objecthood', intentionality, one side of the relation between a cognition and its object, with the other as *viśayitā*, according to New Nyāya. [...] *viśayitā*: 'subjecthood'». Mohanty 2006, 25, 31 *et passim*: «intentionality». È tale intenzionalità a distinguere *jñāna* dagli altri *guṇa* del sé, come desiderio, avversione, ecc., i quali invece possiedono un'intenzionalità solo indiretta, mediata da *jñāna*. In senso stretto, *viśayatā* occorre nell'oggetto (*viśaya*), per es. in un vaso, in quanto *locus* o *dharmin* di detto astratto relazionale. Tuttavia, l'essere oggetto di cognizione (*viśayatā*) dell'oggetto (*viśaya*) non può che occorrere nel contesto della cognizione o, *tout court*, è una cognizione (*jñāna*). In estrema sintesi, la proprietà 'essere oggetto' certamente occorre nell'oggetto, nondimeno 'costituisce' una cognizione.

**34** Mohanty 2006, 40: «Truth is neither a property of the object not a mere property of the knowledge. It is rather relational in nature and as such has to be defined with reference to both the relation, the object and the knowledge, and this is what Gaṅgeśa does».

la sua cognizione ‘corrisponde’ all’oggetto conosciuto (*yathārtha*). La sua natura (*bhāva*) – ossia, l’essere argento e non altro – viene propriamente riconosciuta in quanto risultato del corretto processo cognitivo (*pramāṇa*) di cui è oggetto. Secondo il cosiddetto Assioma di Possesto (*tadvattva-nyāya*), ‘la proprietà di possedere quello è quello’, *tadvattvad tad eva (x + vat + tva = x)*.<sup>35</sup> Il duplice suffisso, astrattizzante e di possesso, esprime così la condizione, lo stato o la natura dell’ente individuale in questione e sottolinea che, in ultima istanza, questi solo c’è.<sup>36</sup> Di conseguenza, il pezzo d’argento che qui e ora è riconosciuto, per essere l’argento che è, deve essere identificato in quanto tale, ossia in possesso di quella particolare proprietà che sola lo rende argento, e non altro. Ponendosi all’altro capo del processo di conoscenza e dei suoi mezzi (*pramāṇa*) e non potendo in altro modo essere colto, quale un ente viene conosciuto per mezzo dell’appropriato *pramāṇa*, tale è (*bhāva*). In altri termini, poiché ogni oggetto di conoscenza (*prameya*) è conoscibile nella misura in cui esso sia mediato dai mezzi di conoscenza, lo statuto ontologico dell’oggetto dipende così dalla sua definizione ‘perfezionata’ restituita dai mezzi di conoscenza, che così si rivela inaggrabile per quanto si possa ripetere l’analisi.

Un consolidato tritico epistemologico vuole infatti la successione tra *uddeśa* (enunciazione o denominazione preliminare del *prameya*, di ciò che deve essere conosciuto), *lakṣaṇa* (la sua definizione

**35** Riguardo al ‘possesto’ di proprietà nella logica Nyāya, cf. Matilal 1998, 29-30: «‘(There is) sweetness in the mango.’ We are back to the locus-locatee model, where here the locus = the mango, and the locatee = the sweetness-possessing-ness = sweetness. [...] This means that as locatees or *dharmas*, it does not make a difference whether we say ‘fire-possessing-ness’ or ‘fire’. The Sanskrit grammarians who discuss the meaning of the suffixes such as *-tva* and *-vat*, would support such conversions». Su concetto e funzione primaria, nella logica Nyāya, dei «dummy singular terms, like *ghaṭa* (pot)», a sostituzione delle variabili quantificate, cf. Matilal 1968, 23. Per una discussione degli aspetti logico-formali dell’Assioma di possesso, cf. Staal 1988, 63 e Anrò 2022, 4.

**36** In generale, come nota Roodbergen 2008, 211: «°*tva*, a *taddhita* [secondary] suffix added by [Pāṇini, *Aṣṭādhyāyī*] 5.1.119 in the sense of *bhava* ‘state, condition’, ‘the state/condition of one who is ...’ [...] ‘the state of being *x*’, ‘*x*-hood/-ness’. [...] In grammar, °*tva*-forms do not come under *jātivaccana* (‘word) expressing a *jāti*’, but under *bhāvavaccana*. [...] In Nyāya, °*tva*-forms stand for a generic character, a universal, which delimits the notion we have of individuals»; cf. AS 5.1.119 (1999 IV, 504): *tasya bhāvas tvatalau* [‘*tasya*’ *iti śaṣṭhīsamarthād* ‘*bhāvaḥ*’ *ity etasminn arthe tvatalau pratyayau bhātataḥ*] (The *taddhita* affixes *tva* and *taL* occur to denote *bhāva* ‘characteristic state’ after a syntactically related nominal stem which ends in *śaṣṭhī* ‘genitive’). Tuttavia, nella riduzione operata dall’Assioma di possesso, interviene una seconda regola, espressa in AS 5.2.94 (1999 IV, 569): *tad asyāsty asminn iti matup* [tad *iti prathamāsamarthād asyeti śaṣṭhyarthe asminn iti saptamyarthe vā matup pratyayo bhavati yat tat prathamāsamartham asti cet tad bhavati*] (A *taddhita* affix, namely *matUP*, occurs to denote the sense of *śaṣṭhī* ‘genitive’, or of *saptamī* ‘locative’, after a syntactically related nominal stem which ends in *prathamā* ‘nominative’, provided it is qualified with the denotatum of *asti* ‘existence’). Dunque, quando l’astrattizzante *-tva* è applicato al possessivo *matUP* vale il radicale (*prakṛti*) di questo, in funzione di ‘dummy singular term’ (cf. nota precedente).

attraverso ciò che specificamente lo caratterizza, distinguendolo, *vyāvṛtti*, da tutto il resto: *tattvavyavacchedaka* o *tattvaparicchedaka*) e *parīkṣā* (l'esame o l'accertamento, *avadhāraṇa*, dell'appropriatezza della definizione attraverso i mezzi di conoscenza, per verificarne la corrispondenza con l'oggetto conosciuto).<sup>37</sup> Rispetto alla tripartizione appena esposta, *lakṣaṇa* non può che precedere l'impiego degli strumenti di conoscenza, in quanto tale impiego è funzionale alla verifica della prima. Muovendo un passo ulteriore nell'analisi, si intende qui fare riferimento a una 'definizione rifinita', perfezionata o comprovata (*parīṣkāra-lakṣaṇa*), e dunque conclusiva, la quale supera la prova di *parīkṣā*; in tal senso, *parīṣkāra-lakṣaṇa* non può che essere successivo all'impiego dei *pramāṇa*. A conclusione del processo conoscitivo, il *prameya* si rivela così come ciò che i *pramāṇa* hanno restituito essere.

#### 4 La questione del vero

Nota Gaṅgeśa, con spietata franchezza, come la mente (*manas*) non abbia alcuna indipendenza riguardo agli oggetti esterni.<sup>38</sup> Una cognizione (*jñāna*) determinata o di primo livello (*vyavasāya*)<sup>39</sup> è esemplificabile nell'asserto 'Questo è argento'. La questione della veridicità di tale asserto non è autoevidente e non può essere risolta a questo primo livello. Tale domanda, il dubbio sulla veridicità della prima

<sup>37</sup> Riguardo a *uddeśa*, *parīkṣā* e *lakṣaṇa* cf. rispettivamente NK, 155, 488, 695 e Jha 2001, 110-11, 262, 339. Riguardo a *pramāṇa* cf. NK, 553-6; Jha 2001, 289: «means or source of valid knowledge»; NS 1.1.3 (2009, 267): *pratyakṣa-anumānopamāna-sābdāḥ pramāṇāni* (La perception immédiate, l'inférence, l'identification analogique et le témoignage verbale sont le moyen-de-connaissance droite).

<sup>38</sup> Jha 2001, 318: «*manas* - mind; understanding, an instrument which helps generating the knowledge of pleasure, etc., the inner sense organ»; Phillips (2012, 166): «the mind or internal organ, sense mind, the sense organ operative in the perception of psychological properties such as pleasure and pain and the conduit of sensory information to the perceiving self». Cf. NS 3.2.56 (2009, 622); TrS (1930, 3, 13); NK, 641-4. Cf. TCM (2009, 96): *idaṃ rajatañca jñānāmīti nānuvyasāyo bahirviśeṣyake manaso 'svāntaryāt | kiṃ tv idam idamtvēna rajatvāna jñānāmīti | tatredamtvārajatatve prakāratvāna bhāsate tatprakāra-ka-jñānavattvaṃ cātmani bhāsate* ('I cognize this and (I cognize) silver' is not the form the apperception takes, since the internal organ (*manas*) has no independent capacity (i.e., independent of the external senses) to grasp an external qualificandum. Rather, the apperception is 'I cognize this as a this, as silver'. There the two, 'thisness' and 'silverhood', would appear as predication content. And the having of the (target) cognition with such predication content (all as the apperception's object) appears in a self).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. TCM (2009, 81, 588); NS 1.1.4 (2009, 271-2): «[*vyavasāya*] connaissance déterminée». Jha 2001, 373: «determinate (knowledge)»; Mohanty 2006, 30: «primary awareness»; Phillips in TCM (2009, 588): «non-apperceptive, ordinary cognition». NK, 825: *vyavasāyah - jñānaviśayabhūtaṃ jñānam*; «Una cognizione determinata è una cognizione occorrente in un soggetto».

cognizione, genera così necessariamente un secondo livello, una cognizione riflessiva o apperettiva (*anuvyavasāya*): ‘Ho una cognizione, e questa è qualificata dalle proprietà *essere questo* (qui di fronte a me) ed *essere argento*’.<sup>40</sup> Nel domandarmi se ciò sia vero non ho più a che fare con la ‘cosa’, oggetto della mia prima cognizione. Il nuovo oggetto della mia appercezione è la mia stessa prima cognizione.<sup>41</sup> L’esito (*phala*) di un processo di conoscenza ben condotto è certamente rivolto alla ‘cosa’, ma non è in grado di distinguere la sua stessa veridicità, non avendo sé medesimo come contenuto. Laddove si apra, la questione del vero è per i Naiyāyika strutturalmente riflessiva e, letteralmente, eccentrica: *parataḥ prāmānyam* (cf. nota 41). La verità di una cognizione dipenderà così da un’appercezione e da un’ulteriore cognizione, poiché solo quest’ultima dirà se la mia prima, oggetto della mia considerazione riflessiva, è vera o no.<sup>42</sup>

Poniamo, con Gaṅgeśa, che una particolare cognizione sia ‘Questo è [l’elemento] terra’ (*idaṃ pṛthivī*). Ora, ciò è vero o no? Alla cognizione primaria fa dunque seguito l’appercezione ‘Una certa cognizione è qualificata dalle proprietà *essere questo* ed *essere terra*’. Ammettiamo di riconoscere anche un certo odore, una nuova appercezione si costituirà allora: ‘*essere terra* in quanto *qualificans* laddove si dà un *qualificandum* in possesso della qualità *odore*’ (*gandhavati pṛthivīva-prakāratvam*). Ora, il permanere dell’elemento terra mai può darsi privo della qualità ‘odore’ (*gandha*), la quale dunque lo ‘pervade’ (*vyāpti*). Alla nuova appercezione seguirà così l’inferenza: non c’è terra senza odore, c’è odore; dunque, c’è terra. In forza di tale inferenza, farà seguito l’appercezione conclusiva, calcata sul modello di definizione di verità: ‘*essere terra* in quanto *qualificans* laddove si dà un *qualificandum* in possesso dell’*essere terra*’ (*pṛthivīvavati pṛthivīva-prakāratvam*). Ciò che era oggetto di dubbio è, per inferenza, riportato al ‘familiare’ (*abhyāsa-daśā-āpanna*).<sup>43</sup> Ecco perché

<sup>40</sup> Cf. TCM (2009, 588). Mohanty 2006, 30: «reflective awareness»; Phillips 2012, 163: «apperception, ‘after-cognition’, introspection». NK, 35: *anuvyavasāyaḥ - vyavasāyagoc araṃ pratyakṣaṃ | yathā ghaṭajñānāntaraṃ ghaṭam ahaṃ jānāmi iti mānaṣaṃ jñānam* (Un’appercezione è una percezione il cui ambito è una cognizione primaria; in tal modo, susseguente alla cognizione ‘vaso’, si dà la cognizione riflessiva ‘lo percepisco un vaso’).

<sup>41</sup> TCM (2009, 97): *ata idamta-rajatatva-vaiśiṣṭyaṃ purovartini nānuvyavasāya-viśaya iti na svataḥ prāmānya-grahaḥ | tasmād anabhyāsa-daśāpanna-jñāna-prāmānyam parato jñāyate sāṃśayikatvād aprāmānyavad ity ācāryāḥ* (Hence, factual relatedness of thinness and silverhood to a thing in front (of a perceiver) is ‘not’ an object of apperception. Thus, grasping of veridicality is ‘not’ intrinsic. Therefore, the veridicality of a cognition occurring in unfamiliar circumstances is known extrinsically (i.e., from later evidence), since such a cognition is subject to doubt, like non-veridicality).

<sup>42</sup> Sulla strategia adottata da Gaṅgeśa per interrompere un potenziale regresso all’infinito (*anavasthā*), cf. TCM (2009, 131, 594).

<sup>43</sup> TCM (2009, 121-2): *evaṃ yat-prakāra-vyāpyatayā yad-gandha-sneha-samartha-pravṛtti-janakatva-kara-caraṇādikam avagataṃ tadvati tat-prakāraka-jñānatvam eva prāmānye liṅgam* (Thus, a property that is understood as pervaded by a

una 'definizione rifinita' (*pariṣkāra-lakṣaṇa*) – tale per aver superato l'esame di appropriatezza (*pariṣā*) della definizione *in primis* proposta nella cognizione (es. 'terra') – non può che certificare quello che gli strumenti di conoscenza hanno restituito. Essa stabilisce una rete di relazioni tra strumenti diversi (es. percezione e inferenza), cognizioni e appercezioni, tra qualificanti e qualificati, siano quest'ultimi, a seconda dei casi, i contenuti (*viśaya*) della cognizione o gli enti a cui la cognizione si riferisce (*dharmīn*). Tuttavia, se una cognizione riflessiva (*anuvyavasāya*) ha quale suo contenuto intenzionale una cognizione primaria, la quale sola è rivolta alla 'cosa' quale suo oggetto, tale oggetto finisce in tale appercezione col rivestire un ruolo semplicemente ancillare (*pucchalagna*). L'intenzionalità (*viśayatā*) capace di porre la questione della verità, si costituisce infatti di sole relazioni e qualificazioni, in una dimensione in primo luogo gnoseologica (*jñānīya*; cf. Mohanty in TCM 2006, 30).

## 5 Conclusioni

La prospettiva avanzata da Gaṅgeśa non manca, come si è visto, di rispettare formalmente il principio fondante di *yathārtha-tva*, seppure in forma indiretta, riflessa, tale da non collassare nuovamente nei limiti del realismo ingenuo. La cognizione, dice Gaṅgeśa, non è certo il *locus* (*āśraya*) di una percezione che sia causa di se stessa, neppure può avere sé medesima quale suo oggetto, poiché ciò la trasformerebbe immediatamente in un'appercezione o 'post-cognizione' (*anu-vyavasāya*). Qualora mancasse qualsiasi connessione con la percezione a determinare l'oggetto dell'obiettività intenzionale, anche ogni riflessività risulterebbe impossibile. Poiché senza causa non può darsi alcun effetto, allora l'obiettività intenzionale percettiva, in quanto effetto, non può darsi senza il prodotto della percezione.<sup>44</sup>

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(property appearing in a cognition as its) predication content, such as odor, fluidity, a generating-of-effort-toward-something-capable (of producing an appropriate sensory quality), or a having of hands and feet, is an inferential mark of veridicality: it (what is so understood) is just the fact that the cognition has  $\phi$  predication content about a  $\phi$  object). Cf. anche KA, 447: *vyāpyavati vyāpakaparakāratvasya vyāpakavati vyāpakaparakāratvavyāpyatvāt* (poiché la proprietà di avere quale *qualificans* una proprietà pervadente in un *qualificandum* pervaso è pervasa dalla proprietà di avere quale *qualificans* una proprietà pervadente in un *qualificandum* pervadente). Sulla 'pervasiione' o 'concomitanza costante' (*vyāpti*), cf. TCM (2006, 60-3). Riguardo a *gandha* quale *guṇa* della sola *prthivī*, cf. TrS (1930, 16). Cf. anche Mohanty in TCM (2006, 48); NK: 73; Jha 2001, 47.

**44** TCM (2009, 591): *sva-janakendrya-saṃnikarṣān-āśrayatvena svasya svāviśayatvāt, viśayatva-niyāmakendriya-saṃnikarṣāder abhāve svāviśayatvānupapatteḥ, kāraṇaṃ vinā kāryān-utpādāt, pratyakṣājanakasya pratyakṣa-viśayatvānupapatteś ca* (A cognition is not a locus of a sensory connection generating itself. So, a cognition does not have itself as object (*viśaya*, that to which a cognition's intentionality is directed). In the absence

Lo schema argomentativo applicato è il medesimo già analizzato riguardo alla cognizione 'Questo è terra'. Una cognizione (*vyavasāya*) si apre a un contenuto. È possibile, ma non necessario, che la veridicità di tale cognizione venga poi messa in questione nella relativa appercezione. Mentre tale post-cognizione dipende dalla cognizione, suo oggetto, quest'ultima dipende nel suo determinarsi dall'oggetto che le è proprio; altrimenti, non sarebbe la cognizione che è, ma un'altra.<sup>45</sup> L'inferenza relativa alla catena causale assicura dunque l'apertura ontologica della riflessione gnoseologica sulla veridicità: il pensiero pensa la 'cosa', seppure la 'cosa' sia colta solo nel pensiero e mai altrimenti; nondimeno, il pensiero non è padrone della 'cosa', ma la riceve.

Un pensiero che sia in grado di mettere in questione l'essere dell'essente e, riflessivamente, la sua stessa veridicità è per Gaṅgeśa una cognizione che riconosce l'occorrenza non dell' "essere vaso", 'sostanza' o di ogni altra proprietà più o meno particolare, ma della proprietà 'essere', in quanto qualificante il suo contenuto che a sua volta è detto possedere tale proprietà: *sattāvati sattāprakāratvam*. Tale proprietà è così il cerchio tracciabile più comprensivo, ragion d'essere degli essenti che per questo sono. Tuttavia, *sattā* propriamente 'non è'. La proprietà 'essere vaso' non è un vaso, piuttosto occorre in un vaso ed è la ragione per cui questo è quel che è e non altro. Allo stesso modo, *sattā* non è o non esiste come invece è o esiste un qualsiasi ente, e ciò poiché quest'ultimo è detto essere proprio in virtù dell'occorrenza di tale proprietà. La *jāti* (cf. nota 17) *sattā*, al contrario, non occorre in sé medesima. Piuttosto, *sattā* occorre in ogni sostanza, qualità o azione che propriamente siano, costituendone la

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of anything like a sensory connection regulating cognitive objecthood, self-objecthood is impossible. Without a cause, an effect is not produced. And perceptual objecthood cannot occur without something being produced perceptually).

**45** Se quanto descritto definisce con precisione i contenuti di entrambe e il principio dello *yathārtha* funge da criterio di veridicità della cognizione, l'attribuzione di valori di verità alla post-cognizione è, in senso proprio, indebita. La possibilità di un regresso all'infinito (*anavasthā*) sulla questione della veridicità si chiude infatti al primo livello di post-cognizione: se la cognizione pensa l'oggetto – e ciò in modo adeguato (*yathārtha*) o incongruo (*ayathārtha*) – la post-cognizione non pensa che la cognizione. Poiché non si dà alcun valore di verità della post-cognizione che sia riferibile al contenuto della cognizione di primo livello, il problema di giustificare la veridicità della post-cognizione neppure si pone. Certamente ci si può ingannare, ma non si può negare, à la Descartes, di pensare quei contenuti forse ingannevoli. Per esempio, 1) 'Dolcezza nel mango' (cf. nota 35) è una 2) 'Cognizione determinata (*viśiṣṭa-jñāna*) che ha come suo *qualificans* o determinante (*viśeṣana*) un *qualificandum* (*viśeṣya*), un mango, il cui *qualificans* è la dolcezza'. Descrivendo 'Dolcezza nel mango', la seconda proposizione è di fatto una 3) 'Post-cognizione che ha come suo *qualificans* la relazione *qualificans-qualificandum* di primo livello'. Poiché la post-cognizione è il *qualificandum* qui in esame, quanto appena descritto è a sua volta il terzo livello di cognizione e così via. È chiaro come solo la relazione tra dolcezza e mango possa essere dichiarata vera o falsa, a seconda del fatto che quel mango sia maturo o acerbo.

ragion d'essere. La *jāti* massimamente comprensiva è così riconosciuta solo nell'ambito di un 'pensiero riflessivo' che apertamente ponga la questione del perché debba darsi, in generale, l'essente e non il nulla.<sup>46</sup> La risposta non concerne di certo questo o quell'ente, ma neppure fa di *sattā* un *ens realissimus* che indefettibilmente sia. Solo gli enti, le qualità e i movimenti sono o esistono in quanto essenti, non certo *sattā*.

La questione della 'cosa stessa' e del pensiero capace di pensarla si riconfigura, nell'analisi di Gañgeśa, come l'esercizio di un 'pensiero riflessivo' la cui cifra è simultaneamente ontologica e gnoseologica. Pensiero ed essere mutualmente si appartengono.<sup>47</sup> Se 'Questo è', qual è il significato di una simile cognizione? Per certo: 'Io, ora, ho una cognizione che possiede quale suo *qualificans* l'essere e quale suo *qualificandum* un'occorrenza della proprietà *esser questo*'. Nondimeno, la mia cognizione primaria è pur sorta; dunque, in qualche modo essa è. Se questa non fosse in alcun modo stata, neppure sarebbe sorta e ora non sarebbe l'oggetto della mia appercezione, che invece è. Di conseguenza, in generale, se non si danno effetti senza cause e la mia cognizione primaria è pur sorta, essa dipenderà dalla sua propria causa, la quale anch'essa, di necessità, deve essere. Ora, cosa determina il sorgere di quella cognizione e non di un'altra se non il suo stesso contenuto? Poiché solo il suo oggetto intenzionale, il 'che cosa' cogitato, 'qualifica' in senso proprio la mia cognizione primaria. Mai la mente può avere accesso diretto alla 'cosa', ma sempre secondo il mezzo di conoscenza che per primo l'ha colta, per esempio la percezione. Nondimeno, l'inferenza appena operata garantisce in favore della veridicità di quella prima cognizione: nell'ambito

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Heidegger (1935) 1990, 13-15: «'Perché vi è, in generale, l'essente e non il nulla?' è la prima di tutte le domande [...] la più profonda, [...] la più originaria. [...] L'estensione di questa domanda non incontra nessun limite se non in ciò che non è né sarà in alcun modo. [...] Essa non verte su questo o su quell'ente, [...] ma sull'essente *in toto*. Chiedere perché è come chiedere: quale ne è la ragione, il fondamento (*Grund*)? [...] Il domandare mira al fondamento dell'essente in quanto essente. [...] Solo che, per il fatto dello stesso domandare, rimane incerto se questo fondamento sia [...] un fondamento originario (*Ur-grund*); ovvero se questo fondamento rifiuti la fondazione, se sia assenza di fondamento (*Ab-grund*); o [...] un non-fondamento (*Un-grund*)». Riguardo all'allusione a un 'pensiero riflessivo' o 'meditante', cf. Heidegger (1952) 2015, 88: *besinnliches Denken*.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Heidegger (1964) 2007, 88-9: «Qui [in Parmenide, framm. 1] è nominata l'*aletheia*, la non-ascosità (*Unverborgenheit*). Essa è chiamata 'ben rotonda' perché è intesa come un attorniare nel senso della pura rotondità del cerchio, dove in ogni punto l'inizio coincide con la fine. [...] Essa [la non-ascosità] concede *opos estin einai*: che l'essere presente si presenti. [...] Noi dobbiamo pensare l'*aletheia*, la non-ascosità, come la radura che sola concede essere e pensiero, il loro presenti l'uno rispetto all'altro e per l'altro». Cf. Parmenide, framm. 1 (2000, 148) e *supra* nota 2; framm. 3 (148): *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai* (Lo stesso è capire [pensare] ed essere); framm. 6 (150): *chre to legein te noein t'eon emmenai* (Dire e capire [pensare] dev'essere essere). Cf. Heidegger (1952) 2015, 227, 243 sulle traduzioni di questi passi.



della mia cognizione l'essere' qualifica ciò che è in possesso d'essere' - *sattāvati sattāprakāratvam* - poiché se non lo possedesse neppure sarebbe stato pensato.

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# Asymmetry in the Acquisition of Directed Motion Constructions in L2 Vietnamese A Comparative Study of Chinese and Korean Learners

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**Abstract** This paper offers a comparative overview of the expression of directed motion constructions in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean, and explores the acquisition of these constructions by L1 Korean and L1 Chinese learners of Vietnamese, with a focus on the role of typological factors and language-specific morpho-syntactic properties in the acquisition process. This investigation not only provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by learners of L2 Vietnamese from diverse linguistic backgrounds but also enriches our understanding of the typology of motion events.

**Keywords** Directed motion constructions. L2 Vietnamese. Chinese. Korean. Second language acquisition. Language typology.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Directed Motion in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean. – 2.1 Directed Motion in Chinese. – 2.2 Directed Motion in Vietnamese. – 2.3 Directed Motion in Korean. – 2.4 Directed Motion in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean: A Comparison. – 3 The Acquisition of Vietnamese Directed Motion Constructions by L1 Chinese and L1 Korean Learners. – 3.1 Research Design and Predictions. – 3.2 Data Collection. – 3.3 Results. – 3.3.1 Goal-oriented Constructions. – 3.3.2 Source-oriented Constructions. – 3.3.3 Route-oriented Constructions. – 4 Conclusions.



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## 1 Introduction

This study aims to provide a comparative overview of the expression of directed motion constructions in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean, and to explore the acquisition of these constructions by L1 Korean learners and L1 Chinese learners of Vietnamese, focusing on the role of typological factors and language-specific morpho-syntactic properties in the acquisition process.

Talmy, adopting a cognitive linguistics perspective, divides languages into ‘verb-framed’ and ‘satellite-framed’, based on the characteristic pattern in which the conceptual structure of the macro-event is mapped onto the syntactic structure. He defines a ‘satellite to the verb’ as “the grammatical category of any constituent other than a nominal or prepositional-phrase complement that is in a sister relation to the verb root” (Talmy 2000, 222), which can be either a bound affix or a free word: e.g. English verb particles, Russian verb prefixes, and Chinese verb complements.

According to Talmy (2000, 222), languages that characteristically map the core schema (the portion of the framing event which determines its character and distinguishes it from other framing events, i.e. the main event; 218) onto the verb have a framing verb and are defined as verb-framed languages (e.g. Romance languages and Japanese). In contrast, languages that map the core schema onto the satellite have a framing satellite and are defined as satellite-framed languages (e.g. English and Chinese). Languages with a framing satellite map the co-event onto the main verb (co-event verb). However, it has been pointed out that there are languages which do not fit this classification. Based on motion events, Slobin (2004; 2006) identifies a third group of languages, i.e. ‘equipollently-framed languages’, in which both Manner and Path are expressed by a verb, to which serialising languages (i.e. those with serial verb constructions) belong (see also Zlatev, Yangklang 2004; Ameka, Essegbey 2013; van Putten 2017). Croft et al. (2010) point out that many languages use symmetric strategies, by which the semantic components of the event are expressed by forms that may occur as predicates on their own: besides serial verbal constructions, symmetrical constructions can also be realised through compounding and coordination.

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However, language types are far from homogeneous. It has been pointed out that there is considerable variation even between languages that belong to the same language type (Slobin 2004). For example, both English and Russian are classified as satellite-framed/Manner languages, but Russian speakers choose Manner verbs more frequently than English speakers. Slobin argues that differences in the degree to which Manner and Path are used in the expression of motion events also depend on language-specific morpho-syntactic properties, as well as psycholinguistic and pragmatic factors. In addition, there is considerable variation also in how motion is encoded within a language: in fact, a language may display patterns of different language types (verb-framed, satellite framed, and even equipollently-framed). According to Beavers, Levin and Tham (2010), the linguistic variation observed depends on the lexical (e.g. manner and result verb roots, spatial adpositions and particles), morphological (e.g. case markers, applicative affixes, compounding), and syntactic options (adjunction, verb serialisation, subordination) available in a given language, reflecting its basic typological profile. Based on the possible combinations, language may fall into many crosscutting types. Croft et al. (2010) argue that classification into types should be based on individual constructions rather than a holistic assessment of the entire language.

Within this typology, Chinese and Vietnamese are generally classified as satellite-framed or equipollently-framed languages,<sup>1</sup> while Korean as a verb-framed language.<sup>2</sup> While previous research has separately examined motion events structures in these three languages, in this paper we will adopt a comparative perspective, in order to have a clear picture of the possible factors influencing the acquisition of Vietnamese directed motion structures by L1 Korean and L1 Chinese learners.

In the past decade, there has been a notable increase in the teaching and learning of Vietnamese as a second language. However, a significant knowledge gap persists regarding how learners navigate the intricacies of Vietnamese, particularly in the realm of word order acquisition. By investigating the typological factors and language-specific features influencing the acquisition process of directed motion constructions in L2 Vietnamese, we intend to shed light on the complexities of language variation and acquisition. This comparative exploration not only offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by learners of L2 Vietnamese from diverse linguistic backgrounds but also enriches our understanding of the typology of motion events.

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**1** For Chinese, see, among many others, Talmy 2000; 2009; Peyraube 2006; Lamarre 2008; Chen, Guo 2010. For Vietnamese, see Brown 1999; Nguyen L. 2001; Nguyen P.H. 2019; Ly 2019.

**2** Choi, Bowerman 1991; Choi 2006; 2009; 2018; among others.

This paper is organised as follows: in Section 2, we will offer a comprehensive overview of the main properties of directed motion constructions in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean. In Section 3, we will first formulate the research questions, outline the research design, and articulate the predictions substantiated through cross-linguistic comparison. Then, we will delve into the specifics of data collection, elucidating the questionnaire's structure and detailing information about the participants. Finally, we will present the main findings of the study. Lastly, in Section 4, we will present concluding remarks and discuss several pedagogical implications arising from the study.

## 2 Directed Motion in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean

Expanding upon Talmy's seminal work (1985; 2000), directed motion, which involves a participant that moves with regard to a reference point, following a path, has served as a pivotal criterion for categorising languages into verb-framed and satellite-framed languages. Talmy delineates four essential components of directed motion events: Figure, Ground, Motion, and Path.<sup>3</sup> In verb-framed languages, like Japanese, Spanish, and Turkish, the Path element (core schema; see § 1) is mapped onto the verb, as exemplified by the Spanish sentence (1a).<sup>4</sup> In this sentence, the Path element is encoded in the verb (*entró*), which expresses the motion event. Conversely, in satellite-framed languages, like English and Finno-Ugric languages, the Path element is encoded in a satellite of the verb, showcased in the English sentence (1b). In this instance, the Path element is represented by the preposition 'into', contained within a separate phrase. In addition to these components, a motion event can be associated with an external co-event, usually expressing Manner or Cause (Talmy 2000, 26), which specifies how the motion takes place or how it is caused. Manner or Cause, if present, can be expressed by the main verb (1b) or by an independent constituent (adjunct), as in (1a). Verb-framed languages often tend to omit the Manner.

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**3** According to Talmy (2000, 25), the basic motion event "consists of one object (the Figure) moving or located with respect to another object (the reference object or Ground)". The Path is defined as "the path followed or site occupied by the Figure object with respect to the Ground object", while Motion "refers to the presence per se of motion or locatedness in the event" (25).

**4** The glosses follow the general guidelines of the Leipzig Glossing Rules. Additional abbreviations include: CONN = connective marker, CRS = current relevant state. For the romanisation of Chinese, we use *Hanyu pinyin*; for Korean, we adopt the Revised Romanisation of Korean.



- (1) a. Spanish  
*La botella*<sub>Figure</sub> **entró**<sub>Motion+Path</sub> *a la cueva*<sub>Ground</sub> *flotando*<sub>Manner</sub>  
the bottle entered at the cave floating  
'The bottle floated into the cave'.  
b. English  
*The bottle*<sub>Figure</sub> *floated*<sub>Motion+Manner</sub> **into**<sub>Path</sub> *the cave*<sub>Ground</sub>

This distinction underscores the disparity between verb-framed languages, where the Path element is embedded within the verb itself, and satellite-framed languages, where it appears as a discrete element, apart from the verb; it can be any element other than verb roots, including prepositions (Croft et al. 2010).<sup>5</sup> This fundamental contrast forms the basis for understanding the diverse grammatical patterns in which languages structure directed motion, providing a foundational framework for our comparative analysis. However, as we mentioned in the introduction, there are languages that apparently do not fit this classification, as for example serial verb languages (including most East Asian and Southeast Asian languages, but also some African and Amerindian languages), where both Manner and Path are expressed by equal grammatical forms, with the same force and significance (see also Peyraube 2006).

## 2.1 Directed Motion in Chinese

One of the languages that has sparked debates about its place in Talmy's typology is Chinese: while some scholars classify it as a satellite-framed language, others believe that it is an equipollently-framed language.<sup>6</sup> Yet other scholars consider Chinese to be a verb-framed language (Tai 2003; Tai, Su 2013). Consider the sentence in (2):

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<sup>5</sup> Here, following Croft et al. (2010), we adopt a broader definition of satellites. As a matter of fact, while Talmy's (2000, 222) definition excludes prepositions as satellites, Croft et al. (2010) adopt a different view: a morpho-syntactic element is considered as a 'verb root' if it can occur as a predicate on its own with the same meaning, while anything that encodes an event component other than a verb root is analysed as a satellite. According to this definition, English prepositions that encode the framing/result subevent count as satellites, even if they do not occur without an accompanying ground expression (Croft et al. 2010, 206). Beavers (2008, 285, fn. 3) holds a similar view, pointing out that the morphosyntactic criteria Talmy proposes do not clearly set apart satellites from prepositional phrases; in addition, he highlights that prepositional phrases serve the same function as satellites in motion constructions.

<sup>6</sup> See Talmy 1985; 1991; 2000; 2009; Li 1997; Shen 2003; Peyraube 2006; Lamarre 2007; 2008; 2013; Ma 2008; Chen, Guo 2010; Shi 2011; 2012; 2014; 2015; 2019; Liu 2014; Yang 2014; Lin 2019; Paul 2022; Lamarre et al. 2022; Guo, Yang, Deng 2022; Chen 2023; a.o.

- (2) 瓶子<sub>Figure</sub> 漂<sub>Manner</sub> 进<sub>Path</sub> 山洞里<sub>Ground</sub>  
*píngzi piāo jìn shāndòng-lǐ*  
bottle float enter cave-in  
'The bottle floated into the cave'.

The sentence in (2) is an instance of a directional construction, where  $V_1$  is a verb of motion indicating Manner, while  $V_2$  is a verb of movement indicating direction (Path).  $V_1$  in this construction can be either a motion verb or a transitive verb implying a change of location of its direct object (e.g. *ná* 拿 'take', *rěng* 扔 'throw', *tuī* 推 'push', etc.), while  $V_2$  belongs to a closed class: *shàng* 上 'go up, ascend', *xià* 下 'go down, descend', *jìn* 进 'enter', *chū* 出 'exit', *huí* 回 'return', *guò* 过 'pass, cross, go through', *qǐ* 起 'rise'.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to this kind of construction, there are directional constructions which make use of the deictic directional verbs *lái* 来 'come' and *qù* 去 'go', indicating motion toward the deictic centre and motion away from the deictic centre respectively (for an overview of the structure, properties, and restrictions of directional constructions, see Lamarre 2008; Lin 2019). These constructions can be simple or complex. Simple directional constructions include a  $V_1$  of movement indicating direction, a manner of motion verb, or a transitive verb implying a change of location of its direct object, followed by the deictic 'come' or 'go' (Peyraube 2006; Chen 2023), as e.g. *zǒu-qù* 走去 'walk-go, walk away', *jìn-lái* 进来 'enter-come, come in'. Complex directional constructions include a  $V_1$ , which is a verb of manner of motion or a transitive verb implying change of location of its direct object, and a  $V_2$  of movement indicating direction, followed by *lái* 来 'come' or *qù* 去 'go' ( $V_3$ ), as e.g. *pǎo-jìn-qù* 跑进去 'run-enter-go, run in (away from the deictic centre)', *ná-huí-lái* 拿回来 'take-return-come, bring back' (toward the deictic centre).<sup>8</sup> In these verbs, we can observe different parts of the

<sup>7</sup> Peyraube (2006) calls these constructions as "motion resultative constructions", as, according to him, they are not proper directional constructions, since they do not involve a directional verb (*lái* 来 'come' or *qù* 去 'go').

<sup>8</sup> Chinese directional constructions are often regarded as serial verb constructions or as verbal compounds (a subtype of resultative compounds; see e.g. Li, Thompson 1981). However, these constructions are structurally looser than other types of verbal compounds and, thus, are not typical lexical units (Lin 2019). In fact, the constituents of directional constructions are separable. Nevertheless, we may remark that the constituents in simple directional constructions without the deictic, like the one in (2), display a higher degree of cohesion than other directional constructions. Beavers, Levin and Tham (2010) point out that it is unclear on the surface whether they are serial verb constructions or VV compounds. In the latter case, the construction can be regarded as an instance of symmetrical construction involving compounding (Croft et al. 2010). However, if one of the constituents can be considered as the head, and thus there is a relation of subordination, they could be seen as an instance of verb-framed or satellite-framed constructions (see Levin, Beavers, Tham 2010).

Path element expressed by different constituents (see Lamarre 2008). In fact, according to Talmy (2000; 2009), the Path component can be subdivided into three parts: 1) the Vector, comprising “the basic types of arrival, traversal, and departure that a Figural schema can execute with respect to a Ground schema” (Talmy 2000, 53; 2009);<sup>9</sup> 2) the Conformation, comprising the main geometric schema of a Path;<sup>10</sup> 3) Deixis (motion toward or away from the speaker). All the components of the Path may be expressed in the verb or a satellite in a language, but it may also be the case that just one or two parts are expressed in the verb or satellite, while the remainder is expressed in a separate constituent (Talmy 2009).

Therefore, in directional constructions without deictics, like *piāo-jìn* 漂进 ‘float-enter, float into’ (2),  $V_1$  expresses manner and  $V_2$  expresses the Vector+Conformation components of Path, while the Deixis component is lacking. In simple directional constructions with deictics,  $V_1$  may express manner and  $V_2$  the Deixis component of Path, as in *zǒu-qù* 走去 ‘walk-go, walk away’, or  $V_1$  may express Vector+Conformation Path and  $V_2$  may express Deixis, as in *jìn-lái* 进来 ‘enter-come, come in’. Finally, in Chinese complex directional constructions, like *pǎo-jìn-qù* 跑进去 ‘run-enter-go, run in (away from the deictic centre)’,  $V_1$  expresses either Manner or Cause (co-event component), while  $V_2$  (path verb) expresses the Vector+Conformation components, and  $V_3$  (deictic verb) expresses the Deixis component (Talmy 2009; for an in-depth discussion of Path distribution in Chinese, see Lamarre 2008). Other languages with serial verb constructions also distribute the Path component of a motion event across different elements, distinguishing deictic and non-deictic Paths (see Beavers, Levin, Tham 2010).

The question is whether these constructions should be seen as instances of satellite-framed constructions or rather as equipollently-framed constructions. For example, if the path *jìn* 进 ‘enter, into’ in (2) is seen as a complement to the verb *piāo* 漂 ‘float’, then the sentence is a satellite-framed construction; conversely, if *jìn* 进 ‘enter, into’ is regarded to have the same status as the verb *piāo* 漂 ‘float’, the sentence should be regarded as an equipollently-framed construction. Croft et

<sup>9</sup> These Vectors are part of a small set of Motion-aspect formulas that are quite possibly universal (Vectors are the deep prepositions given in bold): BE<sub>LOC</sub> AT, MOVE TO, MOVE FROM, MOVE VIA, MOVE ALONG, MOVE TOWARD, MOVE AWAY-FROM, MOVE ALENGTH, MOVE FROM-TO, MOVE ALONG-TO, MOVE FROM-ALONG (Talmy 2000, 53-4).

<sup>10</sup> According to Talmy (2000, 54), “[t]he Conformation component of the Path is a geometric complex that relates the fundamental Ground schema within a Motion-aspect formula to the schema for a full Ground object. Each language lexicalizes its own set of such geometric complexes”. The relevant Conformations for visual paths are found in the geometry of enclosures, lines, and planes, i.e. the configurations that are involved in boundary-crossing: e.g. ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘into’, ‘onto’, ‘out of’, ‘off’ (Slobin 2009; 2011).

al. (2010) observe that, if a verb in a serial verb construction becomes specialised in meaning and syntactic distribution, it can be described as a satellite. Talmy (2009) argues that even in languages in which the constituents of a motion construction apparently share equal status, as in serialising languages, it is often possible to identify a main verb based on morphological, syntactic, phonological, and semantic factors, as well as co-occurrence patterns and class size; thus, the subordinate verb acts as a satellite. Concerning Chinese, Talmy (2009) concludes that the only directional construction that can possibly be classified as equipollently-framed is the one exemplified by (2).

According to Peyraube (2006) and Yang (2014), the constituents of directional constructions do not have the same status. Peyraube (2006) argues that the second constituent in simple directional constructions, or the second and third constituents (directional complements) in complex directional constructions should be considered as satellites. One of the main reasons for considering directional constituents as satellites is that, even though in modern Chinese these items are still used as main verbs, with their full lexical meaning, when they act as complements in directional constructions, they only indicate direction (e.g. *jìn* 进 'enter' > 'into', *xià* 下 'go down, descend' > 'down') or motion toward or away from the deictic centre (the deictics *lái* 来 'come' and *qù* 去 'go'). Therefore, since Chinese path and deictic verbs in directional constructions are fixed and their meanings partially depart from their original ones, they can be considered as satellites (see Croft et al. 2010). In addition, Peyraube points out that directional complements form one lexical unit with the preceding verb because the whole directional construction expresses a single action.

According to Peyraube, in these constructions,  $V_2(V_3)$ s are no longer fully lexical words, with their original meaning, but they have rather become function words or grammatical elements, as a result of a grammaticalisation process. In fact, Peyraube argues that Chinese has undergone a shift from a verb-framed language to a satellite-framed language.<sup>11</sup> Other scholars have argued that  $V_2$  or  $V_2-V_3$  in directional constructions have grammaticalised. For example, Lamarre (2008, 72) argues that, when a path verb acts as a Path satellite in directional constructions, it becomes toneless; in the case of simple directional constructions formed by a path verb and a deictic, the deictic loses its tone. Shi and Wu (2014) also point out that the  $V_2$ s in directional constructions usually undergo tone neutralisation, giving rise to a heavy-light prosodic pattern, suggesting that  $V_1$  is the head. In addition, Shi and Wu highlight that most of the  $V_2$ s in directional

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<sup>11</sup> See also Li 1997; Shi, Li 2001; Wang 2005; Liang 2006; 2007; Liang, Wu, Bei 2008; Hu 2012; Yang 2014; Shi, Wu 2014; Shi 2019.

constructions developed new functions, such as encoding result (see Talmy 2000; 2009). Both tone reduction and semantic change suggest that these verbs have grammaticalised.

In addition, Shi and Wu (2014) point out that the  $V_2$ s in directional constructions form a closed class and that the types of  $V_2$ s that can appear in these constructions have decreased diachronically. This is a further piece of evidence supporting the satellite status of these items (see Talmy 2009).

Furthermore, Shi and Wu (2014) observe that, in these constructions,  $V_2$ s accompanying the main verb can be placed under the scope of negation. In addition, V-not-V alternative questions can be realised on the main verb ( $V_1$  *méi* 没  $V_1$ - $V_2$ ) or on the whole construction ( $V_1$ - $V_2$  *méi* 没  $V_1$ - $V_2$ ), but not on  $V_2$  ( $V_1$ - $V_2$  *méi* 没  $V_2$ ). Shi and Wu point out that this asymmetry indicates that the perfective aspect marker *le* 了 can be used with  $V_1$  and with the whole construction, but not with  $V_2$ . Therefore, Shi and Wu (2014) conclude that, from the morpho-syntactic point of view,  $V_2$ s in directional constructions can be treated as complements to the main verb, even though some of them can still act as main verbs in other contexts. This qualifies these items as satellites (see Croft et al. 2010; fn. 5 above). Other studies also provide arguments in favour of the complement/satellite status of the  $V_2$ s in directional constructions and describe their diachronic development.<sup>12</sup> Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an in-depth theoretical discussion on the status of Chinese directional complements, we will not delve into the issue further, and we refer the reader to the relevant literature.

In Chinese we can also find instances of verb-framed constructions, including those involving the deictic verbs *lái* 来 ‘come’ and *qù* 去 ‘go’ (3e), where the verb itself encodes Motion and Path:

- (3) a. 他们<sub>Figure</sub>            进<sub>Path</sub>            教室<sub>Ground</sub>            了。  
*tāmen*            *jìn*            *jiàoshi*            *le*  
 they            enter            classroom            CRS  
 ‘They entered the classroom’.
- b. 她<sub>Figure</sub>            上<sub>Path</sub>            车<sub>Ground</sub>            了。  
*tā*            *shàng*            *chē*            *le*  
 she            go.up            vehicle            CRS  
 ‘She got on the car/bus’.
- c. 她<sub>Figure</sub>            回<sub>Path</sub>            家<sub>Ground</sub>            了。  
*tā*            *huí*            *jiā*            *le*  
 she            return            home            CRS  
 ‘She went back home’.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Shi 2011; 2012; 2014; 2015; 2019; Shi, Wu 2014; Shu, Yang, Su 2018.

d.	我 <sub>Figure</sub> <i>wǒ</i> I	到 <sub>Path</sub> <i>dào</i> arrive	北京 <sub>Ground</sub> <i>Běijīng</i> Beijing	了。 <i>le</i> CRS
‘I arrived to Beijing’.				
e.	我 <sub>Figure</sub> <i>wǒ</i> I	去 <sub>Deictic</sub> <i>qù</i> go	北京 <sub>Ground</sub> <i>Běijīng</i> Beijing	了。 <i>le</i> CRS
‘I went to Beijing’.				

These constructions are found only in the expression of spontaneous motion events but not in caused motion events (Lamarre 2008).

Lamarre (2008) points out that Chinese path verbs are often combined with a deictic verb, splitting the Path component into two constituents (Path+Deictic), as in (4):

(4) 他们<sub>Figure</sub> 进<sub>Path</sub> 教室<sub>Ground</sub> 去<sub>Deictic</sub> 了  
*tāmen jìn jiàoshì qù le*  
 they enter classroom go CRS  
 ‘They entered the classroom’. (away from the deictic centre)

According to Lamarre, there is a strong tendency for path verbs to be bimorphemic (Path+Deictic), especially when no locative NP follows.

Actually, some scholars argue that Chinese is a mixed type language, displaying features of satellite-framed, equipollently-framed, and verb-framed languages (see Beaver, Levin, Tham 2010; Ji, Hohenstein 2017; Liao et al. 2020). Lamarre (2008) considers Chinese to be a ‘split’ type language, basically because it allows verb-framed language type encoding only for spontaneous motion events.

## 2.2 Directed Motion in Vietnamese

The ambiguity in linguistic categorisation described for Chinese above can also be observed in Vietnamese, another language with serial verb constructions. The intricate nature of Vietnamese within Talmy’s event typology is highlighted in studies conducted by Beecher (2004), Pace (2009), and Ly (2019). These studies present a dual classification for Vietnamese, categorising it as both satellite-framed and equipollently-framed, according to Slobin’s framework (1996; 2004; 2006). Consider the Vietnamese example below:

- (5) *Cái chai*<sub>Figure</sub> *trôi*<sub>Manner</sub> *vào*<sub>Path</sub> *trong* *hang*<sub>Ground</sub>  
CLF bottle float enter in cave  
'The bottle floated into the cave'.

In this sentence, the motion event is expressed in the same way as in the Chinese sentence in (2). In this case, *vào* can be interpreted either as a preposition meaning 'into' or as a verb meaning 'enter', with the same status as the verb *trôi* 'float', forming a serial verb construction (on the debate on the status of 'words denoting direction' as *vào*, see Nguyen P.H. 2019). In the first case, it is an instance of a satellite-framed construction, while in the second case it aligns with the equipollently-framed category, since Manner and Path are expressed in equivalent categories. However, even if *vào* is considered as a verb, if it is possible to identify a main verb based on specific criteria, then the two verbs do not have exactly the same status, and the subordinate verb can be construed as a satellite to the main (head) verb (Talmy 2009).

Different scholars have investigated motion constructions, shedding light on the grammaticalisation of motion elements and the role of directional components in Vietnamese. For instance, Brown (1999) and P.H. Nguyen (2019) examined the evolution of motion elements from verbs to prepositions. L. Nguyen (2001) extended the exploration to three dimensions: space, time, and mental psychology of speech participants. Recent studies, such as those by Ly (2019), have examined Vietnamese's position in the typological framework of motion event encoding, drawing from approaches by Talmy (1985; 2000) and Slobin (1996; 2004; 2006). These researchers collectively emphasise Vietnamese's remarkable flexibility within Talmy's and Slobin's typology. This debate foregrounds the linguistic flexibility of Vietnamese, as its categorisation hinges on specific syntactic structures and interpretations.

Almost all languages have path verbs, and Vietnamese is no exception, thus it also displays verb-framed constructions. P.H. Nguyen (2019) points out that, while Vietnamese has a great amount of manner verbs, it only has a few path verbs: *ra* 'exit', *vào* 'enter', *lên* 'ascend', *xuống* 'descend', *sang* 'across', *qua* 'across', *về* 'return', *đến* 'arrive', *tới* 'arrive', *lại* 'arrive/return', *đi* 'go' (Nguyen P.H. 2019; Nguyen L. 1990, 125-48, cit. in Nguyen P.H. 2019). See the examples in (6):

- (6) a. *Hoa*<sub>Figure</sub> *lên*<sub>Deictic</sub> *lầu*<sub>Ground</sub>  
Hoa go.up floor  
'Hoa goes/went upstairs'.

- b. *Hoa*<sub>Figure</sub>    *đi*<sub>Deictic</sub>    *chợ*<sub>Ground</sub>  
 Hoa            go            market  
 ‘Hoa goes/went to the market’.
- c. *Hoa*<sub>Figure</sub>    *đi*<sub>Deictic</sub>    *vào*<sub>Path</sub>    (*trong*)    *chợ*<sub>Ground</sub>  
 Hoa            go            enter    in            market  
 ‘Hoa goes/went into the market’.

As shown in (6c), the deictic verb *đi* ‘go’ combines with a path verb, thus the sentence encodes both Path and Deixis. Note that, differently from Chinese, the deictic *đi* ‘go’ is the first element of the construction. In addition, in (6c), Manner cannot be expressed by adding a manner verb. In order to specify Manner, the verb *đi* ‘go’ must be replaced by a manner verb, as e.g. *bước vào* ‘walk enter’. Therefore, apparently, differently from Chinese, when both Manner and Path are expressed, it is not possible to split the Path into two components (path verb+deictic verb).

### 2.3 Directed Motion in Korean

Differently from Chinese and Vietnamese, Korean is generally classified as a verb-framed language,<sup>13</sup> since, as in Spanish (1a), it can occupy the main verb slot with a path verb, either a Conformation verb or a deictic verb (Talmy 2000, 56-7). However, differently from Spanish, both Path components may appear concurrently. In fact, a deictic typically follows the other Path constituent in sentences with intransitive verbs expressing spontaneous displacement of the agent, which moves by itself or without explicit causes,<sup>14</sup> similar to the case of the Chinese example in (4). See the example (7), adapted from Choi (2018, 107):

- (7) John<sub>Figure</sub>    방에<sub>Ground</sub>    들어<sub>Path</sub>    갔다<sub>Deictic</sub>  
*John-i*            *bang-e*            *deur-eo*            *ga-t-da*  
 John-SUBJ    room-in            enter-CONN    go-PST-DECL  
 ‘John went into the room’. (away from the speaker)

The verb in (7) is a complex verb formed by *deur-* ‘enter’ (path verb) followed by *gatda* ‘went’ (deictic), which encodes Motion (Choi, Lan-tolf 2008): it indicates the direction of the motion with respect to

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<sup>13</sup> Choi, Bowerman 1991; Talmy 2000; Choi 2006; 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Choi, Bowerman 1991; Talmy 2000; Choi 2011; 2018.



the speaker (Choi, Bowerman 1991; Choi 2011; 2018). The two verbs are conjoined by the connective *-eo* 어, whose function is simply to connect a verb stem to the next one (Choi 2011); only the rightmost constituent bears tense. Different from a Verb-framed language like Spanish, then, Korean encodes Motion in the deictic verb (Choi, Lan-tolf 2008).

Choi (2018) considers this an instance of a serial verb construction, which is a typical construction in Korean, where the verbs share the same tense (attached to the rightmost verb) and the same subject. However, the analysis of this construction is subject of debate, and it has been variously considered as a compound, a serial verb construction, or a complex predicate (see Beavers, Levin, Tham 2010).

This construction can contain more than two verbs and specify Manner too. Compare the example (7) with (8) (adapted from Choi, Bowerman 1991, 88):<sup>15</sup>

- (8) John<sub>Figure</sub> 방<sub>Ground</sub> 뛰<sub>Manner</sub> 들어<sub>Path</sub> 갔<sub>Deictic</sub>  
*John-i bang-e ttwi-eo deur-eo ga-t-da*  
 John-SUBJ room-in run-CONN enter-CONN go-PST-DECL  
 ‘John run into the room (away from the speaker) / John went into the room running’.

This construction recalls Chinese complex directional constructions (§ 2.1), where the Manner and the Path components are expressed by means of different verbal roots. However, in Korean, verbs are linked by a connective particle. Note that it is also possible in Korean to use the manner verb with the deictic verb alone (e.g. *ttwi-* ‘run’, *ga-* ‘go’), similar to Chinese simple directional constructions, as e.g. *pǎo-qù* 跑去 ‘run-go’ (§ 2.1).

Constructions like those in (8), where both Manner and Path are expressed by verbs in a serial verb construction, should be considered as equipollently-framed, and actually Choi (2011, 159) argues that, syntactically, the verbs in this construction are considered to have an equal status. However, the classification of this construction depends on whether it is possible to single out a main verb or whether

<sup>15</sup> Choi argues that there are no restrictions on how many verbs can be put together in this construction, as in the example below, adapted from Choi (2011, 160):

- (i) 돌<sub>i</sub> 산<sub>에서</sub> 굴러 떨어<sub>져</sub> 내려<sub>왔다</sub>  
*dor-i san-eseo gull-eo tteoreoj-yeo naery-e-wa-t-da*  
 stone-SUBJ mountain-from roll-CONN fall-CONN descend-CONN-come-PST-DECL  
 ‘A stone rolled down, falling and descending’.

According to Choi (2011), in (i) there is a Manner verb (*gull-* ‘roll’) followed by three Path verbs (*tteoreoj-* ‘fall’, *naery-* ‘descend’, and *wa-* ‘come’).

all verbs have exactly the same status, similar to the case of Chinese or Vietnamese considered above. Choi and Bowerman (1991, 88) argue that, in expressions of spontaneous motion, the main verb is usually 'go' or 'come', the rightmost verb (see also Choi 2009), in which Motion is conflated with Deixis; the fact that John changed his location in (7) and (8) is specified by the verb 'go', which is a required element in this construction (see also Choi, Lantolf 2008). This verb is preceded by a path verb, which may also be preceded by a manner verb. Interestingly, while for spontaneous motion, the path verb is typically followed by a deictic verb (cf. Chinese), as in the examples (7) and (8), for caused motion, the deictic is not used; a transitive or causative path verb alone is sufficient (Choi 2009; 2011).

Choi and Lantolf (2008, 195) point out that, if the motion is not salient, Korean speakers tend to omit the Manner, resulting in constructions like (7), where only the two Path components are expressed. This aligns with verb-framed languages, which tend to express Manner less frequently than satellite-framed languages. In addition, Choi (2009) points out that Korean is more Path-oriented than Spanish, because Korean speakers tend to express Path of motion more frequently than Spanish speakers do. Similarly, Özçalışkan and Slobin (1999) found that Turkish, an agglutinating and SOV language like Korean, is more Path-oriented than Spanish.

#### 2.4 Directed Motion in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean: A Comparison

The distinctive patterns illustrating the differences in how Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean structure motion events can be summarised as follows, considering two key parameters of variation:

- a. Vietnamese is a satellite/equipollently-framed language, where Manner and Path are expressed by means of different verbal roots, and Path is placed between Figure and Ground.
- b. Chinese is a satellite/equipollently-framed language, where Manner and Path are expressed by means of different verbal roots, and Path is generally placed between Figure and Ground.
- c. Korean is a verb-framed language, and Path is placed after Figure and Ground.

Based on these two parameters, Chinese and Vietnamese are similar, while Korean is typologically distant. However, this picture is too simplistic, and the complexity of the three languages described above highlights the importance of taking into account different constructions and specific lexical and morpho-syntactic devices available in each language. The first important factor to note is that all three languages in question allow serial verb constructions, which

makes it possible to express Manner as a verb (see Beaver, Levin, Tham 2010). Therefore, also in Korean both Manner and Path may be expressed by different verbs forming a serial verb construction (7), similar to multiverb constructions found in Chinese and Vietnamese. In addition, languages with serial verb constructions may also distinguish deictic and non-deictic components of Path, allowing them both to be expressed in the description of a motion event. This aligns Chinese and Korean patterns together, making them distant from Vietnamese. In fact, both in Chinese and in Korean spontaneous motion events, the Path slot can be filled concurrently by a path verb and a deictic verb, with the latter serving as the final element of the construction, as in (4) and (7) above.<sup>16</sup> This differs from Vietnamese, where the deictic comes first, as in example (6c). In addition, differently from Vietnamese (see the discussion on ex. 6, § 2.2), in Chinese and Korean, both Path components may be expressed also when a manner verb is present (§ 2.1, § 2.2, ex. 8).

Furthermore, when dissecting motion events into four components (Path, Motion, Figure, and Ground, following Talmy's framework), a significant variation parameter emerges. In Vietnamese, which has an SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) basic syntactic word order (see Phan, Duffield 2022), directed motion constructions are typically arranged as Figure (the moving object), Path (the direction of motion), and then Ground (reference object), as exemplified in (5). Similarly, Chinese, which is generally regarded as an SVO language (see Sybesma 2017), in directed motion constructions display the sequence Figure>Path>Ground, as illustrated in (2). However, if a deictic path verb is present, it must be placed after the Ground. Conversely, Korean, an SOV language, in directed motion constructions follows the pattern Figure>Ground>Path, in which the Path element is the last element, as shown in (7) and (8). It is worth noting that Chinese is similar to Vietnamese in this respect, while Korean exhibits a distinct structure.

Another feature to consider in the expression of motion events is the use of language-specific devices to denote location or the starting/endpoint of a motion event. In fact, the Ground phrase can assume different forms in different languages. In Korean, there are postpositional markers that attach to the Ground nominal (Choi 2011; 2018), as e.g. those shown in examples (7)-(8) and fn. 15 (i). When the Ground is expressed as a direct object of the verb, it carries a direct object marker (Choi 2009). According to Choi (2009), in verb-framed languages, including Korean, Paths that refer to the goal or source

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**16** However, differently from Chinese, the deictic cannot be omitted in Korean. Also note that, while in Chinese deictic verbs can also be used in caused motion events, in Korean they are generally not used.

of motion ('endpoint paths') occur within an intransitive frame, as in (7) and (8), while those that refer to the space traversed by the figure ('trajectory paths') occur within a transitive frame, as in the example (14c) below. This would contrast with satellite-framed languages, where both types of Paths generally appear within an intransitive frame. According to Choi, this difference lies in the fact that in verb-framed languages the Path is mapped onto the main verb, which makes it possible to assign different syntactic and semantic roles to the Ground nominal. In contrast, since in satellite-framed languages the Path is generally expressed by a satellite, the Ground element is generally not constructed as a direct object, but rather it is placed within a prepositional phrase (Choi 2009, 182-3).

In Chinese, the Ground can be an unmarked noun, as in (3) and (4), or a noun followed by a so-called localiser, as *-lǐ* 里 'in', like in the sentence in (2).<sup>17</sup> In addition, prepositions can mark source (e.g. *cóng* 从 'from') or direction (e.g. *xiàng* 向 'toward'); these prepositional phrases precede the verb in Chinese and are an exception to the Figure>Path>Ground order, since the Ground precedes the Path in this case: e.g. *tā xiàng wǒ zǒu-lái* 他向我走来 '3SG toward 1SG walk-come, walk toward me'. Endpoint, instead, can be introduced by post-verbal items, as e.g. *dào* 到 'arrive, up to' and *zài* 在 'stay, at', whose status is ambiguous between verbs and prepositions (Lin, Sun 2016 consider them as goal prepositions): e.g. in *pǎo-dào shāngdiàn* 跑到商店 'run-to shop, run to the shop', the post-verbal prepositional phrase follows the manner verb *pǎo* 跑 'run' and indicates Goal.<sup>18</sup> This is a satellite-framed construction, since the Goal is expressed by a prepositional phrase; the Path is expressed in the satellite (see Beavers, Levin, Tham 2010). Again, specific constructions depend on the particular devices available in a language, allowing for variation within the language itself. It is worth noting that in Chinese the Ground can be constructed as a direct object, both in the case of 'endpoint' Paths (as in 3 and 4 above, where the main verb is a path verb) and in the case of 'trajectory' paths (e.g. *zǒu shàng lóutī* 走上楼梯 'walk up stair, walk up the stairs').

<sup>17</sup> Localisers, treated as postpositions, clitics, or nouns in the literature, specify spatial relationships between entities (Lin, Sun 2016, 395): e.g. *zhuōzi-shàng* 桌子上 'table-on, on the table'.

<sup>18</sup> *Dào* 到 is not a Goal marker per se, since it is used to introduce different types of boundaries, as temporal and degree boundaries (e.g. *xué-dào bàn yè* 学到半夜 'study-to midnight, study until midnight', *jiā rè-dào yī bǎi dù* 加热到100度 'heat-to one hundred degree, heat to 100 degrees'). It can be considered as an *until*-marker, which, as in other languages, is not a dedicated Goal marker but expresses general delimitation: "[t]he precise form of delimitation is inferred from the nature of the event and the complement of the *until*-marker" (Beavers, Levin, Tham 2010).

In Vietnamese, the Ground nominal can be a bare noun, as in the examples in (6), but location and starting/endpoint point of the motion event can be introduced by prepositions, as in (5). It is worth noting that the status of these items is occasionally ambiguous, with P.H. Nguyen (2019) considering them to be prepositions. As shown by (6c), Goal-oriented constructions can display a transitive frame, where the Goal is expressed by an unmarked Ground NP, which acts as a direct object (which we label as ‘simple Goal’), or an intransitive frame, where the Goal is marked by a preposition, forming a prepositional Ground phrase (which we label as ‘complex Goal’; see also ex. 5). Additional elements can be found also in Source-oriented and Route-oriented constructions. Source-oriented constructions can also incorporate an additional element indicating the Figure’s position relative to the Ground (‘complex Source’):

- (9) a. *Hoa đi từ chợ* (Simple Source)  
Hoa go from market  
‘Hoa goes/went from the market’.
- b. *Hoa đi từ dưới chợ* (Complex Source)  
Hoa go from down market  
‘Hoa goes/went from down the market’.

In Route-oriented constructions, an additional element specifying motion conducted either along the vertical axis or the horizontal axis can be found:

- (10) a. *Hoa đi qua chợ* (Simple Route)  
Hoa go cross market  
‘Hoa goes/went across the market’.
- b. *Hoa đi ngang qua chợ* (Complex Route)  
Hoa go horizontal cross market  
‘Hoa goes/went across the market horizontally’.

### 3 The Acquisition of Vietnamese Directed Motion Constructions by L1 Chinese and L1 Korean Learners

The remarkable cross-linguistic differences between Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese provide a compelling opportunity to explore the role of language typology and language-specific morpho-syntactic properties in the successful acquisition of directed motion constructions in Vietnamese. Research on second language acquisition consistently shows that the use of cross-linguistic similarities (transfer) is an integral part of the language acquisition process. When the

target language and the native language exhibit typological similarities, and both formal and functional similarities can be established, positive transfer occurs, facilitating the acquisition process (Krashen 1982; Ringbom 2006).

Talmy's typological framework provides a means to explore the complex interplay between cross-linguistic influence and the level of similarity or dissimilarity between learners' native language and target language. This framework has proved to be useful for investigating how L2 learners interpret and express motion in the L2 (Cadierno, Lund 2004). Previous research in the domain of motion events has uncovered differences between language models used by native speakers and the performance of learners across various proficiency levels. Several studies have explored the acquisition of motion constructions by learners with L1s of different typologies. In the process of second language acquisition, the expression of motion events in the L2 is influenced by L1 typology; people tend to establish meaning-form mappings based on their L1 (Cadierno 2008). In the light of Talmy's typology, studies have investigated how L2 learners acquire the characteristic meaning-form mappings of an L2 that is typologically different from their L1, but also how the performance of this type of learners compares to learners whose L1 and L2 share the same typological patterns (Cadierno 2008). Learners must learn how the semantic components of motion events are characteristically mapped onto L2 surface forms, and the acquisition of these mapping relations is rather complex, since it does not involve a one-to-one correspondence between meaning and form (Cadierno 2008). L2 learners not only have to learn the morpho-syntactic patterns of their L2, but they also must understand how to relate meaning to these forms. Therefore, when the L2 exhibits lexicalisation patterns different from those of the learner's L1, learners have to locate these differences in the morpho-syntactic structure and to understand what meaning the structure typically expresses (Jessen 2014). Thus, L2 learners must learn a different way of "thinking for speaking" (Cadierno 2004; Cadierno, Lund 2004) or learn to "rethink for speaking" (Robinson, Ellis 2008).

Notably, differences in the expression of motion events between native and non-native speakers are observed across all language combinations in Talmy's typology.<sup>19</sup> Several studies have explored this issue in learners whose L1 is a V-framed language and L2 is an S-framed language (Carroll et al. 2012; Larrañaga et al. 2012; Cadierno, Ibarretxe-Antuñano, Hijazo-Gascón 2023), as well as in learners whose L1 is an S-framed language and L2 is a V-framed language.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out relevant literature.

<sup>20</sup> Hendriks, Hickmann, Demagny 2008; Hendriks, Hickmann 2015; Iakovleva, Hickmann 2012; Sharpen 2016.

With respect to information density, S-framed languages are more information-dense than V-framed languages, as they condense more aspects of information into single utterances (Madlener-Charpentier, Liste Lamas 2022); in the domain of motion events, Path and Manner of motion are typically expressed in the same clause in S-framed languages, and several Ground elements/Path satellites may be attached to a single verb, resulting in elaborate Path descriptions, as e.g. Eng. “he ran down the stairs (1) through the hallway (2) out of the door (3) into the garden (4)” (Madlener-Charpentier, Liste Lamas 2022, 3). Therefore, learning an S-framed L2 should be particularly challenging for speakers with a V-framed L1. But challenges are faced also by S-framed L1 learners of a V-framed L2, for whom it can be difficult to learn to reduce information density, limiting the use of manner-of motion verbs, and to respect the boundary-crossing constraint (Madlener-Charpentier, Liste Lamas 2022).<sup>21</sup>

Challenges in the acquisition process also emerge in learners whose L1 and L2 belong to the same framing type.<sup>22</sup> It has been observed that, even without having to restructure the main lexicalisation patterns, L2 learners may find challenging to increase/reduce information density (Madlener-Charpentier 2022; Madlener-Charpentier, Liste Lamas 2022).

Several studies have investigated the L2 acquisition of motion constructions by learners with different L1 types, considering the role of language typology in the expression of motion events.<sup>23</sup> It has been observed that not all the challenges faced by L2 learners in the acquisition of motion events can be traced back to typological differences, as they are observed across different L1 backgrounds (see e.g. Madlener-Charpentier 2022; Madlener-Charpentier, Liste Lamas 2022). In addition to typological aspects of the event construal, L2 learners have to acquire specific linguistic means. Madlener-Charpentier and Liste Lamas (2022), for example, show that the encoding of Path is challenging for L2 learners of German with typologically different L1s (S-framed: Danish, English; V-framed: French, Spanish) and that even advanced learners struggle to formally distinguish and/or functionally differentiate between different types of Path encoding satellites, as e.g. verb particles, prepositions, and directional adverbs (Madlener-Charpentier, Liste Lamas 2022, 14). Madlener-Charpentier (2022) also points out that for L1 English (S-framed language)

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**21** In V-framed languages, manner verbs cannot be used with telic Paths, in boundary-crossing contexts (e.g. Eng. *run into a house* – Aske 1989; Özçalışkan 2015; Madlener-Charpentier, Liste Lamas 2022).

**22** Ji 2022; Ji, Hohenstein 2014; Lewandowski, Özçalışkan 2021; Paul 2014; Wu 2011; 2014; Zeng 2017.

**23** See e.g. Cadierno, Ruiz 2006; Cadierno, Robinson 2009; Cadierno 2010; Madlener-Charpentier, Liste Lamas 2022; Wu, Nunome, Wang 2022.

learners of German (S-framed language) is challenging to reach target-like levels of utterance complexity and information density, even at advanced levels, even if they do not have to restructure the basic lexicalisation pattern (shared by the L1 and L2). In particular, L1 English learners of German produce less complex Path types and also less syntactically complex Ground elements within more complex Path types than L1 German speakers and L1 German learners of English (Madlener-Charpentier 2022, 250-2).

By delving into the acquisition of directed motion constructions in L2 Vietnamese by L1 Korean and L1 Chinese learners – a pairing seldom explored in the literature – this study aims to examine whether the typological similarities or differences between the learners' L1 and L2 play a role in the acquisition process of directed motion constructions, as well as to enhance our understanding of cross-linguistic and within-language variations.

A key question arises: which group, Chinese or Korean learners, has a greater advantage in mastering Vietnamese directed motion constructions? Based on the typological features and on the language-specific morpho-syntactic properties highlighted above, we expect Chinese learners to be better able to grasp these constructions than their Korean counterparts. This prediction is based on a number of similarities between Chinese and Vietnamese: specifically, the shared basic syntactic word order, the prevalent satellite-framed typology, and the collocation of Path between Figure and Ground in directed motion constructions.

The present study aims at answering the following research questions:

- RQ1 To what extent does the typological similarity or difference between the learners' first language (L1) and the target language (L2) facilitate or hinder the acquisition process of directed motion constructions in Vietnamese by L1 Chinese and L1 Korean learners? More specifically, does the L1 make a difference in the development of learners' grammatical competence?
- RQ2 Among the different types of directed motion constructions (Goal-oriented, Source-oriented, and Route-oriented), which specific type turns out to be more challenging for L1 Chinese and L1 Korean learners?

By addressing these questions, our study aims to contribute to our understanding of how first language structures, language-specific morpho-syntactic properties, and typological proximity/distance influence the acquisition of complex linguistic patterns. This research not only sheds light on the challenges faced by second language learners but also offers insights into the factors that might facilitate their successful acquisition of directed motion constructions in



Vietnamese. The results of this study will contribute to enhancing our knowledge of language acquisition processes and inform language teaching methodologies.

### 3.1 Research Design and Predictions

In order to address our research questions, we designed a questionnaire comprising 33 multiple-choice questions (including 8 distractors) focusing on directed motion constructions with the deictic verb *đi* ‘go’ in Vietnamese. The choice of this verb is mainly motivated by the fact that it is a basic motion verb expressing one of the most basic human activities (Heine, Claudi, Hünemeyer 1991, 35) and that, together with ‘come’, it is the most common and earliest acquired verb of motion (Miller, Johnson-Laird 1976, 531). The questionnaire aims to investigate the grammatical competence of L1 Chinese and L1 Korean learners regarding different types of directed motion constructions in Vietnamese.

Below are examples from each category of directed motion constructions, facilitating an exploration of the cross-linguistic differences among Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean within these stimulus sentences. For each category we examined two key parameters: the kind of Path lexicalisation and its positioning in relation to Figure and Ground, as well as the use of language-specific devices.

Goal-oriented motion constructions:

(11) a. Vietnamese

<i>Hoa</i> <sub>Figure</sub>	<i>đi</i> <sub>Deictic</sub>	<i>vào</i> <sub>Path</sub>	<i>trong</i>	<i>chợ</i> <sub>Ground</sub>
Hoa	go	enter	in	market

‘Hoa goes/went into the market’. (6c)

b. Chinese

阿花 <sub>Figure</sub>	走 <sub>Manner</sub>	进 <sub>Path</sub>	市场里 <sub>Ground</sub>	(去) <sub>Deictic</sub>
Āhuā	zǒu	jìn	shìchǎng-lǐ	qù
Hoa	walk	enter	market-in	(go)

‘Hoa went into the market’.

c. Korean

호아 <sub>Figure</sub>	시장에 <sub>Ground</sub>	들어 <sub>Path</sub>	갔다 <sub>Deictic</sub>
<i>Hoa-neun</i>	<i>sijiang-e</i>	<i>deur-eo</i>	<i>ga-t-da</i>
Hoa-TOP	market-into	enter-CONN	GO-PAST-DECL

‘Hoa went into the market’.

The Goal-oriented motion constructions in (11) reveal different patterns in the three languages. Vietnamese (11a) displays the deictic

verb *đi* ‘go’ followed by a path verb, *vào* ‘enter’, forming a serial verb construction, without indication of manner (see the discussion on ex. 6c, § 2.2).

The Chinese sentence in (11b) contains a manner verb and a path verb, which can be also followed by a deictic verb after the Ground noun. The manner can be omitted (although it is often specified), resulting in a verb-framed construction formed by a path verb and a deictic verb (*jìn qù* 进去 ‘enter go’; see ex. 4). Alternatively, the path verb *jìn* 进 ‘enter’ can be used alone (see ex. 3a). Korean (11c) shows a verb-framed construction, where the Path slot is filled by both a path verb and a deictic verb (see ex. 7). Optionally, manner can be specified by adding a manner verb within a serial verb construction (see ex. 8). In addition, in both Vietnamese and Chinese the Ground noun is placed after the Path constituent (but before the Deictic, if present, in Chinese), whereas in Korean it precedes the Path. Finally, the goal location is introduced by a preposition in Vietnamese, while in Chinese and Korean it is marked by post-nominal items attached to the Ground noun. From the observation of the three patterns in (11), we may conclude that Chinese learners may have more advantages than Korean learners in acquiring this construction in Vietnamese from the point of view of word order, if we consider the basic components of the motion event (Figure, Ground, and Path), but they may experience negative transfer in the collocation of the deictic verb and may possibly overuse complex directional constructions, which are not possible in Vietnamese. Korean learners may experience difficulties in acquiring the correct word order of the constituents, given the typological differences between the two languages: in particular, both the collocation of the Ground and of the Deictic may pose challenges to them.

When the deictic verb ‘go’ is the only verb used in the expression of directed motion constructions, Vietnamese and Chinese are alike: in both languages the Ground is constructed as a direct object and is placed after the Path. In contrast, in Korean the Path occurs within an intransitive frame, and a postpositional marker is attached to the Ground noun. See the examples in (12):

(12) a. Vietnamese

<i>Hoa</i> <sub>Figure</sub>	<i>đi</i> <sub>Deictic</sub>	<i>chợ</i> <sub>Ground</sub>
Hoa	go	market

‘Hoa goes/went to the market’.

b. Chinese

阿花 <sub>Figure</sub>	去 <sub>Deictic</sub>	市场 <sub>Ground</sub>
<i>Āhuā</i>	<i>qù</i>	<i>shíchǎng</i>
Hoa	go	market

‘Hoa goes/went to the market’.

c. Korean

호아는 <sub>Figure</sub>	시장에 <sub>Ground</sub>	갔다 <sub>Deictic</sub>
<i>Hoa-neun</i>	<i>sijiang-e</i>	<i>ga-t-da</i>
Hoa-TOP	market-at	go-PAST-DECL
‘Hoa went to the market.’		

The patterns displayed in (12) suggest that Chinese learners should be facilitated in the acquisition of directed motion expressions containing only a deictic verb, compared to Korean learners. Generally speaking, we expect that Chinese learners acquire Goal-oriented directed motion constructions more easily.

Source-oriented motion constructions:

(13) a. Vietnamese

<i>Hoa</i> <sub>Figure</sub>	<i>đi</i> <sub>Deictic</sub>	<i>từ</i> <sub>Source</sub>	<i>chợ</i> <sub>Ground</sub>
Hoa	go	from	market
‘Hoa comes/came from the market.’			

b. Chinese

阿花 <sub>Figure</sub>	从 <sub>Source</sub>	市场 <sub>Ground</sub>	来 <sub>Deictic</sub>
<i>Āhuā</i>	<i>cóng</i>	<i>shìchǎng</i>	<i>lái</i>
Hoa	from	market	come
‘Hoa came from the market.’			

c. Korean

호아는 <sub>Figure</sub>	시장에서 <sub>Ground-Source</sub>	왔다 <sub>Deictic</sub>
<i>Hoa-neun</i>	<i>sijiang-eseo</i>	<i>wa-t-da</i>
Hoa-TOP	market-from	come-PAST-DECL
‘Hoa came from the market.’		

As it can be seen from the examples, Source-oriented motion constructions reveal a significant contrast between Vietnamese and Chinese/Korean compared to Goal-oriented constructions. In Vietnamese, the locative phrase expressing the source of the motion follows the main verb (13a), whereas in both Chinese and Korean it precedes the main verb (13b,c). It is worth noting that in both Chinese and Vietnamese the Source is constructed as a prepositional phrase, but the position of prepositional phrases is different in the two languages: while both are VO languages, in Vietnamese prepositional phrases follow the verb, while in Chinese they precede the verb, as in OV languages (Dryer 2003). Therefore, both Chinese and Korean learners may have difficulties in acquiring the correct word order of Vietnamese Source-oriented constructions.

Route-oriented motion constructions:

(14) a. Vietnamese

<i>Hoa</i> <sub>Figure</sub>	<i>đi</i> <sub>Deictic</sub>	<i>qua</i> <sub>Path</sub>	<i>chợ</i> <sub>Ground</sub>
Hoa	go	pass	market

‘Hoa goes/went through the market’.

b. Chinese

阿花 <sub>Figure</sub>	走 <sub>Manner</sub>	过 <sub>Path</sub>	市场 <sub>Ground</sub>
Āhuā	zǒu	guò	shìchǎng

Hoa walk pass market  
‘Hoa walked through the market’.

c. Korean

호아는 <sub>Figure</sub>	시장을 <sub>Ground</sub>	지나 <sub>Path</sub>	간다 <sub>Deictic</sub>
Hoa-neun	sijiang-eul	jin-a	ga-t-da

Hoa-TOP market-OBJ pass-CONN go-PAST-DECL  
‘Hoa went through the market’.

In the Route-oriented motion constructions in (14a), the deictic verb *đi* ‘go’ is followed by the trajectory path verb *qua* ‘pass’. In the Chinese construction in (14b), the path verb follows the manner verb *zǒu* 走 ‘walk’, specifying manner of motion: both the Manner and the Path are specified by two different constituents, displaying a typical satellite-framed/equipollently-framed construction.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the Korean example (14c) shows a verb-framed construction, where the path verb *jin-* ‘pass’ is followed by the deictic verb *ga-* ‘go’, as required in the expression of spontaneous directed motion constructions. In addition, it should be noted that all the three languages show a transitive frame in this construction, since the Ground noun is constructed as a direct object. We expect that in this case word order plays a crucial role in facilitating the acquisition of the construction: Chinese learners may find it easier to acquire this construction than Korean students since in their L1 the Path is placed between Figure and Ground, whereas in Korean it follows the Ground.

In summary, among the three subtypes of directed motion constructions (Goal, Source, and Route), the Source-oriented constructions in Chinese and Korean exhibit more significant differences from Vietnamese than the other constructions. Furthermore, compared to

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<sup>24</sup> Note that, whereas a verb like *jin* 进 ‘enter’ can be used alone as a path verb, the verb *guò* 过 cannot (see Lamarre 2008, 77). The use of *guò* 过 as main verb seems to be limited only to certain objects, like *guò mǎlù* 过马路 ‘cross the road’.

Korean, Chinese displays patterns that are more similar to Vietnamese, especially in terms of word order, but also in terms of language-specific devices used in the expression of motion events.

Based on the cross-linguistic variation observed, we make the following predictions:

- a. Generally, the grammatical competence of L1 Chinese learners in Vietnamese directed motion constructions is higher compared to that of L1 Korean learners.
- b. The directed motion construction that proves more challenging for both L1 Chinese and L1 Korean learners is the Source-oriented construction.

An additional factor to consider in assessing L2 learners' competence is language proficiency. Therefore, we expand our research questions to include the following:

RQ3 Is there a correlation between learners' proficiency levels and their mastery of different Vietnamese directed motion constructions?

In this regard, we expect students with higher proficiency levels to demonstrate a better understanding of the structure and properties of Vietnamese directed motion constructions.

### 3.2 Data Collection

In this study, we used a total of 33 stimulus sentences, divided into 25 sentences expressing different types of motion events and 8 distractors [tab. 1]:

**Table 1** Stimuli types

Stimuli types		Number of sentences
Directed Motion	Goal-oriented	15
	Source-oriented	5
	Route-oriented	5
Distractors		8
Total		33

Two methods were employed for data collection: an online survey administered through Google Forms and direct surveys conducted in classroom settings. The survey consisted of 33 multiple-choice questions, each providing three options, aimed at assessing whether learners recognise the correct structure of directed motion events.

Participants were required to select the most appropriate sentence structure, specifically focusing on the arrangement of the Figure, Path, and Ground, as well as the position of location/source/goal prepositional phrases in directed motion construction featuring the verb *đi* 'to go' in Vietnamese.

(15) **Example Question:** Choose the sentence with the correct word order:

- a. *Đi*<sub>Deictic</sub>                      *vào*<sub>Path</sub>                      *Hoa*<sub>Figure</sub>                      *chợ*<sub>Ground</sub>  
go                      enter                      Hoa                      market  
Intended: 'Hoa goes/went into the market'.
- b. *Hoa*<sub>Figure</sub>                      *đi*<sub>Deictic</sub>                      *vào*<sub>Path</sub>                      *chợ*<sub>Ground</sub>  
Hoa                      go                      enter                      market  
'Hoa goes/went into the market'.
- c. *Đi*<sub>Deictic</sub>                      *Hoa*<sub>Figure</sub>                      *chợ*<sub>Ground</sub>                      *vào*<sub>Path</sub>  
go                      Hoa                      market                      enter  
Intended: 'Hoa goes/went into the market'.

In this example, the correct answer is (15b), where the Path is appropriately placed between the Figure and the Ground noun.

Sentences in which the verb *đi* 'to go' appears in other types of constructions were used as distractors. These sentences include those where *đi* 'to go' precedes another verb in a purpose relation, or those where it introduces the means of transport, as e.g.:

- (16) a. *Hoa*                      *đi*                      *xem*                      *phim*                      *cho*                      *vui*  
Hoa                      go                      watch                      movie                      for                      fun  
'Hoa goes/went to watch movies for fun'.
- b. *Hoa*                      *đi*                      *cáp treo*                      *lên*                      *núi Yên Tử*  
Hoa                      go                      cable                      go.up                      mountain Yen Tu  
'Hoa goes/went up to Yen Tu mountain by cable'.

The questionnaire was administered to 58 Chinese learners and 63 Korean learners of Vietnamese, all enrolled as full-time students at Vietnam National University Hanoi. These learners had varying levels of experience in learning Vietnamese, ranging from 7 to 30 months at the time of the study. Additionally, a control group consisting of 31 native Vietnamese speakers, all full-time students at Vietnam National University Hanoi during the test period, was also included in the study [tab. 2].

**Table 2** Participants by L1 background

L1 background	Number of participants
L1 Chinese learners	58
L1 Korean learners	63
Vietnamese native speakers	31
Total	152

In order to assess the students' proficiency levels, we considered two key factors: their placement in suitable language classes and their self-reported evaluation of their language skills.

First, we examined their placement in appropriate language classes. At the time of testing, Korean and Chinese students had been studying at Vietnam National University Hanoi for 6 months. It is important to note that they had received formal education in South Korea and China prior to their immersion program in Vietnam. At Vietnam National University Hanoi, the students were divided into two classes: one from A2 and B1 level and the other from B2 and C1 level. Consequently, all the students were at the intermediate to advanced level.

We also assessed their language proficiency skills using a self-assessment questionnaire based on the CEFR scale of competence. They were given four proficiency options corresponding to levels A2, B1, B2, and C1 in the European CEFR framework.

Self-evaluation proficiency question:

Choose the level that best matches your knowledge of Vietnamese from the four levels below:

(i) Level 1: I can understand frequently used words and phrases related to everyday situations such as shopping, accommodation, and professions. I can understand simple texts and write short, coherent texts about familiar topics. I can also express simple opinions and connect sentences using basic conjunctions.

(ii) Level 2: I can understand the main points of clear, standard speech and texts on familiar topics. I can express opinions, describe experiences, and discuss plans. I can write detailed texts on a wide range of topics, connect ideas logically, and give reasons and explanations for opinions. I can engage in more complex conversations and deal with a variety of social situations with ease.

(iii) Level 3: I can understand abstract topics and express ideas fluently. I can write clear, detailed essays and reports, present arguments effectively, and respond appropriately to different registers and styles of communication. I can also understand implicit meanings and cultural subtleties in conversations and texts.

(iv) Level 4: I can understand long and demanding texts and grasp implicit meanings. I can speak spontaneously and fluently without having to search for words. I can use the language flexibly and effectively in social, professional, or academic situations. I can express myself on complex subjects in a clear and well-structured way. I can distinguish complexities of meaning in relation to complex subjects.

In cases where there was a discrepancy between their class placement and their self-assessment (such as a student placed in an intermediate class self-assessing as B2, or a student from an advanced class self-assessing as B1), we considered their self-identified proficiency level. As a result, 94 students were classified as intermediate (A2 and B1), while 27 were classified as advanced (B2 and C1) [tab. 3].

**Table 3** Participants by Proficiency level of Vietnamese

Proficiency level	Number of participants
Intermediate learners (A2 and B1)	94
Advanced learners (B2 and C1)	27
Native speakers	31
Total	152

### 3.3 Results

In this section, we present the results of the questionnaire. Within each construction (Goal-oriented, Source-oriented, and Route-oriented), we consider both L1 (Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese) and proficiency levels (intermediate, advanced, and native).

Before discussing the results, it is important to outline the methodology used to compare the significance difference between two independent proportions. Throughout this paper, we conduct a hypothesis test comparing two independent population proportions, denoted as  $p_A$  and  $p_B$ . This method assumes that the two samples are simple random samples that are independent, and the number of successes and failures is at least five for each of the samples. We apply this method when these assumptions are met. The difference of two proportions follows an approximate normal distribution. The null hypothesis states that the two proportions are the same, i.e.  $H_0: p_A = p_B$ . In particular,  $p_A$  and  $p_B$  represent the proportions  $k_A/n_A$  and  $k_B/n_B$ , respectively, in which  $n_A$  and  $n_B$  represent the total numbers of answers in two independent samples, A and B;  $k_A$  and  $k_B$  represent the numbers of correct answers within each sample that are of particular interest. The one-tailed probabilities (p-values) associated with the resulting value of z will be used, and the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$  is utilised to reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$  if the p-value is less than  $\alpha$ .



Tables 4-6 summarise the main results of the questionnaire [tabs 4-6].

**Table 4** Goal vs Source vs Route distinction by L1 background

Path types	Native	Chinese	Korean
Goal	95.3%	88.6%	87%
Source	99.4%	<b>74.5%</b>	<b>65.4%</b>
Route	100%	92.8%	<b>73.7%</b>

**Table 5** Goal vs Source vs Route distinction by proficiency level

Path types	Native	Intermediate	Advanced
Goal	95.3%	87.2%	89.6%
Source	99.4%	<b>65.1%</b>	85.9%
Route	100%	80.6%	90.4%

**Table 6** Goal vs Source vs Route distinction by L1 background and proficiency level

Path types	Native	Chinese Adv.	Chinese Inter.	Korean Adv.	Korean Inter.
Goal	95.3%	90.2%	88%	88.7%	86.7%
Source	99.4%	85.9%	<b>69.8%</b>	86%	<b>61.5%</b>
Route	100%	94.1%	92.2%	84%	<b>71.7%</b>

The data presented in tables 4, 5, and 6 confirm our initial predictions (§ 3.1). First, our findings confirm the advantage that Chinese learners have over their Korean counterparts in understanding these constructions. Chinese learners generally outperform Korean learners across all Path types; however, this difference is significant only for Source-oriented ( $p = 0.0075$ ) and Route-oriented constructions ( $p < .0001$ ), but not for Goal-oriented constructions ( $p = 0.3435$ ). The advantage of Chinese learners over Korean learners is significant only at the intermediate level ( $p < .0001$ ). Moreover, among the three types of Path constructions, Source-oriented constructions emerge as more challenging for learners, especially for those at the intermediate level. This trend emerges in both L1 backgrounds, indicating a consistent difficulty faced by learners in understanding and recognising the syntactic properties and arrangement of components of Source-oriented directed motion events. Furthermore, the data also reveal that learners' understanding of the syntactic properties of this construction increases with increased proficiency, indicating the crucial role of language proficiency in mastering these linguistic structures.

To sum up, our data offer evidence supporting our initial hypotheses, confirming the influence of both L1 background and proficiency levels on learners' ability to navigate the complexities of directed motion constructions. In what follows, we will delve into specific constructions to discern the structures that pose notable challenges for learners.

### 3.3.1 Goal-oriented Constructions

As we have seen in § 2.4, Goal-oriented constructions can be classified into two subtypes: those displaying a transitive frame, where the Goal is expressed by an unmarked Ground NP, which acts as a direct object (simple Goal), and those displaying an intransitive frame, where the Goal is marked by a preposition, forming a prepositional ground phrase (complex Goal). The latter pattern is more complex due to the inclusion of an extra element indicating the Figure's location relative to the Ground.

#### (17) Goal types

- a. Simple Goal: Figure + Go + Goal + Ground (ex. 6c, 12a)
- b. Complex Goal: Figure + Go + Goal + Location + Ground (ex. 5, 11a)

The data in tables 7, 8, and 9 demonstrate distinct challenges among the two types of Goal constructions, with complex Goal constructions proving to be notably more difficult for learners, especially among intermediate levels [tabs 7-9]. This seems to suggest that the selection of a prepositional phrase over a noun phrase presents substantial hurdles for learners.<sup>25</sup>

**Table 7** Simple Goal vs Complex Goal distinction by L1 background

Goal type	Native	Chinese	Korean
Simple Goal	100%	99.4%	97.9%
Complex Goal	88.7%	76.1%	74.3%

**Table 8** Simple Goal vs Complex Goal distinction by proficiency level

Goal type	Native	Advanced	Intermediate
Simple Goal	100%	97.5%	98.9%
Complex Goal	88.7%	79%	74.1%

<sup>25</sup> We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this point.

**Table 9** Simple Goal vs Extended Goal distinction by L1 background and proficiency level

Goal type	Native	Chinese Adv.	Chinese Inter.	Korean Adv.	Korean Inter.
Simple Goal	100%	98%	100%	96.7%	98.1%
Complex Goal	88.7%	<b>80.4%</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>76.7%</b>	73.9%

These data show that simple Goal constructions are quite easy to grasp for both groups of learners, whereas complex Goal constructions are more challenging. This may be due to the fact that in complex Goal constructions a marker of goal location is used, the type and collocation of which is different in learners' L1 language (see § 2.4): both Chinese and Korean make use of post-nominal items to mark location (§ 2.4), while Vietnamese makes use of prepositions. Therefore, both word order and the language-specific devices used to mark goal location make the acquisition of these constructions more difficult for learners. No significant difference related to proficiency is observed in the two groups of learners.

### 3.3.2 Source-oriented Constructions

Source-oriented constructions also encompass two subtypes, with the latter being more elaborate, incorporating an additional element indicating the Figure's position relative to the Ground (see § 2.4).

(18) Source types

Simple Source: Figure + Go + Source + Ground (ex. 9a)

Complex Source: Figure + Go + Source + Position + Ground (ex. 9b)

Tables 10, 11, and 12 show the results for both types of Source-oriented constructions [tabs 10-12].

**Table 10** Simple Source vs Extended Source distinction by L1 background

Source type	Native	Chinese	Korean
Simple Source	100%	84.5%	<b>74.6%</b>
Complex Source	99.2%	<b>72%</b>	<b>63.1%</b>

**Table 11** Simple Source vs Extended Source distinction by proficiency level

Source type	Native	Advanced	Intermediate
Simple Source	100%	96.3%	<b>74.5%</b>
Complex Source	99.2%	83.3%	<b>62.8%</b>

**Table 12** Simple Source vs Extended Source distinction by L1 background and proficiency level

Source type	Native	Chinese Adv.	Chinese Inter.	Korean Adv.	Korean Inter.
Simple Source	100%	100%	78%	90%	<b>71.7%</b>
Complex Source	99.2%	82.4%	<b>67.7%</b>	85%	59%

The data show that extended Source constructions pose significantly greater difficulties for learners, especially at intermediate levels. This may be due to the fact that the specification of the position adds complexity to the construction, especially considering that both Source and Position are encoded differently in the learners' L1 (§§ 2.4, 3.1). This may be the reason why this construction is more difficult to grasp, especially at lower levels of proficiency. The data also show that, although learners' understanding of the syntactic properties of these constructions increases with increasing proficiency levels ( $p = 0.0009$  for Korean learners,  $p = 0.0118$  for Chinese learners), learners' competence at the advanced level in complex source constructions remains lower than that in simple Source constructions in both groups of learners ( $p = 0.0051$ ). The understanding of simple Source constructions by advanced learners, on the other hand, approaches that of native speakers. It is worth noting that both Korean and Chinese advanced learners seem to have a better understanding of complex Source constructions than of complex Goal constructions ( $p = 0.0014$ ; compare table 12 with table 9).

### 3.3.3 Route-oriented Constructions

Route-oriented constructions can also be divided into two subtypes, with the latter being more complex and introducing an additional element specifying motion conducted either along the vertical axis or the horizontal axis (§ 2.4).

#### (19) Route types

Simple Route: Figure + Go + Route + Ground (ex. 10a)

Complex Route: Figure + Go + Axis + Route + Ground (ex. 10b)

The results for these two types of constructions are summarised in tables 13, 14, and 15 [tabs 13-15].

**Table 13** Simple Route vs Complex Route distinction by L1 background

Route type	Native	Chinese	Korean
Simple Route	100%	91.5%	69.4%
Complex Route	99.2%	72%	<b>63.1%</b>

**Table 14** Simple Route vs Complex Route distinction by proficiency level

Route type	Native	Advanced	Intermediate
Simple Route	100%	100%	92.6%
Complex Route	100%	88%	<b>77.7%</b>

**Table 15** Simple Route vs Complex Route distinction by L1 background and proficiency Level

Route type	Native	Chinese Adv.	Chinese Inter.	Korean Adv.	Korean Inter.
Simple Route	100%	100%	97.6%	100%	88.7%
Complex Route	100%	92.6%	90.9%	80%	<b>67.5%</b>

As in the case of Goal-oriented and Source-oriented constructions, the complex pattern proves to be more challenging for learners, especially at intermediate levels. However, Chinese intermediate learners demonstrate consistently higher competence in Route constructions than Korean learners at the same level ( $p < .0001$ ). In this case, positive transfer from the L1 may play a role, since Vietnamese and Chinese show comparable structures in expressing this kind of motion constructions, as they both place the Ground after the Path, while Korean put the Ground before the Path (see § 2.4 and § 3.1, ex. 14).

## 4 Conclusions

Directed motion constructions exhibit a high degree of cross-linguistic and within-language variation. The notable differences across Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese offer a compelling opportunity to explore the influence of language typology and language-specific morpho-syntactic properties on the effective acquisition of directed motion constructions in L2 Vietnamese. Our investigation represents a first step in the exploration of this still unexplored field,

aimed at examining the linguistic competence of L1 Chinese and L1 Korean learners.

The findings of our investigation indicate that cross-linguistic differences play a crucial role in the acquisition of directed motion patterns. Chinese learners generally outperform their Korean counterparts, and these differences stem from distinct patterns in word order and the use of language-specific devices. In fact, the most challenging directed motion construction appears to be the Source-oriented one (compared to Goal and Route,  $p < .0001$  in both cases), whose structure significantly departs from the one employed in their L1. The most challenging structure appears to be the complex one (compared to the simple one,  $p < .0001$ ), in which more elements related to the expression of motion are involved, adding complexity to the construction.

Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire also reveal that language proficiency too plays a role in the mastery of these constructions: learners' competence increases with increased proficiency.

These findings also carry significant pedagogical implications, emphasising the necessity of considering both the complexity of the target language and the structures of learners' L1 in developing language curricula and teaching methods (Odlin 1989; Selinker, Gass 1992; Yu, Odlin 2016). Recognising typological differences and similarities between languages can assist educators in tailoring their approaches to accommodate learners' specific needs and challenges. For example, when the target language and the native language exhibit typological similarities, and both formal and functional similarities can be established, leveraging the similarities between learners' native language (L1) and the target language (L2) can facilitate more effective language learning experiences.

In addition, this study also underscores the significance of considering both linguistic typology and proficiency in language teaching. In fact, our findings align with previous research highlighting the significance of language proficiency levels in language acquisition. Tailored language programs focusing on both linguistic complexity and learners' proficiency levels can significantly enhance the effectiveness of language teaching practices. By integrating these insights into L2 Vietnamese language teaching, it could help in developing pedagogical tools and methods that target the needs of learners with different L1s more effectively. Effective pedagogical methods, incorporating contrastive analysis and explicit instruction, empower learners to overcome challenges arising from typological disparities. This approach fosters a deeper understanding of Vietnamese linguistic structures among learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

This study lays the groundwork for further investigations into the acquisition of directed motion constructions in L2 Vietnamese, aiming to deepen our understanding of the underlying mechanisms in the

acquisition process. Future studies should expand their focus to include diverse verb types, encompassing both manner and path verbs, and explore various sentence structures. Additionally, incorporating various tasks designed to assess both linguistic competence and language performance would substantially contribute to our knowledge of the acquisition of these constructions in L2 Vietnamese.

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## Appendix: List of Stimuli Sentences

- 1 *Hoa đi chợ.*  
Hoa go market  
'Hoa goes/went to the market'.
- 2 *Hoa đi Hạ Long.*  
Hoa go Hạ Long  
'Hoa goes/went to Ha Long'.
- 3 *Hoa đi trên phố.*  
Hoa go on street  
'Hoa walks/walked on the street'.
- 4 *Hoa đi trong nhà.*  
Hoa go in house  
'Hoa walks/walked in the house'.
- 5 *Hoa đi đến chợ.*  
Hoa go come.to market  
'Hoa goes/went to the market'.
- 6 *Hoa đi vào chợ.*  
Hoa go enter market  
'Hoa goes/went into the market'.
- 7 *Hoa đi vào trong chợ.*  
Hoa go enter in market  
'Hoa goes/went inside the market'.
- 8 *Hoa đi vào đường một chiều.*  
Hoa go enter street one way  
'Hoa goes/went into a one-way street'.
- 9 *Hoa đi từ chợ.*  
Hoa go from market  
'Hoa goes/went from the market'.
- 10 *Hoa đi từ dưới chợ.*  
Hoa go down from market  
'Hoa goes/went from the market down there'.
- 11 *Hoa đi từ trong nhà.*  
Hoa go from in house  
'Hoa goes/went from inside the house'.
- 12 *Hoa đi tiếp đến chợ.*  
Hoa go continue come.to market  
'Hoa keeps/kept going and goes/went to the market ahead'.
- 13 *Hoa đi thẳng đến chợ.*  
Hoa go straight come.to market  
'Hoa goes/went straight to the market'.
- 14 *Hoa đi lên chợ.*  
Hoa go go.up market  
'Hoa goes/went to the market (up there)'.

15	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>xuống</i>	<i>công ty.</i>		
	Hoa	go	go.down	company		
	'Hoa goes/went to the company (down there).'					
16	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>lên</i>	<i>trên</i>	<i>chợ.</i>	
	Hoa	go	go.up	on	market	
	'Hoa goes/went up to the market.'					
17	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>xuống</i>	<i>dưới</i>	<i>công ty.</i>	
	Hoa	go	go.down	below	company	
	'Hoa goes/went down to the company.'					
18	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>chợ.</i>		
	Hoa	go	go.out	market		
	'Hoa goes/went to the market (out there).'					
19	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>khỏi</i>	<i>chợ.</i>	
	Hoa	go	go.out	of	market	
	'Hoa goes/went out of the market.'					
20	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>lên</i>	<i>từ</i>	<i>chợ.</i>	
	Hoa	go	go.up	from	market	
	'Hoa goes/went up from the market.'					
21	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>qua</i>	<i>chợ Đồng Xuân.</i>		
	Hoa	go	go.through	market Dong Xuan		
	'Hoa goes/went through the Dong Xuan market.'					
22	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>ngang</i>	<i>qua</i>	<i>chợ Đồng Xuân.</i>	
	Hoa	go	horizontal	go.through	market Dong Xuan	
	'Hoa goes/went through the Dong Xuan market (horizontally).'					
23	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>thẳng</i>	<i>qua</i>	<i>chợ Đồng Xuân.</i>	
	Hoa	go	vertical	go.through	market Dong Xuan	
	'Hoa goes/went through the Dong Xuan market (vertically).'					
24	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>mua</i>	<i>táo</i>	<i>ở</i>	<i>chợ.</i>
	Hoa	go	buy	apple	in	market
	'Hoa goes/went to buy apples at the market.'					
25	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>về</i>	<i>nhà</i>	<i>từ</i>	<i>chợ.</i>
	Hoa	go	return	home	from	market
	'Hoa goes/went home from the market.'					
26	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>xe máy</i>	<i>vào</i>	<i>chợ.</i>	
	Hoa	go	motorbike	enter	market	
	'Hoa goes/went to the market by motorbike.'					
27	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>cáp treo</i>	<i>lên</i>	<i>núi Yên Tử.</i>	
	Hoa	go	cable	go.up	mountain Yen Tu	
	'Hoa goes/went to Yen Tu mountain by cable car.'					
28	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>đi</i>	<i>chợ</i>	<i>để</i>	<i>mua</i>	<i>cam.</i>
	Hoa	go	market	in order to	buy	orange
	'Hoa goes/went to the market in order to buy oranges.'					

- 29 *Hoa đi chợ với Lan.*  
 Hoa go market with Lan  
 ‘Hoa goes/went to the market with Lan’.
- 30 *Hoa đi chợ bằng xe máy với Lan.*  
 Hoa go market by motobike with Lan  
 ‘Hoa goes/went to the market by motorbike with Lan’.
- 31 *Hoa đi làm bằng xe máy vì.*  
*chị ấy ô tô bị hỏng*  
 Hoa go work by motorbike because  
 her car get broken  
 ‘Hoa goes/went to work by motorbike because her car broke down’.
- 32 *Hoa đi xe buýt cho tiện.*  
 Hoa go bus for convenience.  
 ‘Hoa goes/went by bus for convenience’.
- 33 *Hoa đi xem phim cho vui.*  
 Hoa go watch movie for fun  
 ‘Hoa goes/went to watch movies for fun’.



# Some Attempts at Enhancing Old Chinese Reconstructions Through the Lens of Palaeography

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**Abstract** The available reconstruction systems of Old Chinese have proven to be indispensable tools for research in different fields, nevertheless, they remain flawed in many aspects and thus call for continuous refinement. Focusing on Baxter and Sagart's reconstruction (2014), in this paper I will argue that a more systematic way of incorporating palaeographic data as an integral part of the methodology could enhance the reconstruction outcomes. In particular, the graphic forms preceding the *kaishu* 楷書 script of many characters and the frequent cases of phonetic borrowing in unearthed texts can provide considerable insightful data. Through some illustrative examples, I will contend that phonetic borrowings in excavated texts can provide insights for a) reconstructing items not included in current reconstructions; b) disentangling rhyme class mergers, and c) questioning and verifying the forms of items included in current reconstructions. A more porous boundary between the fields of palaeography and Chinese historical phonology could thus provide new data for answering many of the still open questions relating to Old Chinese.

**Keywords** Old Chinese. Historical Phonology. Palaeography. Bamboo manuscripts. Excavated texts. Phonological reconstruction.

**Summary** 1 Palaeographic Material as Sources for Old Chinese Phonology. – 2 Reconstructing Items not Included in BS. – 3 Disentangling Rhymes that Have Merged. – 4 Verifying Reconstructed Items. – 5 Conclusive Remarks.



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## 1 Palaeographic Material as Sources for Old Chinese Phonology

In his 2016 review of the latest reconstruction system of Old Chinese (OC) by Baxter and Sagart (2014) (hereafter, BS),<sup>1</sup> Christoph Harbsmeier (2016, 498) concludes that “we need reconstructions, no matter how unreliable these may prove to be”. Harbsmeier’s words were probably too harsh, since, after almost a decade, the system proposed by BS still remains ‘the state of the art’, and many of its features have proven to be essentially correct. The case of vowel purity is exemplary: a comparison between BS and other reconstruction systems regarding the medial vowels in rhyming words of the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Odes*, eleventh-seventh century BCE)<sup>2</sup> demonstrates significantly superior performance of the former, indicating a much more well-ordered pattern of rhyme schemes than any previously proposed system (List et al. 2017, 1-17).

The methodology underlying BS’s reconstruction has been effectively synthesised by Hill (2019, 188-94), and I will largely draw on this schematic and punctual synthesis for many of the instances discussed in this paper. In a nutshell, the methodology goes as follows: it starts from the Middle Chinese reading of a character as given in the rhyme dictionaries and rhyme tables,<sup>3</sup> and projects it back to OC by taking into account both language-internal and language-external data. To the first category belong both philological sources such as the *Shijing* rhyme patterns, ancient glosses, and the *xiesheng* 諧聲 series,<sup>4</sup> but also systematic accounts of Sinitic varieties not descendants of MC (e.g. Min 閩) and word families alternations. The second category mainly includes older layers of loans from OC into

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**1** In this paper I refer to ‘Old Chinese’ (hereafter, OC) in broad terms, as the stage of the language going from its first written attestations (fourteenth century BCE) to the early Han 漢 dynasty (late third century BCE). See Baxter, Sagart 2014, 1.

**2** The traditional datation of the *Odes* given in this paper has been questioned. Baxter (1991) shows that different layers of historical phonology can be detected in the language of these compositions. In particular, the *textus receptus* (i.e. received text) of the Mao tradition clearly embeds some Han (broadly 206 BCE-220 CE) phonological traits.

**3** I refer to ‘Middle Chinese’ (hereafter, MC) in broad terms: as the stage of the language going from the end of the Han dynasty (third century) to the thirteenth century CE circa. The sources here mentioned notably include the rhyme dictionaries *Qieyun* 切韻 (Spellings and Rhymes, seventh century CE) and *Guangyun* 廣韻 (Extended Rhymes, eleventh century CE), and the rhyme tables *Yunjing* 韻鏡 (Mirror of Rhymes, twelfth century CE) and *Qiyinlüe* 七音略 (Outline of the Seven Sounds, twelfth century CE).

**4** Series of characters sharing the same phonetic elements. See Karlgren 1957; Schuessler 2009.

neighbouring languages (e.g. Lakkia and Ruc, among others).<sup>5</sup> Palaeographic data also play a role in the BS system, although they are not employed systematically.

Through some illustrative examples, I will argue that a further step should be included as an integral part of the whole methodology: the systematic verification of reconstructed items against the numerous cases of phonetic borrowings detectable in pre-Han excavated manuscripts. This claim is far from being unprecedented. Many scholars have long recognised the potential that palaeographic data could hold for phonological reconstructions (e.g. Qiu 1979; Liu 2005; Ye 2017), and the same could be said for the reverse (e.g. see Jacques 2022, 488-91). The significant number of texts unearthed through archaeological discoveries, and unfortunately, also through the occurrence of looting ancient tombs in recent decades, now provides a vast amount of data deserving a major role in research on Old Chinese phonology.<sup>6</sup>

To this day, the most remarkable attempts to refine the BS system through the contribution of palaeography have been made by Haeree Park (2016, 31-72). Some attempts at testing rhyme class distinctions in different phonological reconstructions – also including the BS system – through palaeographic evidence also exist in Chinese-language scholarship (e.g. Yang 2022). Nonetheless, Chinese historical phonology and Chinese palaeography remain by and large two fairly distinct fields with only sporadic interaction between them.

The examples discussed in this brief paper will focus on phonetic borrowings,<sup>7</sup> attempting to show how they can prove to be essential evidence for at least three different questions, namely a.)

<sup>5</sup> An overview of the principles underlying Chinese phonological reconstructions is given in Baxter 2015.

<sup>6</sup> The ethical problems related to working with looted – or ‘unprovenanced’ – artefacts have been the object of debate among scholars. There has been advocacy to ignore these materials or to practice self-censorship in order not to contribute to the prestige and market value of these objects through academic scholarship (Goldin 2013; 2023). On the other side, many scholars claim that ignoring these sources would result in a significant loss of potentially relevant data and that the costs of such an intransigent position would far outweigh its benefits (e.g. Foster 2017; 2024; Smith, Poli 2021, 520; Meyer, Schwartz 2022, 2). I agree with the latter position. As Foster (2024) has pointed out, the practice of ignoring or avoiding citing unprovenanced artefacts entirely may prove to be unattainable. Besides, the decision on whether to work with these types of artefacts should be addressed case by case, establishing a validity threshold based on radiocarbon testing and scholars’ expertise.

<sup>7</sup> The practice of phonetic borrowings is extremely frequent in early Chinese texts. The term ‘phonetic borrowing’ refers to at least two different phenomena: i.e. the practice of employing a given character to represent a word originally lacking a graphic representation (*jiajie* 假借), and the practice of employing characters to represent phonetically similar words which have their own graphic representation (*tongjia* 通假). This paper will focus on cases of *tongjia*, which are deemed particularly informative when the borrowed character exhibits a different phonophore (i.e. phonetic component)

reconstructing items currently not included in BS, b.) disentangling merged rhymes, and c.) questioning and verifying reconstructed forms in BS.

## 2 Reconstructing Items not Included in BS

One of the most evident cases in which palaeographic material can help linguists in enhancing current reconstructions of OC are those characters that lack a reconstructed form but function as clear instances of phonetic loans in the manuscripts. For example, consider the case of the sentence final particle *yi* 毇. This particle is rather rare in transmitted texts while it is frequently seen in unearthed sources. Numerous studies, especially in Mainland China, have long argued that *yi* 毇 should be understood as a sort of Qin 秦 region counterpart of the more common sentence final nominal predication marker *ye* 也 (e.g. Zhang 2011, 570-85). Yet, the retrieval of new caches of bamboo slips from the Chu 楚 region has revealed that the particle was frequently used by Chu scribes as well.<sup>8</sup>

Reconstructing this item can prove to be challenging in some ways: the character never appears in the *Shijing* and all the other items included in the same *xiesheng* series have no reconstructed form in BS. This means that its MC form retrievable from the *Guangyun* cannot be projected back to OC.<sup>9</sup> The MC form 'ejH (*Guangyun* 1958, 375)<sup>10</sup> could possibly go back to different rhymes and different initials in OC: the rhyme -ej 齊 can originate from OC \*-ij-s (*zhi bu* 脂部), \*-it-s (*zhi bu* 質部) or \*-et-s (*ji bu* 祭部) and the initial consonant '影 can go back to OC \*q- or \*ʔ-.

A significant piece of data for assessing the correct reconstruction comes from the collection of bamboo manuscripts at Anhui University

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*shengfu* 聲符). For more details on the phenomenon of phonetic borrowings please refer to Qiu 2013, 174-97.

<sup>8</sup> This particle frequently appears in the *corpus* of Warring States (Zhan guo 戰國, 453-221 BCE) bamboo slips purchased in 2008 from the Hong Kong antiques market by Qinghua University in Beijing. The Qinghua cache contains more than two thousand bamboo slips. Radiocarbon dating has confirmed the authenticity of these artefacts, which can be dated to the late fourth century BCE and attributed to the Chu scribal culture. See Liu 2011, 63.

<sup>9</sup> Rhymes in the *Shijing* are not the sole source for reconstructing OC; many other transmitted texts and excavated materials, such as bronze vessels or bamboo and silk manuscripts, also contain numerous rhymed passages that could equally contribute to the reconstruction of OC forms. Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge, a comprehensive and handy compilation of all rhyming passages - especially those found in excavated materials - is currently missing. This absence makes it exceedingly time-consuming for researchers to verify whether a character not rhyming in the *Shijing* is attested as rhyming elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup> In this paper I use the critical edition of the *Guangyun* contained in Zhou 1958.

(hereafter, ADJ1 or ADJ2 in relation to the edited volume): on slip no. 40 of the Anhui University *Shijing* manuscript,<sup>11</sup> there is a line which has a perfect match in the transmitted text of *Shijing* 24/11/18.<sup>12</sup> In this line the character *yi* 毳 clearly functions as a loan for the particle *yi* 伊 \*ʔij (*zhi bu* 脂部):

ADJ1: 佳絲毳緝  
*Shijing* 24/11/18: 維絲伊緝  
 It is silk that makes the thread.<sup>13</sup>

Another instance of phonetic borrowing is found on slip no. 9 of the Shanghai Museum manuscript (SBJ2) *Zigao* 子羔,<sup>14</sup> where *yi* 毳 stands for the particle *yi* 抑 \*ʔ(r)ik.

SBJ2: 毳(抑)亦成(誠)天子也與(歟)?  
 Yet perhaps they truly were the sons of Heaven?!<sup>15</sup>

The example in the Anhui University *Shijing* allows us to opt for the rhyme \*-ij-s (*zhi bu* 脂部) in OC. Yet, to account for the example in the Shanghai Museum manuscript, we could hypothesise a final glottal stop (\*-ʔ) in the reconstruction. As for the initial consonant, no contact with *k*- 見, *g*- 群, *h*- 匣, *x*- 曉 or *y*- 以 can be detected in the *xiesheng* series, suggesting that the MC initial consonant ‘影 should be projected back to the OC initial \*ʔ. The character entry *yi* 毳 can thus be reconstructed as OC \*ʔʷij[ʔ]-s.

A similar case occurs with the character *yan* 𠂔. This character is rather rare: it lacks an entry in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explain the Graphs to Unravel the Written Words, second century CE),<sup>16</sup> never occurs in the *Shijing*, has no *xiesheng* series, and no entry in the

<sup>11</sup> The *corpus* of Chu bamboo manuscripts (1167 bamboo slips) preserved at Anhui University (*Anhui Daxue* 安徽大學) was purchased in 2015. Radiocarbon testing conducted at Peking University (*Beijing Daxue* 北京大學) has confirmed the authenticity of these artefacts, which can be dated to the fourth century BCE. The publication of the manuscripts is currently still ongoing; two of the expected nine volumes have been published to date. See ADJ1 2019, 1 and Liu et al. 2019, 56-60.

<sup>12</sup> In this paper I use the ICS concordance system for referencing the Chinese classical works.

<sup>13</sup> Transl. by Meyer, Schwartz 2022, 199.

<sup>14</sup> The *corpus* of bamboo manuscripts housed at the Shanghai Museum (Shanghai Bowuguan 上海博物館) was purchased on the Hong Kong antiques market in 1994. This collection of unearthed texts comprises more than 1,200 bamboo slips written in the Chu script, which have been published in nine volumes edited by Ma Chengyuan (2001-12). Radiocarbon testing has confirmed their authenticity and provided a dating to the late fourth-early third centuries BCE. For more details see Liu et al. 2019, 11-16.

<sup>15</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author.

<sup>16</sup> This translation of the *Shuowen jiezi* title is taken from Bottéro 2019, 59-62.

*Guangyun*. This makes its reconstruction quite hard. Its MC reading, though, can be retrieved from the *Yupian* 玉篇 (Jade Chapters, sixth century CE in *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典 2015, 651) where the *fanqie* 反切 *niu juan* 牛眷 MC ngjuw kjwenH is given, yielding the MC ngjwenH.

The rhyme *-jwen* 仙 can be reconstructed as OC *\*-ron* or *\*-ror* (*yu-an bu* 元部), while the initial consonant *ng-* 疑 can be reconstructed as *\*m-qʰ-*, *\*m-G-*, *\*N-qʰ-*, *\*N-G-* when showing connections with MC *k-* 見, *y-* 以 or *'-* 影, or as OC *\*ŋ-*.

Also in this case, two instances of phonetic borrowings in the manuscripts can help us test what has been proposed so far: the character *yan* 𠄎 appears in two pericopes of the two manuscript versions of *Cao Mo zhi zhen* 曹沫之陳 (Cao Mo's Battle Formations) from the collections of the Shanghai Museum and Anhui University. The editors of the Anhui University manuscript have interpreted the character as a phonetic borrowing for the words *juan* 願 *\*[ŋ]o[n]-s* (to desire) and *juan* 倦 *\*[g]ro[n]-s* (fatigued) (ADJ2 2022, 53, 66), while the editors of the Shanghai Museum manuscript (hereafter, SBJ4) only agree on the second reading (SBJ4 2004, 267-8):<sup>17</sup>

ADJ2 slip no. 3: 𠄎(願)尔正衿(功)

SBJ4 slip no. 37: 𠄎(願)尔正衿(功)

May you want to rightly apportion merits.

ADJ2 slip no. 24: 不可田(使)𠄎(倦) = (倦)則不行

SBJ4 slip no. 38: 不可思(使)𠄎(倦) = (倦)則不行

Do not let [those in command of the army] get fatigued or they will no longer be able to march.

<sup>17</sup> The editors of SBJ read the first occurrence of the graph *yan* 𠄎 as an allograph of *ben* 奔 MC pwon OC *\*p'ur* (to run, to flee), based on the well-known graphic variant *ben* 犇 (奔). As the entry in the *Yupian* seems to suggest, the characters *yan* 𠄎 and *ben* 犇 should be distinguished. The solution proposed by the editors of ADJ fits better the general meaning of the passage. Besides, the character *yan* 𠄎 also appears in another pericope of *Cao Mo zhi zhen* where it can be arguably read as a loan for *juan* 倦 (fatigued), the whole passage dealing with the *qi* 氣 (vital energy) of the soldiers. For these reasons, I believe that the reading *ben* 奔 should be rejected. A reading *yi* 疑 *\*[ŋ](r)ə* (doubt) has also been proposed by some scholars (e.g. Yu, Zhang 2019, 274). I find this proposal not convincing: the word *yi* 疑 appears on ADJ2 slips nos. 19, 28, 35, 42 and SBJ4 slips nos. 33, 44, 52 and is consistently written as *yi* 𠄎 (ADJ) or 矣 (SBJ). As for the expression *zheng gong* 正衿, the editors of ADJ propose to read it as *zheng gong* 爭功 (to compete for merits). I read it as *zheng gong* 正功 (to rightly apportion merits) as in *Zhouyi* 周易 (The Zhou Changes) 7/11/5 *Da jun you ming, yi zheng gong ye* 大君有命, 以正功也 “The great ruler delivers his charges: thereby he rightly apportions merit” (Transl. by Legge 1882, 276). This parallel had already been noted by Wang Ning (in Sun 2023, 87).

The OC reconstruction *\*[g]ro[n]-s* is mine. MC *gjwenH* 渠卷切. The MC rhyme *-jwen* 仙 after grave initials can only go back to OC *\*-ron/r* (*yu-an bu* 元部) and initial *g-* 群 is likely to be inherited from OC. A nasal prefix (*\*N-* or *\*m-*) plus velar could also be at the origin of MC *g-* 群. In both cases the matching seems suitable enough to validate this instance of phonetic borrowing.

These readings, acceptable with respect to the broader contexts of the pericopes, are both supported by phonological evidence and, at the same time, allow us to enhance our phonological understanding: if *yan* 件 here effectively functions as a loan for *yuan* 願 \*[ŋ]o[n]-s or *juan* 倦 \*[g]ron-s, it would mean that it can be rather safely reconstructed as \*[ŋ]ro[n]-s.<sup>18</sup>

In the absence of a *xiesheng* series for further investigation, a reconstruction with a nasal prefix – be it \*m- or \*N – and an uvular as onset could also be possible. As the *Yupian* glosses the character as related to *niu* 牛 (ox),<sup>19</sup> we could speculatively opt for a \*m- prefix, frequently attested in animal names. However, the reconstruction with \*[ŋ] onset remains the most plausible in light of the phonetic borrowing examples detected in the manuscripts.

### 3 Disentangling Rhymes that Have Merged

In the centuries separating the language of Mengzi 孟子 (fourth-third century BCE) from the language of the *Qieyun* 切韻 (601 CE) many rhymes coalesced. Our current understanding of the phonological developments of Chinese allows us to disentangle many of these cases when projecting MC readings back to OC. However, in some cases such disentangling is subject to more reservations. In this respect, the phonological data encoded in the early script attested on the unearthed texts can once again prove to be extremely valuable.

This is the case of the rhymes \*-at and \*-et (*yue bu* 月部) which have the same reflexes in MC division III after acute initials, making them difficult to disentangle when reconstructing OC (Schuessler 2009, 225). I take the character *shi* 筮 MC dzvejH (achillea stalk, divination by achillea), reconstructed as \*[d][e][t]-s by BS, as an example.

This character appears twice in the *Shijing* but it does not rhyme (Baxter 1992).<sup>20</sup> Fortunately, it is attested on many unearthed manuscripts from the Chu region where it functions as a phonetic borrowing. One of its best-known occurrences is in the Mawangdui 馬王堆 silk manuscripts (hereafter, MWD4) of the *Laozi* 老子 (late third century – early second century BCE) where it functions as a phonetic loan for the word *shi* 逝 \*[d]at-s (to leave, to go afar) in a line which has a parallel in the stanza no. 25 of the received edition (MWD4

<sup>18</sup> This reconstruction is also supported by the character 𪛗 (phonophore *yuan* 元 \*[ŋ]o[r]) functioning as a phonetic loan for *yuan* 願 in Qinghua \**Zichan* 子產 slip no. 21. As many other examples show, the coda \*-r had already shifted to \*-n in the phonology of the Chu manuscripts.

<sup>19</sup> *Niu jian ye* 牛件也 (*Kangxi zidian* 2015, 903).

<sup>20</sup> I.e. *Shijing* 58/27/13; 169/76/12. For a practical tool for checking *Shijing* rhymes see List 2016.

2014, 42, 206).<sup>21</sup> The retrieval of different excavated versions of the *Laozi* allows us to make a deeper survey of the ways this word was written in early manuscripts: the bamboo manuscript preserved at Peking University (second-first century BCE) (hereafter, BD2) writes the character *di* 𡗗 (lofty, extreme),<sup>22</sup> which is likely to function as a phonetic loan as well (BD2 2012, 156).<sup>23</sup> Its phonophore *dai* 帶 is reconstructed as \*C.tʰa[t]-s, making it a good candidate for phonetic borrowing. Highly informative is also the graph attested on slip no. 22 of the *Laozi* bamboo manuscript A (late fourth century BCE) found at Guodian 郭店 (hereafter, GD):<sup>24</sup> 𡗗, usually transcribed as 潛.

At the time of its first attestations, this complex graph sparked a heated debate among palaeographers and philologists both on its transcription and on its reading. Some scholars suggested the character stood for a lexical variant in the line of the *Laozi*, while others suggested it merely represented a phonetic borrowing for the reading *shi* 逝 of the received version.<sup>25</sup>

The debate on how to appropriately read it seems to be settled: the character frequently appears in later discovered caches of bamboo manuscripts where it usually stands for the reading *shi* 逝, confirming that the Guodian version of the *Laozi* did not show any lexical variation or innovation with respect to the received text. As for its transcription, I hypothesise that its phonophore should be identified in the component 音, which is the most stable part of all attested graphic variants.<sup>26</sup> He Linyi (1999, 196-204) and Liao Mingchun

**21** The discovery of over three thousand artefacts including silk manuscripts, paintings, bamboo slips, lacquered objects, weapons etc. from tomb nos. 1 and 3 at the Mawangdui site (Changsha, Hunan 湖南 Province) in 1973 is arguably one of the most famous Chinese archaeological discoveries of the last century. Various elements indicate that burial no. 3 - where the silk manuscripts were retrieved - can be dated back to the year 168 BCE (Western Han 西漢 206 BCE-9 CE). For more details see Liu et al. 2019, 640-756.

**22** This character is glossed as *Gao ye*. *Yi yue ji ye* 高也。一曰極也 (Lofty. One opinion reads this as extreme; Author's transl.) in the *Shuowen jiezi* 1983, 504. This meaning - compatible with the broader meaning of the stanza - makes it suitable to be read *ad litteram*. The reading as a phonetic loan, though, is better supported by the other attestations, all pointing to the reading *shi* 逝.

**23** The *Laozi* manuscript preserved at Peking University is part of a larger collection of over 3000 bamboo slips donated to the university by an anonymous collector in 2009. These slips are generally dated to the reign of Han Wudi 漢武帝 (141-87 BCE). For further details, refer to Liu et al. 2019, 48-52. Regarding the authenticity of these slips, see Foster 2017.

**24** The Guodian cache comprises almost eight hundred bamboo slips, which were excavated in 1993 in the Jingmen 荊門 area (Hubei 湖北 Province), ancient Chu polity. The Guodian *corpus* also dates back to the late fourth century BCE. See Liu et al. 2019, 7-11.

**25** For a detailed account of the different proposals see Andreini 2005, 85-96.

**26** The character appears with some slight variations in the Qinghua manuscripts \**Fu Yue zhi ming* 傳說之命 (The Command to Fu Yue) slip no. 5; \**Liang Chen* 良臣 (Good Ministers) slip no. 10; \**Zichan* 子產 slip no. 21; \**Ziyi* 子儀 slip no. 18; \**Chi bang zhi dao* 治邦之道 (The Way of Governing the Country) slip no. 22; \**Yin Tu* 音圖 (Table of Sounds) slip no.



(2003, 222) identify the phonophore as *xue* 𪚩 \*s.ɲat. The substitution with the phonophore *zhe* 折 \*N-tet is only visible in Han dynasty documents (see Li 2012, 115).

*Receptus*: 大曰逝 \*[d]at-s  
 GD: 大曰澁 (𪚩 \*s.ɲat ?)  
 MWD4: 大曰筮 \*[d][e][t]-s  
 BD2: 大曰懣 \*C.tʰa[t]-s  
 What is great goes afar.<sup>27</sup>

The evidence coming from the *Laozi* manuscripts seems to suggest that reconstruction in \*-at for the character *shi* 筮 could possibly be more felicitous.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4 Verifying Reconstructed Items

Another common case in which palaeography turns out to be a valuable tool for questioning or verifying phonological reconstructions is when we come across some ‘mismatches’ between the reconstructed form and the phonetic information encoded in the ancient graphs, or when the ancient graphs highlight some phonological – and sometimes even etymological – connections no longer visible in the *kaishu* 楷書 script.

The instance of *feng* 風 (wind) and *fan* 凡 (all) is exemplary. Though uneasy to tell by simply looking at their *kaishu* forms, both graphs actually share the same phonophore, as also confirmed by Xu Shen 許慎’s gloss of the entry *feng* 風 in the *Shuowen jiezi*.<sup>29</sup> This is extremely evident when it comes to the Chu script, where *feng* 風 is generally written as 𪚩, while *fan* 凡 is usually written as 𪚩. However, Baxter and Sagart reconstruct the two items with different rhymes: *feng* 風 \*prəm and *fan* 凡 \*[b]rom. This ‘mismatch’ seems problematic, since

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21 and in the Anhui University *Shijing* manuscript slips nos. 43, 59, 81, 82, 83, 101, 111, 112. The attested graphic variants are 𪚩, 𪚩, 𪚩, 𪚩, 𪚩, 𪚩, 𪚩. All these graphs are glossed as *shi* 逝 (in most of the examples), *shi* 澁 or *shi* 澁 by the editors. The latter two – found in \*Ziyi 子儀 and \*Chi bang zhi dao 治邦之道 – show all the components found in the character of Guodian *Laozi* A. However, they should be read as *shi* 澁 (shore).

<sup>27</sup> Transl. by Ryden 2008, 53.

<sup>28</sup> One of the two anonymous reviewers kindly informs me that they are not sure whether the entry *shi* 逝 should be reconstructed as \*-at. The character *shi* 逝 is found rhyming in different lines of the *Shijing* (see Baxter 1991, 788) and BS reconstruction does not seem to question the reconstruction of its nuclear vowel. Therefore, I keep the idea of reconstructing it as \*-at. Whether the nuclear vowel of both *shi* 逝 and *shi* 筮 should be reconstructed as \*-at or \*-et, these many examples of phonetic borrowings strongly suggest that both entries shared the same rhyme.

<sup>29</sup> *cong chong fan sheng* 从虫凡聲 (derived from *chong*, *fan* is the phonophore; Author’s transl.) (*Shuowen jiezi* 1983, 677).

it contradicts the basic assumption of Chinese Phonology – formulated already by Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1815 CE) – that “characters with the same phonophores must have belonged to the same rhyme class in ancient times” (*tong sheng bi tong bu* 同聲必同部).

Baxter transcribes the MC readings of the two characters as pjuwng and bjom. The transcription of the latter, however, could eventually be questioned: *fan* 凡 is given the *fanqie fu fan* 符芝 MC bju phjomH in the *Guangyun* (1958, 233), but the character *fan* 芝 – indicating its rhyme – is actually spelled with the *fanqie fu fan* 孚梵 MC phju bjomH or phju bjuwng (*Guangyun* 1958, 548). Interestingly, the second reading of the character *fan* 梵 matches the rhyme of *feng* 風 (-juwng 東) and would thus allow to reconstruct the same rhyme also in OC.

The -juwng 東 rhyme after labial initials either goes back to an OC rounded vowel or is reconstructed as OC \*-əŋ (*zheng bu* 蒸部). Consequently, the two words could possibly be reconstructed as \*p[o, u]ŋ and \*b[o, u]ŋ or as \*pəŋ and \*bəŋ, which seem to better match the way they were once written on bamboo texts. However, this is not supported by the rhyming patterns of the *Shijing*, where the character *feng* 風 is clearly found as rhyming in \*-əm. It is thus likely, that in this case the same phonophore was used to represent two non-perfectly identical syllable types, in the lack of a better choice (see Baxter, Sagart 2014, 66).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, though it is true that the *fanqie* spellers can sometimes seem ambiguous as having themselves multiple readings, it is also true that each *fanqie* speller is generally only employed with its more frequent and basic reading (Pulini, List 2024).

Cases of ‘mismatches’ between reconstruction and phonetic borrowings in early texts can also prove helpful for reconstructing OC pre-syllables: it is the case of *shan* 善 \*[g]e[n]? (to be good), which, though being a core term in many early Chinese texts, never rhymes in the *Shijing*. Baxter and Sagart (2014, 78) have identified some evidence for reconstructing a velar initial. However, this reconstruction can be questioned on the grounds of a phonetic loan in the *Cao Mo zhi zhen* manuscripts (ADJ2 slip no. 11; SBJ4 slip no. 18) where the character *chan* 纏 \*[d]ra[n] clearly functions as a loan for the verb *shan* 繕 (to repair), which takes *shan* 善 as its phonophore.

e.g. ADJ slip no. 11: 纏(繕) 虞 (甲)利兵

e.g. SBJ slip no. 18: 纏(繕) 虞 (甲)利兵

Maintain armours and weapons in good conditions.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> A full grid of phonophores – both in the standardised Chinese script and in excavated materials – with their phonetic values according to BS system is currently missing. Such a tool could prove to be helpful for further supporting or discarding this claim.

<sup>31</sup> The same pericope also appears on ADJ slip no. 34 and SBJ slip no. 51 of the two *Cao Mo zhi zhen* manuscripts.

This example could possibly be explained by reconstructing *shan* 善 with a \*k- pre-initial before a \*d- onset.<sup>32</sup> This would account both for the evidence found by Baxter and Sagart for reconstructing a velar in the onset and for the suitability of the character *chan* 纏 to function as a loanword for *shan* 繕 in excavated texts. Some further data, also coming from neighbouring languages, could prove useful for further validating this hypothesis.

The last instance of ‘mismatch’ to be explored in this paper is linked to a person’s name: Cao Mo 曹沫, a general of the State of Lu 魯 active in the seventh century BCE, after whom the two aforementioned *Cao Mo zhi zhen* manuscripts from the collections of the Shanghai Museum and Anhui University are named.

The case of Cao Mo is particularly interesting since both the manuscripts and the transmitted sources show a remarkable degree of graphic variation in relation to this name. In the transmitted literature, the general of Lu is called Cao Mo (either written as 曹沫 or 曹昧), Cao Gui 曹劄 or Cao Hui 曹翹.<sup>33</sup> These different graphic variants all seem to point to the meaning of something ‘obscure’, ‘indistinct’, ‘blind’. This meaning is shared by the characters *mo* 昧 and *gui* 劄,<sup>34</sup> of which the characters *mo* 沫 and *hui* 翹 are likely to be allographs. Furthermore, apart from being semantically related, the two variants of the name of the Lu general attested in the transmitted literature also share the same rhyme (*dieyun* 韻) \*-at (*yue bu* 月部).

Conversely, the manuscripts show the graphic variants 𣪠 𣪡 and 𣪢 𣪣 for the first character and the graphs 𣪤 𣪥, 𣪦 𣪧, 𣪨 𣪩 and 𣪪 𣪫 for the second one.

By looking at the different graphic variants we can isolate two different phonophores for the first character: *cao* 曹 \*N-ts’u and *gao* 告 \*k’uk-s; and four phonophores for the second one: *mo* 末 \*m’at, *sui* 歲 \*s-q<sup>wh</sup>at-s, *mie* 蔑 \*m’et and *wan* 萬 \*C.ma[n]-s. A glimpse through the reconstructions in BS clearly reveals a rather complex picture alternating several different rhymes for one single person’s name. This requires further investigation.

It is likely that the phonophore in the graphs 𣪠 and 𣪡 attested on the *Cao Mo zhi zhen* bamboo slips is not solely the component *gao* 告, but rather 𣪢. The latter could possibly be identified as an allograph

<sup>32</sup> Sagart, personal communication.

<sup>33</sup> The figure of Cao Mo appears in many transmitted sources such as *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (The Commentary of Zuo), *Lü shi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Master Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals), *Guliangzhuàn* 穀梁傳 (Guliang Commentaries), *Guoyu* 國語 (Discourses of the States), *Shiji* 史記 (The Grand Scribe Records) and *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Strategies of the Warring States). See Li 2004.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. The character *gui* 劄 appears in the passage [...] *ze xian yi wei gui er bu bian* 則見以為劄而不辯 “then [words] appear to be obscure and without distinctions” *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 (Master Hanfei) 3/5/10 where it is glossed as *mo* 昧 (obscure) by Yu [1932] 2009, 647.

of *zao* 造 \*[dzʰ]uʔ, which matches the reading *cao* 曹 \*N-tsʰu quite well. Among the early graphic variants of *zao* 造, in fact, we find the graph 𣪠𣪡 (*jicheng* 集成 11023), whose semantic component 戈 is sometimes found to be equivalent to the signific 攴 of the graph 𣪢 (synonymous significs, Park 2016, 313). This hypothesis is further supported by the Qinghua \**Chi zheng zhi dao* 治政之道 (The Way of Rectifying the Government) manuscript slips nos. 34, 37 (see QH9), where the graph 𣪢 is in fact used as *zao* 造.

The character *zao* 造 \*[dzʰ]uʔ is said to take itself *gao* 告 as its phonophore in the *Shuowen jiezi*.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, Chen Jian (2006, 100) has clearly shown how the component *gao* 告, already found in bronze inscriptions, is the graphic evolution of an early component *cao* 艸 \*[tsʰ]ʰuʔ functioning as phonophore.<sup>36</sup>

As for the second character *Mo*, the picture is much more complicated: the spelling with the phonophore *sui* 歲 \*s-q<sup>wh</sup>at-s could be subsequent to the evolution of the cluster \*k.m into kw, a phenomenon attested in the evolution of other words from OC to the MC stage: e.g. 袂 \*k.mʰet > MC kwet (Sagart, Baxter, Beaudouin 2022). This usage suggests a late datation of this spelling and accounts for its absence in the *Cao Mo zhi zhen* manuscripts.

The manuscript version of the *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法 (Master Sun's Art of War) excavated at Yinqueshan 銀雀山 (hereafter, YQS) helps us in dating this evolution to have taken place at least by the early second century BCE (*terminus ante quem*).<sup>37</sup> General Cao Mo is in fact mentioned in *Sunzi* A11/12/5 and his name is attested on YQS slips written with the phonophore *sui* 歲 \*s-q<sup>wh</sup>at-s (YQS 1985, 21).

As for the character *mie* 蔑 (tiny, discard, reject, poor sighted), it cannot be associated with an \*-at rhyme if we base our investigation uniquely on its *Guangyun* spelling (i.e. met) (*Guangyun* 1958, 496). Nonetheless, it is interesting to notice that some characters within the same string of homophones of *mo* 末 MC mat given in the *Guangyun* actually share *mie* 蔑 as phonophore: *mie* 醜, *mo* 糲, *mo* 濶, *mie* 𪗇 (*Guangyun* 1958, 497). This implies that indeed these entries can be reconstructed with an OC \*-at rhyme. Furthermore, a gloss preserved in the *Xiao Erya* 小爾雅 (Little *Erya* late third century BCE) and a gloss by Duan Yucai to the *Shuowen jiezi* might provide a clue.

**35** *cong chuo gao sheng* 从詛告聲 (derived from *chuo*, *gao* is the phonophore; Author's transl.) (*Shuowen jiezi* 1983, 71).

**36** Chen Jian's finding was preceded by Ônishi (2006), who also pointed to a similar conclusion.

**37** The corpus of Yinqueshan bamboo manuscripts originated from the archaeological excavation of two Western Han tombs, namely tomb no. 1 and tomb no. 2 at Yinqueshan (Shandong 山東 Province) in 1972. The tombs have been dated to 140-118 BCE (tomb no. 1) and 134-118 (tomb no. 2). The vast majority of unearthened texts, almost 5 thousand bamboo slips, come from tomb no. 1. For more details see Liu et al. 2019, 33-6.

The entry *mie* 蔑 is said to be “the same as *mo* 末” (*mo ye* 末也) in the *Xiao Erya* (in *Kangxi zidian* 2015, 1410), while Duan Yucai states that this is “an allograph of *mo* 昧” (*tong zuo mo* 通作昧 *Shuowen jiezi* 1983, 145), another character meaning ‘to be poor-eyed’.

These glosses, along with the usage attested in the manuscripts, suggest that the character *mie* 蔑 once also had a reading \*mʰat, which had already been lost by the time of composition of the *Qieyun*, but was retained in some characters which take it as their phonophore.

As for the character *wan* 萬 (ten-thousands), – which also has a *mo* reading in Mandarin, generally employed in surnames (e.g. Moqi 万俟) – it matches the OC \*-at rhyme of the other three phonophores only in the medial vowel, but not in the final consonant, though both \*-n and \*-t are acute codas. The phonophore *wan/mo* 萬 is thus in a *dui zhuan* 對轉 relation with the other three phonophores employed for the name of the Lu general.<sup>38</sup> Yet there are some characters within BS reconstruction that though having *wan/mo* 萬 as a phonophore, are reconstructed as \*-at: e.g. *mai* 邁 \*mʰrat-s.

Interestingly, the very well-known allograph *wan* 万 is usually written in the manuscripts as *mian* 𠂔𠂔, which is glossed as *bu jian* 不見 (to be blind, unable to see) in the *Shuowen jiezi* (1983, 423), resembling closely the meaning given for the entries *mie* 蔑 and *mo* 昧, both indicating a poor sight.<sup>39</sup>

e.g. GD Tang Yu zhi dao 唐虞之道 (The Way of Tang and Yu) slip  
no. 27: 𠂔 (万)勿 (物)𠂔 (皆)𠂔 (暗)

The Ten-Thousand beings are all obscure.

Regardless of the scenario, the use of *mie* 蔑 and *wan/mo* 萬 as phonophores for a \*mat syllable type continues to serve as compelling evidence that requires careful examination. This intriguing instance of phonetic borrowing undoubtedly merits further investigation and discussion.

<sup>38</sup> I.e. “[The characters] share the same nuclear vowel, and their ending consonants share the same place of articulation” (*yuanyin xiangtong er yunwei de fayin buwei ye xiangtong* 元音相同而韻尾的發音部位也相同 Wang [1982] 2014, 13).

<sup>39</sup> *Mie*, *lao mu wu jing ye* 蔑, 勞目無精也 (fatigued eyes, lacking energy; Author’s transl.); *mo* 昧: *mu bu ming ye* 目不明也 (when the eyes are not clear; Author’s transl.).

## 5 Conclusive Remarks

By looking at some informative examples, this paper has tried to explore the potential of systematically including palaeographic sources as an integral part of the methodology underlying current reconstructions of OC focusing on the phenomenon of phonetic borrowing, which is extremely frequent in early texts.

As the examples discussed have shown, the phonetic loans attested in early manuscripts can sometimes prove to be an essential tool both for reconstructing items *ex novo*, as well as for questioning and verifying some OC forms currently included in phonological reconstructions. On the other hand, a deep understanding of OC phonology turns out to be an irreplaceable tool for palaeographers and philologists to correctly transcribe and read early sources. A more porous boundary between these fields is clearly needed. This paper has tried to take a modest step in this direction.

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# Eating Like a Buddhist: Vegetarianism and Ethical Foodscapes in the Twenty-First Century

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**Abstract** This paper focuses on oft-overlooked vegan and vegetarian practices among contemporary Buddhist communities in Asia and Europe. It synthesises findings from a range of Buddhism-related contexts with an emphasis on transnational and Internet-based communities. Exploring multifaceted food imaginaries, foodways and place-making practices, it argues that communities of engaged Buddhists, at different scales, deliberately resist mainstream food markets.

**Keywords** Vegetarianism. Buddhism. Environmental sustainability. Ethical eating. Asia. Europe.

**Summary** 1 Refiguring Foodways and the Buddhist Everyday. – 2 Buddhist Dietary Prescriptions and Practices: A Preliminary Overview. – 3 From Fringe to Mainstream: Vegetarianism, Veganism and the Role of Buddhism in Thai Foodscapes. – 4 The Urban Refashioning of *Sushi*: Vegetarian Practices in Contemporary Shanghai. – 5 A Framework of Practice Between Sustainability and Ethical Eating: The Communities of Plum Village. – 6 Concluding Remarks.



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## 1 Refiguring Foodways and the Buddhist Everyday

This article pursues the question of how vegetarianism influence ways Buddhists relate to themselves and their communities. We ask what can be learned about ongoing Buddhist belonging and community formation from analyses of how the experiences, values and practices of Buddhist vegetarians relate to (or differ from) ‘Big Veganism/Big Vegetarianism’. The specific cases we examine extend from socio-historically embedded ‘traditional’ Buddhist communities to emerging or expanding traditions. We take the on-the-ground and the everyday of material practices seriously, focusing our attention beyond conventional understandings of doctrinal frameworks and notions of authenticity. In particular, our contribution discusses oft-overlooked vegetarian/vegan dietary restrictions and practices in contemporary Buddhist communities with an emphasis on their emic relationality with the global ethics and discourses of sustainability (Virtanen, Saarinen, Kamppinen 2012; Liu 2005; Cohen 2001).

First, we consider Buddhist ideas regarding the relations between humans and non-humans and the ways through which consumption of meat and dairy, vegan and vegetarian foods, can be materially, spatially and emotionally experienced, produced, circulated and consumed pursuant to doctrinal prescriptions and following individual and collective experiences of karma, purification, compassion and care.<sup>1</sup> After a historical premise, where we examine some of the main texts from which the meat-eating and vegetarian traditions are derived, we will then address the debates regarding the existence (or re-emergence) of eco-centric vegan/vegetarian values, and even of codified vegetarian *cuisines*, in the main Buddhist traditions.<sup>2</sup> We assess the relevance of nationally and transnationally engaged eco-Buddhist networks, groups and individuals to spread vegan and vegetarian habits as a form of religious activism aimed at peacefully resisting unsustainable food chains and the global economic and political systems that legitimise them.

The categories of “care ecologies” (Carolan 2015; Abbots, Lavis, Attala 2016) and “enchanted modernity” (Greenspan, Tarocco 2020), we argue, can help to shed light upon the multifaceted food imaginaries, foodways and placemaking practices through which engaged Buddhists intentionally resist mainstream food markets at

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1 Harris 1991; 1995; Swearer 2006; Duara 2015; Elverskog 2020.

2 Sterckx 2005; Stewart 2016; Klein 2017; Mohd Nor 2021; Tarocco 2023.

different scales, simultaneously inspiring non-confrontational alternative strategies of ecological sustainability for the future. In our comparative discussion of local Buddhist communities, we remain also attentive to the importance of transnational and virtually mediated communities. Our work contributes to ongoing discussions about Buddhist communities, including studies on Buddhist moralities, human/non-human relations and foodways (Kolata, Gillson 2021; Rambelli 2001) and offers some new perspectives on Buddhist practices and belonging.

Our first case study presents an overview of the role of Buddhism in shaping the current popularity of vegetarianism and veganism in Thailand. It discusses the interplay between Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions in religious festivals, city temples and online. The second case study consists of a preliminary investigation of a network of Chinese Buddhist vegetarians and their strategic cultivation of community-based practices. The third case-study shows how the charisma of a diasporic Vietnamese monk Thích Nhất Hạnh has stimulated the adoption of vegan practices among western Buddhists in dialogue with state authorities, scientists and policy-makers. As they explore contrasting geographical, historical, social, and political contexts of Buddhist practice, the contributors employ a variety of methodological and theoretical tools to highlight intersections with economics, gender, ethnicity, and temporality. By paying attention to the formulation of Buddhist ideas and practices of vegetarianism within institutions and in vernacular contexts through text-based and ethnographic research, this article aims to provide new insights into ethical dimensions of Buddhist dietary practices and community-building that apply beyond Buddhist contexts. We look in particular at some radical changes in the relationship between Buddhists and the environment that have occurred in recent decades: are contemporary interpretations mere reflections of the influence of modern environmental discourses on Buddhism? Are there continuities with the past? And if yes, what do they look like? How do Buddhist vegetarians' experiences, values and practices relate to (or differ from) "mainstreamed" Big Veganism/Big Vegetarianism (Clay et al. 2020; Sexton, Garnett, Lorimet 2022) and which ideas of the future and of environmental sustainability are brought about by the concern for the sacredness of food by engaged Buddhists? How are vegetarian dietary values, feelings, practices, experiences and experiments impacted by the global efforts for a just ecological transition?

## 2 **Buddhist Dietary Prescriptions and Practices: A Preliminary Overview**

Buddhism is profoundly heterogeneous. Such multiplicity is also reflected in the set of possible dietary practices historically adopted by Buddhist monks, nuns, and laypeople since the early centuries of the diffusion of the religion in Asia, up to the present day. Of course, the main traditions of Buddhism share important ideas regarding nature and sentient beings. Indeed, the shared belief, that the Buddha praised *ahiṃsā* (commitment to not violating or damaging other sentient beings), is one of the main precepts, consistent with the Four Noble Truths, that express the ontological relation between human actions and the cosmological order: damaging other beings is a bad karmic action and causes suffering, preventing souls from achieving the *nirvāṇa*. At the same time, Buddhists tend to disagree with regard to the dietary prescriptions concerning meat consumption for monastic and lay communities alike (Ruegg 1980; Schmithausen 2003). The schismatic potential surrounding meat eating is still being discussed, as it has proved to be particularly relevant for practitioners interested in Buddhist views of the environment (Capper 2022, 191-203). In Sri Lanka, there are still significant debates over the doctrinal requirements and practical necessity of vegetarianism (Stewart 2016). Generally speaking, in many Mahāyāna countries, vegetarianism is ubiquitous.

### 2.1 **Meat Eating in Theravāda Traditions**

For the followers of Theravāda Buddhism, practiced mainly in Sri Lanka and in South East Asian continental areas (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia), the prohibition of eating animal meat only refers to specific animals. Namely, this interdiction applies to humans, elephants, horses, which are perceived as sacred; leopards/panthers, tigers, lions, hyenas which might attack wandering monks; dogs and snakes, because they are impure and poisoning (but in the case of snakes, also because they are perceived as relatives of the sacred Nagas) (Mahanarongchai, Marranca 2015, 2-3). For what concerns the *Vinaya* (monastic rules, the prohibition to eat meat only applies to monks (*bhikkhu*) in specific situations: namely, the *bhikkhus*, whose subsistence depends on alms collections from the laity, cannot eat meat when they know, suspect, or have seen that an animal (including fish and aquatic animals) was killed expressly for nourishing a monk. Only under such conditions, the meat can be considered

*trikoṭipariśuddha* ‘pure in three aspects’.<sup>3</sup> Crucially, according to the *Majjhima Nikāya Sutta* 55, such a prescription can be ascribed to the Buddhas’ physician, Jivaka Komarabaccha, who showed how the issue of meat eating is intrinsically related to human health and karmic purity. A monk, thus, can eat *trikoṭipariśuddha* meat despite being aware that the animal suffered for being captured and slaughtered. His *karma* is not affected by meat eating, provided that there was not a direct intention of acting against that animal and creating its suffering. The karmic neutrality of the act of eating meat is explained with the fact that a *bhikkhu* must detach from any selfish behaviour, included the egoistic attitude implied in expressing an intention, as the one of choosing a specific food for satisfying a personal physical desire (it doesn’t matter if it is a vegan, vegetarian or animal food option). In this view, the necessity to avoid any form of choice, even with regard to food preference, is prioritised over the prescription to avoid indirectly damaging other sentient beings (*ahimsā*) by eating their meat. From a moral point of view, such approach – which emphasises the *bhikkhus*’ individual path to avoid selfish intentionality over the wellness of animals and the principle of *ahimsā* – is aimed to solve a tension between two doctrinal priorities apparently at odds (abstaining from killing versus abstaining from choosing). Such contradiction was considered to be a potentially schismatic issue in the fourth century C.E., when the prescription of avoiding meat for monks became a key point of departure of Mahāyāna hermeneutics from other Buddhist traditions (Schmithausen 2003; Ham 2019). This process instigated different cultural attitudes towards meat eating up to the present day.

## 2.2 Meat Eating in Mahāyāna Traditions

Multiple variations of dietary prescriptions exist in different Buddhist traditions, also in the light of specific environmental and climatic niches and the geo-cultural areas where the cult expanded around the Asian continent (Bodhipaksa 2009; Greene 2016). According to Schmithausen (2003, 315-16), the debate regarding meat eating aligned with the Pāli Canon in the early period of Mahāyāna Buddhism and in Tibet.<sup>4</sup> However, the emergence of vegan and veg-

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<sup>3</sup> Mahanarongchai, Marranca 2007, 1-8; Dhammavuddo Thero 2008; Stewart 2016; Ham 2019.

<sup>4</sup> With regard to dietary restrictions for monastics in Tibet, Barstow points out that the prevailing traditions were not prescribing vegetarianism but tended instead to portray meat eating as a bad action that monks should avoid. The author also underlines that in the period of major flourishing of Buddhism in the area in the fourteenth century: “Tibetan monastics were not vegetarian. With some localized exceptions [...]”

etarian positions is connected to the availability of new texts in the early fifth century C.E. (namely, the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* and the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*), which insisted that Buddhist ideals such as compassion required clerics to be vegetarian (Greene 2016). Crucially, in China, begging for alms was frowned upon. In fact, in the centuries of its expansion toward East Asia, the monastic order had to cope with the fact that begging was perceived as a low-class practice, and was associated with vagrancy (Welch 1967, 10-13). In this respect, the Mahāyāna tradition shaped up differently from other Buddhist schools. Monks and nuns tended to replace begging for alms with other forms of material transaction, by encouraging donations and gifts to monasteries, and by enhancing food production within the monastery properties, along with the ancient tradition of self-sufficiency (Mather 1981; Walsh 2010). In his *Sacred Economies: Buddhist Monasticism and Territoriality in Medieval China*, Michael Walsh argues that “Buddhist economic activity is not in itself surprising given the necessity of the Chinese Sangha to establish themselves as a social group with societal efficacy” (Walsh 2010, 58-9). We also know that, by the fifth century C.E., the Chinese Sangha had a high degree of economic independence. Monasteries became land-owners and farmers thanks to “generous grants of tax-free land from sympathetic rulers and pious donors” (Mather 1981, 418-19). They leased the land to farmers, or directly employed them, or farmed the land exploiting the labour of novices and probationers (Walsh 2010). Besides Buddhist scriptures, there exist many other sources that encourage vegan and vegetarian dietary restrictions among lay practitioners in both Mahāyāna and Theravāda contexts. These comprise apocryphal texts and a plethora of vernacular texts (Kieschnick 2005; Greene 2016, 32-3; ter Haar 2014). For instance, the para-canonical *Jātaka* tales, also known as Buddha’s birth stories, which are very popular among the laity, have a very strong anti-hunting and anti-animal killing agenda (Stewart 2016, 44). Moreover, ideal models of conduct fostered the adoption of veganism and vegetarianism among the laity in both premodern and modern times (Kieschnick 2005; Tarocco 2023). In detailing the history of one of the most successful religious movements of late imperial China, the Non-Action Teachings, from its beginnings in the late sixteenth century in the Lower Yangzi to the middle of the twentieth century, Barend ter Haar demonstrated that it was fundamentally a lay Buddhist movement whose core commitments were vegetarianism and following the five precepts

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vegetarianism largely remained a practice available to, but not expected of, most monks and nuns. Nevertheless, despite the fact that most monks were not vegetarian and that different monastic lineages emphasized vegetarianism to different degrees, it remains the case that vegetarianism as a diet remained a largely monastic phenomenon” (Barstow 2019, 3).



(ter Haar 2014). In Chinese Buddhism, strict veganism is mandatory for monks and nuns and is also taken on by exceptionally pious laypeople in connection to practices of purification (Kieschnick 2005; Welch 1967; Tarocco 2023). These dietary restrictions seem to suggest that monks and nuns are fundamentally different from ordinary laypeople. And yet, the latter too can regard veganism as an appropriate dietary regime to reach purity and moral perfection. The process that leads Buddhist laypeople to embrace (even intermittently) veganism and vegetarianism is not necessarily only rooted in identitarian feelings, and is achievable through culturally embedded, bodily experienced routine practices that follow the example of clerics and religious leaders (Tarocco 2023). Buddhist dietary restrictions and prescriptions, also encompassing pious practices such as chanting and praying for the beings being killed or sacrificed – asking for their forgiveness or thanking for their sacrifice, for instance – are present today in other Mahāyāna countries, including Japan, Korea, and Taiwan (see respectively Ambros 2019; Park et al. 2020; Cheng Yen 2021). In recent years, Buddhist temple restaurants and kitchens have played a key role in spreading ethical eating practices among the laity. Importantly, such connotations are also revitalised in contemporary transnational Buddhist movements, as exemplified by the farms in Buddhist temples associated with the Plum Village network discussed here below in this article (Thích Nhất Hạnh 2014). The emphasis, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, is ultimately not just related to food consumption: indeed, restricted dietary practices may also encompass specific food production methods in which both monastics and lay followers are encouraged to engage by employing organic, sustainable, chemical free, regenerative agriculture. The farm model is experienced by the laity that visit the monastery for temporary retreats in Europe and the United States, showing how, for decades, veganism and vegetarianism in the West have found a steady anchor in well-established East Asian monastic practices. Moreover, today, we will argue in the following pages, vegetarianism and veganism are being reinforced by food consumption trends like, for instance, the mainstreaming of tofu and soybean-based food.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> According to a recent report “64% of US consumers rank sustainability as one of their goals. All told, younger shoppers are the most motivated to limit their personal impact on climate change”. See McKinsey & Co. “Hungry and Confused: The Winding Road to Conscious Eating”, 5 October 2022. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/hungry-and-confused-the-winding-road-to-conscious-eating>.

### 3 From Fringe to Mainstream: Vegetarianism, Veganism and the Role of Buddhism in Thai Foodscapes

The state-sponsored Theravāda Buddhist tradition is hegemonic in Thailand. Veganism and vegetarianism are not prescribed for monks. Local Thai *cuisine*, despite using a great variety of plants and vegetables in its recipes, is typically a non-vegetarian diet. Moreover, campaigning for animal rights is very rare among clerics. This is despite the fact that ecologically-minded monks in Thailand have been pioneering representatives of the eco-Buddhist movements in South East Asia (Taylor 1991; Darlington 1998; Swearer 2006). Animals are usually regarded as impure and inferior beings when compared to humans, and the worst insult to a person is labelling her or him *sat* สัตว์ (animal). In recent years, however, eating habits have started to change and there is an increasing offer and appreciation of vegan and vegetarian choices in restaurants and temples. Vegan religious festivals in tourist destinations like Phuket, Hat Yai, Pattaya, Bangkok and Chiang Mai are increasingly popular. Asaree Thaitrakulpanich and others note that Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and other social media platforms are filled with Thai language channels promoting vegan dishes and recipes. In an online article titled “Veganism in Bangkok: A Successor to Buddhist Vegetarianism, Fueled by Trendiness” (2021),<sup>6</sup> Thaitrakulpanich describes the diet’s popularity among middle class youth in urban areas. In fact, argues Edoardo Siani, there is a clear connection between food preferences and social status in Thai institutional discourses (2022).

Our preliminary investigation seeks to open up a new line of inquiry on these as yet scarcely investigated topics. Our sources range from Thai and international social media to blogs and websites on Buddhism and veganism/vegetarianism. The analysis covers the period May-October 2023. The study also relies on interviews and personal communications with scholars of Thai studies and with Europe-based Thai nationals involved in the business and trade sectors. In this section, we will present an overview of some of the dynamics at play and investigate the role of Buddhism vis-à-vis the discourse of environmental sustainability (*kwam yang yeun dan singhuedlom ความยั่งยืนด้านสิ่งแวดล้อม*).

The mainstreaming of vegan/vegetarian products in Asian societies plays an important role in the rapid spread of vegan and vegetarian habits among the Thai population, especially in urban contexts

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://th.boell.org/en/2021/04/26/veganism-bangkok>. The article was published on the website of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation, a German environmentalist Foundation connected to green movements and parties in Germany.

and tourist venues.<sup>7</sup> This development is connected to the mainstreaming of vegetarianism and veganism brought about by large food companies that have adapted to the 'green and healthy' consumerism fashions of the last few decades. These market adaptations, which do not necessarily indicate a contraction of meat production, may well entail, in some circumstances, the use of ethically questionable bio-technologies (Chatterjee, Subramaniam 2021). New start-ups are entering the markets with cruelty-free, vegan, plant-based products, and more and more business events are seeking to reorganise markets and marketing strategies in order to cope with an unprecedented change in consumers' behaviours (Clark et al. 2019).

In the 1980s, Thailand was labelled 'the kitchen of the world' because of its significant production and export of foods, especially rice, corn, pork and poultry. The label was used in the advertising campaign of one of the largest Sino-Thai corporations, the Charoen Pokhphand group (CP), one of the protagonists of the food industrial boom at that time. Today, CP, together with its partners, is joining western companies in the production of meat substitutes:

Thailand's CP Foods has struck a deal to supply a plant-based alternative to chicken to the country's Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants as it seeks to grow the new brand Asia-wide. The meat substitute will have the same taste and texture as the real chicken used in KFC's recipe, the company says. Branded as Meat Zero [...] the menu change aims to cater to health- and sustainability-conscious consumers. CP Foods, a core member of top Thai conglomerate Charoen Pokhphand Group, aims to become the leading Asian brand of plant-based meat substitutes by 2022.<sup>8</sup>

The mainstreaming of vegan food in Thailand appears to be predicated on transcultural discourses of 'health' and 'sustainability'. And yet, it is also interacting with the local religious sphere. In particular, the popularisation of veganism is reviving and expanding in the context of Buddhist practice.

The Thai word for vegetarian is *mang-sawee-rat* มังสวิรัติ, but, more commonly, Thais use the word *jay* เจอ, a word with Chinese roots that describes foodways that do not include meat, fish, eggs, dairy products and vegetables with a pungent taste, including leeks, garlic and onions. The term is used when referring to the dietary regimes and

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<sup>7</sup> "Demand for Vegan Meat to Spike by 200 Percent in China and Thailand by 2025. New research conducted by ingredient giant DuPont shows that plant-based foods are poised for massive growth across the Asia Pacific region" in <https://bitly.cx/dqSKx>. See also the projection in the Asia Pacific Food Industry website, <https://bitly.cx/vWwfz>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://bitly.cx/JvMy>.

religious habits practised by Chinese migrants, some of whom follow periods of abstinence from meat for ritual purification of the body at least twice a month, and in particular religious occasions (Sterckx 2005; Tseng 2020). As reported by my interviewees, Thai Theravāda Buddhists can sometimes join in during public religious celebrations, which are performed in Chinese/Thai neighbourhoods all over urban Thailand. To eat *jay*, then, is commonly perceived by the majority of Theravāda Buddhists as ‘eating the way Chinese Buddhists eat’. Such a way of eating was generally perceived as marginal and minoritarian, at least until the early 2020s. Today, despite being a Theravāda country, statistics and projections show that Thailand is about to dramatically increase the demand for vegan and vegetarian foodstuffs. The country promises to become a global vegan hub, offering more vegan options to citizens and tourists than any other country in Asia and beyond. A statistic commissioned by an influential vegan lifestyle blog named *The Vegan Word*, reveals that, in 2023, the two cities in the world with more vegetarian and vegan restaurants per capita are two Thai cities, Phuket and Chiang Mai.<sup>9</sup> The traditional Phuket Vegetarian Festival, which is actually a vegan one, is more and more successful. The celebration of vegan diets’ purification effects is the focus of the festival, which – as remarked by the anthropologist Erik Cohen (2001; 2008, 68-88; 2012) – since the early 2000s met the growing appreciation of Thais who would normally follow the Theravāda tradition. This religious festival originally celebrated the miraculous release of the Chinese diasporic population from an epidemic that invaded their community in 1880. The communal abstinence from eating meat as a means of purification was understood as key to the survival of the community. According to Cohen, the growing participation to the festival is part of a tendency among Thais of Chinese descent to revive their ancestral culture “without jeopardizing the Sino-Thais’ adherence to Thailand or their Thai identity”. At the same time, Thai adhering to Theravāda practices, increasingly tend to absorb Chinese cults (2008, 68-9). Starting from Phuket Island, the festival has now spread to the main Chinese communities of the largest Thai cities, to Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Patthaya and many other tourist venues, combining Buddhism, veganism, spectacle and business. The festival takes place for nine consecutive days in September or October in accordance with the Chinese lunar calendar. In 2023, it was celebrated from the 15th to 23rd of October. Self-mutilation and body piercing practices by pilgrims and spirit mediums make the event particularly memorable, attracting visitors from Thailand and from abroad. The festival is an important space for vegan activists. For instance, in October 2021, the activist Thai

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9 See <https://bitly.cx/lth9p>.

network *Root the Future* promoted the Thai vegetarian festival as a model for “a sustainable future of food”.<sup>10</sup> It is also profitable for private businesses. Food brands and business enterprises are indeed looking at the space opened up by the vegetarian festivals in Thailand as an opportunity. Interestingly, as pointed out by Sims (2020, 1), this popularity benefits the business sector all over the country:

The number of participants joining the Vegetarian Festival in Thailand has shown an increase by 9.6%; from 57.1% in 2018 to 66.7% in 2019. This indicates that people are becoming more interested in the festival. Consequently, [this indicates] a market value of 4,650 million baht which contributes to a 2.4% year-on-year growth of the Thai market.

Youth participation in fostering the growth of Buddhist Vegan festivals suggests that veganism in Thailand is connected with the creative revival of non-Theravāda Buddhist traditions but recent transformations are also beginning to have an impact on the behaviour of clerics. It is important to note that the schismatic potential inscribed in the adoption of vegan/vegetarian dietary patterns by Thai monks, nuns and laypeople has already challenged the Thai Sangha in the late 1970s, with the emergence of the Asoke movement. Santi Asoke, a temple on the northeastern outskirts of Bangkok, accommodates a vegetarian restaurant, a kitchen, a supermarket and some 50 *kutis* for the housing of monks and nuns known as Sikkhamats. There are several other vegetarian Asoke temples located in various parts of Thailand; the oldest ones are Pathom Asoke in Nakhon Pathom, Sisa Asoke in Sisaket, Sima Asoke in Nakhon Ratchasima. There are also Asoke communities in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Trang, Chumphon, Khon Kaen, Chaiyaphum, Petchabun and other places. Founded in 1975 by Phra Pothirak, Asoke is in favour of strict veganism. According to Charles Keyes, the introduction of Asoke veganism was criticised by many senior monks, and, perhaps surprisingly, by Buddhadasa Bikkhu, who is generally regarded as one of the founders of eco-Buddhist approaches in contemporary Thailand. Keyes, notes that:

Santi Asoke’s vegetarianism became the subject of a heated debate in the 1980s with the very well respected Buddhadasa Bikkhu and Phra Prayudh Payutto both defending non vegetarianism as orthodox Theravāda practice. (Keyes 1996, 18)

Nevertheless, today, Santi Asoke manages one of the main temple-based vegan restaurants in Bangkok, Chamlong’s Asoke Vegetarian

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<sup>10</sup> See <https://bitly.cx/6REII>.

Restaurant, which is very popular among visitors, many of them Chinese, as well as local people (Essen 2005).

A last example from Thailand will show the unexpected way Mahāyāna Buddhists peacefully confront the millenarian tradition of meat eating among Theravāda monks. Indeed, some international NGOs and Buddhist western associations are actively implementing actions aimed to change Theravāda monks' attitudes and behaviour towards meat eating, under the principle of *ahimsā*. One of the most active organisations in this sense is the Dharma Voices for Animals (DVA)<sup>11</sup> network, founded around 2010 in the US by a group of practitioners willing to engage in the reduction of animal suffering caused within Buddhist communities still embracing a non-vegetarian diet. Since its foundation, this network started to engage Buddhist leaders around the world, and establish several national branches (named Chapters) in Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Thailand. Each one of these branches operates through the work of local directors, who push forward projects for the elimination of meat from meals consumed by Buddhist followers, especially monks. The Thai Chapter is managed by a famous Thai blogger and influencer, known by the pseudonym of Coach Bank. Cheera Thawornthawat is a bilingual (Thai and English) expert in human nutrition, and a former monk.<sup>12</sup> His broadcasts on vegan nutrition are followed by more than 200,000 supporters. He works within the traditional milieu of Theravāda Wat (temples) in order to raise awareness among monks on the virtues of a vegan diet. Crucially, more than half of the monks residing in temples is obese or overweight and several state campaigns have attempted to encourage healthier dietary behaviours (*Bangkok Post* 2016).<sup>13</sup>

Coach Bank's programme on YouTube and Facebook describes the intimate space of Theravāda temples' kitchens to the public. More, he encroaches upon the work of the *mae krua* (literally, 'mothers of the kitchen', the women who cook the daily meals for monks), teaching them how to prepare tasty vegan food for clerics, instead of meat-based dishes. The discourse around 'healthy and sustainable food', the fact that taking care of the body through a vegan diet can also help the environment, is repeated like a mantra in his cooking sessions and during the meetings with monks. This last case epitomises an effort from cosmopolitan Buddhists to 'bring back' into Asian countries the Mahāyāna version of Buddhist teachings regarding meat eating. Rather than portraying vegan habits as religiously purer than non-vegan ones, it avoids insisting on schismatic approaches. Even if the mission of the DVA is to save animals in the name of *ahimsā*, it would

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11 See the website [www.dharmavoicesforanimals.org](http://www.dharmavoicesforanimals.org).

12 See the website [www.dharmavoicesforanimals.org/thailand-project/](http://www.dharmavoicesforanimals.org/thailand-project/) (in Thai).

13 See <https://bitly.cx/zrlw>.

be inappropriate to try to teach the Mahāyāna interpretation of such concepts to mainstream Thai monks and risk a pushback (as demonstrated by the Santi Asoke case). For this reason, it may be more effective to use a sort of (westernised) rhetoric of health and sustainability to convince them. Ultimately, ideas of health and sustainability are the modern ingredients being added to Mahāyāna veganism in order to make it appetising for the palate of Theravāda *bikkhus* without returning to the ancient doctrinal tensions between the precept of *ahiṃsā* and the impossibility for monks to express choices or preferences. In conclusion, veganism in Thailand does not merely connect to the global mainstreaming of food fashions among urban middle-class youth. Rather, the historical interplay between Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions also contribute to create a fertile ground for the ‘veganisation’ of local food markets. In the Thai context, the reception of the mainstream rhetoric portraying vegan/vegetarian eating practices as forms of care for the body (health) and the environment (sustainability), is also accompanied by individual and collective ambitions to understand such practices as a way to cultivate spiritual purity: a form of modern enchantment (Tarocco 2023), otherwise unavailable to local Theravāda practitioners.

#### 4 The Urban Refashioning of *Sushi*: Vegetarian Practices in Contemporary Shanghai

Today, Chinese Buddhist-inspired food cultures and ethical eating are experiencing a major resurgence and “many renowned monks and nuns strongly encourage their followers to practise *sushi* on a daily basis” (Tarocco 2023, 8). This phenomenon, notes Jacob Klein (2017), takes place in the context of urban China’s unprecedented socio-cultural changes and increasing concerns around food safety. As a response, Chinese Buddhists have actively engaged in reshaping vegetarian foodways. The Shanghai-based Buddhist communities we have engaged with are discursively entangled with non-vegetarians by ideas and practices of ‘care’ (*guanai* 关爱), not merely for non-human animals, a traditional Buddhist principle, but also for vulnerable people. Based on in-depth interviews, site visits and participant observation conducted from March to August 2023, this section looks at a constellation of actors involved in vegetarianism in Shanghai. Primarily linked to Buddhist institutions, our interlocutors not only engage in manufacturing vegetarian foodstuff, they also create novel venues for self-cultivation, promoting teachings and values aligned with changing everyday lifestyles in Shanghai. One of the sites we have engaged with is La Fonte (*fangtan* 方壇), a vegetarian café and multifunctional cultural space adjacent to Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai (*Yufu si* 玉佛寺) founded by the Buddhist entrepreneur Xue

Baozhong 薛宝中 and her son, the film producer Huang Yue 黄悦. Xue and Huang are part of a growing network of local and transnational Buddhist communities in Shanghai and beyond.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to the support of Buddhist monastic institutions, they have established a gathering space for those urbanites interested in the regular (or occasional) consumption of vegetarian food, ethical engagement, and helping vulnerable social groups. The narratives, practices and social spaces that these practitioners inhabit are not necessarily aligned with mainstream vegetarianism and sustainability politics. Rather, Buddhist dietary habits are cultivated along an expanded and reinterpreted awareness of ‘protecting sentient life’ (*husheng* 护生) (Tarocco 2023). In other words, their vegetarian practices are aligned with the global rise of plant-based urban lifestyles, on the one hand, but also infuse Buddhist tenets into contemporary notions of care and ‘community cultivation’ (*shequn yingzao* 社群营造).

In pre-war Shanghai, there were many institutions aligned with Buddhist values and embedded in novel cosmopolitan convivial practices (Tarocco 2023; Welch 1967), and in 1922, the Shanghai Buddhist world welcomed the opening of one of the most famous vegetarian restaurants in the Chinese-speaking world, Gongdelin 功德林. Its resourceful manager, the layman Zhao Yunshao 赵云韶 (1884-1964) had fundraised among wealthy Buddhists to create a space for gathering and engage with ethical eating. Over the decades, the restaurant branched out in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Macau and elsewhere. The Shanghai Wuyuan Road 五原路 branch has been conducting brisk business for more than fifteen years, welcoming a mixture of office workers and devoted practitioners. Its inviting dishes are presented as healthy and nutritious. References to Buddhism are everywhere, from the couplets on the walls, to the altars and shrines, to the names of the dishes on the menus. Many of the regular clients are practising Buddhists, who also tend to be concerned about the quality of the ingredients in their dishes, the water and oil used to cook them, as well as banquet culture and food waste. They are also concerned about health and sustainability. “I am really worried about overeating meat consumption in China” tells us Mrs. L. a retired teacher in her early 60s. “When I was a young woman, we were very frugal (*jiejian* 节俭) and thrifty but now meat is everywhere”. Her concerns are shared by China’s leadership. Effective immediately on 29 April 2021, the Chinese government issued its latest law regarding food waste and food security. The law’s official title is ‘Anti-food Waste Law of the People’s Republic of China’ (*Zhongguo renmin gongheguo fanshepin fanfeifa* 中华人民共和国反食品浪费法). It includes articles on

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<sup>14</sup> We thank Mrs. Xue and Mr. Huang for their kind help and valuable insights and for agreeing to use their real identities.



environmental protection, the promotion of sustainable development, and the importance of educating society on dietary and nutritional knowledge to limit food waste. Due to these various similarities, in this chapter, there is no subsection included among the food waste law's implementations and its specific changes regarding consumer behaviours, like under the section of the provincial regulation ('Anti-food Waste Law of the People's Republic of China', 2021). At Gongdelin, shop attendants tell us that women are more likely than men to buy the famous plant-based so-called 'mock' or vegetarian meat (*fangrou* 仿肉 or *surou* 素肉) for which the brand is famous. Interestingly, meat eaters are as likely as vegetarians and vegans to buy plant-based meat and higher meat attachment predicts higher purchase likelihood. The key attitudinal predictors of purchase intent, the shop owner tell us, were perceived healthiness, tastiness, and sustainability as a long term food source. Right next to the second Gongdelin-operated vegetarian bakery on Shanghai's Wuayuan Road, the Australian company Oatly displays (in April 2023) a big poster that reads, in English: "We Are the Post-Milk Generation".<sup>15</sup> The choice of the location is perfect, in that it capitalises on Shanghai older vegetarian foodways as well as the more recent appeal of coffee and coffee shops, with a rapid rise of vegetarian and vegetarian-friendly businesses catering to middle class consumers (Cao 2018; Klein 2017). And yet, while, vegetarian trends can be mediated by emerging discourses of sustainability and carbon emissions, we also should bear in mind that environmental politics and animal welfare are still touchy subjects in China, since the majority of the population consumes meat, especially pork (Cao 2018). As one of the China-based managers of Oatly told us in a long interview, marketing strategies for plant-based products in China deliberately dilute environmentalism and the ethics of non-killing:

To promote vegetarian diets, we either fashion a cool, young lifestyle that prioritises health and nutrition, or work with Buddhist communities [...] being vegetarian in China is nothing new as it is intuitively a Buddhist culture [...] people already know that.<sup>16</sup>

While these companies cannot afford to antagonise the meat-consuming mainstream public, on the other hand, vegetarian eating is considered culturally acceptable. Buddhists are non-confrontational active promoters of the 'vegetarian scene' both online and offline. In one of the many online group forums managed by China's Vegan

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<sup>15</sup> A slogan created by Oatly, an oat drink company that advocates non-dairy consumptions. See <https://www.oatly.com/en-us/oatly-who>.

<sup>16</sup> Private communication with Oatly manager D., Shanghai, 22 April 2023.

Society (*huamanghui* 华严会), for instance, a collective with a dedicated lay Buddhist following, one can read hundreds of daily messages from clerics, doctrinal teachings, ritual announcements, and exchanges between young vegetarians (Tarocco 2023).

Shanghai's three major Buddhist institutions, Jing'an Temple, Longhua Temple, and Jade Buddha Temple have each historically maintained unassuming canteens and shopfronts selling vegetable noodle soups alongside Buddhist paraphernalia. In recent years, however, each temple has rebranded their vegetarian food outlets, opening vegetarian cafes and even designer food markets to cater to younger visitors. The most successful café, La Fonte, is adjacent to Jade Buddha Temple. It has featured heavily on Chinese social media platform since it first opened its doors in 2021. It is a multifunctional library, vegetarian café, pastry store and cinematheque. Together with her lay Buddhist husband, Xue Baozhong, also manages the vegetarian restaurant *Yufosi suzhai* (玉佛寺素斋) across the street. Xue launched the new space with her son, film producer Huang Yue. The Huang family 'took refuge' (*guiyi* 皈依) in Jade Buddha Temple as followers of Abbot Juexing (觉醒法师) in the early 2000s. In 2009, Xue joined the institution as the manager of the vegetarian canteen. Subsequently, she became a core member of Juequn's Cultural and Educational Foundation (觉群文教基金), a charity and welfare organisation affiliated with Jade Buddha Temple with the Abbot as its leader. Xue tells us that working with Jade Buddha Temple and its administration, the vegetarian business "has grown significantly" over the past decade.

Over the past few years, they tell us, Xue and Huang saw the need for a variety of charity programmes and decided to "branch out with a new open mind". They created a new space that is different from the ones attached to monastic institutions, or even from Gongdelin. The traditional restaurant business is considered by Xue as "too complicated and old-fashioned". For her, managing a Buddhist business today requires a "more professional attitude". She followed the Abbot's call to expand and refurbish Jade Buddha Temple for "promoting Buddhist doctrines" (*Hongyang fofa* 弘扬佛法), thus reflecting the "more progressive outlook" of major Buddhist institutions in metropolises like Shanghai to appeal to new followers, including younger urban residents. For Huang, opening a new space to "complement contemporary ideas and cultural spaces", outside the temple, which could sustain Buddhist ways of eating and scale up the vegetarian pastry business, aligns with "new urban lifestyles". Huang is a Yale University graduate who returned to Shanghai after graduation. For him social spaces, book salons and community gatherings are a necessary part of life. As we sat down to eat and talk, the space was populated by visitors curiously inquiring about vegetarian products packaged in exciting new designs. Huang's plans also entail several new branches in other parts of the city, all of which would only serve vegetarian

food. Through several interviews and an invitation at the vegetarian restaurant, Huang walked us through the ways dishes, recipes and ingredients were designed and selected. For example, prepackaged pastries and freshly cooked dishes must not involve processed ingredients. Often, he noted, Buddhist-inspired ‘fake meats’ can be heavily processed, factory food. Learning from and incorporating *cuisines* from other Buddhist restaurants, Xue’s vegetarian business, “privileges vegetables as they are”. Fake meat, according to her ideal of health and wholesomeness, is “unhealthy, processed, too greasy”.

Xue sat down with us for a long interview in July 2023, after taking part in a ritual at Jade Buddha Temple. A pious Buddhist and dedicated vegan, Xue’s journey began with her son’s illness. At the age of 9, the child suffered from a severe heart disease. Hoping for her son’s recovery, Xue went to Jade Buddha Temple where, thanks to the help of a monk, she started on a path of religious commitment. In 2000, her child recovered fully and took refuge becoming the first Buddhist in the family. Later, Xue’s mother fell ill and was hospitalised. Witnessing the suffering and powerlessness of many families at the hospital and recalling her own experience at the temple, Xue soon vowed to follow Buddhism, and became a vegan ever since. “Miraculously”, Xue said, “I completely lost my desire for meat, which is very different from those who go vegetarian solely for the sake of health or because of peer pressure”. Her Buddhist practice, based on the experience of the family’s suffering, not only brought her tremendous healing and inner peace, but also turned other members of the family into vegetarian. For example, Huang’s brother refused to eat meat since he was born. The Huang attribute later achievements in their business and individual personal life to Buddhist belief and healthy vegetarian diets. The Huang story of suffering and healing undergirds the establishment of La Fonte. Both Xue and Huang believe that their mission must be grounded in extending karmic care to the community and vulnerable others in need. Although a major motive to create La Fonte was out of Huang’s passion for independent film screening and social gatherings, Xue suggested that the space also mediated more traditional Buddhist activities and other charitable practices. For instance, the temple offers events to protect sentient nonhuman animals, which are organised by Juequn Cultural and Educational Foundation on the temple’s behalf. Every eighth day of the lunar month, followers gather in front of the temple to release eels and river fish collected from wet markets into Dianshan Lake outside Shanghai. Some spiritual events are even coordinated and held digitally (see also Yang 2015; Tarocco 2017). Huang believes that establishing La Fonte as a public-facing social space increases the visibility of physically impaired teenagers. In fact, one of the many La Fonte’s programmes that has gained significant public attention is its inclusion of young autistic adults as baristas and employees. La Fonte

and the Foundation host training programmes and further employment opportunities for these young adults, as well as art workshops, movie screenings, and reading groups open to the public. In fact, participatory practices, community centres and alternative spaces have been emerging in urban China in an effort to re-establish community ties (Chen, Qu 2020). Huang told us of his reluctance to imagine La Fonte as “just a coffee business”. Rather, he wants to create a space that is engaged with wider social causes. He referred to his placemaking practices as “community cultivation”. Not only does he hope that the space will gather diverse social groups, but that it will also extend care, a core Buddhist value, to the everyday life of all visitors. In fact, the parents of autistic children and adults also enjoy their leisure time at La Fonte’s library while the training programme is taking place. They socialise and share caretaking experiences with each other, as well as with other visitors. Some of the caretakers are already lay Buddhists associated with Jade Buddha Temple. Many more will soon convert, tells us Xue.<sup>17</sup>

La Fonte engages in a variety of activities, from hospice care to food catering, to companionship for solitary elders. Xue makes clear that vegetarian food and the idea of ‘protecting life’ (*husheng* 护生) are key to these social programmes. The food provided to participants is strictly vegetarian. Crucially, for Xue, *husheng* includes any practice that sustains ‘vitality’ (*yousheng mingli* 有生命力). Every programme initiated by the Foundation aims to care for living beings, which entails care extended to both nonhuman animals and human communities, especially those who are disabled, impaired and need community support. The idea of *husheng*, then, departs from practices of non-killing based on ethical eating or dietary restrictions, and is instead redefined as ‘care ecologies’ foregrounding affective and visceral experiences. Carolan (2015) has in fact suggested that alternative foodscapes can become a way care is extended and imagined, incorporating “tastes, cares, textures, and practices”. During several of our visits, we met parents of autistic children who, together with Huang, carefully packed vegetarian pastries into bags designed as gift for other visitors and followers in the social network.

Jacob Klein (2016) has suggested that seeking health benefits is a major motivation for the consumption of vegetarian food. And many La Fonte’s customers are young Chinese urbanites or foreign expats who seek a healthier and fresher lunch option. Xue, while expressing

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**17** Ethnographic observations and journalistic accounts confirm that there is a significant growth of interest for Buddhism in post-COVID Shanghai. See for example Ye Zhanhang, “Young Chinese Embrace Temple Visits to Evade Life’s Pressures”. *Sixth Tone*, 21 March 2023 (<https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1012524>). Online travel platforms are seeing a surge in bookings to religious sites from young people seeking a “heart-cleansing experience”. See <https://bitly.cx/LP570>.

multiple times the importance of vegetarian food for her own health, sympathises with urbanites' struggles working in a fast-paced environment full of stress. She feels that eating "freshly made vegetarian soup" will improve young urbanites' "deteriorating health" due to the overconsumption of grease and meat and having an unbalanced life rhythm. For her, the *sushi* 素食 experience extends beyond either Buddhist principles or environmentalism to highlight the everyday welcoming and caring for guests, participants, and visitors in the community. Thus, through events and community-making activities, La Fonte conflates Buddhist practices with socially oriented urban practices of care. Cultivating communities becomes a crucial way for La Fonte to engage with trends and discourses taking place in Shanghai and elsewhere in the Sinosphere. Its creative refashioning of vegetarian eating fosters everyday urban practices not necessarily confined by either sustainable lifestyle trends or traditional Buddhist doctrines (Greenspan, Tarocco 2020; Kolata, Gillson 2021).

## 5 **A Framework of Practice Between Sustainability and Ethical Eating: The Communities of Plum Village**

While the previous case-studies, focusing on two Asian countries, witness the embeddedness of current urban vegetarian trends within larger contexts of care and self-cultivation, in this section we discuss the presence of Buddhist vegetarian and vegan regimes in regions and countries where Buddhism is not a majority religion. In Europe, vegetarian and vegan diets are embodied mostly for health or environmental considerations. With the widespread adoption of Buddhism in Europe, Australia and North America since the late nineteenth century, however, the value of compassion towards all living beings has slowly become one of the main drivers for adopting vegan and vegetarian diets. In this section, we will focus on the work of the Vietnamese monk Thích Nhất Hạnh. With no critical biography yet available, this focused, ecocritical interpretation, looks at the Vietnamese monk's dialogues with western practitioners around interconnected issues like peace, socio-environmental sustainability and ethical eating. According to environmentalist and engaged Buddhist practitioner Stephanie Kaza,<sup>18</sup>

Buddhists may actively promote non-harming through food choice as a form of socially engaged Buddhism. As interest in Buddhism

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**18** Stephanie Kaza is Professor Emerita in the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Vermont. She is a writer, a practicing Soto Zen Buddhist, and has taught religion and ecology.

grows in the west, I believe it will see increased receptivity to Buddhist moral concerns which could influence western food choices in a significant way. (2005, 386)

The choice of food, for her, becomes the practice itself. Likewise, in “Nets of Beads, Webs of Cells”, Buddhist poet and environmentalist Gary Snyder argued that western vegetarians are usually educated members of a privileged class, living in countries that are the largest per capita meat consumers of the world (Kaza, Kraft 2000, 346-52). Snyder also predicted the need to recognise the world’s dependence on fossil fuel agriculture, which produces vegetables and grains in a manner that degrades soil, air, and water and which endangers the health of underpaid immigrant labourers. For Snyder, it is not only about choosing what to eat, but also about interpreting the First Precept (*ahimsā*, cause no unnecessary harm, refrain from taking life) and the first of the Bodhisattva vows within a frame of individual possibilities and never indulging in self-righteousness. It is important to remark that if within Kaza’s and Snyder’s reflections, vegetarianism is mainly understood as an individual practice, it is with the Vietnamese monk Thích Nhất Hạnh (1926-2022), that the prescription for vegetarianism first, and of veganism later, can be understood as an explicit political act.

Thích Nhất Hạnh is a preeminent figure in contemporary Buddhism, and one of most revered spiritual leaders in the world. Also known as Thầy, he was a poet, prolific author, scholar and activist, and due to his efforts to promote peace and build a new vision of a compassionate world.<sup>19</sup> The monk witnessed death and suffering from an early age, during the Japanese occupation of Vietnam, the Great famine of 1945, and the return of the French occupation. One of his most influential contributions, an essay titled “A Fresh Look at Buddhism”, was published in 1955 in the front page of *Democracy (Dân Chủ*, a Vietnamese politically-neutral daily newspaper): in this contribution, Thích Nhất Hạnh’s vision for an engaged Buddhism was presented for the first time.<sup>20</sup> With it, a new way to look at Buddhism was forged.<sup>21</sup> In 1958, the monk co-founded the com-

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**19** Thầy is the informal Vietnamese word for ‘teacher’ and the name by which Thích Nhất Hạnh is known to his students.

**20** “Engaged Buddhism is born in such a difficult situation, in which you want to maintain your practice while responding to the suffering. You seek the way to do walking meditation right there, in the place where people are still running under bombs. And you learn how to practice mindful breathing while helping care for a child who has been wounded by bullets or bombs”. See “In Memoriam: Thích Nhất Hạnh”, *Insight Journal*, Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. <https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/in-memoriam-thich-nhat-hanh/>.

**21** Subsequently, in the first decade of 2000, the term ‘engaged Buddhism’ will change into ‘Applied Buddhism’ to indicate the importance of truly applying the Buddhist teachings of mindfulness and interbeing (cf. below) to every aspect of life and society.

munity of “Fragrant Palm Leaves” in a land in the heart of the Dai Lão Forest, “a rural practice center”, dedicated to spiritual practice and community-building. It was the first experimental model for the renewal and the reinvigoration of Buddhism, the prototype of many “mindfulness practice centers” that would eventually flourish in many parts of the world (Thích Nhất Hạnh 1999).<sup>22</sup>

Founded in France, Plum Village (named after the 1.250 plum trees they planted), quickly turned into a world-wide movement. Established in 1982 near Bordeaux as a small, rustic farmstead, Plum Village has become the ‘International Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism’, Europe’s largest Buddhist Monastery, with over 200 resident monks and nuns and thousands of visitors. Every year, Plum Village hosts thousands of practitioners from all around the world who experience communal living through mindful eating, walking, and working. Today, there are eight monastic practice centres in the Plum Village tradition in Europe, the USA and Asia, all founded by Thích Nhất Hạnh himself. Together with Alfred Hassler (of the Fellowship of Reconciliation) and other leading intellectuals and scientists, the monk helped convene Europe’s first conference on the environment in the early 1970s. The ‘Menton Statement’ – which addressed environmental destruction, pollution, and population growth – was meant as “a message to our 3.5 billion neighbours on Planet Earth”.<sup>23</sup> In 1972, he hosted the ‘Dai Dong’ Environmental Conference alongside the UN Summit on the Human Environment in Stockholm, the milestone conference on environment. Deep ecology, ‘interbeing’,<sup>24</sup> and the importance of protecting the Earth continued to evolve as a powerful theme in his teachings and writings. In the early 2000s, Thích Nhất Hạnh became a leading Buddhist spokesperson for ‘deep ecology’. The insight about interbeing became a foundation for his engaged action.

In *The World We Have* (2008), the monk outlines a Buddhist approach to the growing environmental crisis. “Walking lightly on the earth” and practising the three precepts (“do no harm, do good, protect and preserve life”) are the principles that inform the communities of Plum Village since the very beginning. In “Love Letter to the Earth” (2013), the monk invites his followers to think themselves not as separate entities from the Earth and recognise that people and the

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**22** Thích Nhất Hạnh collected journals from 1962 to 1966 chronicle the first-hand experiences of the Zen Master as a young man in both the United States and Vietnam and detail the first practice centre he founded during the war.

**23** See <https://bitly.cx/MgOH>.

**24** During a retreat at Tassajara Zen centre in California, Thích Nhất Hạnh coined the word ‘interbeing’ to describe the way in which everything ‘inter-is’ with everything else. “Everything co-exists”, he explained. The insight of inter-being became central to his teachings on ecology.

environment are one and the same. Fear, hatred, hunger, and feelings of separation and alienation, all come from the idea that humans are alienated from nature. For Thích Nhất Hạnh, caring for the Planet implies a radical change of the whole human relationship with the Earth (Ives 2016). Crucially, before returning to his native Vietnam in the last years of his life, the monk opened an organic 'happy farm', where resident farmers combine ecology and mindfulness as they cultivate vegetables for the community's vegan meals. Plum Village now hosts three organic vegetable farms, two of which are run by nuns and laywomen. The 'Happy Farms' actively promote mindfulness, community-building and sustainability. To a certain extent, Plum Village represents a revolution in the overall concept of sustainability. It attempts to translate Buddhist teachings of interdependence and non-separation into an embodied practice, possible only through a non-anthropocentric understanding of nature. Sustainability becomes a sanctuary, where every action, not just the act of eating, is an opportunity. It is not just the 'what' is in the plate, but also the 'how' it is produced, both in terms of systems of production, as well as intention and mindfulness. As Plum Village practitioners say, "the farms are a concrete expression of meditation engaged with action, in the area of ethical and sustainable vegetable farming".<sup>25</sup> Eating is a chance to nourish the body "with the wonders of the cosmos". "In Plum Village communities around the world", they continue,

we practice not only to be mindful of food, but also of our spiritual friends sitting with us. Sharing a meal together is not just to sustain our bodies and celebrate life, but also to experience freedom, joy, and the happiness of brotherhood and sisterhood, during the whole time of eating.<sup>26</sup>

Thích Nhất Hạnh recommended that

lay communities should be courageous and give rise to the commitment to be vegetarian, at least 15 days each month. If we can do that, we will feel a sense of well-being. We will have peace, joy, and happiness right from the moment we make this vow and commitment.<sup>27</sup>

Crucially, Plum Village practice centres and retreats have been vegetarian since their foundation, and since 2007, they have all become

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<sup>25</sup> See the presentation of the Organic Happy Farms at the Plum Village website: <https://plumvillage.org/community/happy-farm>.

<sup>26</sup> See <https://bitly.cx/5YFQ>.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Erin Sharaf (2022), *How Thích Nhất Hạnh Changed My Life by Encouraging a Vegan Diet*. <https://bitly.cx/P8M16>.



vegan. In October 2007, the monk wrote the “Blue Cliff Letter” where he explained that the community was turning vegan to nourish compassion and help save the planet.

As a spiritual family and a human family, we can all help avert climate change<sup>28</sup> with the practice of mindful eating. Going vegetarian may be the most effective way to stop climate change. Being vegetarian is already enough to save the world.<sup>29</sup>

He addressed his teachings regarding food consumption also to people with non-Buddhist backgrounds, referring to dietary restrictions in other religious traditions in order to stress the universal, transcultural matrix of ethical eating. In the essay *How to Eat* (2014), Thích Nhất Hạnh considered eating as one of the activities that could influence everything else during the day:

While we eat, we can try to pay attention to two things: the food that we’re eating and our friends who are sitting around us and eating with us. This is called mindfulness of food and mindfulness of community. (Thích Nhất Hạnh 2014)<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion, Thích Nhất Hạnh attempted to entwine compassion for all living beings, interdependence among human and non-human, inter-being with farmers who grow the food and with the people who cook it. The farmers become ‘annadatas’, they enshrine human and non-human animals’ health, protect seeds and biodiversity, and define the relationship between the soil and the Sangha. The practice of cultivating the land, growing and sharing food becomes the Dharma of the food. The meal, at Plum Village, is not just a means to nourish the body, but also “the consciousness, and the spirit” (Thích Nhất Hạnh 2002).

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**28** The term ‘climate change’ replaced the original term ‘global warming’, used by Thích Nhất Hạnh in his letter. In 2014, the spiritual leader received a letter from scientists recommending replacing ‘global warming’ with the more appropriate term ‘climate change’. This change was received by the community as a chance to reflect on what the practitioners buy and eat, as – as they say – “these activities can contribute to climate change, or they can help stop it”.

**29** Thích Nhất Hạnh’s 2007 “Sitting in the Autumn Breeze: Thấy Blue Cliff Letter, 2007” in <https://bitly.cx/45Eeg>.

**30** Kindle edition, position 147.

## 6 Concluding Remarks

In this essay, we looked at the relation between religious ethical eating and the discourses of health and sustainability in contemporary Buddhism. By investigating various Asian contexts and their entanglements with mainstream Big Vegetarianism and with western visions and experiences, we showed how the global revival of Buddhist views on meat eating frame future-oriented food spaces and practices and contribute to shaping alternatives in ethical food production, circulation and consumption. This process, we argue, has a potential to impact the food systems at a global level. As showed in our case-study on Thailand, the value of sustainability of veganism/vegetarianism, (indirectly) understood as karmic purity and the impact of Buddhist social media and transnational activism among the young generation, are likely to represent a fundamental ingredient to 'veganise' mass consumption habits and to challenge Theravāda traditional dietary approaches, with unprecedented impacts on both religious and lay Thai foodscapes. In China, Buddhist cultures and foodways have become intertwined with urban communities and new ways of re-fashioning vegetarian food through everyday practices, rendering care for the human body and for non-human sentient beings central to the practice of Buddhist vegetarianism. Our case-study on foodscapes in Shanghai, illustrates how Buddhist vegetarians creatively deploy placemaking and social support programmes to foster vegetarian habits that are alternative to vegetarianism broadly conceived by mainstreamed sustainability agendas or by strictly monastic Buddhist dietary restriction. In western contexts, Buddhism vegetarianism and veganism have become a political act. Indeed, they are understood as effective practices to tackle global issues, such as climate change and planetary health. They are both part of the individual understanding (*vidyā*) of interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and inter-being, of the need to heal the wound of separation between humans and nature, and to embody compassion (*karuṇā*) towards all beings. At Plum Village, vegetarian and vegan conscious eating are conceived as a dialogue with society in an attempt to shift anthropocentric views to 'biocentric' ones.

In countries like Thailand and China, urban youth strongly support vegan and vegetarian lifestyles. They find Buddhist veganism a modern, trendy way to personally and spiritually engage in the global struggle for environmental sustainability and for human and non-human health. This trend, in urban and metropolitan environments, is importantly accompanied by the emergence of Buddhist vegan food manufacturing and processing sites, factories and services, particularly vegan and vegetarian restaurants. The alternatives, anyway, are not reduced to food production and consumption in urban centres: indeed, contemporary Buddhist dietary practices can also encompass

production methods and practices of sustainable, ethical agriculture according to the 'farm model' in temples and monasteries: food production is part of a cycle of karmic acts, with potent spiritual, material and political implications. It is worth pointing out that ethical concerns are not the only source for the revival of Buddhist veganism/vegetarianism. The belief regarding the miraculous power of purification practices achieved by avoiding meat eating shows us that revived Buddhist vegan practices are embedded in individual and collective efforts to take part in enchanted narrations, cosmological visions, and in corporeal, social and ecological practices of care and reciprocity. Buddhist veganism as a purification practice enables a dialogue with heavenly forces, is a path to achieve the power irradiated by miraculous karmic perfection. Also, it can be perceived as an intimate way for self-cultivation, self-determination and well-being in the material realm.

A growing body of evidence supports the idea that cultural behaviours and trends in food consumption are key contributing factors both in the production of the climate crisis 'and' in its possible mitigation. This is why environmental justice activists and critical scholars interested in environmental sustainability as well as engaged citizens in different global contexts advocate for a 'vegan/vegetarian turn' in mass consumption practices and habits in order to prevent violence on animals, greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE), the overexploitation of water and land sources and a better human and non-human health.<sup>31</sup> They also try to offer alternative solutions both in production and consumption chains, and in dietary recommendations, thereby challenging culturally established food geographies and foodscapes (Clay et al. 2020; Vonthorn, Perrin, Soulard 2020). Given that industrial meat and dairy production are deemed responsible for an average of 14% of the GHGE in the global food system (FAO 2023, 8), their position tends to be corroborated by scientific research and sustainability policies in high income countries. Scholars interested in the relationship between sustainability goals and global dietary patterns underline the fact that dietary shifts are key to reduce environmental impacts of food consumption and dietary patterns are used to assess human and planetary health, as these

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**31** After the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea that human health necessarily depends on the wellness of other beings and ecosystems led the international community to develop the concept of One Health. A high-level expert panel and the Quadripartite represented by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, the UN Environment Program, and the World Health Organization, have proposed this definition: "One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent" ([https://www.who.int/health-topics/one-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/one-health#tab=tab_1)).

different combinations of foods that build diets (e.g. western, Mediterranean, or vegetarian) have been linked to significantly different health and environmental outcomes.

Vegan and vegetarian diets have the lowest climate footprint, compared to other diets, and to the dietary patterns recommended in FB-DG. They are also associated with positive health outcomes compared to prevalent western dietary patterns (Aguirre-Sánchez et al. 2023, 560). In this sense, the transition to a vegetarian or a vegan diet, our Buddhist informants tell us, usually involves taste, ethical concerns and skills that were formed since childhood. It also depends, we argue, on the interaction of elements specific to a context, such as a supportive social environment and/or availability of meat replacement products. Indeed, while in Europe and the US, feminist and radical animal liberation movements, among others, are leading the current vegan and vegetarian movement of critical consumerism, there are also many other future-oriented engagements elsewhere. In particular, in regions where ethical, religious and ideological backgrounds have historically supported the practice of vegetarianism/veganism, many practitioners try to revive them (also, but not only) for the sake of environmental sustainability. In this paper, we address the issue from the point of view of vegan and vegetarian practices among contemporary Buddhist communities in Asia and around the world. The relevance of the impact of Buddhist dietary restrictions on the global GHG emissions has been remarked upon by scholars attempting to create statistic models and projections showing the critical impact of religiously prescribed vegetarianism in Asian societies, particularly among Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhists.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Shih Chao-hwei 2003; Show 2013; Tseng 2017; 2018; 2020; Mo, Zhao, Tan 2022.

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# State-Sponsored Maitreya Cult and the *Shouluo Biqu Jing* A Case of a Transmission of a Heterodoxy to Korea

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**Abstract** In this paper, the author analyses the apocryphal text *Shouluo biqu jing*, centred around the saviour bodhisattva Yueguang Tongzi (Candraprabhākumāra in Sanskrit). It is possible that this text was written in Silla, with some connection with its royalty and the *hwarang* group. This paper confronts this hypothesis with other ones that connect it to some Sui-Tang millenarian movements. Chosen methodology is the historical and philological analysis. The conclusion is that the text was likely written in China, but it possibly circulated in Korean Peninsula. The text is probably the result of composition and manipulation.

**Keywords** Buddhism. Daoism. Millenarism. Maitreya. Candraprabhākumāra. Yueguang Tongzi. Silla. Paekche. Sui dynasty. Tang dynasty. Nanyue Huisi. Dunhuang. Hwarang.

**Summary** 1 Who is Prince Moonlight? – 2 What is the *Shouluo biqu jing* About? – 3 The Sillan Origin Hypothesis: A Brief Summary. – 4 Taking into Account the Implications: The Role of Paekche. – 5 Other Hypotheses on the *Shouluo biqu jing*. – 6 The Limits of All the Previous Hypotheses. – 5 Final Considerations. – 6 Conclusions.



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## 1 Who is Prince Moonlight?

Originally, Candraprabhākumāra was a minor figure, then he shared many characteristics with Maitreya: he became an eschatological character, with a role of a saviour, presented as a guarantor of salvation. Zürcher (1982) made an extensive study of this bodhisattva along with other scholars in a wider perspective (Seiwert 2003). These studies can be summarised as follows: in the early apologetic sutras, this bodhisattva had a minor role, however he later became associated with Maitreya, so that in the end many aspects of the Buddha of the future were translated to him as well. When this happened, Yueguang Tongzi 月光童子 (Skt.: *Candraprabhākumāra*) was so popular in China that some emperors proclaimed themselves to be his rebirth. The reason is that in almost every version of his story it is said he would have returned at the end of times in China as a peace-bringing bodhisattva. However, it was more common that Yueguang Tongzi was adopted by popular, heterodox cults that started violent revolts justified them with full-fledged millenarian movements.

A brief summary of the textual history of this character will follow.

The main source of this character are three texts of Indian origin: the *Yueguang tongzi jing* 月光童子經 (Sūtra on Candraprabhākumāra) of the late third century, the *Shenri jing* 申日經 (Sūtra on Śrīgupta) of the fifth century circa and the *Shenri er ben jing* 申日兒本經 (Sūtra on the Origins of the Śrīgupta's Son), written in year 440. The *Yueguang tongzi jing* was translated by Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 (233-310), the *Shenri er ben jing* is a recension by Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅 (394-468), while the *Shenri jing* is anonymous. All these texts are essentially an apologetic tale (*avadāna*) and originally had nothing to do with millenarianism. They all narrate about a son, Candraprabhā, who tried to dissuade his father, Śrīgupta, from hurting the Buddha, ending in a miracle and a conversion. Only later, in the anonymous *Shenri jing*, was added a prophecy about Candraprabhā's future Buddhahood in the lands of Cīn[a] *Qinguo* 秦國.

The second mention we have is an "Ode to Candraprabhākumāra" written by the monk and Xuanxue philosopher Zhi Dun 支遁 (314-366) in his series of thirteen obscure poems. In this ode it is said that Yueguang Tongzi is famous in China ("His handsome appearance flourished in the Indian lands and his fame spread in the Crimson Regions" *yingzi xiu Qianzhu mingbo Chixian xiang* 英姿秀乾竺名播赤縣鄉), but no canonical text among the ones cited before is mentioned.

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That makes us suppose there already was some sectarian cult of sorts, since Candraprabhākumāra is also paired in this mention with Mañjuśrī, Maitreya and Vimalakīrti.<sup>1</sup>

Almost contemporary to Zhi Dun, we can see in the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 a fragment of a letter to the famous monk Dao'an 道安 (312-381) written by Xi Zuochi 習鑿齒 in the year 365. In this letter the manifestation of Yueguang Tongzi is mentioned, along with the descent to earth of a supernatural alms bowl ("Yueguang will appear and the sacred alms bowl will descent consequently" *Yueguang jiang chu lingbo ying jiang* 月光將出靈鉢應降).<sup>2</sup> The theme of the sacred alms bowl of Gautama is tied to Maitreya and so in an indirect way to Candraprabhākumāra as well. Without any other previous material, the simplest hypothesis possible is that Zuochi was referring to a version of the *Shenri jing* now lost. There are also some fragments of the lost *Qingjing faxing jing* 清淨法行經, maybe anterior to the last mention: in this text it is said that Yueguang Tongzi was Yan Hui 顏回, one of the pupils of Confucius. This text also provides evidence for how the connection between Candraprabhākumāra and China was already taken for granted.

The rebellion of Faqing 法慶 is likely the most consequential event tied to this figure. According to the *Weishu*, the rebellion started when Faqing, a man of Jizhou 冀州, started preaching heterodox teaching in the 515. Faqing attracted another man of Bohai commandery 勃海: Li Guibo 李歸伯. Faqing was proclaimed by Guibo "bodhisattvas in the stages of the ten abodes" (Skt.: *daśa-bhūmi-sthitā bodhisattvāḥ*, *shizhu pusa* 十住菩薩), "demon-pacifying commander" (*pingmo jun-si* 平魔軍司) and "king who rectify the Han" (*zhenghanwang* 定漢王), while Li Guibo named himself *Dasheng* 大乘 ('Mahāyāna'). The two men gathered many followers in the Hebei and preached that, by killing a man, one would have obtained the grade of 'first abode's bodhisattva', while by killing ten men one would have become a 'bodhisattvas in the stages of the ten abodes'. They also stupefied their followers, so they did not recognise friends and family. During the revolt, they killed monks and nuns, destroying Buddhist temples and scriptures. Their motto was "a new Buddha appeared; he will eradicate the old demons". Although that they succeeded in killing a local lord, they were crushed by the army of Yuan Yao 元遙. The revolt was therefore suppressed and the head of the movement executed. Remnants of the sect tried again a revolt in the year 517, in the city of Yingzhou 瀛州, but they were ultimately suppressed too.<sup>3</sup> The Fa-

1 *Guang hongming ji*, book 15: "Ode to Candraprabhākumāra".

2 *Gaoseng Zhuan*, book 16: section on vows 5.

3 *Wei shu*, book 12: Chronicles of Emperors 9: Account of Emperor Suzong (Xiaoming); *Wei shu*, book 22: Biographies 7 - first part: Emperor Jinmu and twelve kings; *Wei*

qing slogan was evidently referring to Maitreya, and his doctrine resembles that of the now lost *Mile chengfo fumo jing* 彌勒成佛伏魔經 (Sūtra on Maitreya Attaining Buddhahood and the Subjugating Demons), text mentioned in the Sui catalogue *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄 [T no. 2146, 55.0126c11]. The association of monks and nuns to demons is, on the other hand, directly tied to Yueguang Tongzi: in the *Foshuo famiejin jing* 佛說法滅盡經, a Dunhuang text, it is said that during the *mofa* the demons will transform themselves into monks to destroy the *Dharma*. Another Dunhuang text, the *Puxianpusa shuo zhengming jing* 普賢菩薩說證明經 says that monks and nuns are in the last category of the “eight kinds of men” and that Maitreya will punish who will try to dishonour the *Dharma*. Generally, the theme of corruption is strictly tied to that of millenarian figures like Candraprabhākumāra (Zürcher 1982, 21-2).

Though indirect, there is also some mentions of this bodhisattva that tie him to the Buddha alms bowl legends. It is worth also noticing that this kind of narratives lies in a limbo, since it is never explicitly said they were either heterodox or orthodox. All the following mentions are contained in the *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集,<sup>4</sup> written by the monk Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518):

The *Guan Yueguangpusa ji yijuan* 觀月光菩薩記一卷 (Prophecy on the Visualisation of the Bodhisattva Candraprabhākumāra in One Scroll). Now entirely lost.

The *Fobo ji* 佛鉢記 (Prophecy on the Buddha’s Bowl) or *Fobo jing* 佛鉢經 (Sūtra on the Buddha’s Bowl) in the Korean recension. The text is no longer extant, but Sengyou reports that it “prophesies the deluge of the *jianshen* year and the manifestation of the Yueguang the bodhisattva” *ji jianshen nian dashui ji Yueguang pusa chushi* 記甲申年大水及月光菩薩出事. It was also different from the *Jiashen nian hongzaidashui jing* 甲申年洪災大水經 (Sūtra on the Great Calamities and Deluges of the *jianshen* Year), mentioned in the Tang’s *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 [T no. 2154, 55.0673a04(00)].

The *Mile xiao jiao yijuan* 彌勒下教一卷 (Sūtra on Maitreya Descending to Teach [the Dharma] in One Scroll), appendix to the *Boji* 在鉢記後 (Prophecy of the Bowl). This text is now entirely lost too.

Regarding the adoption of this cult by the State, the first case among emperors was Sui Wendi 隋文帝 (r. 581-604): in 583, the emperor commissioned the Kashmiri monk Narendrayaśas 那連提耶舍 (516-589) an interpolation within the *Dehu zhanzhe jing* 德護長者經

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*shu*, book 96: Cruel Officials 77.

<sup>4</sup> *Chu sanzang jiji*, book 3: Newly Collected Doubt Sutras, Forgeries and Miscellaneous-ous Records 3.

(Sūtra on Śrīgupta the householder), one of the original texts that marks the beginning of the Candraprabhākumāra cult. In this interpolation it is said that, during the time of the ‘End-of-the-Dharma’, Candraprabhākumāra will appear in the lands of Great Sui 大隋國 as a king protector of Buddhism. He will be named Daxing 大行, make the *Dharma* prosper and will honour the Siddhartha Gautama’s alms bowl, at the time took from Kashgar to Sui (Shale 沙勒, variation of the more common Shule 疏勒). Daxing will also patronise the translation and diffusion of Buddhist texts in all his kingdom. The direct allusion to the emperor here, lies in the name of the Candraprabhākumāra rebirth: Daxing in the text recalls the name of the temple Daxingshan 大興善寺, the capitol’s temple when Narendrayaśas was invited by the emperor to translate the *Dehu zhanzhe jing*. Another direct allusion lays in the character of this mythical king, based on the actions of Wendi himself, who, in 601, built temples all over his empire on the model of Aśoka (Zürcher 1982, 26).

The case of Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690-705) is even more indicative: as it is well known, the empress tried to create a new dynasty under the name of Zhou 周 or Southern Zhou 南周, legitimating herself as a female bodhisattva. An important tool of this project was the *Mahāmeghasūtra* (Ch.: *Dayun jing*, Kr: *Tae’un-gyōng* 大雲經): allegedly, in 690, the year of the empress coronation, she commissioned a group of *bhadanta* (Ch.: *dade* 大德 or *potantuo* 婆檀陀 ‘virtuous monks’) to write a commentary to this sutra, titled *Commentary on the Divine August Empress Receiving Prophecy of Buddhahood in the Mahāmeghasūtra* (*Dayun jing shenhuang shouji yishu* 大雲經神皇授記義疏). Since probably the empress was identified with Maitreya, or at least believed to be both a saviour bodhisattva and a cakravartin, this was to justify her title. Another interpolation likely commissioned by Wu Zetian was that found in the *Ratnameghasūtra* (Ch.: *Baoyun jing*, Kor.: *Poyun-gyōng* 寶雲經) in the translation of Dharmaruci 達摩流支 / Bodhiruci 菩提流支 (d. 727).<sup>5</sup> In this long interpolation, Candraprabhākumāra appears in Mahācīna 摩訶支那國 (Great China) as a female ruler, she will bring peace to the lands and prosperity to Buddhism, until she’ll return to the Tuṣita Heaven along with Maitreya (Zürcher 1982, 26-7; Seiwert 2003, 111-60; Jülch 2016, 7-14).<sup>6</sup>

Until recent times, we had only indirect mentions to the content of texts regarding this bodhisattva and even when the mentions are direct, Candraprabhākumāra is not originally the main protagonist

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<sup>5</sup> Not to be confused with the homonym Bodhiruci, the sixth century translator. His previous temple name was Dharmaruci, then changed in Bodhiruci by the Wu Zetian between 693-95 (Forte 1976, 71 no. 5).

<sup>6</sup> The details of the Wu Zetian’s case were in-depth analysed by Forte (1976, 3-171).

of the story, nor the text itself is totally built around him. However, all this changed when the Dunhuang grottoes' libraries were discovered. At present time, we can count three primary texts: the *Shouluo biqu jing* 首羅比丘經 (Sūtra on the Monk Shouluo),<sup>7</sup> the *Famiejing jing* 說法滅盡經 (Sūtra on the Extinction of the Dharma) and the *Puxianpusa shuo zhengming jing* 普賢菩薩說證明經 (Sūtra on the Realisation of Confirmation of the Understanding Told by Samantabhadra), from here on simply *Zhengming jing*. Among these texts, the *Shouluo biqu jing* - from here on simply *Shouluo jing* - is the only one portraying Candraprabhākumāra as the main protagonist of the narrative, while in the *Famiejing jing* and *Zhengming jing* he is as a helper of Maitreya. The *Shouluo jing* has many elements in common with the other two, but the *Famiejing jing* does not always share common elements with the *Zhengming jing*.

Erich Zürcher (1982) dates the *Shouluo biqu jing* to the sixth century, between 518 and 589, tying it to religious revolts. On the other hand, Seiwert states that the text circulated from sixth century to the end of Tang dynasty among sects of lay devotees. These sects were led by charismatic yet marginal monks, or even not fully ordained lay people, and were initially related to some rebellion, before being tamed by the State repression. Basing on the geographical accounts mentioned in the narratives, Mohan Pankaj (2001) states that the text was written in Silla in the sixth-seventh centuries. The Sūtra on the Extinction of the Dharma was likely written before 514, basing on the count of its first mention, and was also the only one of the three that was considered canonical until the sixth century: Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518) included it extensively in his *Shijia pu* 釋迦譜 [T no. 2040, 50.0001a03-0084b10] and Nanyue Huisi 南嶽慧思 (515-577) cited it in his *Nanyuesi da chanshi lishi yuanwen* 南嶽思大禪師立誓願文 (Woves Text), adding an explicit reference of Candraprabhākumāra rebirth in China (Zhendanguo 真丹國), a detail missing in the current version of the text.<sup>8</sup> The *Zhengming jing* was likely of the seventh century too, between 499-589, and from the Sui monk Fajing 法經's *Zhongjing mulu* onwards it was inserted in every major Buddhist catalogue.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cited as *Shouluo biqu jian Yuanguang Tongzi jing* 首羅比丘見月光童子經 (Sūtra of the Monk Shouluo Meeting with Yueguang Tongzi) in the Sui catalogues, for example in the *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄, T no. 2146, 55.0126c19.

<sup>8</sup> *Nanyue si da chan shi li shiyuan wen*, T no. 1933, 46.0786b22-792b06: 入末法過九千八百年後月光菩薩出真丹國說法大度眾生滿五十二年入涅槃後 (Entered into the End of the Dharma Period, after more than 9800 years, the Bodhisattva Yueguang Tongzi will rise in the Cina lands and will teach the Dharma to the myriad of living beings, after the end of fifty-two years he will reach Nirvāṇa).

<sup>9</sup> Forte 1976, 159-65; Zürcher 1982, 33-44, 51; Seiwert 2003, 13-80, 103-57; Mohan 2001, 152-71.

Though it is philologically important to take into account all three texts, it is noteworthy that the *Shouluo jing* is the only one with a possible connection with the Korean Peninsula.

## 2 What Is the *Shouluo biqiu jing* About?

In order to analyse the history of the *Shouluo jing*, its content has to be taken into account. The story told by this sutra is the following: in a kingdom called 'Kingdom of the Sage Rulers' (Junziguo 君子國) lives monk a named Shouluo (Skt: *Sūra?* 首羅). The monk dwelled in the Taining monastery 太寧寺, near a mountain with the same name and, even if not said openly, close to the capital. This monk met Daxian 大仙 (Great Immortal) along with his following of five hundred immortals (*xianren* 仙人), in pilgrimage toward the abode of Candraprabhākumāra. Daxian and Shouluo talk about this bodhisattva, calling him the 'King of Light' (Mingwang 明王), the 'Sage of Light' (Mingjun 明君) and the 'Sage of Peace' (Pingjun 平君), enumerating the good qualities of the people who will escape the End-of-the-Dharma disasters. Daxian then reveal to the monk the numbers of the wise men (*xian* 賢) who will assist Yueguang Tongzi and how they hide among humans.

After this new conversation, appears the king of Junziguo along with his court. The text gives no information about this king, as he was already known. Daxian tells the king where he is going, and the king decides then to joins the fellowship. The complete group arrives at the mythical Penglai 蓬萊/蓬萊, the island abode of Candraprabhākumāra, where the bodhisattva lives waiting the end of times inside a cave, along with three thousand saints.

In the cave, king of Junziguo personally asks Yuegunag Tongzi about the future, but he does not accept to reveal it. Only after the king insisted that he does not know anything about the future events, the bodhisattva accepts to describe him the coming disasters and how to avoid them.

The scene changes again: it is not explicitly said, but maybe it came back to the monastery. Here, the king of Junziguo teaches techniques and rites to 'visualise' Candraprabhākumāra, purifying oneself and a pseudosanskrit *dhāraṇī*, trying to convert as many people as possible.

In the following and last section, the text becomes more cryptic and chaotic than the previous ones. This part is essentially an enumeration of omens, signs and prophecies, and there is a section when it is said that Yueguang Tongzi's followers will recognise each other by a *mudrā*. The very last part mentions Vimalakīrti 維摩 and Dīpaṃkara 定光: Vimalakīrti will be a saint and will live under a non-specified emperor, while Vimalakīrti will pretend to live dissolutely. In reality, Vimalakīrti will teach the Dharma in an esoteric way,

in a parallel with the bodhisattva-courtesan Vasumitrā 婆須蜜多女 of *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* 入法界品, chapter of the *Avatamsakasūtra* [T no. 278.716c9-717b27]. Here the text ends abruptly.

As shown, the narrative of the *Shouluo jing* lacks of some cohesion and coherence. In fact, it seems that the main concern of the text is collecting prophecies, mystical practices and descriptions of cosmic events. The fact that these two aspects seem independent to each other, along with the clear discontinuity within the narrative, points to the conclusion that this text is a result of a complicated philological history.

### 3 The Sillan Origin Hypothesis: A Brief Summary

As mentioned before, Mohan Pankaj (2001) dates the *Shouluo jing* to the fifth-seventh centuries. In this section, this hypothesis will be discussed more broadly.

Prof. Pankaj identifies the ‘Kingdom of the Sage Rulers’ with the Korean Peninsula, as it was during the post-Han period. He also adds some further identification: the ‘Weak Waters’ (Rushui 弱水), north of Junziguo, is the Heilongjiang/Amur River, north of Koguryōand Xuantu/Hyōndo (玄兔, 玄兔 and 玄菟), is the commandery long conquered by Koguryō.<sup>10</sup> This last place is mentioned as a refuge during the catastrophes. The name of the character Shouluo may be a wordplay with the Silla Kingdom’s name, and Daxian may be an archetype or prototype of the *hwarangs*. In this context, says Mohan Pankaj, Yueguang Tongzi is said to appear inside the ‘Borders of the Han’ (*Han jing* 漢境), which is again the Xuantu commandery. This because Silla Kingdom had no need to be saved, being already officially portrayed as a Pure Land and a buddha-field (*buddhakṣetra*), while on the other hand, Koguryō, being at war with Silla (551-62), surely needed a saviour figure. On these accounts, Mohan Pankaj ascribed the text to the period of king Chinhūng 眞興王 (r. 540-76).

Pankaj, afterward, explains the reason behind the choice of this monarch: Chinhūng is mentioned in the foundation narrative of the *hwarang* 花郎 group reported by the *Samguk Yusa*. The story is reported by Iryōn reports with the title *Mirūk-sōnhwa Mil-lang Chinjasa* 弥勒仙花未尸郎真慈師 (The Story of Hwarang Misi (or Miri or Mil) and the Monk Chinja): in the royal temple of Hūngryun 興輪寺 dwelt

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<sup>10</sup> *Sanguo Zhi*, book 30: Book of Wei, Accounts on Puyō/Fuyu: 夫餘在長城之北, 去玄菟千里, 南與高句麗, 東與挹婁, 西與鮮卑接, 北有弱水 (Puyō/Fuyu is on the north of the Great Wall and thousand *li* from Xuantu/Hyōndo, on the south there is Koguryō, while nearby to the east there are the Yilou tribes, on the west the Xianbei tribes, and, on the north, there is the Ru River). Confront also with *Houhan shu*, book 85: Monographies, no. 75: Information on the Eastern Barbarian [Dongyi]: Puyō/Fuyu.



a monk called Chinja 真慈, who prayed for the descent of Maitreya to Silla as a *hwarang*. He then received a vision of an old man telling him to go to the Suwŏn temple of Ungch'ŏn 熊川水源. Ungch'ŏn was, at that time, the capital of Paekche. Arrived in the temple, however, the monk did not recognise the bodhisattva, who took the appearance of a young and well-looking boy. The only thing the bodhisattva told to the monk was that he was from the Silla capital too. Asking for help, the monk was then told by the spirit of the nearby Mount Ch'ŏn 千山 to come back to the Suwŏn temple, but the bodhisattva already disappeared. Chinja, not finding him, decided to go back to Silla, where he asked the king. The king suggested to follow the bodhisattva's words, so the monk started searching inside the capital. Finally, the monk saw the boy under the tree on the northwest of Yŏngmyo temple 靈妙寺, where he was playing. The boy said his name was Mil, and he was orphan. Chinja then summoned a palanquin, taking the boy to the royal palace. The bodhisattva Mil obtained the liking of the king and became a *Kuksŏn* 國仙 (high ranked *hwarang*) and, after seven years, he disappeared.

This myth is similar in many parts to the narratives of the *Shouluo jing*, according to Mohan Pankaj. Although this, he did not make a comparison in detail between the twos to prove extensively this particular point. Mohan Pankaj noticed another common aspect with Maitreya: both have a role of mediator to the commoners and the official otherworldly figure. Thereafter, in Silla the Maitreya cult may have been domesticating tying it to the royal house and making it a medium to the local realities. It follows, concludes Pankaj, that the *hwarangs* would have been an earthly form of Yueguang Tongzi, which is in turn an embodiment of State's Maitreya.

#### 4 Taking into Account the Implications: The Role of Paekche

If the Pankaj hypothesis about a Sillan origin is correct, then the Buddhism practised by the *hwarangs* may have been influenced or derived from that of Paekche kingdom. In fact, Paekche anticipated Silla in propagandising itself as 'buddha-field'. A demonstration Paekche's religious policy is the famous Mirŭk-sa 彌勒寺, which was commissioned by king Mu 武王 (r. 600-41): this temple was built taking as model the descriptions of Maitreya's seat under the Nāgapuṣpa tree and the three assemblies of the Tuṣita heaven, making it an earthly representation of the dwelling of this bodhisattva (McBride II 2008, 36-8).

For a systematisation of this doctrine about an earthly Maitreya abode, we have to look again at Nanyue Huisi, third patriarch of the Tiantai school. This doctrine was likely (re-)introduced in Korea by

the Huisi's disciple: Hyŏn'gwang 玄光 (fl. sixth century). We have a testimony of Nanyue Huisi doctrines' influence in Paekche in the same period of the Mirŏk-sa: following the practice of burying the *Prajñā Sūtras* in order to preserve it from the End-of-the-Dharma period, nearby the said temple a copy of the *Diamond Sūtra on Golden Paper* (*Kŭmji Kŭmgang p'aya-gyŏng* 金紙金剛波若經) was buried. It is worth noticing that Nanyue Huisi himself wrote a version in golden characters of the *Mahāprajñāparamitāsūtra* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經. What differs here is that, even if the practice was used, neither Paekche nor Silla shared the same millenarian motivations of the patriarch (or any millenarism at all), as this would have been useless if not deleterious to their policy of using Buddhism as a way of political legitimisation (Choe 2015, 16-22; McBride II 2008, 36-8).

Knowing that Nanyue Huisi was surely aware about the cult of Yueguang Tongzi and considered one of the sutras about this figure an orthodox text, we should gather the pieces of this puzzle in order to formulate a better hypothesis: if we assume that Nanyue Huisi knew at least a source of the *Shouluo biqu jing*, namely *Famiejin jing*, and we take for good that the *Shouluo biqu jing* may have been written from the sixth century in its archetypal form and to the end of seventh century in the form we have today,<sup>11</sup> we can suppose that Hyŏn'gwang, who lived in the sixth century, may have known this text in an intermediate stage phase, since he may have already known the *Famiejin jing*. It is worth noticing that the *Shouluo biqu jing* makes a mention to the Mount Tiantai, describing it as a refuge from disasters, which can be interpreted as a reference to Zhiyi 智顛 (538-597), one of the most famous disciples of Nanyue Huisi. Therefore, if the transmission of the Tiantai patriarch's teachings to the Korean Peninsula also included any reference to Candraprabhākumāra, we may have a clue on the reason why the *hwarang* myth and this sutra share many similarities and how, without the necessity of hypothesising a total creation from zero in Silla. If any, some possible changes to the text may have been done to better fit the State(s)' narrative(s).

If Silla kingdom ever knew about Candraprabhākumāra, it would be an exaggeration ascribing its entirety to a single king, and therefore deny the complexity of the sutra. If the text was known in Silla, this would make sense only for some parts of it, not for the entirety, due to its complexity. To better understand such complexity, we have to return to the other philological hypotheses on the *Shouluo biqu jing*.

<sup>11</sup> See below for the problem of dating.

## 5 Other Hypotheses on the *Shouluo biqu jing*

According to Zürcher, the text may have been written between 518 and 589 inside a ‘buddho-daoist’ milieu within the Yangzi regions, then expanded toward northern China. In the Zürcher’s hypothesis, two place mentioned in the text are essential: the ‘Long River’ (Changhe 長河 or 襄河), identified with the Yellow River and the ‘Weak Waters’, identified with the far north or northwest of China. This would have a parallel in the *Zhengming jing* too, where it is said that Maitreya will divide pure persons from impure ones taking them respectively “to east and to the west of the bridge” (*youyuan zai qiao dong wuyuan zai qiao xi* 有緣在橋東無緣在橋西). Therefore, Junziguo is the China northeast and Candraprabhākumāra will appear in the world within these places. Zürcher attributes the text to the Miaoguang 妙光 sect in Yangzhou and the Faquan cult 法權 in Yanling: Miaoguang was a monk, and led a revolt in the year 510, while Faquan set up a sect that venerated an eight-years-old boy, known as Liu Jinghui 劉景暉, calling him ‘the Yueguang Tongzi’. In this text Zürcher also sees some Lingbao influences, specifically in the mention of a ‘willow city’ (Liucheng 柳城) (Zürcher 1982, 41-5).

Seiwert follows Zürcher’s dating, but states in addition that the sutra may have been around until the late Tang period. Seiwert also speculates an origin within Faqing revolt in 499 and the following adoption of a low profile by offspring ramp sects. The cult of Candraprabhākumāra in itself likely began with the 377 Gansu revolt of Hou Ziguang 侯子光, he adds. As for the ‘buddho-daoist’ milieu, Seiwert detailed more extensively its nature: the sects were centred around a marginal or marginalised monk(s), which built their charisma on strict ascetism. Their followers were lay devotees and outcasts of the time like women, poor, farmers, novices and low-grade monks. This kind of sects were largely present in the modern Hebei and had some tie with what historiographers of that time mentions as “vegetarian societies” or “abstinence assemblies” (*zhaihui* 齋會) (Seiwert 2003, 106-11).

These were the main analyses of the *Shouluo jing*. This rises a problem: as we will see, all hypotheses so far analysed are firmly textual-based, but each scholar emphasises some sections of the text over the others. Being the *Shouluo jing* a convoluted text with, some of these hypotheses may be correct only for certain parts of the sutra, and, consequently, for some parts of its formation.

## 6 The Limits of All the Previous Hypotheses

As showed before, there are some contradictions between the hypotheses of Zürcher and Seiwert, about a Chinese origin, and the hypothesis of Pankaj, about a Korean origin. This surely depends on the nature of the object of analysis itself, so it needs to analyse the text directly to solve the puzzle.<sup>12</sup> The columns 110-20 are the main focus of all three analyses, even though they overlooked on the detail within the columns 60-70, about the sacred mountains. In all these hypotheses there is an agreement on the importance of columns 10-15, 120-5 and 210-25, which mention the 'Han territory', likely the northeast of China, thus from Hebei to the Manchurian territories. This limited consensus was inevitable since the text is chaotic, with many variations of the same themes. Being aware of this, the overall logical conclusion is that the extant recensions of *Shouluo biqu jing* are fruit of various re-arrangements. Among the clues that arise this suspicious, the most striking is the title of this is *Sūtra on the Monk Shouluo Meeting with Yueguang Tongzi* (*Shouluo biqu jian Yuanguang Tongzi jing* 首羅比丘見月光童子經) in the Sui catalogues, as in current version the said monk is never explicitly said to have seen the bodhisattva.

To better understand the depth of the issue, we need to explain what we meant by 'variations': the sutra has two versions of a flood prophecy (cols 10-113); at least three versions of the prophecies about a 'golden city' where Maitreya will preach the Doctrine by himself or in form of Yueguang Tongzi (cols 10-89, 233-44 and alluded in 185-200);<sup>13</sup> two versions of the prophecy about the 'Han territory': one mentions the 'Long River' (cols 13-14 and 114-22), while the other names it as the 'Yellow River' (cols 219-33) and five prophecies about a cosmic battle: the first prophecy involving an unknown *deva* from Trāyastriṃśa Heaven called Hetian (赫天 'Crimson' or 'Bright *Deva*') and his "thirty-six men armed with *vaiḍūrya* axes and *vajras*" fighting Mahāmara (Damo 大魔) and his "*yakṣa*, *rākṣasa*, *piśāca*, *kumbhāṇḍa* and flying *rākṣasa*"; the second prophecy involving some "protectors of the Dharma armed with *vajras*"; the third prophecy involving a mysterious 'Emperor of the Curses' (Exiezhuodi 惡邪祝帝) and his "hundred demons"; the fourth prophecy mentioning a character similarly called 'Lord of Darkness' (Anjun 暗君), who will "punish the

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<sup>12</sup> *Shouluo biqu jing*, T no. 2873, 85.1356a12-1358c22; Zürcher 1982, 60-75; Bai Huawen 1990. The column number is based primarily on the work of Erich Zürcher, any minor variations are those mentioned in the work of Bai Huawen.

<sup>13</sup> Here mentions a "great dragon king" saving the believers, which was an indirect mention of the "city of the golden dragon" of the columns 233-44. This is similar to the *Zhengming jing*, where is said that a golden-feathered garuḍa will take the believers in the Tuṣita heaven. See Zürcher 1982, 42.

wicked forces”; and the fifth prophecy says that “one hundred and twenty lord-*arhats*” (*baiershi xianjun* 百二十賢君) will divide good people from the wicked ones (respectively: cols 99-113, 124-45, 223-44, and 278-85).

The narrative framework has problems too: from column 10 to column 70 there is some sort of continuity, although the possibility of being originally two separate texts: one with protagonists the monk and Daxian, and one with the king and Daxian. When the scene changes to that of Mount Penglai (cols 179-234), the presentation of the assemblies has all the characteristics of a chanted liturgical text, and so arises the suspicion that this part was originally a sutra on its own. There the general narration follows that of the *Famiejin jing*. The character of the monk is absent, while Daxian is only mentioned twice: at the beginning (col. 179) and near the end (col. 232). The last narrative section (cols 234-40) shares some continuity with the first one, but not with the central part: the scene comes back to the Taining monastery. First there is a ‘reading’ (*jian* 見) or a ‘vision’ (*xian* 見) of an unknown *Sūtra on Candraprabhākumāra* (*Yueguang Tongzi jing yijuan* 月光童子經一卷), then there is a manifestation of a bodhisattva (‘the Dharma king’ Fawang 法王) preaching under the Nāgapuṣpa tree 龍華樹 in the ‘City of the Golden Dragon’ (Jinlongcheng 金龍城). The scene is a clear reprise of *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* and to the *Zhengming jing*’s themes, such as the city, and the flying golden beast.<sup>14</sup> After the vision, the king of Junziguo makes a sermon to the assembly of the followers, explaining its meaning, the practices and the prophecies tied to this mysterious text. Being an enumeration of visions, omens, unintelligible phrases and meditative techniques, this last section is the most chaotic of the entire sutra, to the point that Zürcher uses the term “oracular language” for its obscure wording (Zürcher 1982, 33-4, 34 fn. 3). There is also a clear contradiction with the previous section, as it is stated that one can see Yueguang Tongzi only by the means of meditation (cols 270-5). The redundancy of the text suggests that some non-narrative parts may have been added to it by the time, when the millenarian wave was wading down and thus are later additions.

The last section may also imply some relationship between Daxian, here absent, and the king of Junziguo. Since there is some sort of continuity between these two figures, it is possible that in the archetype the relationship was different: Daxian and the king may have been originally one character, or they may have had a teacher-follower relationship. The sequence of dialogues in the first (Shouluo-Daxian and Daxian-king) and the last section (king-assembly) may be a remnant of an original unitary plot. In this version, the text could

<sup>14</sup> See the analysis of prophecies before.

have been transmitted to someone at the of the story. Either Daxian was revealed as the bodhisattva all along, or Yueguang Tongzi manifested himself to the monk. In both way, this could explain the alternative title given by the Sui catalogues, and the strange fact that the *Shouluo jing* gives more space to the king. This last element is in itself a sort of contradiction, because the text is named after the monk. In the current form, the king gains information from the followers of Daxian, and both the king and Daxian are instructed on the Doctrine directly from the bodhisattva. After the king clearly but implicitly obtained Buddhahood, he manages to interpret a manifestation of Yueguang Tongzi, preaching Dharma. In all this, the monk appears in a dialogue with Daxian only to vanish completely from the central section onwards, maybe a remnant of the original plot, where he has maybe gained buddhahood along Daxian-king. Therefore, the archetypical story was likely more focused on the monk and Daxian, and, as suggested by the Seiwert's work, more millenarian than the extant recensions.

## 7 Final Considerations

Briefly summarising the previous paragraph: the most logical conclusion is that the *Shouluo biqu jing* was originally a collation of at least two different texts, while the central part of the sutra was substituted with another one. The archetype was more centred on the monk Shouluo, the main core of the narrative. The dialogues and the situations in the current version led to a more archaic conclusion where Daxian should have been revealed being a bodhisattva or a soon-to-be one, maybe together with the monk. In this version, the king may have had the role of transmitting the text itself.

The current recensions have a more mystical tone. Following Seiwert, is reasonable to hypothesise that a more ancient form of the text would have been more millenarian. If the calculations made by Zürcher and Seiwert are correct, it can be argued that the archetype may have been written between 518 and 589, while sixth and seventh centuries would be the time during which the central sections and other minor part were collated, since it is the same period where mysticism overcame pure millenarianism (Seiwert 2003, 124-41, 145). In the text there are surely influences of Lingbao Daoism, as Zürcher noticed, but there could be also influences of Tiantai Buddhism as well, and maybe Huayan Buddhism too, as in columns 274-85 and columns 294-306.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In this part, a character that is a clear allusion to Yueguang Tongzi is said to meet with Yueguang Tongzi, such doubling strongly reminds Huayan doctrine about Gautama

As for its origins, the text was probably written in China. However, the mentions to the Xuantu commandery as well as to a north-eastern city like Gudu 固都 (cols 115-20)<sup>16</sup> suggests a large range of dissemination, giving strength to Pankaj Mohan's hypothesis. Therefore, it can be said that the sutra was transmitted to the northern part of China, hence the designation of all the northeast of the continent as a sacred place, maybe including Korean Peninsula. Another allusion to Korea may be seen in the columns 55-60, where it is said that the devotees will have to follow Yuegunag Tongzi crossing the 'East Sea' and the 'Rushing River', going to the 'Divine Region' (*xin du tu-di Haidong liu chengchuan Xunchuan zhi Shenzhou* 信都土地海東流乘船汎川置神州). Assuming the text so far was set from Nanjing to Hebei, this seems to be a nonsense, however: crossing the sea from there is not needed. Moreover, the term 'Divine Region' was taken from the *Tiandi yundu jing* 天地運度經, where it identifies all China (Zürcher 1982, 33).<sup>17</sup> If so, by the name of Mount Penglai the text was alluding there to a vast region. A similar observation can be made about the hypothetical connection between the 'Weak Waters' and the 'bridge' of the *Zhengming jing* made by Zürcher: pointing to an east-west axis, the *Zhengming jing* brings a more sinocentric perspective, where the Amur is indeed in the northeastern China. But, even in the assumption that the *Zhengming jing* is a source of the *Shouluo jing*, it remains that the *Shouluo jing* differs in this detail taking a north-south perspective, which is more fitting for the Korean Peninsula. A fact that accords better with Pankaj's hypothesis (Zürcher 1982, 38-9, 39 no. 78; Pankaj 2001, 167-70). This makes more credible the possibility of an alteration by Koreans, rather than a creation from zero.

Two scenarios are possible: one is assuming that the text was introduced to Silla either during the conquest of the Han basin during the second half of the sixth century, when, due to wars, the Korean population felt the precarity of life and therefore was more prone to millenarian and/or salvationist cults.

The other scenario is assuming the text was introduced during the conquest of the Kaya and Paekche kingdoms from the mid-sixth to the second half of the seventh century. In the first case, this would better fit with the narratives about the foundation of the *hwarang* and to the thesis of prof. Mohan Pankaj, this may also explain the Huayan and Pure Land influences inside the text, since these two schools

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Siddhartha and Mahāvairocana.

**16** Mentioned in the *Wei shu* as a city in the Liaoning: 魏書, 卷一百六上, 志二上第五, 地形志, 營州 [Weishu, book 106 - first part: Treaties 2: first part, Geography: Yingzhou]. In the same region there were two cities named Liucheng (柳城 and 大柳城) as well, maybe the same of the text, if not a mythical city of Lingbao school.

**17** The *Tiandi yundu jing* is a strictly Daoist millenarian text. It contains some cores beliefs of the Yueguang Tongzi faith.

were the most popular at the time. In this first scenario, the text may have been even arranged from the sources or either modified to better suit it to the political landscape of the kingdom. In the other case, the Huayan and Tiantai influenced would be explained as well, but, if so, it is more likely the text was forged in some minor sections than entirely arranged from some scattered collection of sources.

It is difficult to exclude Koguryō from this chain of transmission: the text does not give any definite proof about this possible passage, due to the ambiguity of the placename. Although being likely, it may have not been forced stop to Paekche, geographically close to China.

Discussing more broadly about any possible passage through Koguryō, the most likely hypothesis is to assume that the version available to the people of the northern kingdom was an archetypical one, if not directly some of its sources, either collected in one manuscript or not. Cautiousness is due in any case: since we lack proofs of any royal involvement, this kind of transmission was probably only on the popular and/or local level. Another difficulty lies in the lack of any detailed reconstruction of the Koguryō Buddhism in its whole.

Besides, a possible connection to Yueguang Tongzi and Koguryō appears only during Sui period, before the kingdom unified the region, when it circulated a prophecy tied to the same milieu of cult Candraprabhākumāra in the northern part of China. This prophecy stated that a “Son of the Heaven with a White Banner” (Baiqi Tianzi 白旗天子), also called “White-robed Son of Heaven” (Baiyi Tianzi 白衣天子), would have come from the “Eastern Sea”, thereafter, the Sui emperor would have always worn white clothes to avert this fate.<sup>18</sup> It is worth noticing here that ‘Eastern Sea’ is an ambivalent wording that may refer either to a vast region including northeastern China, Manchuria and Korea, or to the Korean Peninsula itself, including part of Manchuria. It is possible, therefore, that Chinese people were projecting this kind of millenarian expectation to a foreign land. But this does not proof that the said cult was already arrived inside Koguryō, since the habit of wearing white cloths was a peculiarity of Korean people even before the introduction of Buddhism.

It needs to be remembered in this case of the emperor Wen of Sui, who presented himself as a rebirth of Yueguang Tongzi, forged a relationship with Silla thanks to the monk Wōn’gwang 圓光 (d. c. 690), a fact that makes this hypothesis even more muddled.

Summarising the conclusions so far: the *Shouluo jing* was likely written in China in the period between 518 and 589, and was revised in the late sixth and seventh centuries. The text may have been known in a transition stage between the archetypal and the

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18 全唐詩, 卷八百七十五, 唐受命讖 (Quan Tang Shi, book 875, Prophecies on the Tang’s Gaining of the Heavenly Mandate), as in Seiwert 2003, 150-4.



extant version by Tiantai patriarch Nanyue Huisi. Therefore, the transmission to Korea may have been possible thanks to his disciple Hyōn'gwang in the sixth century. If there was any passage to Silla of the text and the cult, it was through Paekche, since the kingdom officially adopted Nanyue Huisi's Tiantai doctrine and practices. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that in all its hypothetical passages to Korea the text was not altered, due to the references to the Peninsula in the current form.

This kind of transmission may have been reflected in the *hwarangs'* origin narrative. However, comparing the two stories, we have seen they are not quite identical. There is a similarity in the overall plot: both stories present a monk, a holy figure and an authority figure. In both stories, the monk has a vision regarding the holy figure and after a long search and a long talk with an authority, the monk finally sees the bodhisattva, with an uplifting conclusion told by the bodhisattva itself. This analogy may have been even more evident in the archetypical version of the sutra, where the monk sees Yueguang Tongzi in person ascending then to the bodhisattva level, the same fate of monk Chinja. This because the king of Junziguo only is mentioned in the end of the story. Another common point is the reliance on both Buddhist and Daoist sources, such as the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa*.

Regarding the perception of the faith inside the *hwarangs*, the tie with Yueguang Tongzi was not reflected in the official narrative. Therefore, any cult centred specifically on Candraprabhākumāra would have been internal to the *hwarangs*, while at the official level this bodhisattva would have been identified with Maitreya, as in China. Unfortunately, we cannot have any definitive proof, since we lack of doctrinal document written for *hwarangs* by *hwarangs*. The only common point, the habit of fasting, is also the more controversial: assuming the group may have participated in the Assembly of the Eight Prohibitions (*p'algwanhoe* 八關會) like Koryŏ sources may suggest, *hwarang* group too may have had some dietary restriction, and so being in this alike to the 'abstinence assemblies' in China. But even in this case, we cannot rule out that any practice of fasting may be a later Chinese influence, since the only sure case is that of the group tied to Kim Yusin 金庾信 (595-673), who made vow to rebirth in the Maitreya paradise.<sup>19</sup> Another aspect without proof is the use by the *hwarangs* of any wording specific to the Candraprabhākumāra cult, such for example 'Sage of Light'.

Summarising the problem of dating and its transmission to Silla kingdom: a probable temporal range is between fifth and sixth centuries, since it is the time when Silla conquered the Han River basin.

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<sup>19</sup> McBride II 2008, 20-1, 40-1; 2010, 160-3; Tikhonov 1998, 73-8, 319-20, 326 fn. 17; Choe 2015, 25-7.

Another possibility are the sixth-seventh centuries, during the conquest of Paekche and Kaya. Since the *hwarang* origins' narrative is similar but not quite identical to the content of the sutra, it is more cautious to hypothesise an indirect transmission before those aforementioned times, maybe with the help of the Sillan royalty but not by of Paekche royalty, since the Suwŏn temple was not a royal site. Even if these periods cannot be confirmed, the last known chance of contact may have been around the ninth-tenth centuries. In this last case, it is easier to assume the text was already in the current form. This does not necessarily exclude the other ones.

Regarding the possible latest dating, Richard McBride II (2004) noticed a connection between the cult of this bodhisattva and the pretences of Buddhahood by Kungye 弓裔 (d. 918). This may explain why the *Samguk Yusa* lacks of any real direct reference to this cult: in the hypothesis it was effectively arrived to Silla, its millenarian use by the ex-monk may have been censored by the sources uses by Iryŏn or by Iryŏn himself to avoid any direct reference to this case.

Kungye was an ex-monk, allegedly of noble origins, who established a kingdom during the last part of Silla dynasty. This new kingdom was first named Majin 摩震 in 904, then changed in T'aebong 泰封 in 911. Kungye also called his two sons 'Green (or Blue) Light Bodhisattva' (Ch'ŏnggwang Posal 青光菩薩) and 'Divine Light Bodhisattva' (Sin'gwang Posal 神光菩薩), claiming he had composed twenty sutras. He also made public appearances mounting a white horse, wearing monk attires and a golden headgear. Emulating the Buddhist processions, boys and girls with banners, parasols and incense opened his path, while more than two hundred monks chanted hymns in Sanskrit. According to the official records, Kungye felt rapidly into a deep paranoia: citing his 'Maitreya method for seeking the mind-heart' (*Mirūk kwansimbŏp* 彌勒觀心法) as a proof of their disloyalty, the ex-monk executed his own wife and sons. But not long after, one of his generals rebelled and killed the tyrant Kungye after being accused treachery by the king's 'Dhyana absorption's method' (*sŏnjŏng* 禪定). That general was Wang Kŏn 王建 (r. 918-43), who then reunited the Peninsula under Koryŏ.<sup>20</sup>

In this story, the tie to Yueguang Tongzi and Kungye is explicated by Kungye himself: as far as we known, there is no presence in the orthodox Buddhism of any 'Green Light Bodhisattva' and 'Divine Light Bodhisattva'. In addition to this, there is not in any canonical text a single mention to any 'Maitreya method for seeking the mind-heart', but it resounds in the practices shown in the *Shouluo jing*. Moreover, the same name of the kingdom, Majin, seems a shortened form

20 三國史記, 卷第五十, 列傳 第十, 弓裔 (Samguk Sagi, book 50: Monographies, 10: Kungye); 高麗史, 卷一, 世家 卷第一 et alibi (Koryŏsa, book 1, households, 1).

of *Mahajindan* 摩訶震旦, the Sanskrit Mahācīnasthāna ‘Great China’: as we have seen, a place strictly tied to Candraprabhākumāra.

Another proof of this tie lies in the *Ancient Traces of the Haein Temple of Kaya Mountain* (*Kayasan Haeinsa kojök* 伽倻山海印寺古蹟), referring to Wang Kōn as ‘our T’aejo’, but its colophon reports 943. The text says that, at the end of Silla kingdom, the monk head of the Haein-sa, Hūirang 希郎 (fl. 875-927), had obtained the ‘*Samādhi* of the divine *Avatamsakasūtra* assembly’ (*Hwaōm sinjung sammae* 華嚴神衆三昧). At that time, T’aejo was fighting with a Paekche prince named Wōlgwang 月光. Wōlgwang was treacherous with his soldiers on the Misung mountain 美崇山. Wang Kōn was able to defeat him only with the Hūirang’s help: the monk gave him instructions for the war and sent him an army of heavenly soldiers. Wōlgwang, then, seeing gilded armours covering the sky, knew T’aejo had arrived and surrendered. Hūirang was recompensed having the old mountain monastery rebuilt.

We do not have any trace of a Later Paekche 後百濟 (892-936) prince named Wōlgwang, so we can argue that this Wōlgwang is actually the homonym Yueguang Tongzi. As for the reference to Paekche, this simply may be a mention to the previous ties with the Korean kingdom and also to the fact that Kungye effectively dominated a part of its former territories, where the Maitreya worship survived and was even reinvigorated by the political precariousness and the new millenarian tendencies among the arising Sōn schools. This text, thus, clarifies what was implicit in the historical sources, giving us a clue about what Kungye words were referring to, and making evident the connection to the monk and Candraprabhākumāra as well his possible aim to expand his kingdom to Manchuria, i.e. the former Koguryō lands and the ‘Han territory’ of the *Shouluo jing* (McBride II 2004, 37-53; McBride II, Insung Cho 2016, 8-10, 18-23). Therefore, it can be argued that the end of Silla (ninth-tenth centuries) is the outer limit for a transmission of the *Shouluo jing* in Korea.

It is worth noticing here that Kungye officially proclaimed himself Maitreya, pointing to an identification of Yueguang Tongzi and the Future Buddha. But even in its identification, not everything is totally clear: in the Silla kingdom a self-proclaimed *cakravartin* like King Chinhŭng called its sons with the names of the prerogatives of its role, ‘Golden Wheel’ (Kōmryun 金輪 or Saryun 舍輪) and ‘Brass Wheel’ (Tongryun 銅輪), and this makes a clear analogy for this case. In the case of Kungye, we can either assume that the ‘Green Light Bodhisattva’ and the ‘Divine Light Bodhisattva’ may have two helpers of Yueguang Tongzi, in the Kungye’s vision, or two of his characteristics. The fact that those two names resemble the titles of Candraprabhākumāra shows that there is not a clear relationship between the two characters even when we assume that the *Shouluo jing* was taken as a basis for the cult. This keeping in mind that

Kungye was presenting himself as Maitreya. Therefore, it is easier assuming a ‘fluid’ identification of these two bodhisattvas, rather than a rigid one, at least when it comes to Kungye.

In the end, it is likely that Candraprabhākumāra was seen as an aspect of Maitreya, or that Candraprabhākumāra was presented to the commoners as such. This would also have an analogy in the Chinese context, where there was not any clear distinction between the two figures, who often overlap, as Zürcher and Seiwert noticed.

## 8 Conclusions

In this paper, the author analysed the apocryphal *Shouluo biqu jing*. We tried to analyse this text, evaluating the correctness of the hypotheses of Zürcher, Seiwert and Pankaj about its origin.

To reach this scope, we first summarise the history of the Candraprabhākumāra faith and its characteristics. Then, we dissected the various hypotheses around the *Shouluo jing*, either ascribing it to China or Korea. The various hypotheses were then sifted through a philological analysis of the *Shouluo jing* itself.

The conclusion is that the archetype of the *Shouluo jing* was likely written in China between 518 and 589 by some millenarian syncretistic sect, and was revised in the late sixth and seventh centuries. During the revision, it probably lost the central part and acquired a more mystical tone. It is possible that the text was altered in Korea, since it shows some allusion to the Peninsula. This opens to different scenarios: the first scenario is that the faith was transmitted through Paekche in the sixth century by the monk Hyōn'gwang, passing through his master Nanyue Huisi. The second scenario is that the sutra was transmitted during the Silla conquest of the Han Basin in the second half of the sixth century, through the local population. The third scenario is a transmission during the Silla conquest of Kaya and Paekche from the mid-sixth to the second half of the seventh century. The last scenario is a transmission of the text during the Kungye revolt of the ninth-tenth centuries. In the first scenarios, it is possible that the *Shouluo jing* was rearranged, in the last scenarios only little changes are probable. All these explanations are not exclusive.

The *Shouluo jing* shows many analogies with the foundation myth of the Sillan *hwarang* group. If the first scenario of a sixth century transmission is true, this can be an explanation of these analogies, also due to the *hwarang* ties with Paekche. However, it is not possible to have the details about the Candraprabhākumāra faith within the group, but the version used by the *hwarangs* was likely more archaic than the extant version. The Sillan Candraprabhākumāra faith was likely embedded within the State-sponsored Maitreya cult.

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# Old 'Women' on the Stage Actorship and the Ageing Body in the Works of Enchi Fumiko

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**Abstract** Enchi Fumiko's literature has frequently faced the topic of ageing, especially focused on the bodily decay from the point of view of disease or loss of beauty and femininity and often in reference to the double standard adopted for female and male bodies. In this paper, focusing mainly on the novel *Komachi hensō* (1965) and the short story "Futaomote" (1959), I analyse how in Enchi's works the figure of the actress and the one of the *onnagata* actor perceive the process of ageing vis-à-vis their gender and sexuality. The *onnagata* and the actress experience a real loss of identity when facing age, since the success they have lived has almost been based on the charm of their figure on the stage. In this paper I analyse how the protagonists cope with the reality of ageing, comparing their reaction with regard to their gender and sexuality. By looking from a peculiar perspective the idea of the 'female' decaying body, I aim at giving a further contribution to the already rich scholarship on the vision of ageing in Enchi's literature. Moreover, I aim to demonstrate that the foundational elements of Enchi's series of works, known as *rōjomonō* or 'works on old women', typically believed to have originated in the 1970s, were in fact established as early as the late 1950s.

**Keywords** Enchi Fumiko. Rōjomonō. Image of femininity. Actorship. Ageing body.

**Summary** 1 Introduction: *Rōjomonō* and Their Definition. – 2 Old Women Are Women As Well: *Transformations of Ono no Komachi*. – 3 Even More Womanly than Women (?): "Two Faces". – 4 Conclusion.



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## 1 Introduction: *Rōjomon* and Their Definition

Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986)'s career as a writer spans many years and has been remarkably productive, despite her success as a novelist coming later in life. In her youth, she primarily wrote theatre pieces. Her female protagonists typically belonged to the intelligentsia, often being artists or writers, and tended to be around the same age as Enchi herself. Consequently, her fiction predominantly revolves around middle-aged or older women. This shared age with her characters has led many critics to interpret her writings largely from an autobiographical perspective, particularly concerning themes of ageing and physical decline (Furuya 1996; Hulvey 1995, 190). This emphasis on biography is further underscored by the fact that Enchi Fumiko battled cancer twice, a personal struggle that frequently surfaces in her works, particularly in relation to the theme of illness intertwined with ageing. However, some scholars, such as Kurata (2010) and Kobayashi (2005), have diverged from this biographical approach, choosing instead to analyse her works independently of her life events. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that undergoing two major surgeries for a serious illness leaves an indelible mark on anyone's life and world view, especially on a writer's creative output.

While it is acknowledged that Enchi likely drew inspiration from her real-life experiences as a writer, I refrain from incorporating biographical elements into my analysis. This stance aligns with the perspective of Noguchi Hiroko (2003, 33-4), who contends that even in works like *Ake o ubau mono* 朱を奪うもの (What Spoils Red, 1956), where the protagonist bears resemblance to Enchi herself, labelling them as autobiographical is not essential for textual analysis.

Illness is not the sole recurring theme in Enchi's works centred on older women. Monica Tamas (2012, 183) identifies three age-related changes that emerge in Enchi's narratives as elements that disrupt the female characters' sense of identity: apart from illness, there are also bodily defects and bodily instability. Additionally, I would highlight the element of senility, which, though more mental than physical, remains a significant presence in Enchi's production from around the 1970s.

These themes are distinctly evident in a substantial portion of Enchi's work, to the extent that a considerable number of scholars examining her *oeuvre* concur in employing the classification of *rōjomon* 老女もの (works on old women).<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Enchi herself, at the age

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<sup>1</sup> Having no specific definition, scholars have interpreted the concept of *rōjomon* in different ways. I will focus on Kurata Yōko's interpretation, since she is the scholar who dedicated more time to the study of works who fall into the category. See also Zhang 2022.

of 71 during an interview with Kumasaka Atsuko (1976, 37), used this term, directly alluding to a category of Noh dramas centred on old women. Enchi utilised this term to encapsulate the straightforward notion that over the years, her interests had evolved, consequently leading to a transformation in her literary works:

Kumasaka: Recently, I've noticed a certain deepening of *yōbi* 妖美 (bewitching beauty) in your work, and a seasoned beauty emerging from the weight of life called age, as seen in "Hana kui uba" 花食い姥 (The Old Woman Who Ate Flowers)...

Enchi: That piece is a recent creation, but preceding it is one titled *Yūkon* 遊魂 (Wandering Spirit). I believe it evolved from works like *Onnamen* 女面 (Masks). I can not pinpoint a specific reason, but lately, I find myself gravitating towards such works. For instance, I penned a story named "Ushirosugata" うしろすがた (Back Figure), where a woman's figure captivates a man's gaze, her back turned towards him. He questions whether she is real or merely a fragment of his imagination. This scene recurs, and eventually, he realises she existed solely as a concept, an idealised image within his mind. Over the past six or seven years, something inexplicable has emerged: I've found myself crafting what could be considered as representations of women. I predominantly write pieces in which the characters from my novels blend with real individuals. I'm unafraid of producing awful results; rather, I'm driven by the pursuit of new horizons. They must exist. Lately, what I'm composing could be categorised as *rōjomonō*. I'm exploring narratives where the perspectives of older women unfold in various directions. (37)<sup>2</sup>

Enchi cites 1970 *Wandering Spirit*, part of a trilogy, as a work which embodies the fundamental traits of her later writings falling into the category of *rōjomonō*, while mentions 1968 "Back Figure" as the

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<sup>2</sup> All the translations from Japanese are from the Author unless otherwise specified. The portrayal of the old woman (*rōjo* 老女) in Noh theatre does not depict a refined or gentle elderly figure. According to scholar Yamaori Tetsuo (1997, 30), there is a tendency for the old woman character to be associated with the traditions of demon women and *yamamba* 山姥 (the mountain crone), instilling fear and dread in the audience. He further elaborates (36): "In the male realm of Noh, the distinction between the *okina* 翁 (gentle old man) and *jō* 尉 (frightening old man) is established, but in the female realm, only the frightening old woman archetype has been embraced, while the gentle old woman image has faded into obscurity".

In the words of Noh scholar Masuda Shōzō (1990, 95), the role of the *rōjo* is one that Zeami cultivated for its psychological depth, as it combines the beauty of old age with the beauty inherent in female roles. However, Masuda notes that this role has primarily been depicted through the lens of the male gaze (97). This likely explains why only menacing images have endured. I believe that this emphasis on the male perspective shaping the fearful *rōjo* image is also pivotal to Enchi's use of the term.

genesis of this thematic exploration. She implies that this writing reflects on how the male gaze idealises femininity as a concept rather than engaging with real women directly. In "Back Figure", the idealised woman's figure is perpetually turned away, observed but never reciprocating the gaze, adorned in a kimono with an allure not found in contemporary women. This highlights the contrast between today's real women and the idealised feminine figures purportedly existing in the past. The ideal woman transcends time, embodying stereotypes of femininity such as condescension, tenderness, and fragility, while the contemporary women in the story are depicted as wearing a mask of femininity yet being stronger and fiercer than men (Enchi 1968, 98).

To fully grasp the idea of *rōjomonō*, it is crucial to consider the author's confession that the ideal woman forms the foundation of her exploration within this category. This reflection on the construction of an ideal, a figure shaped by the patriarchal gaze over centuries, triggers various 'horizons' for these elderly female protagonists.

Kurata Yōko is the scholar who wrote most extensively on figures of old women in Enchi's literature. In her book chapters dedicated to Enchi's *rōjomonō*, referencing the aforementioned interview, she explicitly acknowledges the absence of a unified definition for the category (Kurata 2010, 249). However, Kurata repeatedly cites a single statement by Enchi indicating that, in her *rōjomonō*, the perspective of old women unfolds in various directions (164, 268), as to suggest that this is the sole possible definition.

As a first important feature of *rōjomonō*, Kurata lists the mingling of *genjitsu to kagen no sekai* 現実と仮現の世界 (reality and a world of phenomena) (251). Kurata admits that fantastic elements such as the spirit possession were already present in Enchi's earlier production. She notes, however, that compared to earlier protagonists who were driven by anger, the characters in *rōjomonō* exhibit the courage to unleash their erotic desires by establishing a *kyokō no sekai* 虚構の世界 (fictional world) (242). In Kurata's view, a tighter connection between erotic desire and fantasy may characterise *rōjomonō* compared to earlier works centred on middle-aged or older women.

Furthermore, *rōjomonō*, in contrast to other works, are not only less preoccupied with emotions such as hatred and more focused on desire and hope, but they are also adept at deconstructing normativity and systemic stereotypes (Kurata 2010, 242) by dislodging them from their naturalised state and presenting alternative narratives. As Kurata suggests (242, 291), Enchi's works explicitly associate gender and age stereotypes, thereby preempting a contemporary intersectional approach that recognises gender and age identity as interdependent constructs.

What I do not entirely agree with in Kurata's definition is the chronological limitation of *rōjomonō*. I recognise that Kurata primarily

examines Enchi's works within the Japanese social context of the early 1970s, a time ripe for scrutinising the condition of the elderly in a changing society. Undoubtedly, works like *Saimu* 彩霧 (Coloured Mist) from 1975 can be viewed as a response to the impact of the 1972 bestseller *Kōkotsu no hito* 恍惚の人 (lit.: A Man in Ecstasy) by Ariyoshi Sawako.

However, Kurata's chronological restriction likely stems from Enchi's own interview, where she mentions reflecting on the idea of 'ideal woman' at the core of *rōjomonō* for the past seven years. Nevertheless, I find Enchi's explanation contradictory, and I propose that the foundation of *rōjomonō* existed long before the end of the 1960s. Specifically, I discern elements of *rōjomonō* already present in the well-known novella "Yō" 妖 (Enchantress, 1956) and I believe it is essential to consider the concept in a broader sense. Enchi herself, in the same interview, prior to the passage I quoted above (Kumasaka 1976, 35), acknowledges that the tone of her works shifts slightly from "Enchantress" onwards. She feels that while erotic energy is implied in works such as 1957 *The Waiting Years*, the distinction lies in the fact that in "Enchantress" it becomes intertwined with *hyōreitekina mono* 憑霊的なもの (elements of spirit possession).

In "Enchantress" (Enchi 1956), the use of phenomena serves as a conduit for the middle-aged protagonist's daydreams and experiences of erotic ecstasy. Drawing inspiration from the ancient books she translates, she crafts romantic narratives while traversing the slope behind her house, seamlessly oscillating between past and present, reality and fantasy. The protagonist Chikako employs thick makeup as a means of transformation, allowing her to transcend her unhappy marriage and the inevitability of bodily decay within her daydreams.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the male character of Tōno serves as a poignant reflection on the intersection of age and gender identity. Despite appearing older due to the toll of war on his body, Tōno seems unperturbed by his altered looks, a sharp contrast to Chikako's reliance on makeup to conceal hers. Through Tōno, the perception of age intertwined with gender identity is vividly portrayed.

While the element of spirit possession connected to eroticism is already present in 1956 "Enchantress", I believe that the contemplation of the eternal woman image, which Enchi refers to in relation to *rōjomonō*, emerges fully with the novella *Komachi hensō* 小町変相 (Transformations of Ono no Komachi), published in 1965. This work in my opinion must be considered a *rōjomonō* in virtue of the fact that,

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<sup>3</sup> Writer Hirabayashi Taiko, quoted by Noguchi Hiroko (2003, 84), reads Chikako's makeup as an effort to *nanikani bakeyōto shiteiru* 何かかに化けようとしている (try to transform into something) and Tanaka Yuki (1998, 153) argues that makeup could be a device to become similar to *kami* 神 (goddess).

as we shall see, includes all the above-mentioned elements. Furthermore, by illustrating the striking parallels between *Transformations of Ono no Komachi* and the earlier short story "Futaomote" 双面 (Two Faces, 1959), I attempt to demonstrate that a significant contribution to the development of *rōjomonō* was made by an almost obscure work, paradoxically centred on a male protagonist.

In order to do this, I will conduct a close reading of both the novella and the short story, examining how the protagonists navigate the challenges of ageing and comparing their responses in terms of gender and sexuality. This comparative analysis seeks also to illustrate how Enchi, as early as the late 1950s, engaged in a highly relevant exploration of the construction of femininity and age, and the ways in which these intersect.

## 2 Old Women Are Women As Well: *Transformations of Ono no Komachi*

In *Transformations of Ono no Komachi* (hereafter *Transformations*), the protagonist is Reiko, a charming actress of Shingeki theatre in her sixties, often likened to the Heian poetess Ono no Komachi 小野小町 within the narrative. She is invited to portray Komachi's character in a contemporary play penned by her former admirer, professor Shigaraki. Despite his lifelong love for Reiko, Shigaraki felt obliged to move away and married a woman he did not love. Throughout the years, he idealised Reiko, finding solace in this image amidst a life he found dissatisfying. As he is tasked with writing a play for Reiko in old age, he fears that meeting her will shatter his idealised perception of her as an 'artisticised Reiko'. Though it is not explicitly stated, Shigaraki perceives Reiko's loss of her uterus due to cancer as an obstacle to his idealisation of her image (Enchi 1965, 67). When they finally reunite, he is not disappointed by her aged appearance, but his conception of a 'sterile' and devoid-of-sexuality Reiko hinders his writing process. To rekindle his perception of eternal femininity intertwined with sexuality and fertility (referred to in the text as *Urmutter*, 'primeval mother'), Shigaraki takes his disciple Natsuhiko on a trip to view waterfalls, evoking the symbolism of the female body and sexuality. Ultimately, the image of Reiko as sexless is dismantled in Shigaraki's mind. Shigaraki's ability to idealise Reiko's figure once again and subsequently write the play is likely due to the waterfall imagery overlapping with the concept of the eternal female, as well as his realisation that Reiko is sexually active, notably with her young lover, Natsuhiko. The story concludes with Reiko stoically performing the Komachi role crafted by Shigaraki, fully aware that her recurrent uterine cancer will claim her life shortly after the performance. The narrative perspective alternates among Reiko, Natsuhiko, and

Shigaraki, offering insight into each protagonist's mind and allowing for comparison of their differing perspectives.

The connection between the archetype of poetess Ono no Komachi, established by the canon over centuries, and the character of Reiko is evident from the outset of the work. Reiko has opted for a solitary life, sacrificing love for her career, as the man she loved ultimately married another actress, Umeno, who left the stage for him (the mother of Natsuhiko). This is why Reiko is frequently likened to the *fumō* 不毛 (sterile) Komachi, who rejected the advances of men and ended up alone. The myth of Komachi as an unattainable woman is encapsulated in the expression *ana nashi* 穴なし (without a hole), commonly used to describe her as a woman who rejects men and, therefore, is not considered a real woman.

In *Transformations*, an essay discussing the figure of Komachi, titled "Komachi shiken" 小町私見 (A Personal Vision of Komachi), is interwoven into the narrative. "Komachi shiken" is based on an analysis of various texts written by Ono no Komachi herself or focused on her figure. The essay delves into the negative stereotypes associated with Komachi, traditionally viewed as an arrogant woman, illustrating that these stereotypes were constructed by men out of both fear and desire for women who chose roles divergent from societal expectations, such as marriage or motherhood. *Transformations* has been previously examined in a few studies, with the primary focus often being on the comparison between Reiko and Ono no Komachi, particularly regarding the significance of the metatextual essay within the narrative. The process of ageing and bodily decay has thus been interpreted from a universal perspective on the human condition. Here, I aim to delve into the bodily decay experienced by the protagonist Reiko in old age, considering it through the lens of the actress's imperative to maintain eternal youth.

Various interpretations exist regarding the identity of "Komachi shiken"'s author within the narrative, with some scholars suggesting it is Shigaraki, while others propose it is his wife. Here, I aim to focus solely on the role of the essay as a narrative device that propels the plot forward. It is through this essay that Natsuhiko becomes closer to Reiko, as Shigaraki tasks him with explaining its contents to her. Another significant aspect of the essay within the plot is its empowering effect on Reiko. Indeed, Reiko directly draws upon the words of the essay to justify her decision to not forego another operation, prioritising her performance as Komachi over her own health and over her affair with Natsuhiko (Enchi 1965, 112):

It is alright. The moment I saw blood flowing from my own body, the absurd obsession I once harboured for that person vanished... Ultimately, I am a woman who loves herself more than any man. The fact that Umeno took his father away from me is not entirely

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incomprehensible. [...] I am a sterile woman. Perhaps I am a descendant of Komachi. But the thing that comes out of the void, like the empty shell of a woman unable to conceive... as long as I have life I want to keep going on to see which fireworks it can launch into the sky.

In these few sentences, Reiko encapsulates the essence of her existence: she devoted herself entirely to her art, forsaking other aspects typically associated with women's lives, such as starting a family and having children. Paradoxically, her condition of being 'sterile', and thus deviating from the conventional notion of womanhood tied to familial roles, unleashed the full force of her creativity, akin to the brilliance of fireworks.

This newfound positive self-perception in Reiko is directly influenced by the *apologia* of Komachi presented in the essay, alongside her realisation that her relationship with Natsuhiko has detrimental effects on her. Prior to this realisation, from the outset of the narrative, Reiko had been grappling with uncertainties regarding her own self-worth and life choices. She had faced the dilemma of choosing between pursuing a career as an actress or starting a family, ultimately opting for the former, albeit not without feelings of regret and envy towards Umeno, who chose differently. However, while this decision initially brought her happiness, doubts about her identity as a renowned actress began to surface more recently. Needless to say, this shift in perspective and the ensuing uncertainties are rooted in the passage of time. Despite being aware that her allure remains intact, Reiko finds herself confronting an identity crisis triggered by her ageing body and her involvement with a much younger man.

It is widely recognised that society frequently imposes a double standard of ageing, favouring the notion that male ageing is less concerning than female ageing. As an actress, Reiko epitomises the concept that one's perception of their own age is influenced by external scrutiny, and the notion of ageing as problematic only arises when the audience and those in her circle begin to perceive her body as deteriorating.

The discourse surrounding age is multifaceted, with some scholars focusing on the cultural construction of age while others emphasise its medical or physical aspects (Twigg 2004). Clearly, both aspects are undeniable, as later critics have pointed out. Kathleen Woodward (1991, 149), an influential figure in the study of age, contends:

In addition to being a state of mind, aging is a biological phenomenon and a social construction. To subjective or personal age, we must add social age, which is mediated by chronological age (how many years old we are) and biological age (the state of health of the body).



I find that Enchi, through her works, delves into the interplay between these two aspects. Specifically, by focusing on a middle-aged actress who portrays young roles of idealised femininity, Enchi anticipates the notion of age as something that can be constructed, akin to many other facets of identity (not solely confined to the stage). However, simultaneously, for an actress subjected to constant scrutiny, the reality of bodily decline can be particularly distressing compared to the experiences of women in other professions. Margaret Gullette (2004, 163), who authored a seminal work on ageing and dedicated a chapter to the performance of age on stage, highlights it as an example of our daily performance, where “we both have a body [...] and perform our body” (162). She argues that in our everyday lives, we possess “default bodies” that are constantly at work whether we are conscious of them or not, and these bodies generate diverse age effects (162). This phenomenon is even more apparent on stage, where the “‘meatiness’ of bodies” is tangible, and the “default body” is continuously present and prone to peek out of their performance (163-4).

Reiko’s acknowledgment of her ageing process is vividly depicted throughout the narrative, often portrayed through scenes where she meticulously examines her appearance, usually at the mirror (Enchi 1965, 12, 105, 114). Particularly noteworthy is a lengthy scene at the outset, prompted by an offer for her to portray Komachi’s character, during which Reiko scrutinises all the signs of ageing and exclaims:

Oh! I am really in decay. How many more years will I be able to make the spectators believe that I am beautiful? [...] Of course, there is a promise inherent in theatre, but that promise is not strong enough to conceal every trace of decay in the actor’s body. Especially in the case of an actress, unlike the allure created by the *onnagata* actor of Kabuki, who from the outset makes the eerie promise of burying his gender. The allure of a feminine body captivates the audience directly, but at the same time, they can mercilessly and ferociously discern its deterioration. (12)

The “promise” she speaks about can be viewed as the audience’s conditioning, as they “contribute a great deal to the dramatic illusion” of age, as noted by Gullette (2004, 165). Not only critics and audience members, but also those in her circle, perceive the changes in her ageing body. Specifically, Natsuhiko (Enchi 1965, 52) becomes aware of her physical decline, to the extent of envisioning himself in the protagonist role of the story of *The Peony Lantern* engaging in intimacy with a skeleton (102). Tsune (22, 55), her assistant, and Umeno (90), her eternal rival who nonetheless supports her portrayal of Komachi on stage, express doubts about whether her performances will continue to be appreciated. Umeno (36) describes Reiko’s stage presence as *zōka* 造花, an ‘artificial flower’, where the idea of artificiality is

associated with the diminishing brightness and depth in an actress' performance. This is because her "default body" is the sole instrument she possesses to bring to life vastly diverse characters. The default body represents "the current visible manifestation of my selfhood, my embodied psyche in culture over time" (Gullette 2004, 161) and despite this, the audience must suspend disbelief in the reality of the character on stage, where age and disease should not interfere. What Reiko truly fears is that not only those close to her in private, but also the audience, will begin to perceive her aged body instead of the characters she portrays. Ageing thus becomes a threat to her success and to her lifelong identity as an actress.

Reiko's identity crisis likely influences her involvement with the young Natsuhiko, who initially appears to offer a *wakagaeri* 若返り (rejuvenation) effect, ironically likened by Reiko's assistant to taking hormones (Enchi 1965, 54). However, Natsuhiko's youth is not the primary reason for Reiko initiating their relationship. On the contrary, she is drawn to him solely because of his striking resemblance to his father, Shōgo, the cherished love of her youth. Reiko openly acknowledges that the motive behind their relationship is vengeance against Umeno, Natsuhiko's mother, who separated Reiko from Shōgo (60). Furthermore, it becomes clear early on that Natsuhiko merely serves as a conduit for her: reminiscent of his father, Reiko yearns for him to *mō ichido onna ni shite kureru* もう一度女にしてくれる (to restore her sense of womanhood), effectively using him as a *katashiro* 形代, a surrogate reminiscent of those prevalent in Heian literature (Uesaka 1993, 339), to reignite her romance with Shōgo (Enchi 1965, 60). This lack of a deep attachment likely explains why Reiko ends the relationship with the young student as soon as she learns about her poor health condition. She reflects:

I have more important matters to attend to than affairs between men and women. After initiating the relationship with him, I felt inferior, a sensation I had never experienced before, and my heart was tainted by this... For those one or two months, on stage, I felt like a skeleton dancing in a cemetery, but finally, this week, I have reached a point of resolution. (111)

She has come to realise that instead of rejuvenating her, the contrast with his youth makes her feel uncertain and amplifies her sense of inferiority. Moreover, in her dissertation, Pammy Yue Eddinger (1999, 306-7) argues that medical treatment "would signify the death of passion and desire, essential human experiences that Reiko identifies with her artistic life". Therefore, Eddinger believes that the character of Reiko somehow introduces the protagonists of *The Wandering Spirit* trilogy, *rōjomon* par excellence, with her "desire for life and human experience in old age" despite the looming threat of death.

On the other hand, summarising Natsuhiko's feelings for Reiko is rather complex. He appears to be involved in the relationship with Reiko not entirely of his own volition, but rather succumbs to what seems like an external force. The narrative employs straightforward expressions to imply Reiko's bewitching power, which can draw him towards her, such as "a butterfly in a spider's web" (Enchi 1965, 53) or *suikyō* 酔狂 (rapture) (100). Indeed, in *Transformations*, we can already discern more than a trace of the theme of erotic involvement as spirit possession, which forms the foundation of later *rōjomonō* (Eddinger 1999; Akagi 2020). Not only Natsuhiko but also Shigaraki (93) experiences *kōkotsu* 恍惚 (ecstasy) by imagining a sexual encounter with Reiko as if it was real. However, this phenomenon is not solely induced by Reiko's eerie beauty towards both Natsuhiko and Shigaraki but the triangle is also provoked by Shigaraki himself towards Reiko and Natsuhiko. Reiko experiences a hallucination in which she believes she is embracing Natsuhiko, only to realise in the end that it is Shigaraki (109).

Akagi Tomomi in her article (2020) perceives Reiko as ultimately unable to break free from the archetype of the eternal woman desired by men, the *mirareru sei* 見られる性 (gender to be looked at) as she is ensnared in the ageist perception of a decaying body as something to be concealed. I disagree with this interpretation because Reiko's fear primarily revolves around the potential loss of her identity as a successful actress, rather than the loss of beauty in her private life. Being 'looked at' is an inherent aspect of her profession as an actress, and this aspect should not be overlooked when analysing this novella. In fact, when Natsuhiko visits her, she makes no effort to conceal her body and foregoes wearing makeup, in stark contrast to the care she takes with her appearance when she goes out (Enchi 1965, 52). Additionally, she decides against meeting Shigaraki in a dimly lit restaurant as previously planned, opting instead to reveal her true figure to him (61).

It is undeniable that Reiko falls victim to her internalisation of ageism, as evidenced by her feelings of inferiority towards Natsuhiko. However, it is precisely this temporary internalisation that ultimately leads her to realise her desires and choose to dedicate herself entirely to her career for the rest of her time, aiming to create an enduring image of success and beauty as an actress within the illusory space of the stage (Moro 2015, 98).

As we have observed, Enchi, in her *rōjomonō*, begins to consider and reflect on 'female figures' - stereotypes of eternal and ageless women that either do not exist or are absent in contemporary society. As Kurata (2010, 52) describes it, these images, when presented and scrutinised, ultimately serve to critically expose the constructs upon which they are built and to denaturalise the stereotypes associated with age and gender. Enchi's decision to cast an ageing actress as the protagonist in a work that marked the beginning of her

*rōjomono* is in my opinion very significant. Reiko, in order to portray each role effectively, must embody a *man'nen musume* 万年娘 (eternal girl) (Enchi 1965, 35) on stage, reflecting the efforts of every woman striving to conform to society's idealised image of womanhood.

In this context, the scenes at the mirror hold significant meaning and are a recurring motif in *rōjomono*. However, according to Kurata (2010, 284), they do not necessarily signify the internalisation of gender stereotypes or ageism. Instead, they symbolise the challenge of reconciling womanhood with ageing and acknowledging that *rōjo mo onna dearu* 老女も女である (old women are women as well).

For Reiko, the mirror is not just a reflection of her physical appearance; it also symbolises her life on stage (Enchi 1965, 16). As an actress, she is constantly scrutinised by the audience and critics, and she sees herself through their eyes. In essence, her perception of herself is intertwined with the feedback she receives from others, creating a cyclical relationship between self-perception and external validation. Indeed, the transformation in Reiko's self-perception following her disillusionment with Natsuhiko is pivotal to her success on stage as she portrays the role of Komachi. Equally crucial is the essay on Ono no Komachi, which provides Reiko with a sense of belonging to a category and empowers her with self-determination. Throughout the narrative, derogatory terms like 'sterile woman', 'without a hole' or *bakemono* 化け物 (monster-like) are repeated vis à vis the figure of Reiko, yet they are often employed by unconventional characters in Enchi's works as a form of reappropriation.

The expression of disgust or fear *gimi ga warui* 気味が悪い (creepy) (60, 110) is frequently directed towards Reiko by others, reflecting a fear associated not only with her illness but also with the image of Komachi's aged figure, resembling a crone or a skeleton. This fear stems from encountering someone who was once a *femme fatale* but now lacks the quintessential organ of femininity.

Enchi skilfully navigates the ironic juxtaposition between the expectation for Reiko to embody eternal femininity as an actress and the reality of her 'monster-like' body. By seeking solace in the realm of theatre, Reiko finds the opportunity to subvert her condition, transforming from a 'monster' into a figure who dazzles with fireworks precisely because of her deformity, which imbues her with a unique strength.

Furthermore, Shigaraki has contributed to re-establishing a new figure of Komachi, one unaffected by the male desire for revenge against her freedom and unconventional femininity. In the cruel legend analysed in the essay, Komachi is depicted as an abandoned skeleton, pleading with a monk to remove a blade of grass from her empty eye socket. In Shigaraki's reinterpretation, Komachi is not portrayed as pitiful, but rather is transformed into her youthful and enchanting form (Enchi 1965, 72):

I have no intention of portraying Komachi as deformed or crippled in the play I am writing. Her stunning beauty and dazzling talent had become a hindrance; she simply could not bring herself to rely on a man. It is a type of narcissism. She delighted men with poetry and captivating gestures, but surrendered nothing of herself. The men soon felt betrayed, tossing and turning in anguish, labeling her an evil woman. When she lost her beauty to old age, she had to suffer the cold stares of hatred from these men, and live out the rest of her life as a mad old crone. Next we find her as an abandoned corpse in a field of pampas grass. One thin reed had pierced through the eye socket of her skull, causing her spirit to moan in pain. But when a travelling monk plucked out the grass to relieve her spiritual torment, she transformed into the beautiful figure of her youth once again, and attempted to seduce the holy man. You see, I want to depict the karma of a woman who cannot enter nirvana.<sup>4</sup>

Drawing from Kurata's perspective, I would argue that this scene removes the barrier of ageism, which often obscures the fact that 'old women are women as well'. While Reiko is still subjected to the spectators' gaze, she now possesses a newfound confidence in her abilities. Her performance as Komachi is a resounding success, attributed in part to the depth and maturity she brings to the role:

Reiko masterfully captured Komachi's enchanting transformation with a seasoned performance that only someone of her age could deliver. [...] Each day, voices praising Reiko's beauty likened her to a fully bloomed chrysanthemum. (113)

In this scene, Reiko embodies both the aged Komachi and the youthful Komachi simultaneously, highlighting the skill required of an experienced actress to portray such contrasting roles. As Gullette suggests, portraying a younger character is more straightforward in realist theatre (Enchi 1965, 168). However, the key to Reiko's success in this performance lies in her own confidence and the reflected image in the spectators' gaze, which empowers her in turn.

The symbolism of the chrysanthemum is significant. In an earlier scene (35), the envious Umeno scoffs at the idea of Reiko's beauty being compared to that of a chrysanthemum, known for its ability to retain its beauty until it falls. Yet, contrary to expectations, Reiko's final stage appearance is akin to a fully bloomed chrysanthemum.

Despite her health struggles, Reiko is able to create a world of beauty on stage and defy ageism or what Gullette terms "the decline

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<sup>4</sup> Translation is taken from Eddinger 1999, 305.

gaze" (2004, 163) through her newfound confidence and the image of eternal femininity portrayed by Shigaraki.

### 3 Even More Womanly than Women (?): "Two Faces"

The story of "Two Faces" revolves around the fictional protagonist Segawa Senjo, a renowned and exceptionally skilled middle-aged *onnagata* 女形 (actor playing female roles in Kabuki) of the Segawa family. The title originates from a Japanese dance incorporated in 1784 in the Kabuki play known today as *Hokaibō* 法界坊, from the name of one of the protagonists, a mendicant priest. This intertextuality is rooted in the metaphorical connection between a scene in the play and Senjo's gender identity. In the play, the spirits of a deceased man and woman simultaneously possess a single woman's body, granting the female character on stage both masculine and feminine attributes. The title suggests that Senjo's dual gender identity parallels this supernatural phenomenon.

The ageing Senjo is hospitalised for an anal ailment, and his disciple recounts his treatment in explicit terms that portray the doctor's sadism and Senjo's apparent masochism, hinting at a homosexual attraction between them. The narrative vividly depicts the 'perverted' ambiance of the hospital room, likened by a medical staff member to that of a brothel (Enchi 1960, 173).<sup>5</sup>

In "Two Faces" the plot is simple and the narration starts with the actor's preoccupation with bodily decay after his illness which could reveal the 'maleness' of his body on the stage. The main event in the story is that the convalescing Senjo encounters a young female university student, Akiko, researching the gender and sexuality of *onnagata*. She elucidates:

In my thesis, I aim to delve into the inner persona of the man residing within an *onnagata*, while he endeavours to portray a woman. Essentially, as Kabuki *onnagata* art encompasses the portrayal of femininity in men and masculinity in women, it is a remarkable form of expression, incomparable to that of actresses, in my opinion. (177)

Despite Senjo's disinterest in women following the heartbreak of a youthful romance and his subsequent exclusively homosexual relationships, the female student manages to captivate him, sparking a romantic *liaison* between them. However, we get to know that the

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<sup>5</sup> For an analysis on the problematic notion of 'perversion' in Enchi's works and its meaning as an inherent trait of a talented or 'authentic' *onnagata*, see Moro 2015.

real motive at the base of Senjo's *liaison* with Akiko is the fact that she is strikingly resemblant to her aunt, who actually is Senjo's past unique woman. Here the device of *katashiro* triggers his heterosexual behaviour, which otherwise would be difficult to justify after so many years. Akiko admits satisfaction in confirming that "Segawa Senjo is indeed a man, just like any other" (Enchi 1960, 180).

After the affair, Senjo takes on the role of Tamate Gozen, a brave and skilled female warrior, with remarkable success. Both critics and audience attribute his powerful performance to a newfound energy following his prolonged convalescence. However, the narrative explicitly attributes Senjo's revitalised skill to his affair with the student, linking his supposedly regained masculinity directly to the improvement of his *onnagata* art.

The narrator elucidates Senjo's conflictual sentiments following the performance:

even though a hint of masculinity now enhances the vigour and grace of his *onnagata* portrayal, that concealed truth reverberates like discord within him. (184)

What he feels sad about is the fact of realising that "as an old man he could love a young woman in an ordinary way" (182). This sense of melancholy is not in the least due as in the case of Reiko to the age difference which makes her feel inferior, but only to the fear of being 'normal', fitting the heteronormative stereotype of an older man who is attracted to a younger woman. For Senjo, following the old style of *onnagata* art as we shall see, being a 'normal' man means losing brightness on the stage. Senjo begins to realise that the romantic entanglement with the young girl, while adding allure to his performance, has also disrupted the delicate balance of the gender identity he meticulously crafted through years of practice. Here, we observe how Enchi explores the concept of Senjo's inherent femininity, hinting at post-gender theories that suggest fluid sexuality. However, simultaneously, the narrative reinforces a binary view of gender and sexuality, implying that his emerging masculinity automatically draws him towards women. This notion stems from a heteronormative assumption that male gender and sexual orientation towards women coincide, yet it offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of *onnagata* art, which transcends - used to transcend - mere impersonation of the female gender (Moro 2015, 30).

Examining the aspects of the work more closely related to the perception of age, there are several elements that mirror those in *Transformations*. One such element is the ideal of dying on stage (Enchi 1960, 169) as the ultimate dream for an actor, a fate experienced by Reiko in the final moments of *Transformations*. Another obsession shared by Senjo, reminiscent of Reiko's own concerns, is the actor's

reliance on the audience's presence and the praise of their work by critics, a theme that permeates the narrative (169).

In "Two Faces" the reflection of the protagonist on ageing as an *onnagata* is stimulated by a really existing *waka* 和歌 composed by his ancestor Segawa Kikunojō:

Along the shadowy river-bank,  
the wild pink grows weary with the deepening autumn;  
alas, that my rising from and retiring to bed is known to  
others<sup>6</sup>

The narration comments:

For women, particularly actresses and singers, whose physical beauty holds great significance, ageing is somewhat acceptable as it aligns with their natural gender. But for a man who had transformed himself into a woman, the onset of old age lays bare an undeniable reality. For him, then, the only way to cover the quotidian loss of youthfulness with ever more exquisite charm was to guard the secret of "alas that my rising from and retiring to bed is known to others". (Enchi 1960, 170)

The above *waka* is only one of the ancient texts authored by Senjo's ancestors to which the narration refers to and which holds significant value by providing Senjo with a reference for his art and ultimately contribute to shaping his identity. This mirrors the metatextual essay on Ono no Komachi inserted in the narration of *Transformations*.<sup>7</sup>

From the outset of the story, Senjo's concern with his ageing body becomes apparent, anticipating themes we can find in *Transformations*. While hospitalised, he frequently gazes at his reflection in the mirror, attempting to smile and assess his charm despite the pain. However, unlike in *Transformations*, where the protagonist faces the scrutiny of others, Senjo's concern with ageing stems from his own perspective - the 'decline gaze' is self-imposed:

Although he was confident in his established reputation within the theatre world and in his ability to excel in specialised roles unique to him, the thought of his youthful beauty gradually fading away from his made-up face was unbearable. (168)

Furthermore, his maleness is accentuated even more by his *liaison* with the student and it intensifies Senjo's fear of losing grace on the

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<sup>6</sup> The translation is taken from the dissertation by Asmita Satish Hulyalkar (1998, 26).

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of the other metatext in "Two Faces" see Moro (2015, 30).



stage. However, in the end, when he performs Tamate Gozen, he distinctly senses that the audience experiences no uneasiness while watching. On the contrary, he receives numerous words of praise such as:

The last time I saw Hamamuraya perform, the fault was that the actor had seemed too feminine and weak. Today he has charm as well as strength and there is nothing to criticise. (184)

Despite his apprehension, Senjo's art is not adversely affected by his masculinity. On the contrary, it is what Katherine Mezur (2005) would term the "body beneath" that lends charm to the *onnagata's* performance. The 'two faces' of the title are manifested in this unique beauty of the *onnagata*, which blends male and female genders. This beauty is not attained without suffering and is characteristic of a figure, that of the *onnagata*, which is deemed 'perverted' precisely due to its gender on the stage as mirrored in private life.

The narration of "Two Faces" implies that there are two ways to interpret Senjo's beauty: "one is as the typical beauty of an *onnagata*, the other is as the monstrous creepiness of someone who camouflages his sex" (Enchi 1965, 167). Senjo is described with the same words used in *Transformations* to delineate Reiko's character, but it is remarkable that this otherness is never connected to his bodily decay or illness as for Reiko. The only 'creepy' thing in Senjo is his gender connected to his sexuality, which gives to Senjo's hospital room a grotesque ambiance, but at the same time gives grace to Senjo's performance.

Here, I need to draw a distinction based on Maki Isaka's book regarding the gender of the *onnagata*. Isaka (2016, 150-1) explains that there is a significant difference in the perception of *onnagata* art between the premodern and modern periods. In the premodern era, *onnagata* would convincingly pass as women both on and off the stage, embodying specific characters with distinct traits akin to actual women. However, in modern times, the *onnagata* actor is not expected to exhibit female gender characteristics in his personal life. Instead, the *onnagata's* gender identity is starkly divided: on stage, they embody the epitome of feminine beauty devoid of personal traits, while in private life, they identify as males. Isaka contends that the notion of the *onnagata* being "even more womanly than women" is therefore a modern construct.

Taking into account the aforementioned argument, the character of Senjo embodies a fusion of both *onnagata* paradigms. Isaka (155) elucidates that the period immediately following the end of World War II and the US occupation was pivotal for the evolution of Kabuki as a whole. "Two Faces" was first published in 1959, a time when the debate from the 1950s regarding the necessity of *onnagata* may

not have been fully settled, thus the modern image of the *onnagata* was not entirely solidified.

Senjo draws inspiration from ancient biographies and manuals authored by his ancestors, attempting to replicate their ability to pass as women in private life (Enchi 1960, 170). Renowned *onnagata* of the past like Kikunojō or Ayame would conceal their marital status and familial ties, living public lives as women and exerting continuous effort to maintain their youthful appearance (Isaka 2016, 38-42).

Embracing Kikunojō's principles, Senjo is troubled by the deterioration of his body, which betrays his male physique, and fears that his off-stage masculinity might detract from his femininity on stage. Additionally, he is profoundly embarrassed at the prospect of the audience discovering his affair with a woman. Interestingly, he exhibits no shame regarding the hospital staff gossiping about his flirtation with the male doctor. The narrative elaborates that following his illness, Senjo was meticulous about preserving his 'beauty as an *onnagata*' in the eyes of others, even going so far as to request his assistant to sponge his lower body instead of the nurse, so as not to compromise his public image. Unlike Reiko, Senjo, in his capacity as an *onnagata*, is concerned about how others perceive his beauty not only on stage but also in his private life.

I want to emphasise that Senjo's anxiety is a personal matter stemming from his internalised ageism, influenced by his emulation of premodern *onnagata*, who prioritised maintaining a youthful appearance even in old age. However, as a modern *onnagata*, he is expected to embody femininity and beauty exclusively while performing on stage. The acclaim for Senjo's performance, highlights its artificiality, lauding him as possessing a "sensual elegance which nowadays women have lost" (Enchi 1960, 167, 173). In reality, since Senjo's performance is expected to embody what Mezur (2005, 228) terms "artificial beauty" closely linked to artificial youth, ageing is not perceived as detrimental to his success on stage. Obviously, this is not the case of an actress like Reiko, whose performance is evaluated on the base of its 'naturalness'.

This concept of artificiality is evident in descriptions of Senjo's art using terms like *zōkei* 造型する (construct) and *kamosu* 醸す (brew) (Enchi 1960, 169), whereas the artistry of young and inexperienced *onnagata* is likened to an 'artificial flower', the same term used by Umeno to criticise Reiko's performance after her illness. This suggests that the transient beauty of youth (referred to by Noh master Zeami as "temporary flower") is inherently weaker than the enduring beauty crafted through practice (Zeami's "genuine flower").

Mezur's analysis does not neatly separate the premodern practice of 'passing' as women from the modern construction of the eternal woman on stage, as Isaka does. However, she does assert that the *onnagata*'s stylisation of beauty and youth has evolved over time, with

contemporary performances showcasing an even greater emphasis on these qualities (Mezur 2005, 69).

Senjo's discomfort, in my view, arises from the conflict between the contemporary world he inhabits and the legacy of his predecessors, which he believes in and seeks to embody. Drawing from Isaka's insights (2016, 158), in the eighteenth century there was no clear distinction between body and mind, natural and artificial. Consequently, older *onnagata* could convincingly portray young women both on and off the stage. However, with the advent of modernity came an epistemological shift, leading to a separation between gender performance on stage (the Artificial) and gender expression in daily life (the Natural). Senjo endeavours to emulate a youthful femininity, a practice deemed unnatural for an elderly man in his time and accepted only within the confines of theatrical performance. Consequently, Senjo finds himself ensnared between idealising an antiquated model of the *onnagata* and performing a modern interpretation, a situation that inevitably leaves him frustrated despite the audience's admiration for his craft.

#### 4 Conclusion

Sunami Toshiko (1998, 151) references Enchi's statement that she had been contemplating *Transformations* for four or five years before actually writing it, a period that coincided with her work on "Two Faces". This, in my view, strongly suggests a direct connection between the two works I have analysed in this paper.

In the preceding chapters, I have highlighted the commonalities between the two works as well as the differences in how they depict the ageing process of their protagonists. Both Senjo and Reiko ultimately prioritise the reception of their performances and how the audience perceives their beauty and youthful appearance on stage (Isaka 2016, 18-19; Gullette 2004, 177). However, the key distinction lies in how Reiko needs to believe in her art first for the audience to appreciate it, whereas Senjo is admired regardless of any personal doubts or insecurities he may harbour about his role as an *onnagata*.

During the pivotal transition from adulthood to old age, the actor and the actress face crises in specular ways. For Senjo, whose artificial beauty is celebrated, ageing is primarily a personal question of identity. Conversely, for Reiko, it signifies a physical change that threatens to undermine her artistry. This may also explain why she chooses not to undergo surgery and instead opts to fulfil a final dream of death on the stage.

However, Reiko's lack of predecessors leaves her with more freedom to decide how to navigate her life and career. The metatextual device of the essay on Ono no Komachi serves as an empowering tool, providing her with the language of self-determination. Conversely, for

Senjo, texts like the aforementioned *waka* have the opposite effect, constraining him and making him uncomfortable with his masculinity, thus perceiving ageing as a threat. Paradoxically, we could argue that Reiko, by overcoming her insecurities and refocusing solely on her art, finds fulfilment in embodying the ideal of dying on stage, while Senjo is burdened by the impossibility of maintaining the traditional *onnagata* art form, leading him to see his success as fleeting.

In many of Enchi's works, regardless of the time period, women often seem to lose in both art and love but find solace in alternative dimensions, while men, regardless of how 'perverted' or 'creepy', are successful. However, in comparing these two works, what becomes apparent is an actor who falls victim to the patriarchal gaze and an actress who somehow resists it. Ironically, the man portraying eternal femininity feels frustrated by the physical decay, while the actress finds satisfaction on stage despite her ageing and suffering body.

Indeed, Enchi's exploration of the reality of ageing bodies prompted her to reflect, through her works, on the image of eternal femininity constructed by the male gaze and its diverse implications for women throughout history. In my view, the evident parallels between "Two Faces" and *Transformations* concerning the perception of ageing deepen the contemplation of identity construction in Enchi's *oeuvre*. I hope to have also illustrated that the idea at the base of those works by Enchi later called *rōjomon* originated as early as the late 1950s in a dialogue with the ideal of eternal feminine beauty epitomised by the 'woman' on stage.

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# Showcasing Japan A Journey of Japanese Identity Through Archaeology and Ancient Art Exhibitions in Italy

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**Abstract** To what extent does the narrative of Japan's prehistorical origins matter to Italy? In the second half of the twentieth century, Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome hosted two significant exhibitions dedicated to Japanese archaeology and ancient art: *Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese* in 1958 and *Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente* in 1995. Both displays provided Italian visitors with an unparalleled framework to engage with early artistic manifestations of the archipelago known today as Japan. Built on a critical analysis of the prehistoric and protohistoric artefacts from the Jōmon to Kofun periods selected for the Italian audience, this paper examines the active application of narrative discourse on Japan's identity by the Japanese government in Italy. Still, it also sheds light on the presence of Japanese archaeology and art in Italian public and private collections throughout the twentieth century. The analysis delves into the textual and visual presentation of exhibits, examining both the venue and catalogues. These sources offer insights into potential instances of orientalism or self-orientalism, revealing a narrative closely tied to stereotypical views. The investigation unravels aspects of Japan's past emphasised in diplomatic shows, evolving alongside ground-breaking archaeological discoveries in post-war Japan.

**Keywords** Japanese archaeology. Identity. Japanese art. Italo-Japanese cultural exchange. Exhibition Studies.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Archaeology and Ancient Art of Japan in Italy. – 3 Japan in Palazzo delle Esposizioni. – 4 Narrating the Japanese Identity in Archaeological and Ancient Art Exhibits in Italy. – 5 Conclusions.



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## 1 Introduction

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome hosted two large-scale exhibitions featuring archaeology and ancient art from Japan. *Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese* (Treasures of Japanese Art) constituted the inaugural exhibition that the Italian audience had the opportunity to appreciate by the close of 1958. In the initial decade following the conclusion of World War II, both nations formerly belonging to the Axis Powers underwent introspection and political adjustments. Concurrently, a miraculous and swift economic regeneration provided a measure of relief from the lingering war trauma persisting in both societies. Simultaneously, the disintegration of the myth surrounding the imperial family in Japan was succeeded by ground-breaking discoveries in the field of prehistoric archaeology.

Nevertheless, it was not until 1995, with a gap of nearly forty years, that another major exhibition titled *Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente* (Japan Before the West) was organised in Italy at the same venue as in 1958. While the content of the second exhibition displayed outwardly analogous features to the first one, the contextual backdrop significantly differed in the two instances. By 1995, the year of the second exhibition, Japan had already experienced the bursting of its economic bubble at the close of the 1980s, plunging the country into the so-called 'Lost Decade'.<sup>1</sup> Emperor Hirohito passed away in 1989, and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Japan also entered the post-Cold War era. Furthermore, noteworthy archaeological discoveries in Japan, such as the identification of the Sannai-Maruyama Site in 1992, altered the discourse on Japanese prehistory.

A palpable shift is discernible between the 1958 and 1995 exhibitions in the approach to presenting archaeology and ancient art, influencing narratives of Japanese identity. Despite disparities in descriptions and the showcased artefacts, both exhibitions serve as pivotal junctures where archaeology and art converge, crafting narratives about Japan and conveying its identity to Italian audiences. However, it is essential to note that while the so-called artworks contribute to the translation of Japanese aesthetics, archaeological

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This study stems from the close collaboration of the two Authors. For the concerns of the Italian Academy, Wei Sun is responsible for Sections 2, 3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.2 and 5, Claudia Zancan is responsible for Sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.3, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 4, 4.1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3. The Section 1 was written jointly.

**1** Japan experienced an economic bubble between 1986 and 1991, primarily in financial assets but also in real estate. The collapse of this bubble in 1992 resulted in the country's economic stagnation throughout the 1990s, a period commonly referred to as the 'Lost Decade'.



artefacts exhibited beyond national borders bear the crucial responsibility of narrating the (pre)historical past of the Japanese people.<sup>2</sup>

Identity in archaeology is a complex and dynamic concept, challenging rigid confinement to stable traits inherent in individuals, as experiences play a transformative role (Meskell, Preucel 2004, 122). Beyond intrinsic traits, social constructs significantly shape identity, expanding it to encompass the perception of 'who we are' within society, surpassing internal self-perception (Schwartz, Vignoles, Luyckx 2011a, 3). The social identification process involves recognising affiliation to a specific group, constituting a vital aspect of the conceptual framework wherein self-identification as a group member is central (3). Comparative evaluations with other groups follow, prompting the need for clear distinctions, sometimes achieved through material culture, as a means of delineating one's group from others (Spears 2011, 203). Material culture, in this context, serves as a 'symbolic' marker facilitating the archaeological identification of associated social groups (Shelach 2009, 77). Affiliation with a particular identity also manifests through objectification, seen as a means of "self-knowledge for individuals and groups" (Tilley 2006, 60). Members of a specific identity group recognise objectification elements as integral to their shared identity. It is, therefore, essential to understand the choices made in the selection of archaeological artefacts exhibited beyond national borders that have the crucial task of narrating the Japanese people's past and their identity.

This paper aims primarily to uncover the story of two historical exhibitions, almost forgotten today both in Japan and Italy. Based on a critical analysis of the archaeological objects selected for the two major exhibitions in 1958 and 1995, the following text will try to demonstrate how Japanese identity has been constructed and conveyed to Italian audiences in different contexts. Concurrently, the paper will delineate the presence of Japanese archaeology and ancient art

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**2** Shortly before the 1958 exhibition, significant changes occurred regarding legislation concerning the protection of cultural properties. As demonstrated by Failla (2004), concerning the safeguarding of cultural properties, there was a widespread apprehension during the aftermath of the war that many artefacts would be dispersed or lost amidst the chaotic post-war period (2004, 103). Consequently, in 1949, the Division for the Protection of Cultural Properties was established. Merely a year later, in 1950, the new *Bunkazai Hogo Hō* 文化財保護法 (Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties) was enacted. This legislation introduced two new categories to the roster of protected items: 'intangible cultural properties' (*mukeni bunkazai* 無形文化財) and 'buried cultural properties' (*maizō bunkazai* 埋蔵文化財). Furthermore, the law aimed to consolidate the "system of cultural properties", ensuring the prompt and effective implementation of the new norms and regulations. It also instituted the Committee for the Preservation of Cultural Properties (*Bunkazai Hogo Inkaei* 文化財保護委員会) as an adjunct to the Ministry of Education, comprising an advisory board of experts in cultural property preservation (Failla 2004, 103). This shows that from the post-World War II period onwards, including the 1958 exhibition, there was a greater focus on the cultural and identity significance of pre-protolithic objects.

in Italy since the last century, along with the role played by Palazzo delle Esposizioni in showcasing Japan.

## 2 Archaeology and Ancient Art of Japan in Italy

Starting under the regime of the Kingdom of Italy (1861-1946), individual interest in Japan began to manifest itself among passionate art collectors. The early collections of Japanese art in Italy formed by those individuals, among which Edoardo Chiossone (1833-98) and Enrico di Borbone (1851-1905) are the most well-known, gave rise to museums towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Originally, Edoardo Chiossone was an artist invited by the Japanese government to contribute his skills as a drawing and engraving master at the Tokyo School of Art.<sup>3</sup> Actively participating in Japan's artistic and technological development program oriented towards the West, he began collecting art and craft objects and items from the pre- and protohistoric period in 1875. The collection, bequeathed by will to the Ligustica Academy of Fine Arts and the city of Genoa, Chiossone's hometown, was transferred to Genoa after his death and presented to the public in 1905. A building dedicated to the collection was built between 1953 and 1970 and opened in 1971 as the Museo d'Arte Orientale Edoardo Chiossone, as it is known today in Genoa.<sup>4</sup> The Chiossone Museum in Genoa organised several exhibitions on *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵 from 1971 to 1976, showcasing its extensive collection and supporting various research and studies in this field (Caterina, Tamburello 1978, 11).

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<sup>3</sup> Chiossone was invited to Japan through the mission of Iwakura Tomomi (1825-83), alongside the painter Antonio Fontanesi, the sculptor Vincenzo Ragusa, and the architect Giovanni Vincenzo Cappelletti (Failla 2004, 79). The Iwakura Mission is regarded as the first diplomatic tool for political and cultural internationalisation, as well as being the first to draw attention to 'Western' models for the interpretation of ancient and contemporary art (79).

<sup>4</sup> Muto 1961, 20-1; Caterina, Tamburello 1977, 28-9; Failla 2006, 194-5; Kumakura, Kreiner 2010, 642. In the Chiossone Museum's archaeology collection, the following items are currently on display:

Yayoi period: halberd head (Middle/Late Yayoi period), three spearheads (Middle Yayoi period), fifteen *magatama* 勾玉 (Yayoi/Kofun period), necklace of *kudatama* 管玉 (Yayoi/Kofun period);

Kofun period: bronze ornament for horse tack (ring with three bells, from Eta Funayama Kofun, Nagomi, Kumamoto Prefecture, fifth-sixth CE), bronze mirror with five bells fifth-sixth CE), knob of a ring-handle sword depicting a dragon head (sixth-seventh CE), iron sword blade (no date). (All information was provided by Dr. Aurora Canepari of the Chiossone Museum via private correspondence on 22 November 2023. University of Padua MA student Rossella Panarella supervised the objects' dating. At the time of writing this paper, archaeometric analyses are still in progress to determine the precise dating of the bronze objects).

Another important collection is that of Prince Enrico di Borbone-Parma, Count of Bardi. He began acquiring numerous Japanese art objects during a long journey to East Asia, including primarily weapons, lacquers, *netsuke* 印籠, and *inrō* 根付け from the Edo period. Initially housed at Palazzo Vendramin Calergi in Venice, the collection was sold to a Viennese antiquarian after he died in 1906. Many works were subsequently sold to collectors and foreign museums. What remained of the collection until the end of World War I was then assigned to Italy as part of war reparations from Austria. These works found a place in Palazzo Pesaro in Venice, constituting the first and foremost nucleus of the local Museo Orientale, open since 1928 (cf. Kumakura, Kreiner 2010; Boscolo Marchi 2020).

It was at the Weltausstellung in Vienna in 1873 that the Japanese regime first became aware of the need to show art to a European audience, when the Japanese neologism *bijutsu* 美術 (fine arts) was coined to accommodate the systematic categorisation of the World's Fair (cf. Kitazawa 1989). Nevertheless, it was not until the 1897 Venice Biennale – also known as the Second International Art Exhibition – that the Japanese were involved in officially showcasing their art in Italy. To this event, the *Nippon Bijutsu Kyōkai* 日本美術協会 (Japan Fine Art Association) submitted historic and neo-traditional paintings (Adriasola 2017, 212), while the collection of German art dealer Ernst Seeger and numerous *kakemono* 掛け物 owned by Alessandro Fè d'Ostiani were displayed as complementary artworks of the Edo period (Boscolo Marchi 2020, 134). Subsequently, Japan participated in the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin in 1902. Equally important was the exhibition dedicated to Japan in 1908 at the Gabinetto cinese Wunsch in Trieste, open since 1843 and instrumental in shaping the Trieste collection of Japanese objects and prints (Caterina, Tamburello 1977, 27).

The Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East (IsMEO),<sup>5</sup> and the Japanese Cultural Institute were devoted to showing Japanese art in Rome throughout the 1950s and 1960s. One of the most significant

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**5** Founded in 1933 by Giuseppe Tucci with the support of philosopher Giovanni Gentile, the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East (IsMEO) was created with the primary objective of promoting cultural relations between Italy and Asian countries, initially with a focus on the Indian region. During its activities until the outbreak of World War II, IsMEO organised language courses, teacher exchanges, distributed scholarships, and published periodicals aimed at an educated but non-specialist audience. It also opened a museum of East Asian art, which was interrupted in 1944 due to the war. After resuming activities in 1947, the Institute expanded its scope, organising scientific expeditions to Tibet and Nepal and entering into agreements with various Asian countries for archaeological excavations and monumental restorations. In 1995, due to budgetary reasons, the Institute was merged with the Italian-African Institute, giving rise to the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient (IsIAO) (IsMEO – Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo e l'Oriente, <https://www.ismeo.eu/chi-siamo/>).

exhibitions organised by IsMEO was the 1954 show in collaboration with the Municipality of Venice, commemorating the seventh centenary of Marco Polo's birth and featuring works from Europe, the United States, and Japan (*Marco Polo: Celebrazione del settimo centenario della nascita, 1254-1954*, 1954). This show was followed by numerous displays focusing on traditional painting and Japanese prints, including the 1959 exhibition by IsMEO on *suiboku-ga* 水墨画 and *sumi-e* 墨絵, titled *Pittura zen dal secolo XVII al secolo XIX* (Zen Painting from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century), and the 1961 exhibition *Mostra di Gibon Sengai* (Zen Master Gibon Sengai).

Regarding Japanese prints, in the 1950s, the IsMEO organised the first exhibition of Japanese print engravings from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century in collaboration with the National Museum of Tokyo. Later, in 1967 and 1968, further exhibitions were held, sponsored by the Japanese Cultural Institute and presented at the Cabinet of Prints and Drawings of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. In 1971, another *ukiyo-e* exhibition was organised by the Japanese Cultural Institute in collaboration with the Austrian Cultural Institute in Rome (Istituto Giapponese di Cultura, 1971).

Between 1958 and 1959, a particularly notable event was the exhibition *Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese* at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, curated by Emilio Lavagnino and Kawai Yahachi. It assembled various aspects of Japanese art that had never been presented in such an ensemble before. Surprisingly, the same venue hosted two other exhibitions from Japan, in 1930 and 1995. If this venue holds a special place in the history of Japanese art exhibitions in Italy, how has the historical relationship between Japan and this Italian exhibition space evolved since 1930?

### 3 Japan in Palazzo delle Esposizioni

Designed by Pio Piacentini, Palazzo delle Esposizioni was constructed as an exhibition hall in 1883. It is located on the Via Nazionale, near the Roma Termini railway station. It was conceived to address the need for the construction of particularly representative buildings and to provide the city with all the necessary structures for its new role as the capital. The aim was to create the first building in Italy dedicated to the Fine Arts, establishing a connection with the artistic history of the past and present.<sup>6</sup> It has housed important historical exhibitions such as the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932-34) and has provided the main venue

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<sup>6</sup> *Il progetto di Pio Piacentini nella Roma Capitale*, <https://www.palazzoesposizione.it/pagine/il-progetto-di-pio-piacentini-nel-programma-di-roma-capitale>.

for the Rome Quadriennale since 1931 (Ghirardo 1992, 68-70). Throughout the twentieth century, Japan has been thematised in three major exhibitions in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, in 1930, 1958 and 1995, respectively. Despite the thematical heterogeneity, these three exhibitions reflect the socio-political entanglements of art between Italy and Japan during the interwar, post-war, and post-Cold War periods.

### 3.1 *Esposizione di Arte Giapponese, 1930*

As a consequence of political agreements with Japan, there was an increase in exhibitions featuring contemporary Japanese painters in the first half of the twentieth century. The initiation of a long series of contemporary art exhibitions in Rome occurred with the 1930 exhibition at Palazzo delle Esposizioni [fig. 1]. Organised and sponsored by Baron Ōkura Kishichirō (1882-1963), this exhibition reunited hanging scrolls and folding screens from a group of contemporary *nihonga* 日本画 (lit. Japanese-style painting) painters including the nationalistic painter Yokoyama Taikan. On 26 April, Benito Mussolini, Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and his wife Elena of Montenegro attended the exhibition's opening (Yokoyama 1930). Their presence marked a sign of friendship between the two countries in the 1930s (Caterina, Tamburello 1978, 7).<sup>7</sup> The painter Cipriano Efisio Oppo, the founder of the Rome Quadriennale, also visited the exhibition in the company of Japanese people. The art exhibition became a reasonable pretext to celebrate the close cultural and political relationship between Japan and Italy, preceding the official emergence of the Axis powers, as Yokoyama reported later in a journal article:

From a cultural-historical point of view, it is precious that two different nations, far removed from each other by a distance of ten thousand miles, could chorus harmoniously together in the most profound and highest realm of spiritual resonance [...]. It means that the citizens of Italy and Japan were united at the height of their ideological sentiment. (Yokoyama 1930)

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<sup>7</sup> The victory over Russia in the early 1900s led Japan to be regarded by European nations as a 'yellow peril'. Yet, Italian fascism reinterpreted Japan, which, in a sense, traced the ideological trajectory of the Imperial Ancient Rome: both were reference points for European (Rome) and Asian (Japan) civilisations (Miyake 2018, 618). Consequently, despite the fascist inclination towards Nazi 'racial' ideals, following military alliances between the two countries, Italian narratives regarding Japan sought to increasingly portray it as a counterpart to Italy in the Asian context. This led to comparisons, such as assimilating sumo wrestlers to their Roman counterparts and equating Manchuria with Abyssinia. As a result, Japan not only assumed the role of a military ally but also acquired the metaphorical status of a blood brother in these narratives (cf. Raiteri 2005; Miyake 2018).



**Figure 1**  
Catalogue of the Exhibition *Esposizione di Arte Giapponese* held in 1930 at Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome

As a counterpart to *yōga* 洋画 (lit. Western-style painting) using oil colours, *nihonga* was the painting style that dominated some overseas exhibitions of contemporary Japanese art organised around 1930 (e.g. Paris, Rome, Berlin, US). For the dominance of *nihonga* at the time, art historian Yōko Hayashi-Hibino put forward two factors that could have affected the official preference. The one factor was commercial: *nihonga* had a broader European market (Hayashi-Hibino 1998, 95). For the Rome exhibition, however, this could only be a secondary factor because Baron Ōkura Kishichirō purchased the totality of the exhibits after the show, and most of the artworks implied in this transaction integrated the collection of Okura Museum of Art after the war (Okura Museum of Art, <https://www.shukokan.org/out-line/>). The other factor Hayashi-Hibino pointed out was embedded in the rising nationalism: *nihonga* was intended to be the ‘national art’ (Hayashi-Hibino 1998, 95). This presumption resonates with Yokoyama’s statement that *nihonga* was endowed with “deep Oriental spirit and high ideals of subjectivity” (Yokoyama 1930).

Moreover, the historical photographs documenting the exhibition and its vernissage enable visualisation of the scenography back then.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> It is possible to view some photos of the exhibition on the Istituto Luce website at the following link: <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL3000044147/12/sala-del-palazzo-esposizioni-dipinti-sulle-pareti-occasione-della-prima-mostra-d-arte-giapponese.html?indexPhoto=0>.

Additionally, a video of the exhibition setup can also be viewed at this link: <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000019636/2/allestimento-mostra-d-arte-giapponese-roma-7.html>.

The dome structure of Palazzo delle Esposizioni was decorated with gigantic Japanese and Italian flags, as the venue provided the space where people of two nations dialogued with each other. On a wall that stretches horizontally in one of the exhibition rooms, each hanging scroll appeared homogeneous in form and size, enclosed within an area of equal size divided by the trimming lines of the wall. Whilst the subject matter of each painting was distinctive, the homogeneity of the format resulted in a solemn and dignified presentation of the artwork. Although the audience could circulate freely within the horizontally extended rectangular space, this turned into an experience like a military parade.

While this exhibition is not the primary focus of the paper, as it was a contemporary art exhibition of the time, it will serve as a foundation for comprehending the political decisions in showcasing pieces of Japanese art in Italy based on the specific political context.

### 3.2 *Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese, 1958-59*

From 18 December 1958 to 1 February 1959, with the exhibition *Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese*, Palazzo delle Esposizioni was occupied by Japanese art for the second time. Displaying 143 objects considered essential works of art from Japanese history, the show of Japanese art was not only conceived to attract attention from Italian audience, but as part of the travelling exhibition that was also presented in Paris (Musée d'Art Moderne), London (Victoria and Albert Museum), and The Hague (Museum voor Moderne Kunst),<sup>9</sup> celebrating the event that Japan became a member state in the United Nations in December 1956. Hence, rather than seducing European visitors, the diplomatic message was the primary purpose for this temporary translocation of artworks in 1958, accompanied by high transport and insurance costs and the risk of damages for the fragile antiquities. To transcend the militaristic past and restore diplomatic relationships, the post-war Japanese government intended to restore international reputation with the country's long history and distinctive cultural treasure, in other words, through cultural diplomacy. Artworks and exhibitions, thus, became an instrument for softening friction between Japan and other countries.

The politician Kawai Yahachi (1877-1960), who wrote the preface for the exhibition catalogue [fig. 2], claimed the aesthetical supremacy

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<sup>9</sup> The Museum voor Moderne Kunst, or Haags Gemeentemuseum, was a museum in The Hague established in 1886. From 1998 to September 2019, it became the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (Municipal Museum of The Hague). In October 2019, the museum is renamed as the Kunstmuseum Den Haag (Art Museum of The Hague).

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of Japanese art: “Beauty can unite all humanity” (Kawai 1958, 9). According to him, these exhibits have been “thoroughly discussed and selected”, and they were “examples of the highest quality currently available to send abroad” (9). His assertion was credible as the loans came from important official institutions, prestigious Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, museums, and private collections.<sup>10</sup> Notably, the Japanese Emperor lent one work from the imperial collection. It was a pair of folding screens, *Warm Spring Day*, painted by Takeuchi Sei-hō in 1924 and depicting sleepily accumbent deer. Deer are divine messengers in Shinto (“Shinto Symbols” 1966, 14), and here, according to the catalogue, they symbolise the peaceful atmosphere of a warm spring day (*Tesori dell’Arte Giapponese* 1958, 55). Despite the traditional medium of folding screens, the exquisite treatment of the deer’s fur embodies the realist tendency of the painter Takeuchi, formed by the Shijō School but “influenced by Western painting” (55). Spring is a subject of a new beginning, giving hope. Deer, the sacred animals, are depicted as harmless and innocent. One can deduce the message that the emperor Hirohito wished to deliver to the European public during the post-war period. The imperial family showed considerable solicitude to the travelling exhibition, which was also confirmed by the presence of Prince Takamatsu at the vernissage.



**Figure 2**  
Catalogue of the exhibition  
*Tesori dell’Arte Giapponese*, held in 1958  
at Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome

**10** Many of the loans come from prestigious Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Japan, including the Kōryū-ji and Byōdō-in in Kyoto prefecture, Hōryū-ji, Kasuga Taisha, Tōdai-ji in Nara. Among the institutions that provided the works were, in particular, the National Commission for the Protection of Cultural Property and the Tokyo National Museum.



This exhibition also travelled to Paris in 1958. The exhibition's French title *L'art japonais à travers les siècles* clearly summed up the organiser's intention to demonstrate the continuity of Japanese art.<sup>11</sup> This show allowed the Italian public to become familiar with various Japanese painting styles and, as emphasised by Marcello Camillucci, contributed to dispelling the myth of Japanese art's "supine dependence" on Chinese art (Camillucci 1959, 100).

Comparing the objects on display with the Japanese art accessible in Italy previously mentioned, the inclusion of the archaeological objects section dating back to the prehistoric period was striking: Three Jōmon period *dogū* 土偶 figurines,<sup>12</sup> and five Kofun period *haniwa* 埴輪,<sup>13</sup> were on display. How were archaeological objects presented in an art exhibition? An analysis of the selection and description of these periodised objects will shed light on the place they occupied in the continuity of a discourse narrated in the exhibition.

### 3.2.1 Jōmon Period

From the Jōmon period,<sup>14</sup> described in the catalogue as a Neolithic period (in the catalogue dated from 2500 BC to 200 BC) organised into tribes, the displayed objects consist exclusively of *dogū* figurines. Additionally, they are categorised in the catalogue under the macro-category of "sculptures" (*Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese* 1958, 57). Moreover, the *dogū* are described in Italian as *statuette* (statuettes). Although mentioned, the characteristic vessels of the period have not been exposed, presumably due to transportation difficulties at that time.

The selection of exhibited objects includes:

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**11** The Paris version of the exhibition was organised by the Commission for the Protection of Cultural Property in Japan. The initiative to host the exhibition in France was taken by the Direction générale des Affaires Culturelles, the Direction des Musées de France and the Association Française d'Action Artistique (*L'art japonais à travers les siècles* 1958, 1).

Similarly, it can be argued that the Italian side has no direct influence over the content of the exhibition. As far as the exhibition in Rome is concerned, the contents of the catalogue do not suggest to which party the initiative is attributed. Nevertheless, it is clear that the institutions such as the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public Works, the Italian Embassy in Tokyo, the IsMEO were involved in the organisation (*Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese* 1958, 1).

**12** Clay figurines typical of the Jōmon period. On the origins and significance of the *dogū* figures, see in this regard Kaner (2009).

**13** Terracotta clay figures typical of the Kofun period.

**14** The current dating for the period is c. 14500 or 11500-1000 BCE. To understand the new Jōmon periodisation, please refer to Mizoguchi (2013). However, the dates as recorded in the catalogues are provided in the text to highlight changes in considering the beginning and end of Periods based on archaeological developments.

- Three *dogū*: clay figurine (Jōmon period, probably second millennium BC, Kurokoma-mura, Yamanashi Prefecture); clay figurine (period not mentioned, from a shell mound at Shimpukuji, Iwatsuki-shi, Saitama Prefecture. Property of Mr. Takeo Nakazawa, Tokyo. Inscribed in the Register of Important Cultural Property); clay figurines (Late Jōmon period, first millennium BC, Kamegaoka, Kizukuri-machi, Aomori Prefecture. Property of Mr. Gengo Echigoya, Aomori. Inscribed in the Register of Important Art Objects).

### 3.2.2 Yayoi Period

In the catalogue of the 1958 exhibition, there were few details about this period (in the catalogue dated from 200 BC to 400 AD) as it was mistakenly considered of short duration at that time.<sup>15</sup> It is mainly emphasised that “[t]his culture, called Yayoi, brought elements of Chinese and Korean civilisation to Japan, such as new agricultural techniques, the wheel and the kiln for ceramic production, and sporadic use of bronze and iron” (*Tesori dell’Arte Giapponese* 1958, 12). Indeed, many of the most significant discoveries of the Yayoi period, such as the Yoshinogari site, came later. However, there are no displayed objects from the period.

### 3.2.3 Kofun Period

Designated in the catalogue as the “Great Burial Mound Period” (in the catalogue dated from 400 AD to 600 AD),<sup>16</sup> it is emphasised that, following the Korean tradition, the role of the large mounds was central as the burial sites for the most important persons (*Tesori dell’Arte Giapponese* 1958, 12). Additionally, the catalogue states that the *haniwa* were crafted using a “tecnica primitiva” (primitive technique) (*Tesori dell’Arte Giapponese* 1958, 12). The selection of exhibited objects includes:

- Five *haniwa*: warrior (Great Burial Mound Period, fifth-sixth century AD, Chūjō-mura, Saitama Prefecture); woman (Great Burial Mound Period, fifth-sixth century AD, Jūjō-mura, Saitama

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<sup>15</sup> The dating of the Yayoi period is still uncertain due to continuous new discoveries, but it is believed to be from 900 or 400 BCE to 250 CE. Still, two intermediate and transitional periods are mentioned. The first from 800 BCE to 300 BCE when the Jōmon period and the nascent Yayoi period coexisted. The second is from 250 CE to 300 CE, a transitional period between Late Yayoi and Early Kofun visible especially by the emergence of a different funerary architecture (cf. Mizoguchi 2013).

<sup>16</sup> The current dating for the period is c. 250-710 CE.



**Figure 3**  
Woman seated on a high stool, Kofun period,  
Ōkawa-mura, Gumma Prefecture.  
Tokyo National Museum,  
ColBase (<https://colbase.nich.go.jp/>)

Prefecture. Property of Mr. Hisashi Ōkura, Tokyo); woman seated on a high stool (Great Burial Mound Period, fifth-sixth century AD, Ōkawa-mura, Gumma Prefecture. Tokyo National Museum [fig. 3]); deer (Great Burial Mound Period, fifth-sixth century AD, Ibaragi Prefecture. Property of Mr. Keiji Takakuma, Tokyo); monkey (Great Burial Mound Period, fifth-sixth century AD, Tachibana-mura, Ibaragi Prefecture. Property of Mr. Takeo Nakazawa, Tokyo).

The anthropomorphic *haniwa* and the monkey shaped *haniwa* were at the time of the exhibition already inscribed in the Registry of Important Cultural Properties.

### 3.3 Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente, 1995-96

L'Ambasciatore Carlo Perrone Capano, gran diplomatico e gran signore (lasciatemelo dire con l'empatia che si prova di fronte a una specie in estinzione) cui devo il mio lungo soggiorno a Tokyo cominciato nel 1974 essendo egli allora il capo della nostra rappresentazione diplomatica, mi diceva anni dopo a Roma: bisogna fare una grande mostra in Italia, anzi qui a Roma, di arte antica giapponese. E io: Ambasciatore, è quanto mai difficile e poi non sono un nipponista, ma come prova di fedeltà feudale verso di lei,

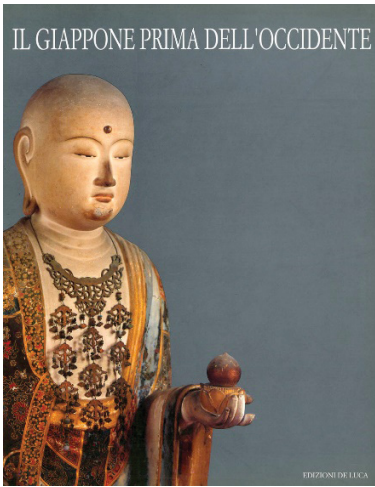
e con il suo aiuto, tenterò. Di fronte alla determinazione di Carlo Perrone Capano anche la Rocca di Gibilterra appare vacillante: soli, ostinati, tenaci abbiamo progettata e promossa la mostra fino alla sua realizzazione, coinvolgendovi il Ministero degli Affari Esteri per la parte diplomatica, il Comune di Roma per la parte organizzativa, l'Istituto per il Medio e l'Estremo Oriente per la parte scientifica e naturalmente le componenti nonché caute autorità giapponesi, dato che tutti i pezzi esposti provengono dal Giappone. E l'abbiamo anche battezzata col titolo *Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente*. (de Marchis 1995, 11)

Ambassador Carlo Perrone Capano, a distinguished diplomat and a true gentleman (allow me to say it with the empathy one feels in the presence of a species facing extinction), to whom I owe my extended stay in Tokyo starting in 1974 when he was the head of our diplomatic representation, said to me years later in Rome: "We should organise a major exhibition in Italy, even here in Rome, showcasing ancient Japanese art." I replied: "Ambassador, it is quite challenging, and besides, I am not a Japan enthusiast. However, as a sign of feudal loyalty to you, and with your help, I will attempt it." In the face of Carlo Perrone Capano's determination, even the Rock of Gibraltar appears to waver: alone, persistent, and tenacious, we planned and promoted the exhibition until its realisation, involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the diplomatic aspect, the Municipality of Rome for the organisational part, the Institute for the Middle and Far East for the scientific aspect, and naturally, the cautious Japanese authorities, as all the exhibited pieces come from Japan. And we also baptised it with the title *Japan Before the West*.<sup>17</sup>

With this charming introduction, art critic Giorgio de Marchis expresses a strong desire to have another significant exhibition of Japanese art in Italy. Indeed, the exhibition *Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente* (15 November 1995-15 January 1996 [fig. 4]) marks the return of valuable artistic works from the Japanese archipelago to Italy. As emphasised by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Susanna Agnelli, and the then Ambassador Bartolomeo Attolico (President of the Italo-Japanese Cultural Centre of the Institute for the Middle and Far East), it had been since 1958 that Italy had not hosted such an exhibition on ancient Japanese art (Agnelli 1995, 2; Attolico 1995, 10).

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<sup>17</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Authors.



**Figure 4**  
Catalogue of the exhibition  
*Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente*,  
held in 1995 at Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome

The exhibition was part of the cultural program *Japan in Italy '95-'96*, an event organised by committees from both countries and with the collaboration of both governments to introduce Japan to various Italian cities through cultural activities (Giappone in Italia 95/96, <https://www.italiagiappone.it/1995.html>). The exhibition showcased artefacts from different historical periods: from the Jōmon period to the Heian period, up to shortly before the Edo period. As explained by de Marchis, who was part of the Scientific Committee, the idea of organising an exhibition focused on a single period was excluded because, especially for ancient art, it would have been challenging for some works to leave Japan (de Marchis 1995, 11). Instead, exhibiting objects from different epochs and types would allow Italian visitors to understand better ancient Japanese art (11). The exhibition was divided into sections covering the periodisation of Japanese history. De Marchis describes the choice of objects for each periodisation as a “sampling” representing the historical period of the section (12). In doing so, the visitor could follow a logical and temporal thread, understanding the value of the artwork in its context of origin (12). The selection of works to be displayed was made through an exchange of requests from the Italian side and on the proposal of scholars from the *Bunkachō* 文化庁 (The Agency for Cultural Affairs) who were part of the Japanese scientific committee, also based on the availability of loans from museums and other institutions (temples,

etc.). The catalogue entries were curated by *Bunkachō* scholars and translated into Italian.<sup>18</sup>

*Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente* thus marks an important milestone in the history of Japanese temporary exhibitions in Italy, as it is the first organised to immerse the Italian visitor in a chronological, historical, and cultural journey for a better understanding of the development of Japanese art. Of considerable significance is the attention given to archaeological artefacts, constituting the first example of Japanese artistic expression. The section titled “Cult and Ritual in Prehistory” was curated by Professor Adolfo Tamburello (1934-), who was a professor of the History and Civilisation of the Far East at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.3.1 Jōmon Period

A noticeable disparity in the presentation of the Jōmon period, as opposed to the catalogue *Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese* (1958), is apparent in the definition of the period itself. In the initial exhibition, the Jōmon period was categorised as ‘Neolithic’, establishing a comparison with our concept of what we imagine as Neolithic. This approach was motivated by the fact that early Western archaeologists in Japan, at the beginning of the twentieth century, categorised Jōmon as Neolithic (cf. Munro 1908), in addition to the perception that the ancient Japanese period was once considered of little academic relevance and somewhat arcane by the ‘West’ (Hudson 1997, 81). However, already by the 1970s, it began to be deemed inappropriate to identify Jōmon as an entirely Neolithic period (cf. Bleed 1976), and recent research has focused on the inaccuracy of such a designation, considering the development of the Jōmon period as radically different from the European Neolithic (cf. Kaner, Ishikawa 2007). In the 1995 exhibition,

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<sup>18</sup> Information obtained through private correspondence on 18 December 2023 with Prof. Paolo Calvetti (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice), who was then a member of the Advisory Board.

<sup>19</sup> Adolfo Tamburello was a professor of the History and Civilisation of the Far East at the University of Rome. From 1968, he held the position of lecturer in the History of Art of the Far East at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples and in the History and Civilisation of India and the Far East at the University of Turin. He served as a professor of the History and Civilisation of the Far East at the Istituto Universitario Orientale from 1972 to 2008. Among his contributions to the dissemination and study of Asian culture in Italy, Tamburello was the founder of the Italian Association for Japanese Studies (AISTUGIA), along with Fosco Maraini and Giuliana Stramigioli. He participated as a member of the scientific committee in important exhibitions and was part of various academic institutions, including the Accademia Pontaniana and the Società Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere e Arti in Naples. Additionally, he was a member of the Matteo Ripa Study Centre and the Chinese College of the University of Naples ‘L'Orientale’ (Accademia Pontaniana s.d.).

on the contrary, Tamburello avoids mentioning the term ‘Neolithic’ within his explanation in the catalogue. He simply refers to the period by its name only (Tamburello 1995, 18-19, 58-60) and thus narates its geographical uniqueness.

The exhibited artefacts include:

- Five pieces of pottery: flame-shaped vessel (Middle Jōmon period, mid-third to first millennium BC, Umataka, Nagaoka, Niigata Prefecture, City Museum of Science of Nagaoka); pouring vessel (Late Jōmon period, mid-second to first millennium BC, Yagi B, Minamikayabechō, Hokkaidō, Department of Education of Minamikayabechō); container with hole (Late Jōmon period, mid-second to first millennium BC, Yagi B, Minamikayabechō, Hokkaidō, Department of Education of Minamikayabechō); terracotta vase (Middle Jōmon period, mid-third to second millennium BC, Tonobayashi, Enzan, Yamanashi Prefecture, Prefectural Archaeological Museum of Yamanashi. Important Cultural Property); vase with anthropomorphic mask (Middle Jōmon period, mid-third to second millennium BC, Tsukimimatsu, Ina, Nagano Prefecture, Department of Education of Ina).
- Four *dogū*: anthropomorphic figurine (Late Jōmon period, tenth-third century BC, Chobonaino, Minamikayabechō, Hokkaidō, Department of Education of Minamikayabechō. Important Cultural Property);<sup>20</sup> anthropomorphic figurine (Middle Jōmon period, mid-third to second millennium BC, Imojiya, Kushigatamachi, Yamanashi Prefecture, Department of Education of Kushigatamachi. Important Cultural Property); anthropomorphic figurine with hand on chest (Middle Jōmon period, mid-third to second millennium BC, Kamikurokoma, Misakamachi, Yamanashi Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum. Important Cultural Property

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**20** “Since its discovery, the artefact has been esteemed as a National Treasure. However, during that period, Minamikayabe Town lacked the necessary facilities to exhibit it such an Important Cultural Property. It is kept in the vault of the receiver general’s town government office after it has been put in a paulownia box inside a safety box, except when it was displayed at overseas exhibitions organized by Japan’s Agency for Cultural Affairs. It has not been removed for more than 30 years, which has led to some joking that it has been sentenced to 30 years imprisonment (The Japanese words for ‘safety box’ and ‘sentenced to imprisonment’ are both pronounced ‘kinko’). [...] It was in March 2007, approximately 32 years after the discovery, that the nickname ‘Kakku’ became widely known. The figurine was designated as a National Treasure and an interview with Ae Koita was published in a newspaper. In the interview she said, ‘Kakku, I am so glad that you got promotion’ and a picture of her big smile was in the newspaper. She used the word ‘promotion’ to express the upgrade from an Important Cultural Property to a National Treasure. Through the newspaper article I could see how important it is for her and that she treated Kakku like her own daughter. [...] Soon after the G8 Summit, it was exhibited at the British Museum as part of *The Power of Dogū* held in December 2009. [...] During the exhibition, Kakku acted as a kind of Goodwill Ambassador to impart the importance of the Jōmon culture” (Abe s.d.).

[fig. 5a]); anthropomorphic figurine (Late Jōmon period, X-III century BC, Kaburuki, Tajiri, Miyagi Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum. Important Cultural Property [fig. 5b]).

- One animal-shaped figurine (Late Jōmon period, tenth-third century BC, Bibi 4, Chitose, Hokkaidō, Department of Education of Chitose. Important Cultural Property).

### 3.3.2 Yayoi Period

The Yayoi period is a pivotal and delicate phase in establishing Japanese identity.<sup>21</sup> In the 1995 catalogue, Tamburello provided a comprehensive exploration of introducing bronze and iron to the archipelago, particularly emphasising weapons and ritual bells known as *dōtaku* 銅鐸 (Tamburello 1995, 19-20). Despite Tamburello's explanation regarding the significance of the introduction of rice cultivation and metal weapons, such objects have not been exhibited. This exposition puts forward a narrative depicting the Yayoi period as a multifaceted era characterised by diverse cultural aspects but still focused on the ritual aspect of the pre-protohistoric Japan. It is interesting the assertion made by the former Director of the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, Tōyama Atsuko, who believes that despite the Chinese influence, which introduced the use of metal and rice cultivation, a unique culture began to emerge that diverged from the continental one. She suggests that the cultural and religious structure taking shape during this period is directly linked to that of contemporary Japanese society (Tōyama 1995, 5).

The exhibited artefacts include:

- One red-painted pedestal (Yayoi period, first century BC-first century AD, Nanaita, Yasuchō, Fukuoka Prefecture, Department of Education of Yasuchō).
- One red-painted jar (Yayoi period, first century BC-first century AD, Nanaita, Yasuchō, Fukuoka Prefecture, Department of Education of Yasuchō).
- Two: bronze bell-shaped with crossed bands (Yayoi period, first century BC-first century AD, Sakuragaoka, Hyōgo Prefecture,

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**21** It is normally referred to as a 'Yayoi package' for the Initial Yayoi culture, that is "a set of discourses/communication system, or a set of ways of thinking, doing things and communicating with one another that involved the use of certain material media" (Mizoguchi 2013, 63-4; Barnes 2015, 271). The Yayoi period was a period of enormous social as well as technological changes for the entire Japanese archipelago: new technologies of agriculture, new aspects of culture and thought, easily entered the archipelago through the Korean Peninsula. During this period real migratory flows began from the Peninsula to the shores of northern Kyūshū: people crossing the sea to land in the archipelago were called *Toraijin* 渡來人. For more on this topic see Rhee, Aikens, Barnes 2021.



Kobe City Museum. National Treasure); bronze bell-shaped decorated with a 'chain' motif (Yayoi period, first century BC – first century AD, Kibi, Mabichō, Okayama Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum [fig. 5c]).

### 3.3.3 Kofun Period

Considered today as the State Formation Period,<sup>22</sup> the Kofun period represents a complex era characterised by the formation of an emerging and consolidated social hierarchy towards its end and the emergence of tumulus graves that materially demonstrated these social changes. It is interesting to note the definition of the entire period given in the catalogue of the 1958 exhibition, where it is simply termed the "Period of Great Burials". In 1995, Tamburello did speak of "funerary megalithic" (20) while correctly using the name of the period.

The exhibited artefacts include:

- One bronze mirror with 'curved jewel' (*magatama*) motifs (Kofun period, fourth century AD, Shikinzan, Ōsaka, Kyoto University).
- Gilded bronze stirrups (Kofun period, seventh century AD, Miyajidake, Miyajidake Jinja, Fukuoka. National Treasure).
- Gilded bronze saddle fittings (Kofun period, sixth century AD, Fujinoki, Ikaruga, Nara Prefecture, Bunkachō. Important Cultural Property).
- Four *haniwa*: boat (Kofun period, fourth century AD, Nagahara Takamawari, Ōsaka, Bunkachō. Important Cultural Property); wild boar (Kofun period, sixth century AD, Tenjin'yama, Sakaimachi, Gunma Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum. Important Cultural Property [fig. 5d]); woman with cup (Kofun period, sixth century AD, Tsukamawari, Gunma Prefecture, Bunkachō. Important Cultural Property); warrior (Kofun period, sixth century AD, Narizuka, Ōta, Gunma Prefecture, Archaeology Museum of Aikawa. Important Cultural Property [fig. 5e]).
- Two vessels: a stemmed vessel with a lid topped by a bird, Sue pottery (Kofun period, seventh century AD, Sumiyakidaira, Ichinomiya, Aichi Prefecture, Department of Education of Ichinomiya); a long-necked vessel, Sue pottery (Ganiana, Toba, Mie Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum [fig. 5f]).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Tsude 1987; 1991; Farris 1998; Fukunaga 2004; 2018; Barnes 2007; Sasaki 2018.



**Figure 5** Some of the objects displayed at *Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente* exhibition: (A) anthropomorphic figurine with hand on chest (Middle Jōmon period, mid-third to second millennium BCE, Kamikurokoma, Misakamachi, Yamanashi Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum); (B) anthropomorphic figurine (Late Jōmon period, tenth-third century BCE, Kaburuki, Tajiri, Miyagi Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum); (C) bronze bell-shaped decorated with a 'chain' motif (Yayoi period, first century BCE-first century CE, Kibi, Mabichō, Okayama Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum); (D) wild boar (Kofun period, sixth century CE, Tenjin'yama, Sakaimachi, Gunma Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum); (E) warrior (Kofun period, sixth century CE, Narizuka, Ōta, Gunma Prefecture, Archaeology Museum of Aikawa); (F) a long-necked vessel, Sue pottery (Ganiana, Toba, Mie Prefecture, Tokyo National Museum). ColBase (<https://colbase.nich.go.jp/>)

#### 4 Narrating the Japanese Identity in Archaeological and Ancient Art Exhibits in Italy

As highlighted by the list of exhibited objects, the choice to present a specific narrative of ancient Japanese art and archaeology to Italian visitors becomes evident. The selection is often linked to the kind of Japanese identity that the exhibition aims to convey and the social changes that have influenced archaeology since the post-war period. Archaeology and the narration of a community's past play a crucial role in consolidating the bond between the individual and their national identity. This occurs because archaeological artefacts serve as symbolic communication means related to transcendent concepts and

entities, such as the original identity of the nation-state (Mizoguchi 2006a, 55). Japan, in particular, provides an interesting case study on the relationship between archaeology and national identity, as a significant portion of protohistoric archaeology is inherently linked to the imperial family, the emperor figure, and the construction of the nation-state's identity (cf. Smith 2001, 51-7). Archaeology plays a vital role for the Japanese in their perception of identity and history (cf. Fawcett 1996; Hudson 1997, 85). In the creation of the modern nation-state, the emperor was made the embodiment of Japanese identity, and a narrative was constructed with metaphorical ties – often supported by the creation of an ad hoc mythology – between the emperor and the people, where one could not survive without the other (Mizoguchi 2006a, 81). As Mizoguchi emphasises, archaeology was mobilised and exploited as a tool to legitimise and support this imperial narrative (81). During World War II, Japanese nationalism focused on the ideology of *tennōsei* 天皇制, the cult of the emperor. The pre-war emperor worship policy complicated archaeological interpretation in terms of peoples, especially the ancestral Japanese people, as archaeologists had to avoid interpretations that questioned the divine origins of the imperial line based on ancient texts like the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Records of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (The Chronicles of Japan) (Edwards 1991, 13; Habu, Fawcett 1999, 189).<sup>23</sup> To avoid ideological problems, archaeologists focused on detailed and apolitical typological studies of artefacts (cf. Bleed 1976; Fawcett 1996). The academic study of the state formation during the Kofun period was likely to face suppression, leading to a stagnation in research (Nakakubo 2018, 35). With Japan's defeat and the loss of the divine status of the emperor, Japanese archaeology began to focus on a narrative created and directed at ordinary Japanese people (Habu, Fawcett 1999, 189). This narrative highlighted the continuity that the Japanese people had with their ancestors, even from the Jōmon period (Hudson 1997, 86). It was emphasised how the prehistoric

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**23** Failla asserts that already during the Edo period, ancient objects were regarded from a mythological perspective aimed at associating them (and Japanese history) with mythological texts. Indeed, during the Edo period, scholars in Japan developed ideas and theories concerning the antiquity and ancient cultural and religious identity of the nation. Neo-Confucian scholars employed by various fiefdom administrations chronicled fortuitous discoveries from chance excavations in local chronicles. Their goal was to categorise the growing collections of ancient stone artefacts, resulting in detailed lists and descriptive records. Interpretations of historical contexts and finds varied between rationalist perspectives favoured by neo-Confucians and traditional, semi-mythological views, influenced by ancient Japanese chronicles like the *Nihon Shoki*. These scholarly endeavours elevated significant works to the status of 'treasures' (*hōmotsu* 宝物), becoming emblematic cultural symbols associated with territory, land, and the histories of fiefdoms. Mythological narratives of the past intertwined with elements of ethnic identity, alongside political and ideological aspirations, shaping the conceptualisation of Japan's 'national treasure' (*kokuhō* 国宝) (Failla 2004, 75).

cultures of the archipelago were more similar than different but at the same time substantially different from the rest of the world, thus contributing to a more pronounced sense of ‘unique culture’ and homogeneity in the context of Japanese historical-cultural development (Fawcett 1996, 76). According to *Nihonjinron* 日本人論 theories,<sup>24</sup> the Japanese are considered a ‘racially’ homogeneous entity both culturally and socially since prehistoric times, and they are believed to be different from any other population (cf. Dale 1986). Thus, archaeology has become a key element in understanding one’s past (Pearson 1992, 122) and rediscovering a national identity materialised in archaeological artefacts. Since the post-war period, archaeology has initiated programs to involve the local and national populations in rediscovering their identity through an understanding of the past (cf. Fawcett 1996). In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a genuine boom of interest in Japanese archaeology, as evidenced by front-page headlines about discoveries, the considerable number of books and volumes dedicated to the subject in the 1990s, and television programs broadcast on national networks.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, archaeology and identity in Japan are closely connected: the past consolidates the historical and cultural roots of the population.

#### 4.1 Tracing Identity Through Archaeological Exhibits: Narratives Embedded in Object Selections

The concept of identity in archaeology, as articulated in the introduction, is closely tied to the material choices made by the group. Through these choices, individuals identify themselves as affiliated with a specific identity. Therefore, the decision to exhibit particular objects while excluding others is integral to the identification process with the characteristics of a particular identity group. For instance, in both exhibitions, Jōmon and Kofun periods’ specific objects, *dōgu*

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**24** In the *Nihonjinron* movement, born in the post-war period and still prevalent today, there is a tendency to emphasise the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Japanese culture compared to European and American cultures (cf. Minami 1980; Goodman, Refsing 1992; Sugimoto 1999; Andō 2009).

**25** Pearson 1992, 116; Fawcett 1996, 60-2; Hudson 1997, 81-2; Nakakubo 2018, 39. According to Nakakubo (2018, 39): “In 1976, when data collection began, there were 1,571 cases of development-led rescue excavations and 155 cases of academic excavations. From the 1970s to the 1990s, while the number of academic excavations increased almost twofold, rescue excavations showed an overwhelming increase, with 8,536 cases in 1990. As the majority of the development projects were public works projects, there was no significant downturn following the collapse of the economic bubble, with a peak in 1996 at 11,738 cases. While a sudden decrease can be witnessed after 1996, the number of annual rescue excavations hovers at approximately 8,000 cases. Although not all of these excavations are of mounded tombs, the fact that a great number of excavations are conducted annually within Japan is readily apparent”.

and *haniwa*, were chosen for display. This suggests that, despite the evolving perception of archaeology from the early post-war years to the late nineties, Japanese identity was strongly objectified and self-identified in these two categories of artefacts. With new discoveries, the surge in archaeology's popularity, and the local populace's growing connection to their past, the narrative of Japanese identity has become more intricate, encompassing new objectification. An example is the difference in the narrative of the Yayoi period: with no objects on display in 1958, by 1995, there is a nuanced narrative portraying it as a foundational period for what is considered the essence of Japanese-ness, including elements such as rice cultivation and methodical, organised labour. However, although the characteristic aspect of agriculture is mentioned in the description, there are no exhibited items related to this. The choice was made to exhibit only objects from the ritual sphere.

Yet, it is also evident that there is an intent to showcase a facet of Japan that is markedly distinct from anything resembling European pre-protohistory artefacts and ancient art, creating a narrative of uniqueness and immutability.

Una visione armonica e grandiosa che si perde nella lontananza dei secoli e che giunge fino a varcare le soglie di questa nostra età testimoniando malgrado il mutare dei tempi, degli eventi e degli influssi una costante fedeltà ad alcuni fondamentali atteggiamenti dello spirito nipponico. (Lavagnino 1958, 7)

A harmonious and grandiose vision that is lost in the distance of centuries and reaches as far as the threshold of our age, testifying, despite changing times, events, and influences, a constant loyalty to certain fundamental attitudes of the Japanese spirit.

Lavagnino, moreover, states that the exhibition will be an opportunity to

evaluate the relationships of progression also in comparison to what was happening in the West at the same time, defining, in the similarity of certain solutions, elective affinities that cannot fail to find echoes and consensus in our souls. (7)

Although the sentence was not said with a negative intention, it again recalls that 'we'-'other' relationship in which a comparison of artistic development is sought that inevitably leads to a judgment of comparison with Italy.

On the other hand, a primary point of discussion regarding the 1995 exhibition is the choice to display exclusively the sphere of cult and ritual to the Italian audience. This aligns with the vision

and narrative of the origins of the Japanese people closely linked to the mysterious and mystical sphere of autochthonous cults and the imperial cult narrated in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. A narrative where, through the selection of exhibited objects, a repertoire emerges, evoking ancestral rituals and stylistic characteristics unique to the archipelago. It could be assumed that this choice falls within the concepts of *Nihonjinron* and the self-orientalistic vision (cf. Miyake 2014) that Japan has enacted upon itself.<sup>26</sup> The Italian visitor, observing the exhibition, will notice artefacts that are unique examples of Asian artistic expression, described in the catalogue as such.

#### 4.1.1 Jōmon Period

This period plays a crucial role in Japanese history and contemporary identity, as it is considered one of the critical elements in the uninterrupted chain of Japan's past (Hudson 1997, 81), where the roots of the Japanese people's history and Japaneseness reside (Mizoguchi 2006b, 58). In the broader context of the Jōmon narrative, a significant aspect related to the decision to exhibit *dogū* figurines is the association of Jōmon with the feminine, shamanism, and a nostalgic sentiment that may contain remedies for contemporary challenges (57-64). The *dogū* displayed in the 1995 exhibition fully depicts the feminine figure with breasts and a swollen abdomen. In the same descriptions written by the Japanese, they are referred to as "goddesses of fertility" (*Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente* 1995, 64). From the pottery choices in the 1995 exhibition emerges a uniquely impactful and visually striking art. Rather than showcasing the development of pottery during the period with its various regional differences, the most distinctive examples have been chosen. The catalogue underscores how vessels with 'flame' decorations are the most representative of the period,<sup>27</sup> and entirely absent from the Euro-Asian region (61). The decision to place ancient art in the section "Cult and ritual

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**26** Miyake (2014, 36) states that during the latter half of the nineteenth century, Japan faced an urgent situation posed by the euro-American great powers imposing limited sovereignty on the country through the 'Unequal Treaties', foreseeing its colonisation as already occurring towards its Asian neighbours. The formation of Japan's national identity necessarily contends with Eurocentric occidentalism, now hegemonic worldwide. This national identity is shaped through a process of self-Orientalism, presupposing a much more radical and active operation: the internalisation of Euro-American occidentalism. This involves adopting its essentialising and contrasting grammar, its generative structure of collective identity and alterity, its paradigmatic assumptions: West = modernity = universalism vs East = tradition = particularism.

**27** Despite the choice to exhibit this specific type of vessel, it should be noted that flame-rimmed pots are only distributed in a very restricted area centring on Niigata Prefecture.

in prehistory” inevitably led to the exclusion of everyday life objects. The absence of these items, however, further reinforces the image of the ‘exotic’ often associated with Japan, distancing the visitor from finding common elements with their own past.

#### 4.1.2 Yayoi Period

It is interesting to note that the Yayoi period was practically forgotten in the 1958 exhibition. In both displays, Yayoi is considered the period when metals entered the archipelago, along with influences from China and Korea. Mizoguchi (2006b, 65) believes that 1) the introduction of metals (and thus weapons) and 2) the assimilation of foreign concepts later internalised by the Japanese align with the self-image cultivated by the Japanese from the conclusion of World War II to the economic zenith of the 1980s. In Mizoguchi’s view, if Jōmon embodies the feminine and shamanism, Yayoi symbolises masculine activities (such as bronze and iron weapons, ritual objects shaped like weapons, and agricultural tools), and labour (66).

#### 4.1.3 Kofun Period

The Kofun period, as stated by Mizoguchi (2006a), is the period when the sense of origin and continuity must be perceived through Japanese archaeology (104). Indeed, the Kofun period and the keyhole-shaped tombs typical of the period are considered the beginning of the continuity of the unilinear descent line of both the dominant clan (Yamato clan, from which the imperial line still derives today) and the system of regional leaders (104). Therefore, if they symbolise continuity, their beginning is to be placed before this period (104).

Significant is the description of *haniwa*: in the *Tesori dell’Arte Giapponese* exhibition, its crafting technique was described as “tecnica primitiva”, an adjective avoided by Tamburello (1958, 12). Indeed, words have power within them and, depending on how they are used, can alter the description of reality that is presented (Sornni 1989, 95). In this case, ‘primitive’ takes on a not entirely positive meaning as it recalls a technique considered so simple that it is compared to our prehistoric ‘Western’ techniques.<sup>28</sup> A power relationship is therefore

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**28** According to the Italian Enciclopedia Treccani, the word ‘primitive’ also the meaning of: “Il termine, per influsso delle schematizzazioni evoluzionistiche del 19° secolo, viene spesso riferito (con una connotazione più o meno coscientemente limitativa che da un punto di vista etnologico risulta oggi priva di effettivo valore) a manifestazioni, costumi e modi di vita di popoli o gruppi etnici extraeuropei tuttora esistenti che non si sono adeguati alle forme di civiltà e di vita delle nazioni moderne occidentali o

created through language, highlighting issues of power asymmetries, manipulation, exploitation and structural inequalities between ‘our European past’ and ‘their Japanese past’. Ancient Japanese is therefore considered in opposition to ours, where a conflict is created between a more advanced ‘us’ and a more retrograde ‘other’. This is even more important when one considers that it was done to describe one of the most important artistic aspects of the Kofun period, considered the period of the Imperial Tombs and thus indirectly linked to the whole discourse of Japanese identity.

## 4.2 From 1958 to 1995: A Narrative Shift for Archaeology and Art History

Art, which legitimised the over-one-year dislocation of these objects from Japan to Europe, embraced in its subcategory ‘sculpture’ of the 1958 exhibition three *dōgu* from Jōmon and five *haniwa* from Kofun. The exhibition catalogue classified the 143 exhibits into seven categories: Buddhist paintings, *yamato-e* 大和絵, *sumi-e*, portraits, different schools of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, the beginning of the twentieth century, and sculptures. Painting and sculpture excluded here the *ukiyo-e*, while the Nō masks and prehistorical artefacts, perplexingly, entered the section ‘sculptures’. While

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orientali: le tribù p. dell’Oceania; i costumi p. di alcune popolazioni africane. Analoga connotazione ha il termine come sost., soprattutto al plur., primitivi, introdotto in antropologia culturale e in etnologia dagli evoluzionisti del 19° secolo come alternativo di selvaggi, barbari, popoli di natura, per indicare una serie di popoli dalle forme semplici e promiscue di vita, presso le quali ritenevano di avere scoperto la documentazione storica e la sopravvivenza dei ‘primi stadi’ (da cui appunto primitivi) dello sviluppo culturale; tali popoli furono ritenuti privi di religione e incapaci di conoscenza razionale (dove le varie teorie sulla cultura dei p., dall’ateismo p. alle teorie della promiscuità sessuale, del preanimismo, del prelogismo, ecc., rivelatesi poi del tutto inconsistenti con lo studio diretto di tali popolazioni)” (Enciclopedia Treccani, <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/primitivo1/>).

The term, influenced by the evolutionary schematisations of the nineteenth century, is often referred to (with a more or less consciously limiting connotation that ethnologically is now devoid of actual value) to manifestations, customs, and ways of life of still-existing non-European ethnic groups or peoples who have not conformed to the forms of civilisation and life of modern Western or Eastern nations: the primitive tribes of Oceania; the primitive customs of some African populations. A similar connotation is associated with the term as a noun, especially in the plural, ‘primitives’, introduced in cultural anthropology and ethnology by nineteenth-century evolutionists as an alternative to terms like savages, barbarians, people of nature, to indicate a series of peoples with simple and promiscuous forms of life, where they believed to have discovered historical documentation and the survival of the ‘first stages’ (hence, primitives) of cultural development; such peoples were considered devoid of religion and incapable of rational knowledge (hence the various theories about primitive culture, from primitive atheism to theories of sexual promiscuity, preanimism, pre-logic, etc., later revealed to be entirely inconsistent with direct studies of these populations).



the intentional inclusion of archaeological artefacts into a show of Japanese art blurred the boundaries between artworks and prehistorical artefacts, Jōmon and Kofun were periodised, hence included as part of Japanese history. As for the Yayoi culture that came between Jōmon and Kofun, it was also periodised in the chronology of the catalogue, whereas surprisingly, no artefacts from the Yayoi culture came across the exhibit selection. The total absence of Yayoi was probably caused by the judgment that Yayoi was only a “*cultura di transizione*” (transitional culture), marked by its agricultural development and exchange with the continent (*Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese* 1958, 12).

Moreover, the few exhibits representing the Jōmon and Kofun periods were all bounded to humanoid figurines, which were prioritised in the selection over other representative artefacts such as the cord-pattern ceramics (the exquisite three-dimensional creations that inspired Morse for the designation of Jōmon). The emphasis on the figurative depiction of human(-like) being articulated the declaration of Japanese identity on the one side because these corporal features belong to the simulacra created by the historical population of Japan. Figuration and narration prevailed as two common characteristics across media and genres: Buddhist statuary and paintings, *kakemono*, etc. On the other hand, the exhibited landscape and animal paintings, two less narrative genres, enhanced the figurative image through a euphemistic translation of Japaneseness. Classical *topoi* such as pine trees, peonies, cherry blossoms, and mountains resonate with the vital spirituality expressed by the anthropomorphic figures of *Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga* 鳥獸人物戯画. The unspoken principle of distinguishing characteristic features of Japanese from Chinese and Korean was applied to most of the works selected for the 1958 exhibition.

Although the 1995 exhibition inherited mainly the genealogical concept of Japanese art established in the 1958 show, the imagery of Japan was reshaped through a different selection of objects. A closer observation of the exhibits' selection reveals that the archaeology of Japan has been given more quantitative and qualitative attention than in the 1958 exhibition. The progressive attitude can be attested from two perspectives. On the one side, the archaeological section embraced objects of various natures. Rather than focusing on the sculptures depicting human-like figures, the 1995 exhibition also included Jōmon and Yayoi potteries, *dōtaku*, as well as bronze mirrors and gilded bronze saddles and stirrups from the Kofun period. Beyond the humanoid representation, the *haniwa* section comprised a wild boar and a canoe. Among a total of 21 exhibits from Jōmon to Kofun, only one featured in both 1958 and 1995 exhibitions: the anthropomorphic figure with a hand on the chest from the site Kamikurokoma dated Middle Jōmon period, endowed with the original physical appearance of “*una specie di Venere di Milo di epoca Jōmon*” (a kind

of Venus de Milo from the Jōmon era) (*Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente* 1995, 65). On the other hand, the 1995 exhibition abandoned the categorisation method of fine arts adopted in 1958, which prioritised paintings and created a mishmash of non-painting objects in the 'sculpture' section. As concretised in the exhibition catalogue, the narrative of Japanese art history began with the flame-shaped pot of the Middle Jōmon period – the archetype of potteries with cord patterns – claiming for the chronology of Japanese art history that could be traced back to Jōmon.

Some crucial factors underlay the prioritisation of chronology over fine-arts-based classification in the time frame. As a resistance to globalisation since the 1980s, the nation-state of Japan requires a historical narrative with characteristic features distinguishing it from its neighbours. Consequently, the prehistory was appealed to enhance the homogeneous narrative. The pursuit for the latter coincided with the ground-breaking discovery of the Sannai-Maruyama Site in 1992, the catalyst challenging the outdated understanding that Jōmon people were only primitive hunter-gatherers. Therefore, the 1995 exhibition even provided Japan with an empirical ground to showcase pre-historical artefacts abroad before the exhibition *Jōmon, l'art du Japon des origines* (1998, Paris) opened the new era which Kobayashi Tatsuo described as "Jōmon diplomacy" (Nakamura 2002, 22-4).

The fact that the 1958 and 1995 exhibitions both presented archaeology as part of Japanese art in Italy raised the question of 'amalgamation' between art and archaeology in Japan's overseas exhibitions. This question can be answered from an institutional perspective. Although the 'Western' notion of 'art' has long been assimilated into Japan, the 'National Treasure' system (*kokuhō*) and the 'Important Cultural Properties' system (*jūyō bunkazai* 重要文化財) act as legal means to classify cultural artefacts as materially superior or inferior.<sup>29</sup> The 'Important Cultural Properties' system, for example, uses a designation system and a registration system to provide legal protection and restrictions on the alteration, repair, and export of selected cultural properties (Outline of the National Institute for Cultural Heritage 2007). On the other hand, National Treasures are divided into two categories, namely buildings and structures and fine arts

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<sup>29</sup> 'National Treasure' is a designation that has been employed by the Meiji government in the Ancient Shrines and Temples Preservation Law of 1897, later replaced by the National Treasures Preservation Law of 1929. The year of 1949 witnessed a big fire at the Buddhist temple Hōryū-ji. Consequently, one year later, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties emerged and revamped the landscape of cultural heritage protection in the postwar Japan. Under this law of 1950, the national government designates the 'Important Cultural Properties' and the 'National Treasures' (Kakiuchi 2017, 9-13).

and crafts.<sup>30</sup> Prehistoric artefacts such as Jōmon pottery are naturally classified as archaeological materials under the category of fine arts and crafts. Regarding cultural dissemination to the outside world, cultural properties under the National Treasure system are undoubtedly the preferred option. Therefore, from Japan's point of view, the presence of archaeological artefacts in Japanese art exhibitions is not surprising.

## 5 Conclusions

It is nearly three decades since the *Giappone prima dell'Occidente* exhibition came to an end, yet this does not mean that Japan no longer presents archaeological objects and ancient art in Italy. In fact, rather than ambitiously featuring Japanese art in its entirety, the latest exhibitions with the support of the Japan Foundation had more specific subjects, either showing only one archaeological aspect like *Haniwa - Guardians of Eternity from the Fifth to Sixth Centuries* (2002, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome) or dedicated to the arts of a defined period like *Arts in Japan 1868-1945* (2013, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome). This tendency reveals their strategy of showing Japanese art in a horizontal rather than vertical sense, in other words, with a shorter time frame yet unfolding the richness of various subjects.

This paper focused on two major exhibitions of Japanese archaeology and ancient art in Italy back, *Tesori dell'Arte Giapponese* (1958-59) and *Il Giappone prima dell'Occidente* (1995-96). Both exhibitions embodied the audacious attempt of massively translocating ancient objects, coming abroad to illustrate a genealogy of artefacts or/and artworks in a historical continuity of Japan. The first difference between the two is that the content of the 1958 exhibition was completely programmed by the Commission for the Protection of Cultural Property in Japan, whereas for the 1995 exhibition, the Italian agency played a remarkable role in organising and curating the exhibition. Following a historical contextualisation of exhibiting Japanese archaeology and ancient art in Italy, a text- and object-based analysis of the exhibits shed light on the narrative of Japanese identity conveyed to Italian visitors in the given time and space. One initial observation is that there has been a tangible shift in describing the artefacts and their respective periods from the 1958 exhibition to that of 1995. This shift can be attributed, in part, to the lack of fundamental archaeological discoveries that occurred only after 1958.

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<sup>30</sup> Agency for Cultural Affairs. <https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkazai/shokai/shitei.html>.

Additionally, it reflects a different perspective on what archaeology represented in the construction of Japanese identity.

Moreover, a lexical transition manifested in the descriptive framework applied to the displayed objects. In 1958, there was a tendency to use orientalist terminology, still defining ancient art as 'primitive' and categorising objects in macro-categories that might not be easily comprehensible to Italian visitors. In 1995, however, a choice was made to exhibit only the category of artefacts related to 'cult and rituals', seemingly asserting the uniqueness of the ancient Japanese period. Nevertheless, the catalogue provides greater historical contextualisation and a better understanding of pre- and proto-historic periods. The narrative of the emerging Japanese identity is closely aligned with the social context and the archaeological vision within which the exhibitions were curated.

Although all the pieces on display have now been returned to their countries of origin, it does not mean that the legacy of these exhibitions has been lost. The narrative and image of Japanese identity encapsulated in these exhibitions still endure, thanks to the catalogues available for purchase and consultation. While it holds true that Italian museums of Asian art lack a comprehensive selection of Japanese art objects to encompass the entirety of Japanese art history, it prompts thoughtful consideration on how to gracefully align their collections with the nuances of a globalised world where the articulation of identity holds growing importance.

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