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Note: The title of the journal comes from a Hungarian Act CXC of 2011. on National Public Education in which they use the term 'Különleges Bánásmód', and this translates as Special Treatment, but this encompasses the areas of Special Educational Needs, Talented Children and Children with Behaviour and Learning Difficulties. The adoption of Special Treatment is therefore in accordance with Hungarian law, but it is recognised that the translation may not be perfect in expressing the full meaning of what is encapsulated in this term.

TARTALOM/CONTENT

EMPIRIKUS TANULMÁNYOK / EMPIRICAL STUDIES

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGES IN TURKESTAN: INSIGHTS FROM FIELD RESEARCH IN FIVE VILLAGES OF THE TURKESTAN REGION, KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of religion in shaping inter-ethnic marriages in the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan, specifically focusing on five rural villages: Zhana Iqan, Shornak, Turki Poselkasy, Hantagy, and Sayram. With a historically diverse population composed of various ethnic groups—such as Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Tatars—the region presents a unique case for examining how religious practices influence family life, marriage dynamics, and ethnic integration. Based on 45 semi-structured interviews conducted during the first phase and 40 interviews and observations during the second phase of fieldwork, the study reveals that religion is a central component in everyday family interactions, impacting child-rearing, marital relations, sexual education, and broader social integration. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative data from interviews and participant observations with quantitative data from

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structured questionnaires, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of religious practices. The findings highlight that religion not only informs inter-ethnic marital dynamics but also reinforces cultural and familial roles within the broader social fabric. The study contributes to discussions on the intersection of religion, ethnicity, and family life, emphasizing how religious flexibility and adaptation occur in response to practical life challenges. Additionally, the study underscores the role of women within these marriages, particularly in negotiating religious and cultural expectations, thus contributing to the understanding of "lived religion" in diverse social settings.

Keywords: Inter-ethnic marriages, religion, Turkestan, family dynamics, lived religion, cultural integration

Discipline: Cultural Anthropology

Absztrakt

A VALLÁS SZEREPE A NEMZETISÉGEK KÖZÖTTI HÁZASSÁGOKBAN TURKESZ-TÁNBAN: TEREPKUTATÁSI TAPASZTALATOK KAZAHSZTÁN TURKESZTÁN RÉGIÓ-JÁNAK ÖT FALUJÁBÓL

Jelen tanulmány a vallás szerepét vizsgálja a nemzetiségek közötti házasságok alakításában Kazahsztán Turkesztán régiójában, különös tekintettel öt vidéki falura: Zhana Iqan, Shornak, Turki Poselkasy, Hantagy és Sayram. A történelmileg sokszínű népességgel rendelkező régió – ahol kazahok, üzbégek és tatárok egyaránt élnek – egyedi esettanulmányi helyszínt kínál annak megértéséhez, hogy a vallási gyakorlatok miként befolyásolják a családi életet, a házassági dinamikát és az etnikai integrációt. Az első kutatási szakaszban 45 félig strukturált interjú, a második szakaszban további 40 interjú és megfigyelést végeztek. A tanulmány rávilágít arra, hogy a vallás központi szerepet játszik a mindennapi családi interakciókban, hatással van a gyermeknevelésre, a házastársi kapcsolatokra, a szexuális nevelésre és a szélesebb társadalmi integrációra. A kutatás vegyes módszertani megközelítést alkalmazott, amely kvalitatív adatokat (interjúk és résztvevő megfigyelések) és kvantitatív adatokat (strukturált kérdőívek) ötvözött, lehetővé téve a vallási gyakorlatok átfogó elemzését. Az eredmények rámutatnak arra, hogy a vallás nemcsak a nemzetiségek közötti házassági dinamikát alakítja, hanem megerősíti a kulturális és családi szerepeket is a tágabb társadalmi struktúrán belül. A tanulmány hozzájárul a vallás, az etnicitás és a családi élet metszéspontjának megértéséhez, kiemelve a vallási rugalmasságot és alkalmazkodást a mindennapi élet kihívásaihoz. Emellett hangsúlyozza a nők szerepét ezekben a házasságokban, különösen a vallási és kulturális elvárások közötti közvetítésben, ezáltal hozzájárulva a „megélt vallás" (lived religion) sokszínű társadalmi kontextusokban való elemzéséhez.

Kulcsszavak: nemzetiségek közötti házasságok, vallás, Turkesztán, családi dinamika, megélt vallás, kulturális integráció

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

Preface

Inter-ethnic marriages have long been a feature of the social landscape in Turkestan, a historically diverse region where various ethnic and religious groups coexist. In Kazakhstan, especially in rural areas, the intersection of ethnicity and religion is a significant factor in shaping familial and social relationships. The Turkestan region, with its

dominant Muslim population and various Turkic-speaking ethnic groups such as Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Tatars, presents a unique case for exploring how religion influences inter-ethnic marriages. Information on religious features and the role of religion in society were gathered from 85 semi-structured interviews conducted in the Turkestan villages of Zhana Iqan, Shornak, Turki Poselkasy, Hantagy, Sayram, serving as the foundation for a more in-depth investigation of this topic.

According to the data gathered in these villages, religion plays an important role in each family studied. This extends to various aspects of every-day life, such as raising children, intergenerational communication, the process of marriage, family planning, and the integration of a new daughter-in-law into the family. Religion was also shown to affect social interaction, hosting guests, organizing festivities, and celebrating religious holidays. Furthermore, the data illustrates the integration of religious and ethnic values, as well as insight into how religion influences sexual education within inter-ethnic marriages.

In examining the role of religion in shaping inter-ethnic marriages, this study draws upon several key anthropological and sociological theories. Barth's Theory of Ethnic Boundaries (1969) posits that ethnic groups maintain boundaries not solely through shared cultural content but through practices and interactions that emphasize difference and the maintenance of group identity. Within the context of inter-ethnic marriages in Turkestan, religious practices emerge as critical in both maintaining and redefining these boundaries, particularly in how they navigate ethnic and religious identities. Complementing this is Redfield's theory of acculturation (Redfield et al., 1936), which underscores how prolonged cultural contact leads to the exchange of traits and the creation of hybrid practices. This is reflected in the present study's findings, where inter-ethnic couples adapt their religious practices, impacting marital

dynamics, child-rearing, and gender roles. Furthermore, Nancy Ammerman's concept of lived religion (2007) is crucial in understanding how religion operates in daily life, beyond institutional doctrines. Ammerman emphasizes how individuals engage with religious practices as dynamic, embodied experiences, rather than merely adhering to doctrinal mandates. The current study highlights how women in inter-ethnic marriages actively negotiate religious and cultural expectations within the domestic sphere, particularly regarding child-rearing and sexual education.

Paul Vermeer's research on parent-child pairs (2014) further contributes to understanding how religious values are transmitted and negotiated within families. He argues that parent-child pairs function as dynamic units, reflecting shared beliefs and practices while being shaped by cultural context and individual differences. This perspective is highly relevant to inter-ethnic marriages, where religious socialization across generations becomes a complex negotiation of both cultural and religious identities. Vermeer's insights help contextualize how inter-ethnic families pass down religious values, particularly in mixed marriages, where children often navigate questions of religious identity, adopting either a singular religious affiliation or a more fluid, bi-ethnic identity. His work on methodological diversity in studying religious socialization also enriches the present study's approach to analyzing inter-ethnic families.

These theoretical frameworks collectively illuminate how religion both preserves and transforms cultural and ethnic identities within the context of inter-ethnic marriages. In this study, the dynamics of Kazakh-Uzbek and Russian-Tatar mixed marriages exemplify how Barth's theory of ethnic boundaries and Redfield's theory of acculturation (Redfield et al., 1936) are negotiated in these unions. While Kazakhs and Uzbeks have historically coexisted in the same region, they maintain distinct cultural and religious identities,

reaffirming Barth's idea that ethnic boundaries are sustained through everyday practices. Yet, as Redfield highlights, prolonged interaction fosters the development of hybrid cultural and religious practices, demonstrating acculturation in action. Vermeer's concept of parent-child pairs offers a deeper layer of understanding, particularly in the intergenerational transmission of religious and cultural identities. This interplay of maintaining ethnic boundaries while exchanging cultural traits is evident in the everyday practices that shape family life and religious observances, serving as markers of ethnic identity in both homogeneous and inter-ethnic families.

Methodology

This study investigates the role of religion in inter-ethnic marriages in the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan, with a focus on five villages: Zhana Iqan, Shornak, Turki Poselkasy, Hantagy, and Sayram.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques to explore religious practices, the integration of religious and ethnic values, and their influence on various aspects of inter-ethnic marriages, including everyday life, family dynamics, and sexual education. Qualitative research served as the primary method for the study, facilitating an in-depth exploration of how religion and ethnic identity interact within inter-ethnic marriages. Specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect detailed narratives from participants about their lived experiences, religious practices, and family life. Participant observation was also employed to observe daily routines and religious observances in the community, particularly during events such as marriages, family gatherings, and religious celebrations (Kvale, 1996). Additionally, quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture demographic information and general patterns in religious observances and family life among the participants. The instrument also included Likert-scale questions to measure the degree of religious adherence, perceived integration of religious and ethnic values, and the level of tensions in interfaith or inter-ethnic marriages. This provided complementary data to the qualitative interviews, enabling the identification of broader patterns in religious behavior across different households.

The methodology of this study followed a carefully structured research plan, designed to systematically investigate interethnic marriages within the target area, with a particular focus on the role of national values in shaping these unions. As part of a larger ongoing research project on interethnic relations, this phase concentrated specifically on how shared or conflicting national values influence family dynamics, marital roles, and intergenerational transmission of identity and traditions within these marriages.

Two extensive research trips were conducted to collect qualitative data. During the initial visit, critical groundwork was laid by establishing strong relationships with the village administration, ensuring the necessary permissions to conduct interviews were obtained. This foundational stage was essential in facilitating the research process and gaining the trust of the local communities.

During the first phase of fieldwork, 23 families participated, providing 45 semi-structured interviews that revealed rich qualitative data about the religious and cultural dynamics within interethnic marriages, especially among Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tatars, and Russians. The second research trip built on these findings, with the researcher contacting 20 additional families and conducting 40 more interviews. In total, 85 semi-structured interviews were collected, offering a comprehensive dataset for analyzing the intersection of religious practices with ethnic identity and family life.

This phase of the study exclusively focused on Kazakh, Uzbek, Tatar, and Russian communities, concentrating on the most prominent ethnicities in the region. The collected data played a central role in addressing the study's objectives, particularly in exploring how national values shape family structures, influence gender roles, and impact the negotiation of ethnic identities within interethnic marriages. Approximately 70% of the interviews from the broader research were utilized in this study, providing a focused examination of the influence of national values on interethnic family life in the region.

Particularly, these interviews explored several key topics, including (1) Daily integration of national values, how couples incorporate traditional customs, festivals, and moral principles into their everyday routines. (2) Family and marriage dynamics, the role of national values in marriage negotiations, raising children, and managing inter-family relationships, particularly in cases where ethnic differences exist; (3) Negotiation of ethnic and cultural values, how national values are reconciled with ethnic customs and traditions in mixed-ethnicity marriages; (4) Gender roles and intergenerational transmission, how national values shape attitudes toward gender expectations, child-rearing practices, and the transmission of cultural heritage.

The semi-structured format allowed participants to elaborate on their personal experiences while ensuring consistency across interviews, enabling comparison between the responses. Each interview was recorded (with the participant's consent), transcribed, and later analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The theoretical framework for this study draws on acculturation theory (Berry, 1997), which examines how individuals and groups adapt to and negotiate between differing cultural values in a multicultural setting. The study also employs social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), focusing on how national identity is constructed and maintained in inter-ethnic marriages, and the assimilation model (Park & Burgess, 1921), to understand the integration of diverse ethnic groups within shared cultural frameworks.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the local administration's ethics committee. All participants were informed of the study's aims and were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to conducting interviews or administering questionnaires. To ensure confidentiality, all identifying information was anonymized in the study results.

Description of the research locations

The territory of the Turkestan region spans an area of 117.3 thousand km², with the city of Turkestan serving as its administrative center. It is bordered by the *Ulytau* region to the north, the *Zhambyl* region to the east, *Kyzylorda* to the west, and the Republic of Uzbekistan to the south. The region includes 11 administrative districts, 4 city *akimats*, 7 cities (excluding *Shymkent*), 13 settlements, 171 rural districts, and 932 villages. Over the past two years, the state has focused significant attention to the city of Turkestan, constructing numerous new ultra-modern buildings and crowning it as the cultural and spiritual capital of Kazakhstan.

The region was originally established as South Kazakhstan Oblast in the Kazakh SSR of the Soviet Union and was referred to as *Chimkent Oblast* between 1962 and 1992. *Shymkent* served as the administrative center until 19 June 2018, when it was excluded from the region to be administered directly under the government of Kazakhstan. Consequently, the administrative center was moved

to Turkestan, and the region was renamed as the Turkestan Region.

Zhana Iqan rural district is an administrative unit of the Sauran district of the Turkestan region. It includes the villages of Ibaata and Oyik, with Ibaata serving as the center. According to the 2009 census, the population of the district was 6,253. It is characterized by its significant Uzbek population, which lives in close contact with the local Kazakhs. This has earned it the colloquial nickname of "Uzbek village" among residents.

Shornak rural district is an administrative unit of the Sauran district in the Turkestan region. It includes the villages of Shornak, Kosmezgil, Asha, and railway junction No. 32, with Shornak serving as the district center. According to the 2009 census, the population of the district was 11,102. Locally it is known as the "Kazakh-Uzbek village". Historically the district played a role as an area for cotton picking, a preparation point for the Turkestan ginning plant, and a grain receiving point. Farms were organized on this basis. In the 18th century, the ancient city of Shornak was located here. It includes the villages of Zhuynek, Shekerbulak, and Shypan, with the district centered around the village of Zhuinek. According to the 2009 census, the population of the district was 8,646.

Turki Poselkasy, officially known as the Bekzat region, is a rural district in Turkestan. Locally referred to as *Түркі поселкасы* [Turkish settlement], it is primarily inhabited by Meskhetian Turks, from which its name is derived. Information about the rural district is scarce both online and in territorial databases. Nevertheless, fieldwork research has yielded some basic information about the location from the village's administrative sources. (АКОРДА 2018: Публичное подписание Указа «О некоторых вопросах административно-территориального устройства Республики Казахстан». https://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/akorda_news/akorda_other_events/publichnoe-podpisanie-ukaza-o-nekotoryh-

voprosah-administrativno-territorialnogo-ustroistva-respubliki-kazahstan – 01.04.2024.)

Kentau, known in Kazakh as *ken tau* [Ore Mountain], is a city under the regional jurisdiction of the Turkestan region. It is situated at the southern foot of the *Karatau* ridge, 24 km northeast of the city of Turkestan and 190 km from *Shymkent*. *Kentau* itself covers an area of 7104 hectares and has a population of 67,713. The administrative jurisdiction of the city includes several villages: *Achisay* (8402 hectares, 2176 residents); *Bayaldyr* (1562 hectares, 1528 residents); *Hantagy* (1610 hectares, 6364 residents); *Karnak* (includes the central village of *Karnak* and the village of *Kushata*, 42,571 hectares, 11,703 residents). (АЯГАН, Б. (2005 *«Казахстан» Национальная энциклопедия.* Алматы: Қазақ энциклопедиясы, https://rusneb.ru/catalog/000200_000018_RU_NLR_bibl_1706457/ - 04.04.2024.)

Figure 1. Kazakhstan and the Turkestan Region. Source: https://rus.azattyq.org/a/30611190.html

Figure 2. Map of Kazakhstan by the Distribution of Ethnic Groups.
Source: https://ontheworldmap.com/kazakhstan/map-of-ethnic-groups-in-kazakhstan.html
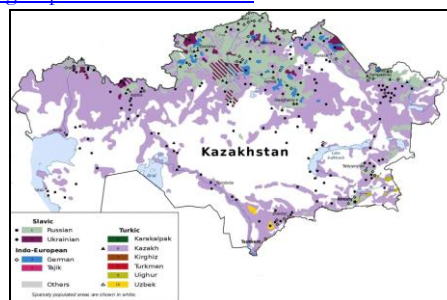
Figure 3. Map of the Turkestan Region.
Source: https://ru.sputnik.kz/20180621/karta-kazakhstan-izmenneniya-6112704.html

The framework of the study

The value and effectiveness of each of the selected factors were illustrated through the selection of both mixed marriages and homogeneous marriages. Given the impracticality of presenting all of the collected material in depth, homogeneous marriages were specifically selected in order to facilitate a more accurate comparison and better understanding of interethnic marriages. Based on the analyzed data and the established database, the respondents were categorized into the following groups, encompassing all marriage units:

Muslim households: Kazak-Uzbek, homogeneous Uzbek marriages under study;

Christian households: Russian-Tatar, homogeneous Russian marriages under study;

Mixed-religious households: Uzbek-Russian, Kazakh-Russian inter-ethnic marriages;

Table 1. Number of interviews by marriage type and household classification. Source: Author

Type of Marriage	Household Classification	Number of Married Couples Interviewed	Total Number of interviewees
Kazakh-Uzbek mixed marriages	Muslim households	7	14
Homogeneous Uzbek		7	14
Tatar-Russian mixed marriages	Christian households	5	10
Homogeneous Russian marriages		3	6
Uzbek-Russian mixed marriages	Mixed-religion households	4	8
Kazakh-Russian mixed marriages		4	8

Results

Religious practices and adhering to religious rules in inter-ethnic marriages in everyday life

This part of the paper examines how couples in mixed Russian-Uzbek and Kazakh-Uzbek marriages integrate religious rituals such as prayer, fasting, and the celebration of religious holidays into their everyday routines.

Nancy Ammerman (2007) emphasizes, the central focus is on how individuals engage with religious practices as lived, embodied experiences rather than purely doctrinal or institutional observances. It explores how religious rituals and behaviors are not passively followed but actively negotiated and sometimes resisted, depending on the social context.

Ammerman highlights that individuals often adapt religious rituals, such as prayer or fasting, to fit their everyday realities, engaging in subtle negotiations to align these practices with their personal and cultural identities. This is particularly evident in diverse social settings where religious norms may conflict with secular expectations or other cultural values. The chapter emphasizes the dynamic nature of religious practice, showing how adherents can both embrace and resist religious norms, crafting a lived spirituality that reflects their everyday lives. This work contributes to the understanding of "lived religion," focusing on the real-life challenges and adaptations people make while practicing faith within complex social environments (Ammerman, 2007).

As an example, consider families representing two types of mixed marriages under the category as Muslim households and Muslim-Christian households: Kazakh-Uzbek and Russian-Uzbek inter-ethnic marriages. These cases were chosen considering the fact that the majority of the people in the region under investigation are Muslims, including Uzbeks and Kazakhs, who were initially chosen. Representatives of the Russian ethnic minority are scarce, and their national ideals and religious heritage differ significantly from Muslims in the region under study.

Kazakh-Uzbek inter-ethnic marriages

The marriages examined in this paragraph are categorized as Muslim households, specifically Kazakh-Uzbek mixed marriages, based on the collected data. Among Uzbeks, specific rituals such as bride acceptance, birth ceremonies, and the circumcision ritual—integrated with Islamic obligations—are important in reinforcing both ethnic and religious boundaries. Religious holidays, especially Eid al-Adha, hold significant importance in shaping family dynamics; Uzbeks customarily gather at night to recite prayers, exchange religious insights, and engage in communal discourse—practices notably less prevalent among local Kazakhs. Furthermore, religiously grounded rituals like sacrifices during key holidays, the preparation of traditional dishes tied to these customs, and the adherence to national attire during funerals and other major life events highlight how both homogeneous and mixed families express their cultural and religious identities. These practices reflect Barth's (1969) theory of ethnic boundaries, which posits that ethnic groups maintain their distinct identities not merely through shared cultural content but through everyday interactions and ritualized activities that differentiate one group from another, even within a shared religious framework. Religion thus plays a profound role in shaping family and marriage dynamics, particularly in interethnic or interfaith contexts, where it governs key rites such as marriage customs, bride acceptance, child-rearing rituals (including circumcision), and the overall management of family relationships under Islamic tenets.

In the case of Uzbeks, these rituals act as crucial mechanisms for reinforcing both ethnic and religious boundaries, illustrating how religion functions as a key factor in shaping ethnic identity through daily practices and communal interactions.

This process of boundary maintenance through religious and cultural rituals also resonates with Redfield's theory of acculturation (Redfield et al., 1936), which explores how cultural exchange and adaptation emerge through prolonged contact between distinct groups. Despite the shared geographical and historical context of Kazakhs and Uzbeks, their unique religious practices—such as bride acceptance and sacrificial ceremonies— underscore how acculturation occurs selectively. While certain cultural traits may blend over time, these rituals demonstrate how clear ethnic and religious boundaries are preserved, even in environments of ongoing cultural interaction.

Additionally, in the mixed Kazakh-Uzbek inter-ethnic marriages examined, every aspect of daily life demonstrates the essential role of Islam. This includes the preparation of meals, hosting visitors, showing respect for the elderly, parenting, and family holiday celebrations. Male dominance is also frequently evident in the religious beliefs of these families. Depending on their specific daily habits, the five primary Islamic duties are adapted to the everyday practices of Kazakh households (Note: The five pillars of Islam are essential acts of worship that form the foundation of Muslim faith and practice. These include: (1) Shahada – the declaration of faith in Allah and Muhammad as His Prophet, central to Islamic belief; (2) Salat – five daily prayers facing Mecca, fostering discipline and submission to Allah; (3) Zakat – obligatory charity (2.5% of wealth) to support social equality; (4) Sawm – fasting during Ramadan for self-discipline and spiritual growth; and (5) Hajj – the once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca, symbolizing unity and submission to Allah. These pillars integrate personal faith with social, economic, and spiritual life (Denny, 2016; Esposito, 2005)). The requirement to pray five times a day (known as Salat) at specific times is emphasized. However, practical circumstances, such as the arrival of a guest or illness, can interfere with this obligation.

Despite this, Islamic teachings allow for some flexibility; for instance, if one cannot pray at the prescribed time due to a valid reason, Islam provides guidelines for making up for missed prayers later, though intentionally skipping Salat without a valid excuse is discouraged. The situation described in this family highlights practical challenges, but it should be noted that Islam both encourages prayer and accommodates for situations in which prayers might be delayed.

Additionally, while every Muslim who is physically and financially able must perform the Hajj pilgrimages to Mecca, financial constraints are a valid reason for postponing this obligation. As in the case described, if the family is experiencing financial hardship, the obligation to perform Hajj can be deferred until they are able to afford it, as Islamic law prioritizes the well-being of the family.

Zakat (i.e., almsgiving, the obligation to give a portion of one's wealth to the less fortunate) is a key component of Islamic social justice. However, this obligation is also contingent on one's financial capacity. If a family does not have the necessary wealth, they are not required to give Zakat until they reach a threshold of savings, known as Nisab. Thus, scenarios in which a family cannot fulfill this duty due to financial hardship are addressed within Islamic teachings. In the Kazakh-Uzbek families studied, the observance of Sawm, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, is primarily fulfilled annually by the men, although women also participate in most cases. However, Islamic law provides specific exemptions for women who are pregnant, menstruating, or experiencing health-related conditions, allowing them to delay fasting until they are able to complete it later without compromising their well-being. This flexibility aligns with the broader principles of Islamic jurisprudence that prioritize health and welfare when fulfilling religious obligations. Islamic law offers practical flexibility in religious obligations when genuine constraints arise, ensuring that

worship remains accessible while also accounting for life's challenges.

Uzbek-Russian mixed marriages

Among the married couples interviewed, a notable segment consisted of mixed-religious households, specifically Uzbek-Russian mixed marriages, for whom Islam plays a significant role in their daily lives. In one case a Russian wife, originally a Christian, converted to Islam after years as the daughter-in-law in an Uzbek family characterized by male dominance. In her interview, she expressed a deep commitment to the teachings of her new community and the standards of the Islamic faith. She highlighted the importance of religious practices, such as the five daily prayers, in fostering self-discipline and cultivating positive thoughts. Furthermore, she articulated her belief that prayer uplifts communal spirits, encouraging individuals to support one another and nurture positive relationships with their neighbors. She highlighted her determination to raise her children in accordance with these values, emphasizing the importance of instilling a sense of community and responsibility.

This transformation in her identity illustrates Ammerman's (2007) concept of lived religion, where religious practices are experienced as integral to daily life rather than mere adherence to doctrine. Additionally, her acknowledgment of women's specific roles in Islam reflects a broader understanding of gender dynamics within religious frameworks. The multifaceted role of women in Islam, as informed by religious texts and interpreted through various cultural lenses, grants women distinct rights and responsibilities, including spiritual equality with men, access to education, and participation in economic activities. Simultaneously, their familial duties encompass child-rearing and maintaining household harmony. Islamic law also emphasizes women's autonomy, protecting their rights to consent in marriage and

to seek divorce under certain conditions (Jawad, 1998). This interplay of religious and cultural identities, along with the negotiation of personal beliefs and communal practices, highlights the complexities of inter-ethnic marriages and the transformative power of faith within family dynamics.

Moreover, this transformation aligns with Redfield's theory of acculturation (Redfield et al., 1936), which highlights how prolonged exposure to a different cultural and religious environment can lead to the adaptation and blending of practices. The Russian woman's adoption of Islamic values and her acknowledgment of women's distinct roles within Islam underscore the multifaceted nature of her experience. Islamic teachings grant women various rights and responsibilities, including spiritual equality, education, and participation in economic activities, while also emphasizing familial duties such as child-rearing. This negotiation of identity and practice exemplifies how religious and cultural values evolve within inter-ethnic marriages, illustrating a blend of traditions and the complexities of maintaining both personal and communal identities.

Family and marriage dynamics

This section explores the role of religion in the marriage process, child-rearing, and managing family relationships, with a particular emphasis on families in which ethnic or religious differences exist. Utilizing the data from a homogeneous Islamic Uzbek family and mixed Christian Tatar-Russian families, the following subsections explore the coexistence of Islamic and Christian households within a shared geographic region. The research focuses on key aspects of family life, including the marriage process, child-rearing practices, and the management of familial relationships in order to assess how these elements are operationalized in the respective families.

Homogeneous Uzbek marriages

The following marriages examined represent Muslim households where religion profoundly shapes family and marriage dynamics, particularly in multicultural or interfaith contexts, where it often dictates the rites and customs associated with marriage, child-rearing, and managing relationships. For instance, in Islamic marriages, both parties must consent to the union, and a husband must provide a 'bride price', or 'Mahr', to his wife, an obligation rooted in Islamic law. This obligation serves not only as a symbolic gesture but also as legal protection for the wife, granting her security in the marriage. Religious norms can also influence the selection of partners and legal conditions, such as divorce terms, which vary across different religious traditions (Esposito, 2005).

In the researched settlements, the 'Bride price' («Қалың мал») system operates somewhat differently, as locals have established their own rules for the marriage system. It is important to note that Bride price is distinct and separate from mahr (Note: In Islamic law, *mahr* is a mandatory gift or financial obligation given by the groom to the bride as part of the marriage contract (*nikah*). It serves as a form of security and respect for the bride and is her exclusive right. The *mahr* can be a monetary amount, property, or any agreed-upon asset and is typically negotiated before the marriage. Unlike a dowry, Mahr is a legal requirement ensuring the woman's financial rights in the union. The Quran emphasizes the importance of the *mahr*, stating that it should be given willingly and with good intention (Quran 4:4; Ali, 2002))

According to the data collected, the form and amount of «Қалың мал» (bride price) can vary across different villages. The responsibility for providing the «Қалың мал» typically rests with the groom's parents and extended family. The specific amount is generally determined by the elders of both families, including the parents and close relatives of both the bride and groom. The bride price is higher in Kazakh families that Uzbek homogeneous families.

Moreover, locals who participated in the interviews indicated that besides bride price, there is another essential requirement called «Жасау» (dowry). This includes the provision of various household items and furnishings by the bride and her family required for establishing life in a new household. This preparation typically involves acquiring home appliances and new furniture, as well as items such as curtains and tulle. The total cost of these contributions often exceeds that of the mahr. According to the women interviewed, these requirements for the new bride are dictated by the local communities. In the context of other Uzbek homogeneous families, the treatment of the bride by her new family is influenced by the dowry that she brings. The perceived value, quality, and aesthetics of the dowry items play a critical role; when the mother-in-law is satisfied with these attributes, it often leads to a corresponding level of respect and favorable treatment toward the daughter-in-law within the new family structure.

Within the homogenous Uzbek family investigated, religious convictions are crucial to the premarital phase. Before the marriage agreement is formalized, obtaining elder consent is deemed necessary, and the process usually begins with invoking the name of Allah. The mother of the potential groom formally approaches the prospective bride's family to announce her decision to marry her son to their daughter. In Uzbek homogeneous families, in preparation for the wedding, the elders convene to perform rituals associated with obtaining their approval; these include «нан сындыру» breaking bread and «бата беру» giving blessings.

In Islam, the importance of respecting elders and seeking their blessings is deeply rooted in both religious texts and cultural practices. Numerous

hadiths emphasize the value of showing respect to elders, associating it with blessings and success in life. For instance, the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, "He is not one of us who does not show mercy to our young ones and esteem to our elders" (Sunan Abu Dawood, 4943). This principle extends to major life events, including the initiation of new ventures, where the blessings of elders are sought as a sign of respect and to ensure divine favor [13, 14].

On the day of the wedding, before the celebratory festivities begin, the couple participates in a ceremonial marriage at the mosque in accordance with Islamic traditions. This religious ceremony is crucial, as it involves the taking of an oath mandated within Islamic jurisprudence. Only after the formalization of their union through this Muslim marriage can the couple be regarded as faithful to one another both in a physical and spiritual sense, thus permitting further intimacy.

Tatar-Russian mixed marriages

The family analyzed is in this section is categorized as a Christian household. As noted earlier, in the villages examined, the religion of the husband holds particular significance. Despite the wife's efforts to maintain both Muslim and Christian practices, the family is generally regarded as Christian by the local community due to the husband's religious affiliation.

Paul Vermeer's research (2014) highlights the concept of "parent-child pairs" as a crucial framework for understanding the interplay between religion and family life. He argues that these pairs are dynamic units reflecting shared beliefs, practices, and experiences, with their interactions revealing how religious values are transmitted and negotiated across generations. Vermeer also stresses the importance of accounting for factors such as cultural context and individual differences that shape these relationships. By focusing on parent-child pairs, researchers can gain deeper insights into the complexities of religious socialization and the impact of family dynamics on religious beliefs and practices. To capture the multifaceted nature of these relationships, Vermeer advocates for methodological diversity in researching this area.

Moreover, the implications of mixed marriages, particularly in religiously diverse contexts, extend to the next generation, with children often grappling with questions of religious identity. Research shows that children from Christian-Muslim unions frequently engage in a process of identity negotiation, which may result in the adoption of a single religious affiliation or the development of a more secular, bi-ethnic identity. This fluidity in religious identification can promote cultural exchange and understanding but can also carry a risk of identity loss or confusion among children (Cerchiaro, 2020).

In the mixed Tatar-Russian family examined in this study, the husband identifies as Christian and Russian, while the wife identifies as Tatar and practices Islam. Although patriarchal structures are commonly observed in the villages under investigation, this particular family exhibits egalitarian dynamics. Both spouses enjoy equal rights and responsibilities, granting each other autonomy and mutual respect for their distinct religious and cultural identities. They refrain from exerting pressure on one another to convert or adopt different beliefs; instead, their relationship is characterized by respectful communication.

When it comes to child-rearing, both parents in this mixed Russian-Tatar family allow their children the freedom to choose their religious affiliation. For example, one son in the family identifies as Christian, while the daughter follows Islam. According to the mother, both religious traditions are preserved in the household. Islamic customs such as the weekly baking of seven loaves of bread (жеті нан) and reading the Qur'an for deceased ancestors on Fridays are adhered to.

The practice of baking seven loaves of bread, though not universally Islamic, is common in certain regional and cultural expressions of Islam, particularly in Central Asian and Tatar communities. The number seven holds symbolic significance in Islamic tradition, representing completeness or spiritual fulfillment, as reflected in the Qur'an and hadith literature. The act of baking bread is seen as a form of charity (ṣadaqah), as it is distributed among family, friends, or the needy, and serves as a supplication (du'a) for the soul of the deceased. This ritual underscores the communal aspect of remembrance, as family members gather to participate in acts of charity and worship together (Al-Qaradawi, 2013; Schimmel, 1994).

Despite her observance of these Islamic practices, the wife does not strictly adhere to all Islamic obligations, such as praying five times a day, performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, or fasting regularly during Ramadan. Additionally, the family celebrates Christian religious holidays and follows certain Christian traditions. The husband, in contrast, distances himself from Islam and maintains a Christian identity, viewing baptism as central to being Christian. The children, raised with exposure to both religions, are allowed to make independent decisions regarding their religious identity upon reaching adulthood, with the parents refraining from exerting pressure. They support their children's choices, allowing them to form their own beliefs based on their personal experiences, societal influences, and upbringing.

The participant observation method used in this study helped validate and corroborate the data collected during the interview, ensuring its consistency with the observed reality. Immersing in the family environment and engaging directly with the children provided valuable insights into the influence of parents on their children, as demonstrated by the observed interactions and familial dynamics.

Integration of religious and ethnic values

This chapter focuses on how religion interacts with local customs and traditions, particularly in mixed-ethnicity marriages.

The integration of religious and ethnic values in mixed-ethnicity marriages presents a complex interplay of local customs, traditions, and individual beliefs. This interaction is particularly pronounced in contexts where different religious backgrounds converge, influencing family dynamics, cultural preservation, and social acceptance. Intermarriage can challenge traditional ethnic boundaries, as ethnically mixed couples may experience a dilution of distinct cultural practices and religious observances, leading to a transformation in identity for both partners and their offspring (Voas, 2009).

The case of a Kazakh-Russian couple representing a mixed-religion household from the study exemplifies the intersection of two distinct ethnic identities and religious traditions. The wife, despite her Russian ethnicity and Christian upbringing, has lived in the village for over 15 years and has assimilated into the local Kazakh culture, adopting its national values and customs. She has also become proficient in the Kazakh language, using it as her primary means of communication. Despite her integration, she continues to observe the religious duties and rituals of her Christian faith, including important celebrations like Easter (Note: Easter is a central Christian holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, which is believed to have occurred three days after his crucifixion. It is considered the most important event in Christianity, symbolizing hope, renewal, and the victory of life over death. Easter is typically observed with church services, feasts, and various customs like egg decorating, symbolizing new life - Insert Easter Reference). In contrast, the husband has maintained his Islamic faith and has not adopted his wife's religious beliefs. The woman noted that while interacting with her husband's

relatives and neighbors in public and social contexts she also adheres to local Kazakh traditions to ensure social cohesion. For example, during *Eid* al-Fitr, which is celebrated by Muslims worldwide to mark the end of the month-long dawn-to-dusk fasting of Ramadan, the family engages in the customary practices of sacrifice, hosting guests, and reciting the Qur'an, following the religious and social expectations of the village. She emphasized that celebrating Eid with neighbors is an annual tradition that reflects the family's integration into the local community despite their religious differences.

However, in mixed-ethnicity marriages, particularly between Muslim Kazakhs and Russian Orthodox individuals, religious differences can sometimes lead to tensions, especially during key religious observances. For instance, a Kazakh woman married to a Russian man noted that religious holidays often become a source of conflict due to differing traditions and expectations. As she stated, "religion sometimes becomes a source of conflict, especially during holidays. We have different traditions, and it can be hard to balance them." In such marriages, compromises are frequently necessary, with couples either celebrating both sets of religious holidays or adopting a more secular approach to avoid conflict.

Additionally, in rural communities, social and familial pressures can exacerbate these challenges, as adherence to religious customs is often crucial for social acceptance. One interviewee highlighted this dynamic, stating, "In our village, people expect you to follow the religious customs, even if you're from different ethnic groups. It's part of being accepted in the community." This underscores the broader role that community expectations and cultural norms play in shaping religious practices within mixed-ethnicity marriages, further complicating the negotiation of religious identities and observances.

In examining how religion interacts with local customs and traditions in mixed-ethnicity marriages, participant observation revealed significant intersections between religious practices and culturally ingrained beliefs. For instance, in the area researched, members of some communities use the Qur'an for healing purposes, a practice deeply rooted in local traditions yet grounded in Islamic belief. Interviews with these healers suggest that they view their ability to heal as a spiritual obligation, one that if neglected would result in their own illness. This reflects a local understanding of religious texts not only as sources of spiritual guidance but also as conduits for mystical power. Belief in the efficacy of Quranic healing is widespread, with many locals turning to such healers during times of uncertainty or difficulty, seeking purification and relief. This interaction between Islamic practices and indigenous healing traditions highlights how religion can adapt and integrate with pre-existing cultural customs, creating a unique fusion of religious and local practices.

Sexual education and gender roles

This chapter focuses on how religious beliefs shape attitudes toward sexual education, gender roles, and marital relations. The interplay between religious beliefs, sexual education, and gender roles is a significant factor shaping societal attitudes towards marital relations. Religious doctrines often dictate the parameters of acceptable sexual behavior, influencing not only individual choices but also broader community norms regarding sexual education and gender expectations.

Moreover, religious beliefs significantly shape gender roles within marital contexts. In many religious traditions, especially within Islam and Christianity, there is a strong emphasis on sexual abstinence outside of marriage, reinforcing traditional gender roles where men and women are expected to adhere to specific behavioral norms

(Koffi & Kawahara, 2008). For example, in Muslim communities, the concept of virginity is often regarded as a critical aspect of a woman's honor and respectability, which can lead to stigmatization of women who engage in premarital sexual relations (Navarro-Prado et al., 2023). This cultural framework not only affects women's autonomy but also perpetuates gender inequalities, as men may face fewer repercussions for similar behaviors.

According to the data collected, the role of religion in sex education is crucial, particularly in the regions of Turkestan examined in the present study, where traditional norms significantly influence societal attitudes towards gender and sexuality. A comprehensive evaluation of the five villages revealed a distinct disparity in the freedoms afforded to men and women. Men often experience societal leniency, with minimal restrictions on their behavior concerning sexuality, which is deemed acceptable within the local cultural context. In contrast, women face considerable pressure and stringent societal expectations regarding their own sexual conduct.

From a young age, girls in these regions are subject to strict regulations, such as wearing conservative clothing, refraining from public appearances, and avoiding evening gatherings. These restrictions are aimed at preserving the perceived honor of both the individual and her family. A girl who fails to conform to these standards risks drawing shame, and engaging in premarital sexual activity is regarded as a profound disgrace, bringing dishonor not only to herself but also to her entire family. The societal valuation of gender roles is markedly uneven; the birth of a boy is celebrated as he signifies the future head of the household, while the arrival of a girl is often viewed with less enthusiasm, reflecting the belief that she is merely a temporary guest in her family until marriage. Within the family unit, girls are expected to learn domestic responsibilities from their mothers and familiarize themselves with cultural customs and traditions. These are considered essential for successfully entering a new family as a bride. This emphasis on preparation for marriage underscores the pervasive influence of cultural and religious beliefs in shaping the understanding of gender roles and sexuality in inter-ethnic marriages within these communities.

Conclusion

The study of inter-ethnic marriages in the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan reveals the complex interplay between religion and ethnicity in shaping familial dynamics and social relationships. Through a mixed-methods approach encompassing both qualitative and quantitative research, the investigation provides valuable insights into how Islamic beliefs and practices influence everyday life, marriage processes, and family structures among diverse ethnic groups. The findings from 85 semi-structured interviews and participant observations highlight that religion is not merely a set of beliefs but a practical framework that guides various aspects of life, including parenting, social interactions, and cultural celebrations. The integration of religious rituals into daily routines underscores the importance of spirituality in maintaining family cohesion and cultural identity within inter-ethnic marriages. Moreover, the study demonstrates how religious practices adapt to the complexities of mixed marriages; while adherence to Islamic principles remains crucial, families also exhibit flexibility, negotiating religious obligations based on contextual factors such as the presence of a guest or financial constraints. This reflects a dynamic understanding of "lived religion," where personal and cultural identities intersect. Additionally, the analysis of family and marriage dynamics reveals that religious norms significantly impact the selection of partners, the marriage contract, and child-rearing practices. The findings indicate that religious observances, such as the payment of a bride price (mahr) and seeking elders'

blessings, play a pivotal role in the marriage process, particularly within Islamic communities. However, the study also sheds light on the challenges faced in inter-ethnic marriages, including potential tensions arising from differing religious backgrounds. In conclusion, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how religion shapes inter-ethnic marriages in the Turkestan region, emphasizing the need for continued exploration of the complexities surrounding ethnicity and faith in multicultural contexts. The study serves as a foundation for future inquiries into the role of religion in family life, social cohesion, and cultural integration in diverse societies.

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THE POWER OF CULTURE – THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER AND IRRIGATION IN JORDAN

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of organizational culture on ethical leadership and employee performance within the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan. The research uses a qualitative methodology comprising semi-structured interviews and direct observation to examine how core cultural values such as integrity, accountability, and collaboration influence leadership behaviors and operational outcomes. Findings reveal that the Ministry's culture significantly promotes ethical decision-making and fosters employee motivation; yet hierarchical rigidity poses challenges to creativity and inclusivity. The

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study highlights the interplay between cultural values, ethical leadership, and performance, emphasizing the need for structural reforms to align operational practices with cultural ideals.

Keywords: Organizational culture, Ethical leadership, Employee performance, Public sector

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

Absztrakt

A KULTÚRA EREJE – A SZERVEZETI KULTÚRA HATÁSA AZ ETIKUS VEZETÉSRE ÉS A MUNKAVÁLLALÓI TELJESÍTMÉNYRE JORDÁNIA VÍZÜGYI ÉS ÖNTÖZÉSI MINISZTÉRIU-MÁBAN

Ez a tanulmány a szervezeti kultúra hatását vizsgálja az etikus vezetésre és a munkavállalói teljesítményre Jordánia Vízügyi és Öntözési Minisztériumában. A kutatás kvalitatív módszertant alkalmaz, amely félig strukturált interjúkból és közvetlen megfigyelésekből áll, hogy feltárja, hogyan befolyásolják az alapvető kulturális értékek – például az integritás, az elszámoltathatóság és az együttműködés – a vezetői magatartást és a működési eredményeket. Az eredmények azt mutatják, hogy a minisztérium kultúrája jelentősen elősegíti az etikus döntéshozatalt és növeli a munkavállalók motivációját. Ugyanakkor a hierarchikus merevség kihívásokat jelent a kreativitás és az inkluzivitás szempontjából. A tanulmány rávilágít a kulturális értékek, az etikus vezetés és a teljesítmény közötti kölcsönhatásra, hangsúlyozva a strukturális reformok szükségességét annak érdekében, hogy a működési gyakorlatok összhangba kerüljenek a kulturális ideálokkal.

Kulcsszavak: szervezeti kultúra, etikus vezetés, munkavállalói teljesítmény, közszféra

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

Ethical leadership in public sector institutions is critical for fostering a culture of ethics, transparency, and accountability. Leaders in these institutions are entrusted with public resources and services, making their ethical responsibility two-fold: they must manage resources effectively while maintaining the public's trust through fair and transparent actions. Ethical leadership has been shown to shape not only individual employee behavior but also the overall ethical climate of an organization. For example, Brown and Treviño (2006) explain that ethical leaders model integrity and fairness, which helps create a work environment where employees feel empowered to uphold these values, even when facing ethical dilemmas. Such an environment is particularly valuable in public sector settings, where the stakes involve direct impacts on citizens' well-being (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Resick et al., 2006).

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan plays a pivotal role in managing the country's water resources—a critical mission given Jordan's chronic water scarcity. Ranked as one of the world's most water-poor nations, Jordan faces extreme pressures on its water supplies for domestic, agricultural, and industrial needs, which are further compounded by population growth, climate change, and limited natural resources (UNICEF, 2021). The Ministry is tasked with overseeing water conservation efforts, implementing policies for equitable water distribution, and managing resources in a way that balances immediate needs with long-term sustain-

ability. Given the sensitivity of this role and the public reliance on water services, the Ministry must cultivate a culture that promotes ethical leadership at every level, ensuring that employees not only comply with guidelines but are motivated by a genuine sense of responsibility to the public they serve (Jordan Ministry of Water and Irrigation, 2020).

Organizational culture is a powerful driver of ethical leadership, and in turn, ethical leadership significantly impacts employee performance. An effective ethical culture within the Ministry can guide employees in ethical decision-making, enhance their commitment to public service, and boost overall job satisfaction and effectiveness. In contrast, a culture that fails to reinforce ethical standards may lead to lower morale, inconsistencies in service delivery, and diminished public trust. Thus, understanding the Ministry's culture – and its influence on ethical leadership and employee performance – offers valuable insights into how public sector institutions can improve both their internal operations and their public impact (Grojean et al., 2004).

Furthermore, employee performance is closely linked to their perceptions of organizational justice and support. When employees feel that their organization upholds ethical standards, they are more likely to report high levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. For example, research by Schminke et al. (2005) indicates that an organization's commitment to ethical practices can positively impact employee morale, reducing turnover and enhancing the quality of work. In the context of the Ministry, a strong culture that promotes ethical leadership could empower employees to voice concerns, innovate in problem-solving, and remain motivated in their roles, knowing that their efforts contribute to a mission of public significance (Schminke et al., 2005).

With this in mind, the study examines how organizational culture impacts ethical leadership directly and how it impact employee performance in a strategic public service institution, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan. The study aims to go beyond specific organizational contexts to analyze how public sector organizations can use structural constraints and opportunities embedded in organizational culture to effectively serve their goals while building credible and valid public trust concerning the organization's performance.

The relationship between organizational culture and ethical leadership in the light of previous research

The interplay between organizational culture and ethical leadership has garnered significant attention in organizational studies due to its profound impact on employee behavior, organizational performance, and societal perceptions (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Schein, 2010). Ethical leadership, characterized by fairness, integrity, and accountability, plays a pivotal role in shaping and reinforcing the values and norms of an organization's culture (Yukl et al., 2013). Similarly, a strong ethical culture provides a conducive environment for ethical leadership to thrive, fostering trust and shared values among employees (Kaptein, 2011). Previous research highlights the bidirectional relationship between these constructs, where ethical leadership acts as a catalyst for cultivating an ethical organizational culture, while the culture itself serves as a foundation for supporting and sustaining ethical leadership practices (Grojean et al., 2004). Understanding this dynamic is essential for addressing contemporary challenges in organizational ethics and achieving sustainable success. Scholars have identified unique challenges faced by ethical leaders in the public sector, such as navigating bureaucratic constraints, managing competing stakeholder interests, and addressing ethical dilemmas in resource allocation (Lawton & Páez, 2015).

The Impact of Organizational Culture on Ethical Leadership

Organizational culture represents the shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide behavior within an organization (Schein, 2010). A strong ethical culture is characterized by practices and policies that promote integrity, accountability, and ethical decision-making. According to Kaptein (2011), such a culture reduces the likelihood of unethical behavior and fosters a sense of moral responsibility among employees. Research has shown that an ethical culture serves as a framework that supports ethical leadership by embedding ethics into the organization's structural and social systems (Grojean et al., 2004).

In the context of public sector organizations, culture plays a vital role in influencing how leaders and employees respond to ethical dilemmas. Grojean et al. (2004) emphasize that ethical leadership is closely tied to organizational culture, as the latter establishes the norms and expectations for ethical conduct. A culture that prioritizes transparency, accountability, and integrity provides a fertile ground for ethical leadership to flourish.

In hierarchical organizations, like many government ministries, culture often reflects formal structures and processes. While this can ensure consistency and adherence to regulations, it may also create barriers to open communication and innovation (Hood, 2001).

The Importance of Ethical Leadership in Public Sectors

Ethical leaders are defined as individuals who demonstrate normatively appropriate conduct through their actions and promote such conduct among their followers through communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Their role is particularly critical in the public sector, where decisions often have far-reaching implications for societal well-being. Research highlights that ethical leadership fosters trust, reduces workplace misconduct, and promotes fairness, contributing to both individual and organizational success (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). In the public sector, ethical leadership also mitigates corruption risks and reinforces good governance principles (Kolthoff et al., 2010).

In public sector settings, the influence of ethical leadership extends beyond compliance with rules and regulations. Leaders in this domain face unique challenges, such as balancing competing stakeholder needs, managing limited resources, and maintaining public trust. Ethical leadership has been linked to increased employee engagement, reduced unethical behaviors, and enhanced organizational citizenship behaviors (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). By fostering an ethical climate, leaders can ensure that employees uphold the organization's values, leading to better performance and alignment with institutional goals.

The Impact of Ethical Leadership on Employee Performance

The relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance has been widely studied, with evidence showing a positive correlation between the two. Ethical leadership fosters an environment where employees feel valued, motivated, and committed to their work, which in turn enhances their performance. Walumbwa et al. (2011) found that ethical leadership promotes psychological safety and trust, enabling employees to take initiative without fear of negative repercussions. In public sector institutions, this dynamic is particularly important, as employees' actions directly impact the quality and equity of services provided to the public.

Moreover, ethical leadership influences employee attitudes and behaviors through its impact on perceived organizational support and justice. Employees who perceive their leaders as ethical are more likely to report higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and engagement (see: Mayer et al., 2012). These outcomes are critical for

public sector institutions, where high employee performance is necessary to address complex societal challenges effectively.

Challenges to Ethical Leadership
in Public Sector Organizations

Implementing ethical leadership in public sector institutions faces significant challenges despite its benefits. Bureaucratic structures, hierarchical decision-making processes, and resource constraints can hinder leaders' ability to act ethically or promote ethical behavior among employees. Hood (2001) highlights that bureaucratic cultures often prioritize compliance and risk aversion over innovation and ethical considerations, limiting leaders' flexibility in addressing complex ethical dilemmas.

In addition, cultural factors specific to a region or organization can shape the practice of ethical leadership. For instance, in Jordan, societal norms emphasizing respect for authority and seniority may reinforce hierarchical decision-making while discouraging open dialogue and bottom-up communication (Hofstede, 1984). Moreover, limited resources and political pressures can further complicate ethical decision-making, as leaders must balance competing demands while maintaining transparency and fairness (Kolthoff et al., 2010).

Methodological Background
of Organizational Culture
and Ethical Leadership Research

In order to investigate the impact of organizational culture on ethical leadership and, through this, on employee performance, it is appropriate to use qualitative research tools. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), applying qualitative methodologies provides in-depth details on the participants' perspectives of the target topic and permits investigation into the significance of the participants' experience.

The methodology of this study involved interviews with relevant stakeholders including leaders, managers, and employees to gather insights into the ministry's practices and cultural dynamics. The criteria for selecting the research organization included the need to sample an organization where traditional and national values play a significant role in the work, but at the same time, the organizational framework should not be too rigid. This is the reason a Jordanian public organization that is important to the governance system was selected as the data collection organization.

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan plays a vital role in managing the country's water resources, a critical task of Jordan's status as one of the most water-scarce nations globally (Al-Ansari, 2013). The ministry's culture is deeply influenced by the societal values of Jordan, including collectivism, respect for authority, and an ethical emphasis rooted in Islamic principles (see: Alshawabkeh, 2024). These cultural traits shape how leadership is perceived and enacted within the organization, making it a compelling case for examining the interplay between culture, ethical leadership, and employee performance.

The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews, designed to capture participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the Ministry's culture, ethical leadership, and its impact on employee performance. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their flexibility, allowing for in-depth exploration of key themes while providing participants the freedom to elaborate on their responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The study employed a semi-structured interview guide that systematically addressed three core variables: cultural dimensions, ethical leadership, and employee performance. Cultural dimensions were explored through organizational norms, ethical climate, and the influence of collectivism and hierarchical structures (Hofstede, 2001). Ethical leadership was measured by assessing behavioral

integrity, fairness, transparency, and the role-modeling of ethical conduct (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Employee performance was examined through task effectiveness, engagement, motivation, and adaptability.

To ensure scientific rigor and validity, the study employed purposive sampling with clearly defined criteria for participant selection. Interviewees were required to have at least five years of experience at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to ensure familiarity with its culture and operations. Both managers and employees were included to capture diverse perspectives on the relationship between leadership practices and employee performance across organizational levels.

Participants were selected based on their ability to articulate the influence of organizational culture on leadership and performance, and their willingness to engage in semi-structured interviews. The final sample comprised 15 participants, including eight managers and seven employees from various departments such as water policy, operations, resource planning, and project implementation, ensuring a balanced and comprehensive representation of the ministry's organizational dynamics.

The interviews were conducted in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan between September and December 2024 in a private setting to ensure confidentiality and encourage candid responses. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Follow-up questions were asked as needed to probe deeper into participants' responses and clarify key points. Every interview was taped and then transcribed for analysis and the database was stored and processed following the GDPR rules.

The audio recordings of the interviews were translated into English and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then analyzed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher read through the transcripts and observation notes multiple times to gain an overall understanding of the data. Then, The text segments were coded based on recurring themes, ideas, or keywords (e.g., "ethical decision-making," "employee empowerment," "leadership styles"). Finally, Codes were grouped into broader themes aligned with the research objectives, such as "impact of culture on ethical behavior"

Research Results

Organizational Culture Description. The organizationnal culture of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation is integral to its operations, reflecting a dual structure of rigidity and flexibility. The hierarchical framework ensures stability and accountability, essential for managing critical water resources in Jordan's resource-scarce context.

Explicit rules, such as adherence to procedural compliance, and implicit norms, including deference to authority figures reinforce this culture. As one participant noted, *"Our structure ensures that every decision is carefully reviewed and aligns with our mission"* (Interview 1). While this rigidity promotes transparency and trust, it also limits employee creativity and adaptability, as described by another participant: *"While the structure helps us know what's expected, it sometimes feels like there's little room for creativity."* (Interview 5).

Ethical leadership emerges as a key factor in reconciling these tensions. Leaders who model transparency and accountability create an environment where innovation can thrive within a structured framework. For example, during observed meetings, some leaders actively solicited employee input, fostering collaboration while maintaining clear decision-making protocols. This duality aligns with Schein's (2010) assertion that culture can constrain and enable behavior simultaneously. The analysis reveals that ethical leadership not only upholds the integrity of rigid systems but also introduces mechanisms for flexibility, such as

participative decision-making and empowerment. This balance is critical for addressing the Ministry's mission while adapting to dynamic challenges, highlighting the transformative potential of ethical leadership in shaping an effective organizational culture.

Core Values and Behaviors

The interplay between values, organizational culture, ethics, and performance is a complex and dynamic relationship that profoundly influences the functioning of institutions. Values act as the foundational principles guiding individual and collective behavior, organizational culture provides the framework within which these values are expressed, ethics ensures that these values are operationalized in decision-making and actions, and performance reflects the tangible outcomes of this alignment. Analyzing this interrelationship highlights both the synergies and tensions that arise in an organizational context. Questions such as *"What values and behaviors are emphasized most strongly in the Ministry?"* were used to probe participants' views on how core values like transparency, accountability, and fairness are practiced and perceived across the hierarchy.

In the case of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan, core values such as transparency, accountability, and collaboration emerge as essential to ethical leadership. These values are not only explicitly promoted by leadership but also form the basis for fostering trust and integrity within the organization. Transparency, for example, is viewed as a means of building accountability and ensuring public trust, especially in managing Jordan's scarce water resources. One senior manager stated, *"Our culture is built around providing clear and accurate information because the public deserves to know how we're managing this scarce resource"* (Interview No. 7). However, some participants noted inconsistencies in the application of these values, particularly regarding accountability at

senior levels. A mid-level manager remarked, *"We are constantly reminded of the importance of accountability, but sometimes I feel it's more heavily enforced at the lower levels."* (Interview No. 6).

The emphasis on accountability reflects the Ministry's mission to ensure ethical and transparent water management. However, discrepancies in value application suggest a need for stronger alignment between stated values and practice, consistent with findings by Grojean et al. (2004) on organizational climate and leadership.

Impact on Daily Work Practices

The impact of organizational culture on daily work practices is crucial in understanding how employees interact with their environment, make decisions, and achieve performance goals. Daily work practices are the tangible manifestations of the organization's values, norms, and leadership styles, influencing efficiency, innovation, and employee satisfaction.

Questions such as *"How do you think the Ministry's culture impacts daily work practices?"* are critical for examining the interplay between organizational culture, employee behavior, and performance outcomes.

Daily work practices reflect how well employees internalize the organization's mission and values. A culture emphasizing ethical leadership ensures employees prioritize integrity, fairness, and accountability in their daily tasks, an employee stated, *"The focus on transparency helps us to keep each other accountable"* (Interview No. 10). Clear communication of expectations, decisions, and goals fosters trust and ensures that everyone understands their role in achieving organizational objectives. This transparency also creates an environment where employees feel more confident raising concerns or providing constructive feedback, as they know their voices will be heard and valued. This alignment enhances coherence across teams

and strengthens the organization's ability to meet strategic objectives (Schein, 2010).

At the same time, the hierarchical structure of the organization can sometimes create bottlenecks, as decisions require approval from multiple layers of management *"Sometimes, even a small decision requires approval from multiple levels, which slows everything down."* (Interview No.3). However, the shared values of integrity and accountability help mitigate these challenges by ensuring that employees remain committed to high ethical standards in their work.

The culture's influence on daily work practices significantly affects employee empowerment. When employees feel valued and their contributions acknowledged, they are more likely to take ownership of their roles Employees expressed pride in contributing to the Ministry's mission of addressing water scarcity in Jordan *"The sense of public responsibility drives us to work with a purpose"* (Interview No.12) . Conversely, cultures that overly emphasize control and compliance may reduce engagement, decreasing morale and performance (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Empowerment in daily practices encourages proactive problem-solving and continuous improvement.

The Ministry's cultural diversity also plays an essential role in shaping daily practices. With employees from various cultural backgrounds, there are often different approaches to communication, teamwork, and problem-solving *"It's bringing varied perspectives and fostering creativity"* (Interview No. 5). While this diversity can sometimes result in misunderstandings, it also enriches collaboration by bringing in varied perspectives. Leaders who emphasize cultural sensitivity and inclusivity are particularly effective in fostering a supportive and productive environment (Northouse, 2018).

Discussion of the results

The findings of this study highlight how the organizational culture of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation significantly shapes ethical leadership and employee performance. Core values such as integrity, accountability, and collaboration were identified as drivers of ethical decision-making and leadership behaviors. These cultural elements foster trust, transparency, and a sense of shared purpose among employees, reinforcing their commitment to organizational goals. However, inconsistencies in the application of these values across hierarchical levels, particularly in translating senior leaders' ethics into operational practices, were observed. These findings align with Hofstede's (2001) power distance theory, which suggests that rigid hierarchies can inhibit the effective diffusion of cultural values throughout an organization.

Despite these cultural strengths, the Ministry's hierarchical structure poses challenges, particularly in fostering creativity and inclusivity. Bureaucratic rigidity was noted as a barrier to bottom-up innovation and decision-making, limiting opportunities for employees to contribute to problem-solving and strategic initiatives. These observations align with public sector research that critiques hierarchical systems for stifling organizational agility and adaptability (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Denison, 1990). Addressing these challenges requires structural reforms, such as empowering middle managers, encouraging employee feedback, and decentralizing decision-making. By aligning cultural values with operational practices, the Ministry can enhance its capacity to lead ethically, motivate employees, and achieve its mission of sustainable water management in Jordan's resource-constrained context.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the organizational culture of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan plays a pivotal role in shaping ethical leadership and influencing employee performance. By embedding values such as integrity,

accountability, and collaboration into its culture, the Ministry fosters an environment where ethical decision-making and transparent leadership can thrive. These cultural strengths encourage employee motivation, engagement, and alignment with organizational goals. However, structural and procedural challenges, including the rigidity of the hierarchical system, hinder the full realization of these benefits, particularly in promoting creativity and inclusivity.

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HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF SHAHSUN NOMADS OF IRAN

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Abstract

Nomads are a group whose axis of social communication is organized based on relative, causal, real, or ideal kinship. Shahsun lived in parts of northwestern Iran, especially Mughan and Ardabil. Shahsuns are one of the most important and famous nomads of Eastern Azerbaijan province and have a long history. Shahsun nomads have special customs and traditions. Their life is mostly based on the animal husbandry economy, and agricultural activities are at the next stage of importance. They had special local clothes such as Petawa and Charuq, which are indicators of Ilat Shahsun's clothing. Among the special arts of Shahsun, I can mention handicrafts, the most important of which is Varnish weaving, as well as music and the use

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of various instruments such as Reeds, Tutak, Tar, and Garman, which are popular among these nomads. They live in the region of The beauty of Arsbaran is that in their way of accommodation, it is possible to mention the use of pavilions, Kome, and Chatma. Apart from field research and objective observations and experiences, the present article is an analytical study and review of texts and documents related to the history of Shahsuns. This research is based on the opinion of the French anthropologist Marcel Moss, who believes in the in-depth research method, that is deep observation and study about a limited community like nomads. What is followed in this research is to investigate and analyze the culture, beliefs, religious practices, and social behavioral patterns of the Shahsun nomads.

Keywords: Nomads, Shahsun nomads, clothing, Handicrafts, pavilions and Kome, culture and beliefs.

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

Absztrakt

IRÁN SHAHSUN NOMÁDJAINAK TÖRTÉNETI ANTROPOLÓGIÁJA

A nomádok olyan közösséget alkotnak, amelynek társadalmi kommunikációs tengelye rokonsági, oksági, valós vagy eszmei kapcsolatok mentén szerveződik. A Shahsunok Irán északnyugati részein, különösen Mughan és Ardabil térségében éltek. Az iráni Kelet-Azerbajdzsán tartomány egyik legjelentősebb és legismertebb nomád népcsoportja a Shahsunok, akik hosszú múltra tekintenek vissza. A Shahsun nomádok sajátos szokásokkal és hagyományokkal rendelkeznek. Életmódjuk alapvetően az állattartásra épül, míg a mezőgazdasági tevékenységek másodlagos jelentőségűek. Különleges helyi viseletük közé tartozik a *Petawa* és a *Charuq,* amelyek az Ilat Shahsun népviseletének jellegzetes elemei. A Shahsunok sajátos művészeti kifejezésmódjai között kiemelkedő szerepet játszanak a kézműves mesterségek, amelyek közül a legjelentősebb a *Varnish-szövés.* Emellett a zene is fontos része kultúrájuknak; a különböző hangszerek, mint a *Reed, Tutak, Tar és Garman,* széles körben elterjedtek a közösségükben. Az *Arsbaran* vidékének természeti szépségei között a Shahsunok hagyományos szállásformákat alkalmaznak, mint a *pavilonok, Kome és Chatma.* A jelen tanulmány terepkutatásokra, empirikus megfigyelésekre és tapasztalatokra épül, valamint elemző áttekintést nyújt a Shahsunok történetével kapcsolatos szövegekről és dokumentumokról. A kutatás Marcel Mauss francia antropológus mélyreható vizsgálati módszerén alapul, amely a közösségek, így a nomád társadalmak mélyreható megfigyelését és elemzését helyezi előtérbe. A kutatás célja a Shahsun nomádok kultúrájának, hiedelmeinek, vallási gyakorlatainak és társadalmi viselkedési mintázatainak feltárása és elemzése.

Kulcsszavak: Nomádok, Shahsun nomádok, viselet, kézművesség, pavilonok és Kome, kultúra és hiedelmek.

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

The Shahsuns are a group that was formed by Shah Abbas I instead of the Qizlbash to take the place of the Turkish nomads that had helped them before the formation of the Safavid dynasty. He invited other nomads to establish Shahsun "friend of the king" and the king accomplished this task. The nomads of Shahsun considered themselves to belong to a clan composed of 32 clans. Each clan had a Bey and several Obas (Ili camp); each Oba was divided by different combinations, and an Aq Saqal "white beard" was in charge of several Obas. This article deals with the anthropology of the Shahsun nomads in Azerbaijan from the 10th century until now. I will examine the history of the

nomads and various perspectives on their formation before delving into the main topic. In the following section, I will analyze the Shahsun nomads, considering their historical formation process. The next part examines the customs and traditions of the Shahsun nomads in the historical process with an approach to anthropological factors and then the status of the Shahsun nomads and their tyranny will be reviewed.

Historical background

With the emergence of anthropological knowledge within social sciences in the Western world, field research was conducted regarding recognizing and investigating nomad social, cultural, economic, and political structures. Henry Field is one of the researchers who studied and researched ethnic and tribal compositions and their structural features in Iran. Several European anthropologists, such as Paul Basniyeh, Cornelis Apt Ltd., and Günther Schweitzer, have investigated the issue of the Shahsun nomadic community. There have been publications published about Shahsun nomads by the Institute of Social Studies and Research (ISSR) of Tehran University, including studies related to the settlement of nomadic shepherds of the Shahsun plains and the nomad settlement program, the marriage system among the Shahsuns, as well as structural changes in the economy and the culture of the region and the people living there.

The English anthropologist Richard Tupper focused his research on the Shahsun tribal community since his student days, living among them for several decades.

Ilat and nomads
Il and nomads

Il or El is a Turkish-Mongolian word that has more than a thousand years of historical background. This word is used in ancient Turkish and Persian texts to refer to province, peace and friendship, multitude and group, friend, tame and obedient, people, and congregation. (Bloukbashi, 2003: 17). In another definition, it means clan: "An Il includes several clans that are united with each other due to consanguinity or socio-political reasons and usually live in a geographical area that is considered the territory of the clan. The clans of the same clan usually have relative or causal kinship with each other; sometimes they may unite without having kinship and form a clan. Most of it is the same" (Gorhod, 2004: 322). According to Tupper Il, it was a political union of nomads and a term to introduce a mass of nomads, and the nomads, despite the lack of a common relationship between them and the gathering of some clans that make up the nomads from other places, is more than the concept of political citizenship, and having loyalty to a boss conveys the concept of cultural unity.

A nomadic society is a society whose livelihood is based on traditional animal husbandry and follows the tribal system, to gather livestock and provide for their livelihood, they have a regular seasonal movement, often from the black tent. They use portable pavilions and shelters for all or part of the year (Bahret, 2004: 34). In addition to the aforementioned definition, there is another definition of nomads: "Nomads today refer to a society whose social relations are organized based on relative or causal kinship, real or ideal. The members of this community are aware of their ethnic affiliations and are actively concerned about their preservation and reputation" (Khosravi, 2010: 38). Part of their livelihood is on natural pastures, and nomadism is one of its consequences.

Factors of formation of Eilat

Given the long history of migration, nomads as organizations have formed over time. The main factors that led to the formation of nomads can be listed according to the characteristics of each nomad:

- Security and Social Needs: A major part of the country's population has lived in

desertification and migration from the past; their dependence on potential events and dangers and defending life has been a vital necessity for each of them. In a particular period, there has been a creation of a collective power to defend or invade the nomads, and the common and collective life has continued from one to generation another.

- Livestock: Physical needs have been one of the basic needs that have led to human movement from one point to another or settlement in a specific area. Therefore, the type of livestock or pasture is another factor in the formation of nomads in the early days, and on the other hand, common aspects of this type of life are simultaneously used to exploit pastures and cooperatives and help each other.

- Family dependencies: Due to the limitations of personal communication, geographical barriers, and observance of some ancient tribal traditions, the nomadic marriage was first confined to the nearest households then to the tribe, other nomads, and finally to the rural community, or the city was expanding.

- Geographical and Ecosystem: The continuous growth of population over time has led to the expansion of the nomadic environmental territory, and those who have been in this area have been formed in the frame of independent nomads.

- Language and dialect: Another factor in the formation of nomads can be considered a common language between them. Usually in the category of nomads, one of the aspects of distinction is language. In the existing boundaries, the common language of each nomad differs from that of other nomads.

- The authority and characteristics of the tribal leaders: The authority of the tribal

chiefs has been another factor in attracting or dominating tribal nomads. The canvas has been effective (Boom, 2005: 27).

The nomadic segmentation in terms of life pattern:

The social composition of the Iranian population consists of three distinct urban, rural, and nomadic societies. Social life in this land has long been influenced by the interactions and lives of the aforementioned societies, and in the meantime, the tribal society has always played a distinct role in the country's political destiny and economy. A wide range of Iran has been the realm of life and activity of this community. A wide range of nomadic living spaces. The nomadic biological area shows that a large part of the western, southeastern, and northern regions of the country are tribal lands. The size of these lands is 936,000 kilometers, which accounts for about 59% of the area (Mosh, 2005: 45). Part of the nomadic lands, a common living space with the rural and urban community, and part of the nomadic ecosystem.

In the current situation, Iranian nomads are divided into two major groups in terms of their biological pattern: Desert nomads and settled nomads.

Desert Nomads: This group of nomads do not have buildings or houses in the village and live under tents or mobile shelters all year round. The economic life of this group is mainly dependent on livestock, and pasture is the main source of food for the livestock. The majority of this group of nomads are landless.

Settled Nomads: This group of nomads has permanently settled in Qeshlaq or Yilaq, and some of them are content with herding cattle in the pastures around the centers of settlement, and some of them only give their cattle to the relatives of the first group to use pasture fodder. They leave in some cases, despite the concentration of agricultural activities in the territory of permanent

settlement, they use their agricultural methods in other territories in different ways, such as renting land. The living pattern of this group of nomads who abandoned the nomadic life for many reasons and settled in one place is rural. Although they still have adherence, dependence, and interest in the nomadic life, these bonds are separated according to the age of settlement. Of course, in this group, there are different spectrums; some of them have potential conditions for migration. Many times in the past, nomadic nomads have become nomads after settling down for a long time, especially the nomads who settled by force or because of desperation and poverty. Just as after the Islamic revolution and in the heat of the war, groups of settled people turned to migration (Verjavand, 1344: 98).

Il Shahsun

Iran's nomads, who have their livelihood and customs, are considered one of the most attractive ways of social life in Iran. Ardabil province has many nomads, the most important and coherent of which are the Shahsun and Arsbaran nomads, which are scattered in different regions of the province.

The Shahsun nomads are one of the most important and famous nomads of the Ardabil and East Azarbaijan provinces, which have a long history and special socio-cultural characteristics. The members of this clan are cattle breeders and use the green pastures of the mountains of Ardabil. Arsbaran nomads also live in mountainous areas, and their main territory is the western part of the Maghan Plain. Shahsuns of the Shiite religion who speak the Azerbaijani Turkish language have lived a nomadic life in the past, and in the present century, they also make a living through agriculture. Regarding the way of life and customs of the Shahsun nomads, different opinions have been expressed regarding the name and historical background of the Shahsun nomads, which I will express.

The origin of Shahsun nomads

Ilats and nomads who migrated to the country of Iran from the east and west before the Seljuk attack, with the Seljuk, or after the Seljuk and became Iranians and did great services for Iran, which the history of the Seljuk is proof of.

The Seljuqs are one of the 24 nomads of Oghuz (Gaz). These nomads have settled in Iran for thousands of years, and they have spent their time in desert tourism and livestock farming, and they have lived in summer camps. Most of these nomads are in Azerbaijan (these lands on both sides of the Aras River), Anatolia, Syria, and Iraq, where they have been replaced and lived. Until the emergence of Timur and his march to the West and the opening of the Middle Eastern countries, one after the other, Timur faced Turkic peoples in Syria and Anatolia and fought a hard war. Indeed, the nomads could not resist Timur's campaign, but they were noticed by Timur because of their bravery and manly fighting, and Timur took nearly 30 thousand families with him to his land, which is Central Asia. This number of people from Eilat, in the absence of Timur's army, went to the city of Ardabil, and at the request of Sultan Ali Siahpoosh, they separated from Timur's army and stayed in Azerbaijan. Some historians have considered this province as having 9 or 7 nomads, the most important of which were Begdali (Shamlu) and Rumlu. Since the Begdali were from Syria in Timur's army, they became known as Begdali Shamlu or Shamlu. It was this nomad that joined the Safavid dynasty and created the Safavid dynasty. Shah Ismail I brought them to the throne of Iran; these people were called Qizilbash; the people of Qizlbash, who were a strong arm and defender of the country and the Safavid dynasty, had authority in all state affairs and were in charge

of the administration of the country until the middle of the era of Shah Abbas I. Shah Abbas I ended the power and influence of Qazlbash by creating a group called Shahsun, and the influence of Shahsun increased day by day. From that time until our time, the people of Shahsun have been living in tents and engaged in animal husbandry, but in recent years they have settled in some areas and engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. Azerbaijan has been the territory of three factions or three Shahsun groups since that time. Arsabaran 2. Anklet 3. Northeast Azerbaijan, around Sablan, Sahand, the central core, and the residents on both sides of the Aras River.

Sykes says about the formation of the Shahsun nomads: "Shah Abbas I invited the members of all the nomads to come to name Azad (Shahsun) or Dostdar Shah. This policy and good planning were completely successful. The Shahsun nomads have remained strong until today and inhabit a large area between Tabriz and Ardabil and southeast of Qazvin".

Hatum-Schindler writes: "1. The Shahsuns are one of the most important and large Turkish nomads in Ardabil.2. Among the Bedouin nomads of Iran, Shah Abbas I formed this nomad in the 7th century to break the power of Qazlbash. It means the lovers of the king. In 1896. The Minanlu was the main branch of the Shahsuns".

Henry Field wrote: "Shahsun is one of the most important and large Turkish nomads in Ardabil" (Kurzon 1892 (Vol. II) - p. 270).

Mohammad Karimzadeh, in his book Shahsuns of Fars, describes the historical background of Shah Sonha as follows: "The history of King Sonha dates back to the time of the Sufi kings. The writers of chronicles and travelogues believe that Shah Abbas Yazragh wanted to reduce the influence and power of the rulers. Thirty-two Qazalbash clans, who in those days were in charge of all the affairs of the country and were considered a great power and a leader against the

king, made an effort to create a well-equipped and organized army in one regiment of infantry and one cavalry (Zadeh, 1352: 87). And it was considered to be disobedient and to remove their power and prestige".

In the book Bustan al-Siyah, written by Hajj Zain al-Abidin Shirvani, it is stated about Shah Sunha: "A group of Qizilbash came out against the Shah. Abbas boldly advanced and the Shah said: The Shah Sunha came after every sect and defeated the Shah's opponents.

Vladimir Minorsky, in an article entitled Shahsun, which is included in the Islamic Encyclopedia, points out that the existing documents have made Malcolm's narration somewhat confusing: because historical sources of the Safavid era lead us to the fact that Shah Abbas I was a nomad He created it and called it Shah Son, it does not lead. Minorski directs the attention of the readers to the narratives of the Shahsuns themselves. The narrations of Shahsuns are different from the narrations of others, but it is not in conflict with them, and there is only a difference in details. The Shahsuns have also confirmed the migration of their ancestors from Anatolia. The official narrative and accepted belief of the people of the nomads, which is reflected in the writings related to the Shahsun nomads, have been prioritized in the current century. According to the Shahsuns, the Shahsun clan consists of thirty-two clans with equal status. The Shahsuns claim that they have never been under the command of a senior leader. There is no historical document confirming Malcolm's narrative, which was formed based on his incorrect understanding of the sources. However, his story has been accepted by both recent Iranian and foreign historians (Tupper, 45:1384). Even his narrations have been widely accepted among the Shahsuns through new educational books. People like Curzon, Brown, and Sykes gave formality to this story following the writing of Shahsunha's article by Minorsky. Only a handful of historians

specializing in the Safavid period, including Bausani, Petroshevski, and Morkan, have questioned Malcolm's story. Some have reconstructed an old legend in the form of historical fact, despite citing Minorski and sometimes previous research (Same, 32).

Most historians believe that the word "Shahsun" is derived from its original meaning, which means personal loyalty and religious devotion to the Safavid kings. The Safavid kings inherited their enduring legitimacy from Sheikh Safi, the founder of the Safavid school, who was considered a descendant of the Shia imams. For this reason, the establishment of the Shahsun nomads from the combination of different nomads represents a part of the military and tribal policy of the Safavid kings.

Clans of the Shahsun clan

The names of Shahsun clans of Azerbaijan are:

Haji Khojalo, Ajirlo, Javadlo, Joroglu, Gedeh Biglo, Giklo, Mustali Biglo, Serkhan Biglo, Moradlo, Johnny Yarlo, Demirchi Lo, Talesh, Mikael Lo, Homan Lo, Kor Abbaslo, Koja Biglo, Meghan Lo, Pirayo Klo, and Qara Ghasemlo Sazi Jafarlo, Arab Lo, Khalifa Lo, Edolo, Zargarlo, Bigold Lo, Sarvanlar, Hossein Khan Biglo, Ali Babalo, Sidlo, and Jafarlo (Ismailpour, 1998:204).

Cultural identity and historical continuity of Shahsun clans

In the 1960s, the Shahsun nomads considered themselves members of the nomads, which consisted of thirty-two clans. Each clan consisted of several small clans. The head of the clan was called Bey, and the head of the nomads was called Aq Saqal (white beard). Each clan was also divided into several Oba (Ili camps). The terms clan and nomads had different meanings outside the hierarchy. Obedience to a chief was a characteristic feature of the clan. Ail was referred to as a political union consisting of various clans. Ail was also

called a group of nomads. The clan was part of a larger political unit and was led by an Aq Saqal (White Beard). In most cases (tire) was formed from one (Bobek or family) and was named after the founder of that family (Azizi, 1362:75). The official approval of the nomads by the government was practically a confirmation of the importance of its political dimension. However, from the point of view of the nomads, the clan was considered a cultural unit. Some clans within the Shahsun clan union were always considered independent political units. The distance between the smallest clan and the whole clan was so great (one hundred to one) that the small clans inevitably formed clusters and factions. With all these interpretations, the question that comes to mind is: what factors have been involved in the continuation of the identity of the serf clans? First, as mentioned, the central government recognized the clan as a unit by appointing clan heads. But it cannot be argued with certainty that the integrity and continuity of the identity of the serf clans were only a result of their recognition by the government and the efficiency of the heads of those clans. On the other hand, marriage was considered the key to the continuation of the clan identity. The political leadership of the nomads no longer had a role in maintaining the integrity of the nomads, but in most cases, the head of the nomads was able to maintain the integrity of the nomads in various ways. Since the subjects still sought the approval of the head during marriages, the heads of the clans traditionally supervised the marriages of their subjects. In addition to being able to prevent the formation of categories based on alliances, the head of the clan could also gain the consent of the influential heads of clans through the establishment of alliances, like the Qajar and other ruling dynasties.

Holding celebrations, especially circumcision celebrations, and weddings of family members, was one of the o ther ways that the chiefs could

increase the unity of the clan. In the 1960s, the heads of the clans, mainly to impress the elites of the district, held big celebrations. Such celebrations preserve the identity and enhance the reputation of the nomads due to the recreation (and sometimes revival) of the customs and traditions of the nomads. The peasant class could not afford to hold such big celebrations. The first-degree relatives of powerful chiefs rarely had relations with the people of the vassal class of the clan. Most of the marriages were either within the family or with the big class of other clans and influential non-Ili families. The members of the family of the chiefs, who had less influence and power, were often connected with the members of their families, like the class of subjects.

Causal links, friendship, values, and common customs are more important than the factors in maintaining the solidarity and cohesion of different clans of a clan, They played a political role. As a culturally homogenous group, the nomads became an arena of competition and eye-to-eye when establishing celebrations and rituals. The rules and regulations of rituals and celebrations were the same for all members of the clan. Some clans were famous for having different customs and traditions of intensity and weakness in the tendency to marry close relatives. But these differences were not to the extent of differences between clans. The members of each nomad emphasized the uniqueness and superiority of their nomads in some matters, and in support of their statement, they pointed to tangible things such as herding, agriculture, rituals, dialects, and terms (Naba'i, 1366: 42). Despite the lack of context for social competition and the absence of a real hierarchy based on aristocracy, the wealth and population numbers of the clans were important in political matters. Because these two factors affected the independence of the nomads. Despite this, there was no correlation between wealth and the size of the clan and gaining influence. Some heads of

relatively small clans had more dignity and prestige compared to the heads of larger clans. Apart from greatness and wealth, some other characteristics, such as adherence to religion, truthfulness, or even theft, bring fame to clans. The preservation of the identity, cohesion, and survival of the vassal clans depended to some extent on the support of the government, having a specific territory, and above all, a common culture and a high rate of intra-clan marriage.

Examining the customs and traditions of the Shahsun nomads in the historical process
Customs of Eilat Shahsun
The establishment of Islamic and Iranian festivals and rituals is one of the most important customs of Shahsuns, which is done especially and follows the principles of the nomads. Shahsuns celebrate and visit each other on religious holidays, including Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, after the Eid al-Fitr prayer. Marriage ceremonies and rituals are very important among the clan. When a boy wants a girl, he sends two of the elders of the nomads to the girl's father's tent, and if they agree, they make a pact and pay a lot of attention to it. After the proposal, the groom's family takes gifts for the bride, such as a scarf, gold, mirror, fabric, and sweets. A few days before the wedding date, the guests are invited to participate in the ceremony. The guests bring gifts, and as soon as the guests of the groom and his companions approach, they go to welcome them together with the musicians of local instruments. The guests eat dinner in the tent of the groom's family and give a sum of money to the cook and butler. This ceremony continues for several days, and on the last day, the guests go to the bride's house and bring the bride with them to the groom's tent. When the bride is about to leave her father's house, one of her family members ties a beautiful golden belt around her waist, and then the bride moves towards the groom's house with her mirror and dowry. When the bride approaches

the groom's tent, the groom throws a red apple or a bouquet to him, and at this time, the riders take turns performing local shows. One of the rituals of the Shahsuns, which enriches the culture of the nomads, is the Yalda night ceremony, which is the beginning of the winter season. Yalda night is celebrated with special passion among these nomads. On this night, the first of January, which is Yalda night, the people of Ail (Chile Qarpzai) eat Chele watermelon and believe that by eating watermelon, the cold will not affect them. Shab Cheleh is considered the longest night of the year, and the ceremony related to it is a kind of family and friendly night out. During this night stay, all kinds of winter foods are eaten, such as dry fruits and sweets. Eating spring and summer fruits that have been preserved until the first night of winter by various tricks is a kind of insistence on the existence of warm and blessed spring and summer. Cooking white rice on the night of Big Chele or Yalda is a kind of white magic for a white day and good luck in the cold winter. Most of the winter ceremonies are related to the small chela, which covers the hardest and coldest days of winter. In some villages and sometimes in the urban areas of East Azerbaijan, there are common rituals in this regard, such as lighting fires on the roofs and sometimes shooting or making noise. The most usual and common rituals are related to the small challah. The public suspects that the old woman Sarma, or Qari Nene, gets scared and runs away when the fire and the noise are lit (Abbas Marufan, 1367: No. 3). The mentioned ceremonies are performed not only among nomads but in all regions of Ardabil and East Azerbaijan provinces, but each of the villages and cities may increase or decrease a part of the mentioned ceremonies according to their originality and roots.

Clothing

The local costumes of the Shahsun nomads are also considered one of the cultural identities of these nomads. The men of the Shahsun nomads do not have special clothing; their suits and hats, known as Turkish hats, which are similar to the hats of the men of Gilan, constitute the clothing of the Shahsun men. Among men, in addition to wearing colorful socks, a type of handwoven wick called Petawa was used, which protected their feet from cold or snake bites. The clothes of the women of the Shahsun nomads are each reminiscent of a corner of the clothing of the people of other regions of Iran. The women's scarf is made up of a Charqad Guldari, which is closed with a bow. Aphid is one of the special scarves of nomads, which is still common, and after wearing the scarf, they put the aphid on the scarf and wrapped it around a few times. In some nomadic clans, it is also called Aphid Yailiq. All women's shirts are made of various and happy colors and are long. Tanban is a shawl they wear, and it is similar to the tanbans of Gilan, Bakhtiari, and Qashqai women. Among other important clothing items was a type of clog called Charuq, which is made of leather and used as shoes, the vest of Shahsun women. It consists of sewn cloths without sleeves, on which gold and silver coins are sewn, and the number of coins indicates the wealth of the family. Among Shahsun nomadic women, it is common to wear jewelry including beads and gold on the hands and neck, as well as cosmetics such as henna and vermilion, which are even used by old women (Ismailpour, 1998:295).

Language and dialect

The foundation and pillar of every culture is its language, which expresses the words of every language, the thoughts, and the type of relationships of human reactions in every society. There are different languages and dialects among nomads and nomads, which include Iranian and non-Iranian languages. Turkish is one of the non-Iranian languages spoken by the Eilat and Shahsun nomads in East Azarbaijan province. The common

Turkish language in Iran includes dialects that belong to the Oghuz Turkic language group. Although there is a kinship between the Shahsuni Turkish language and the Azerbaijani and modern Turkish languages, the languages and dialects of these two groups are not mutually intelligible (Bulukbashi, 2002: 92).

Music

Art plays an important role among the Shahsun nomads; among the special arts of these people can be music and dance, which were accompanied by each other, and no doubt, the local dances and songs of the nomads are a part of the precious gem of the culture and folklore of this land, which shows a patient, people. , brave, hardworking, and loving the water and soil of their motherland, Iran, and it shows a rich and proud cultural history in this land. The original music of Azerbaijan is also the birth of these people who call such original music with their ballads, poems, and music (Maqam), and the musician and singer of these poems are called (Aashiq). The music of nomads and peoples is not separate from Azari music, and for centuries it has found a place in the hearts of the people of this border and region among the members of the society, but with all these nomads, it has its weight and songs and traditional devices and instruments, which are important. The most popular musical instruments are Reed, Tar, Saz, Garman, and Totak.

Azari music and poetry begin with Ashiqlar and end with the joy of love. Aashiq in Farsi is the same as Ashiq, which has become Aashiq in Azari language. The expression of love is always accompanied by music and poetry, and the main stories of Karam, Korawghli, Nabi's Trafficker, Ramaq, Ezra, and Sara are among these sentences (Same., 302).

Handicrafts

The Shahsuns are one of the largest livestock breeders and farmers in East Azarbaijan and Ardabil. Their lives are largely dependent on livestock, and the presence of livestock products has made handicrafts very important among these nomads. Types of Rugs, Jajim, Khorjin, and Jal asb are among the most important handicrafts of Shahsun nomads. The most important weaving of Shahsuns is sumac Rugs, which are called Verni bafi in the local language. Verni-bafi is the most important and beautiful handicraft of these nomads, whose complex designs are woven with vertical or horizontal machines in the form of long and narrow pieces three meters long, and their surface is decorated with intricate patterns and needles. The most common design of these rugs is called Noah's Ark, which is in the shape of an embroidered woman with a ship design, and in the middle of it, a tree and birds and animals can be seen around it. A rug is a type of rural and nomadic handicraft that is used in rural homes to store bed linens and sleeping accessories, and in Koch Ilat and nomads, the rug is considered a very suitable means of carrying various items. The rug is in the shape of a rectangular cube, is sewn in different lengths, and has beautiful and heartwarming patterns. In terms of the special style of the image of animals and birds, as well as in terms of coloring, the horses of the Shahsun nomads are considered to be the best Iranian horses. Khurjin is used to carry objects and hand tools and is woven with special and beautiful patterns. In addition to Khorjin, some other accessories needed by nomads, such as Camel's skin and tape for tents, are woven in the same way. Shahsun carpets, like the Baloch carpets of Khorasan, which have been influenced by their neighbors, have a Kurdish color and glaze, so that their Lopodi products, with a very hard and compact and not very delicate texture, remind the mind of Kolya weaves. The common designs in Shahsun carpets in the local

term are Laki Nima, Shabiri Nari, and Doquz Boruni (Ismailpour, 1377: 319).

Settlement

The Shahsuns live in the beautiful region of Arsbaran in a mountainous and plain area, and their main territory is in the western part of the Mughan plain around Ahar city. The name of these nomads is taken from the area of their residence between the land of Arsbaran and Karabagh. The history of these nomads is also very similar to the history of Shahsuns. The summer area of the Shahsun nomads is formed by the mountains around Arsbaran and Sablan. The winter area (Qashlagi) of the Shahsun nomads is also south of the Mughan plain and around the Qarasu River and the side of the Aras River in the Khodaafrin region. The most organized group of Shahsuns live in the west of the Mazandaran Sea. In addition to the Shahsuns of the Moghan Plain, there are many groups of Shahsuns living in different areas that are located between Tabriz and Tehran. Among the most important of them, the groups that live around Hashtroud, Mianeh, Bijar, Qazvin, Saveh, Varamin, Hamadan, and Qom should be mentioned. Other groups of these nomads live around Zanjan. Also, a group of Shahsun nomads lives in the Niriz region of Fars on the south shore of Bakhtegan Lake. Shahsuns of Fars are a branch of the Inanlu nomads. A group of Shahswans in Shahin City live in the Yilaq fortress in the mountains, which are known as Shahswans (Bulokbashi, 2012:51-47).

Gazebo and shed

One of the cultural indicators of Shahsuns is their tents, which are known as al-Achiq. The Shahsuns live in hemispherical and hall-shaped tents, which are called Al-Achiq and hall-shaped tents. Kume is usually smaller than al-Achiq and is woven from rough material, and al-Achiq is woven with delicacy and skill, and they are more durable

than Kume. The interior space of the huts is usually 5 meters. The main hut is generally made of white and elegant felt. These felts are decorated with colorful designs on the front and sides, and tassels are hanging on the doors of the entrances, these features distinguish the main tents from other tents. The felts of this tent gradually turn brown and finally black due to rain, dust, and smoke inside. Al-Achiq is superior to Kume in the eyes of the Shahsuns, and every Kume resident tries to turn his Kome into Al-Achiq in a short period. But superiority does not have the slightest effect on the social base of its owner (Andrews, 1977:125-123).

The nomadic population of Iran, especially the Shahsun nomads

The total population of Iran's nomads in 1906, out of 8 million of the total population of Iran, more than 2 million people, or about a quarter of Iran's population, belonged to the nomadic. In the 1956 census, 2-3 million of Iran's 21 million population belonged to the nomads, which started a downward trend. According to the latest statistics of the Iranian Statistics Center and the Organization of Nomadic Affairs of Iran in 2007, out of the (782,495,700) million population of Iran, (2,343,312) people, equivalent to (1.68%), are nomads, of which 47,248,000 people are equivalent to 2.02 % of the total nomads of Iran are Shahsun nomads.

Policy of disarmament and resettlement of Shahsun nomads

Reza Khan became the king of Iran in 1305. Reza Shah's hatred of the nomads was well-known and common, and he considered the Ili system and the leaders of the ilat as a political threat, after reaching authority, he decided to overthrow the Ili. Reza Khan's policy in this direction had two main dimensions: the first was the suppression and disarmament of the nomads, and the next stage

was the forced resettlement of the nomads, which was implemented in the last decade of his reign. Reza Shah was able to stop the armed conflicts between the nomads by using the army and appointed one of the army officers, Il Bey, as the head of the nomads, who was responsible for establishing political security. After the disarmament, the nomads' fear of the army intensified, and the victory of the army over the clans and the nomads was celebrated (Tupper, 2004: 333).

The forced resettlement of the nomads was the second stage of Reza Shah's policies, which were implemented in 1310. In line with the implementation of this order to settle the nomads, this community had to build village houses under the supervision of Il Bey (an army officer), at their own expense, which the nomads themselves did not want to implement, so the settlement officials burned their tents until nine. There is no place to live in winter or summer (Zahed, 115:1358).

The biggest damage of the forced settlement policy was the creation of a class gap and discrimination in the society of that day. This program created a special conflict and enmity between the lord and the serf. The government land transfer document was given to the elders of the clans, and the common people of the nomads were deprived of land ownership, which brought irreparable consequences.

Conclusion

As a social necessity, a nomad is formed based on security and social needs, economy, family affiliations, geographical area, language, and the authority of tribal leaders and gathers a group. The Shahsun nomads, which are one of the tribal groups of Azerbaijan, were formed by Shah Abbas I in the 10th century AH, and until now they live in the categories of desert nomads and settled nomads. Based on anthropological indicators and

factors, they have maintained their cultural identity until now. The Shahsun nomads were facing the destruction of their identity during the period of forced settlement, which was rebuilt after the Islamic revolution of the Ili Shahsun regime. The Shahsun nomads have continued their customs and traditions in this historical process and have their religious ceremonies and festivals. Their clothes are one of the indicators of their identity, and weaving is one of their most important works. The Shahsun nomads's subjects are more or less equal in economic and social terms and adhere to the old egalitarian model among the people of the nomads. The Shahsun nomads guarantee economic and social equality through marriage among their relatives, and in fact, marriage is the key. It is considered the continuation of the clan. After the Islamic revolution of Iran, Shahsun nomads called nomads (Il Son) were re-created, the Ili system in the old sense was destroyed, and the duties and heads of clans were assigned to the nomad affairs organization, this organization recognized the importance of these units and supports them to maintain their values and identity standards.

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CRAFTING THE COMMONS:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY ON COLLECTIVITY AND IDENTITY IN ACTION

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Abstract

Studies on social movements underwent a prominent shift from the rigid division between the 'personal' and the 'political' into the feminist perspective from the renowned concept and slogan popularised by second-wave feminism in the 60s' and 70s' "the personal is political", that served and was used by many movements of the time. This shift aimed to illuminate the strong link between these concepts focusing on lifestyle and the effects on culture. Following the concept of prefigurative politics (Boggs, 1997), where the embodiment of the different forms of socialties and human experiences is the ultimate goal within the political practice of a movement, this paper is based on an ethnographic case study that examines a network of five organised communities – Toestand (Brussels, Belgium), Termokiss (Prishtina, Kosova), Space Tetova (Tetova, North Macedonia), DKC Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Pomorandza

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(Podgorica, Montenegro). The findings show how members of these communities, who besides their respective communities are part of a joint network, engage in lifestyle choices and adopt cooperative practices as acts of resistance and transformation, challenging contemporary capitalist values and their surrounding sociocultural realities.

Keywords: collectivity, identity

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

Absztrakt

A KÖZÖSSÉGI JAVAK MEGTEREMTÉSE:
ETNOGRÁFIA A KOLLEKTIVITÁSRÓL ÉS IDENTITÁSRÓL CSELEKVÉS KÖZBEN

A társadalmi mozgalmak vizsgálata jelentős változáson ment keresztül: a „személyes" és a „politikai" merev elhatárolásától a feminista perspektíva irányába mozdult el. Ezt a változást a második hullámos feminizmus által az 1960-as és 1970-es években népszerűsített „a személyes egyben politikai" koncepció és szlogen tette lehetővé, amely számos akkori mozgalom számára szolgált eszközként és iránymutatásként. Ennek a szemléletváltásnak a célja az volt, hogy rávilágítson e fogalmak szoros kapcsolatára, különös tekintettel az életmód és a kultúrára gyakorolt hatások összefüggéseire. A prefiguratív politika (Boggs, 1997) elméletét követve – amely szerint egy mozgalom politikai gyakorlatának végső célja a különböző társadalmi kapcsolatok és emberi tapasztalatok megtestesítése – ez a tanulmány egy etnográfiai esettanulmányra épül. A kutatás egy öt szervezett közösségből álló hálózatot vizsgál: Toestand (Brüsszel, Belgium), Termokiss (Pristina, Koszovó), Space Tetova (Tetovo, Észak-Macedónia), DKC Sarajevo (Bosznia-Hercegovina) és Pomorandza (Podgorica, Montenegró). Az eredmények azt mutatják, hogy e közösségek tagjai – akik nemcsak saját közösségeikhez, hanem egy közös hálózathoz is tartoznak – életmódbeli döntéseiken és együttműködésen alapuló gyakorlataikon keresztül az ellenállás és a társadalmi átalakulás eszközeiként lépnek fel. Ezzel kihívást intéznek a kortárs kapitalista értékek és a környező társadalmi-kulturális valóság ellen.

Kulcsszavak: kollektivitás, identitás

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

Personal reflective statement and method

For the last 6 years, I have been involved and worked regularly with this network, particularly with the Social Cultural Space Tetova community from North Macedonia, in Tetova, my hometown. Through activist and applied anthropology as a practice, using reflexive and participatory methods, collaborative ethnography materialised with the attempt to share and integrate the involved communities into the acquired experience and knowledge production. Using elements of the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which seeks to analyse by considering different case studies, through a lens of comparative details, this paper aims to demonstrate the intercultural complexities that arise from contemporary identity politics and collaborative practices in community building as part of new social movements in Europe.

By engaging in secondary analysis of ethnographic data and to avoid the potential strain on participants, this study draws upon interview data collected by Era and Tesa who are both anthropologists and researchers as well as participating members of Termokiss the social and community space in Prishtina, Kosova, that is also

part of this network of communities. In their research *"Urban revitalization through cultural centres: The case of Termokiss and sister centres"* they explore the concept of public, cultural and social spaces, focusing on the individuals who use them and the future of these spaces as collective resources for citizens and the city. While the data from the original interviews was collected with their own research focus, it is important to mention the similar themes and significant overlap with the current study, allowing for critical insights into the shared experiences and challenges of understanding these communities' complexities. In line with collaborative ethnography as a method and ethical considerations in the use of these data, the confidentiality and consent of the participants involved have been ensured.

I will end this part with the inscription of the 'Shared Vision' that the network created in the summer of 2024, during the yearly meeting in the centre Termokiss, in Prishtina, Kosova, to discuss the collective nature of this network:

"We believe in the fundamental right to space. The spaces we create serve as tools for rethinking established social orders within socio-political realities. Through reclaiming abandoned and forgotten buildings and the creation of autonomous communities, we aim to challenge and transform current social structures through DIY practices. Our goal is to empower youth and other generations to self-organize and create inclusive environments where alternatives can flourish free from hierarchy. We believe that people have the right to be together in spaces where they do not need to consume anything or justify their presence. We strive to create places where people can just be and have the choice and freedom to meet others, organize, experiment, fail, think freely and be free from judgment. Rather than waiting for an authority to give us the things we want, we take matters into our own hands through the power of a common learning-while-doing process."

You can learn more about this project and the involved network at:

https://futureunderconstruction.hotglue.me/?WHOAREWE?

Introduction

For a while now, studies about social movements groups, intentional communities, and activism have gone beyond the traditional way of interpreting them as being primarily motivated by strategic calculations (Gibb, 2001; Cohen, 1985, 1989). Dismissing the main idea of classical social movements theories that put a great emphasis on the dichotomy between the 'personal' and 'political', New Social Movements (NSMs) theories switched the focus to the relationship between these concepts, considering lifestyle as a means for political engagement (Melucci, 1980; Lichterman, 1995, 1996; Breines, 1980). Following this approach, scholars like Escobar (1992) argue that social movements cannot be fully grasped without considering their cultural context. Rubin (2021) drawing from the works of theorists such as Barkun (1984), Berry (1992), Kanter (1972) and others, emphasises the emergence of intentional communities, especially in the 60s and 70s, in parallel with wider waves of activism and radical social movements. This shows how the growth and spread of such communities was not exactly an isolated phenomenon as intentional communities embody many aspects of change, such as social, cultural, political, and economic alternatives. Pitzer (1989) in his book *"Developmental Communalism: An Alternative Approach to Communal Studies"* defines intentional communities as *"small, voluntary social units partly isolated from the general society in which members share an economic union and lifestyle in an attempt to implement, at least in part, their ideal ideological, religious, political, social, economic, and educational systems"* (p. 221). Starting as grassroots responses to systemic crises, these communities, with their existence, reject the dominant neoliberal logic of individualism and competition in favour of collective cooperation, mutual aid, and the develop-

ment of shared values. These practices are strongly tied to the broader currents of new social movements and collective actions, which focus on cultural, reflexive, identity-based, collective, urban, and ecological concerns, among many others. One important concept that makes a great part of the practices of these communities and is worth mentioning is that of "the commons."

The term was first used by the American ecologist and evolutionary scientist Garret Hardin in his article *"The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968)*, where he discusses the negative impacts of the phenomenon of overpopulation over common environmental resources. Practically, he argues that the individual short-term interests gradually worsen the common resources of society as a whole. The concept was later revisited, developed, and popularised by many other scholars, among which was the American political economist Elinor Ostrom in her book *"Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action." (1990)*. She observed and explained the theory of long-term self-governance in collective action and shared ownership, as well as the possibilities of economic and environmental sustainability in the face of limited common natural resources. Her idea and theory of self-governance are based on several approaches that show the different ways communities can manage common resources without depending on governmental involvement or various market systems. Some of the highlighted characteristics of these approaches that would be needed for sustainable control of the shared resources are: the clearly defined boundaries – meaning that there should be clear and formalised solutions about the authority to access resources and the needed boundaries; the consistency with the local supply and demand to use the resources; mutual monitoring; establishing mechanisms for conflict management; the establishment of a penalty system; possibilities to create and change the rules depending on the context while avoiding

external interference, etc. Ostrom's research and concepts have been demonstrated to be successful through numerous empirical case studies, where she shows governance cases in which collective commitments have worked to manage shared resources in comparison to cases where it has failed because of bad governance systems. In connecting all the aforementioned principles, Ostrom, with her theory, presents an important groundwork for understanding the commons and the ways communities might self-organize and efficiently control their common resources. Her work encourages a rethinking of existing governance structures, pushing for a more decentralized and participatory approach, which has inspired many communities worldwide and other scholars who study these structures, such as Charlotte Hess (2008).

Through the years, the theory of the commons has been readapted to contemporary contexts as a response to globalization, corporatization, and intensive privatization, as well as changing societal values and technological advancements. Hess, in her paper *"Mapping the New Commons" (2008)*, explores and maps in great detail the term "new commons," contrasting it with the earlier research regarding this concept that focused mostly on natural shared resources that usually have a history of management. She focuses on redefining common resources as emerging ones, admitting, in her own words, that "*the challenge in mapping this new territory is allowing for growth, flexibility, and change—lots of change.*" (Hess, 2008, p. 14.). For every definition of the new commons sector, Hess uses various definitions and explanations of other scholars regarding each sector and subsector, producing in this way a groundbreaking overview of emerging commons.

To give a little bit more context and meaning to Hess's (2008) mapping logic, Figure 1 shows the view of two sectors, which are part of the map of the new commons created by her, followed by an

interpretation of the rest of the categories and sectors.

Figure 1. Cultural Common Sector and Neighborhood Commons Sector

A. Cultural Commons

People are reclaiming bits of nature and of culture, and saying this is going to be public space. (Naomi Klein 2001)

B. Neighborhood Commons

Commons can even be thought of as the social bonds shared by a community, and can include the need for trust, cooperation and human relationships. These are the very foundations of what makes 'a community' rather than merely a group of individuals living in close proximity to each other. (James Arvanitakis 2006)

Hess explains in detail every part of the map, which she divides into the main sectors: the cultural commons; neighborhood commons; knowledge commons; social commons; infrastructure

commons; market commons; and global commons. She clarifies that by sector she means the resource type and that not all of them but most of them have a physicality to them, which is social group and collective action. These resources highlight the importance of collective management and community engagement in addressing contemporary social, cultural, and environmental challenges. Emphasizing their lack of established governance structures, Hess suggests the necessary active engagement of communities to build or implement their own managing structures and practices to protect and sustain these resources, which will help the process of restoring social justice and pushing toward direct action. Following up on Hess's propositions, this study examines the lifestyles and identities, cooperative practices, and value systems of these communities in spaces where theory and practice come together, showing how everyday practices and broader ideologies reflect on these communities' challenges, struggles, and lessons. Communities actively involved in managing commons – whether it's cultural, social, or infrastructure resources – often adopt cooperative practices and value systems that emphasize collective well-being and social justice. These practices go beyond resource management; they embody a way of functioning that rejects individualism and competition, common in contemporary capitalist societies and reality, in favour of collaboration, sustainability, and mutual care. Without being able to completely 'drop out' of this system, they may engage in ethical consumption, sustainable living, or the creation of alternative spaces that challenge consumer-driven cultures. But what drives these individuals to choose and embrace these communal ways of organizing and making them part of their lives? Beyond the everyday communal practices, their principles are not only related to functionality but can turn out to be deeply political.

To understand this, we turn to the conversations and exchanges with the members of these

communities, whose stories illustrate how identity, lifestyle, and imagining the alternative intertwine with political engagement and communal practices.

Living as resistance:
lifestyle and identity in communal practices

In the context of New Social Movements (NSMs), intentional communities are not isolated utopias but part of a larger landscape of resistance and experimentation. This idea expands upon the understanding of how identity claims, even though often complex, are central to contemporary movements and how individuals and groups move through their social realities by actively engaging in practices that reflect their values and resist dominant societal norms. By considering the societal issues as a spectrum, these movements tend to address them more integrally, reaching beyond the productive structures and mere economic control, into everyday life and lifestyle concerns including social relations and organization, culture, ecological issues etc (Melucci, 1980). While exploring this phenomenon throughout the years, many scholars like Boggs (1997), Melucci (1980), and Lichterman (1995; 1996) discuss how, because of the many changes and emerging activist movements, like the civil rights movement and others, during the 1960s there was a twist in the ways social movements operated. It was important to include all aspects of the social life. For this, the prefigurative model that Boggs (1997) coined is a key framework in understanding these communities and it also underscores the fundamental concept they all aim to realize—the necessity of dismantling all forms of domination—economic, social, cultural, and others. This approach combines personal lifestyles with political 'agendas', challenging hierarchical structures and envisioning an embodiment of social relations, experiences, individual and collective culture, etc. It proposes a reality where lived values of everyday life reflect the practices within the operating community, resulting in a democratic environment through these inclusive practices. In her work *Community and Organization: The New Left and Michels'"Iron Law"*, Breines (1980) – together with Boggs (1997), also considered to be one of the first to use the term "prefigurative" – explains this concept in parallel with participatory democracy, or even as central to it. Endorsing the Port Huron statement of 1962, she describes participatory democracy as an equal process of an individual's involvement in all social issues affecting their life and the quality of it.

Port Huron statement is a political manifesto created in 1962 by the American student activist movement 'Students for a Democratic Society' (SDS) entailing a critique but also suggesting reforms, and advocating for nonviolent civil disobedience through 'participatory democracy', in regards to the political and social system of the US at the time, inlcuding economic inequality and racial discrimination, as well the failures of the government towards international peace and justice in relation to the Cold War and the threat of nuclear war.

Rejecting the separation of means and ends, the concept of prefigurative politics emphasizes the notion of the 'embodiment' of ideals that a movement aims to achieve, through the ways it is organized. The intersection between activism and daily life stands in the middle of the existence of these communities, helping them to transform their ideas into lived realities and reshape relationships while managing tasks and shared resources.

To exemplify this dynamic and this lived reality, the reflections of Rozafa, a young architect from Tetova and a member of the Space Tetova community, offer valuable insight. During our discussion, she spoke about the injustices that surround her, and noted the importance of having

a space like Space Tetova, an environment where she can explore her autonomy, voice, and creativity while pursuing her passion and broadening her knowledge of architecture on her terms and curiosity, *"without becoming part of this circle of capitalists"*. She continues:

"I have always been uncomfortable in situations where there was injustice. That's how I am. And I think that in our place and reality specifically, there's a lot of injustice going on all the time. And there's abuse of power. Definitely. This abuse of power doesn't allow people to express themselves and empowers them to actually use their energy to try to change something because everything seems impossible all the time. [...] In a place like this, this community is the only thing that pushes me to believe that I can do something. I can be of help to my community or anything of the sort."

Apart from reflecting the political and social reality of Tetova, this statement illustrates a sense of disempowerment and resonates with a broader critique of bureaucratic structures and authoritarian systems that tend to ignore, neglect, or even repress social engagement, including individual creativity and freedom. The emergence and existence of communities like the space of Space Tetova, in the context of the city of Tetova, can be seen as a notable counterbalance to this situation and a sort of refuge, providing spaces where alternative forms of social and political engagement can be cultivated and developed. Rozafa further elaborates:

"And, when I discovered a place like Space, for example, that... it doesn't matter where you come from. It only matters where you want to go, kind of. Like, what, what are your goals? It is very refreshing. And simply, it gives you support. That you matter. You are not just another number in the system. Your opinions matter, and your voice matters, and you actually can make a difference."

This statement captures an important component of the ideology of intentional communities as spaces of affirmation and empowerment. By creating affinity groups and environments where diverse voices are valued and collected, what is greatly prioritized is individual agency. These spaces though often practice a more 'conventional' style of activism, still manage to challenge the alienating effects of mainstream systems in which they live and act, specifically in countries like those in the Balkans. Moreover, by living their values through these spaces, members of such communities embody the concept and idea of prefigurative politics – they do not merely advocate for change but actively live the change they wish to see by being part of these groups. Though a problematic process, the creation of a collective identity that is not naturally granted because of the social reality is another key point made during the discussion that illustrates this transformative aspect:

"When you surround yourself every day with people that, uh, share similar ideals as yours, that gives you strength and, uh, pushes you closer to those people. So automatically they become a big part of your life."

Apart from producing a collective identity as a strategic choice, these spaces also function as laboratories for personal reflection and different ways of social innovation and are often experienced as places of experimentation. They provide ground for testing and refining practices like horizontal decision-making, conflict resolution or transformation, and collective functioning through practices of solidarity and sustainability. These ways of functioning and organizing, as well as successes and failures, can often contribute to the broader social movement's knowledge base, offering and exchanging practical tools and strategies for change. This idea was widely discussed by the group of the network during their yearly meeting, in the summer of 2025, in the center of Termokiss in Prishtina, Kosova, while thinking of how to maximise the skills and knowledge exchanged during the individual and common projects. From the many questions, two that arose during the discussions were: *"How do we value and utilize the skills of participants effectively?"* And

"How can we pass on knowledge between generations and across countries for future projects?" However, for these desired changes to be significant and lasting, they must be strategic, and many of the members during the discussions and interviews recognize the inter-connectedness of culture, lifestyle, identity, and political struggle in their everyday lives.

Similarly to Rozafa, but from a completely different socio-political reality, Josef, a social worker, activist, and a volunteer in the organization of Toestand in Brussels, Belgium, describes his experiences regarding the socio-cultural life in his city as a form of resistance against the exclusionary logic of urban development.

As mentioned in the begging of this paper, through the use of secondary analysis of ethno-graphic data, the following analysis and inter-pretation relies partly on the interview data collected by Era and Tesa, researchers and members of the Termokiss community, and partly from personal conversations and dicussions with Josef during our meetings.

His work, from initially seeking institutional approval for different community projects, has evolved into more direct approaches through initiatives like squatting movements, which has deeply affected his involvement in projects that engage in reclaiming and repurposing abandoned urban spaces into creative and social sites outside bureaucratic constraints.

Squatting is the action of occupying an abandoned or unoccupied area of land or a building, usually residential that the squatter does not own, rent or otherwise have lawful permission to use. The United Nations estimated in 2003 that there were one billion slum residents and squatters globally.

He reflects on the exhaustion of constantly having to position himself in opposition to the oppressive systems that surround him:

"It's super fatiguing sometimes to be anti-capitalist or anti-fascist or anti-Zionist because your position is being determined by others and you're always in reaction. And I felt this really hard in my work. I'm working with people without a home, but everything else is determined by the state. A state that refuses to do the things that are necessary, so what can I actually do?"

This statement summarizes the sense of limitation imposed by surrounding structures that are felt by many members of these communities, with small differences in where they are situated. This failure of institutional structures to address social and cultural issues that are fundamental seems to be the obvious push needed to want to do something about it. Being part of the creation of autonomous, alternative spaces, physically, seems to be a tangible solution for many of them, including Josef, which at the same time allows for a way to reclaim agency. The link between resistance and autonomy follows a larger scope of ideological consequences of choice. Their participation in these practices, encompassing the elements of culture, lifestyle, identity, and political struggle, not only deepens the democratic and inclusive vision that is lacking in a widely capitalist system and society but also displays an opposition to capitalist materialism, and addresses the alienation that often accompanies their lacking role in general political engagement.

Social and ideological implications of choice

The socio-political circumstances of a group of people can often define but at the same time limit political engagement and institutional support. The notion 'political' is here used in a multitude of meanings, but mainly represents its original sense, from Greek, concerned with the affairs of the polis, or the community, and the governance of

collective life. Apart from a conscious rejection of the predominant cultural customs that surround an individual, elements such as socioeconomic background and psychological needs can serve as answers to questions about the choice of being part of such a community. In his book *The Search for Political Community* (1996), Lichterman, reminds us about the time when during the 60s college students regarded activism or being part of a movement as a treatment for a psychological transition in their life. However, he explains that these reasons might not necessarily answer the questions of how the choice to be a part of collective action can be political, though they can be seen as complementing the cultural and social structural realities. Understanding the sociopolitical background that influences the commitment to becoming part of a community becomes one of the most important elements. In many cases, the choices can often extend beyond the immediate environment towards a lifestyle decision, an ideology or even a part of a wider global culture or subculture. (Portwood-Stacer, 2013)

Theorists such as the British sociologist Anthony Giddens who developed the structuration theory, explains in his book *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) that in modern societies lifestyle decisions usually emerge as a crucial condition for political expression and identity formation. His theory of structuration illustrates how the structures that humans find themselves in are settled and determined for them in comparison to the concept of volunteerism which puts forward the freedom of people to create the environment in which they live and act. In the context of this study, the choice of becoming a part of such a community oftentimes shows a conscious or unconscious critique of surrounding ideologies that prioritize profit and individualism over social and environmental well-being.

The long-term participation in this research together with interviews for this study has revealed that members of these communities consider their lifestyle as a form of activism and resistance. During a discussion with Asja, a graphic design student from Sarajevo, a member of the community cultural space DKC Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina, she explains how the choice of her studies allows her creative freedom and enables her to express herself without having to do something that she doesn't want to do and without being constrained by technical limitation. Besides university life she spends a great time of her free time dedicating it to DKC Sarajevo, where she's actively involved and where her main role aligns greatly with her field of study—apart from everything else, like organisation, different *"space functions"*, cleaning up, driving, and other mundane everyday tasks, she usually deals with '*anything that has to do with creative creativity and creating*' such as promotional materials, illustrations, designs, as well as other visual media including posters. During our talk, she reflected on the time when she joined the initiative at the very beginning of the creation of the social-cultural space DKC Sarajevo and how transformative such involvement can be:

"In August, when everybody came, everything was so hectic and crazy that I don't even remember where I was half the time. I don't remember half of that, but it was really life-changing, as corny as that would sound."

She continues to tell the story recalling her first contact with this project and community through a Facebook event that took place before the establishment of the space in Sarajevo. Having been part of the skateboarding community for a while she and some friends attended the event, intrigued by the idea of a skate park, which was built in parallel with the community center. Now a full member of DKC Sarajevo, she notes that even though over the years there has been a constant flux of people with different groups forming and dissolving over time, if one doesn't share the same ideas, and morals as the collective, and everything it stands for, one cannot really be part of it. It is a

place for people who align with a similar way of thinking and the principles they stand for. She adds:

"There's constant questions. So many questions. Nobody is really sure how it's functioning, or how it stays alive, but everybody is always so intrigued and so I am very optimistic about it and surprised almost."

Her experience underscores how becoming part of such a community, a part of the many questions and difficulties, pushes toward constant reflection on personal and collective practices, challenging members to rethink and readapt their ways. This constant challenge of self-examination to rethink how one thinks, speaks, and acts in combination with other cooperative activities indicates how an experience transforms everyday life into a practice of ideological resistance. Again here there is a reminder of the concept of "prefigurative politics" (Boggs, 1997) which describes how the desired social changes start by being implemented within a microcosm, which is what these communities try to do.

In a similar light discussing the choice to become a part of such a community, in the neighbouring city of Podgorica in Montenegro, Nikola, who recently graduated in film and TV directing of drama arts describes the social-cultural centre Pomorandža of which he is part, as an integral part of his life and as something that *"occupies his mind and thoughts daily"*. He and his friends would talk about the need for such a place even before the space was created while meeting in bars or other outdoor locations like parks in Podgorica. They often imagined a spot where they could gather and not just a space for themselves but also an open environment where they could meet other people and where many could join to contribute and create together in different ways. Among other things what fascinates him most is the ways in which people get together:

"It's super interesting to see how people from totally random backgrounds, professions, and social circles come together to create something and become part of something, which is not only a space for some activities – it becomes a real community."

He continues his reflection on how over time the space of Pomorandza has become more than just a physical space. It has gradually become a part of one's daily life growing deeper with each interaction, conversation, shared events, and even shorter visits. The same views are shared by his friend Anika, another member of Pomorandza, and a recent graduate of architecture, who reflects on the transformative role of this space in their city:

"Well, it is strange because I feel like we spend our free time there in a much better quality than before, you know? It's like a time that's spent better! There was no such place in Podgorica before, and sometimes it's kind of hard for people to get used to it. But I think it's really doing so good to the people of Podgorica."

They both suggest the importance and novelty of this space in their city and how positively it affects the young people of Podgorica, and even wider in Montenegro. The city lacked such alternative cultural spaces where free time is spent in a more meaningful way. According to Nikola *"it's revolutionary in a way"* because it opens up opportunities and new perspectives to the people and community, though both of them note that existing and functioning beyond the surrounding conventionality also presents a challenge because it takes a lot of time for people to adjust to something so unfamiliar. The external scepticism that is present, highlights the difficulty of maintaining such non-conventional spaces in environments that are dominated by different cultural norms.

Cultural-specific context and the role of cultural particulars

In studies of intentional and alternative communities, various scholars have frequently highlighted the importance of the cultural context in the process of shaping effective communal stra-

tegies. Anthropologist James C. Scott, in his book *Seeing Like a State (1998)* discusses the attempt of central governments to force *legibility* on their people – meaning to make them more legible as in easier to understand and manage from a top-down perspective. Using historical examples he argues that these models are flood and problematic leading to negative consequences for the people affected and they often ignore local knowledge and structures that can be valuable.

He takes the examples of Collective farms in the Soviet Union and forced villagization in 1970s Tanzania as failed attempts from the statesm, while ignoring the knowledges of the locals regarding these issues.

He highlights how communities by organising themselves and building on existing cultural practices while using bottom-up practices, can thrive in ever-changing environments. Similarly, in his book Spaces of Hope (2000), David Harvey emphasizes that communal practices in order to be effective should adapt their ideals to the historical and cultural contexts or particularities or the regions they inhabit. Further reinforcing this perspective bell hooks in *Belonging: A Culture of Place (2008)*, argues how inclusivity requires an engagement with a unique cultural landscape, though what remains critical in this thought is the ability to recognize and balance the community ideals with norms and particularities of a Space without compromising the communal practices that reflect core values and principles such as autonomy sustainability equality, etc.

While in the case of Brussels, the lack of social and cultural spaces is not an issue, the lack of autonomy in these spaces is. The use of empty spaces has become very popular, especially in the last ten years. In the case of Niels, one of the co-founders of the Belgian organisation Toestand, also part of this network, the need for space is beyond

physical: *"What we need is a space without judgments. A space that has its own rules and boundaries. We know that those rules are needed, but we create and develop them together"*. In many of the discussions with Niels during our encounters and also, more specifically, in the interview made by Era and Tesa, they discuss the need for spaces and initiatives, taking as an example the case of the city of Brussels (secondary usage of data).

Niels reflects on how there is a common tendency to define 'function' in order for 'life' to emerge, though according to him often what pushes organic social interactions to flourish is the absence of function. In Brussels, he explains there is a strong presence of grassroots initiatives and he sees this as a broader counter-cultural movement:

"These scenes are kind of big in Brussels. They are big because there are initiatives. Initiatives inspire people. People are also fed up, disgusted and start to realize the position they have in a capitalist system which is to be blocked in a way where you have to work to spend your money, and of course the movement is big and it's amazing to have this huge counter-culture because the more you are, the more people take you into consideration. It's the power of numbers – it has always been like this and it will always be like this. It's important to inspire people."

He emphasizes the power of numbers, arguing that the more people are involved in such movements, the more they are taken seriously. He continues pointing out a challenge that he thinks it's one of the bigger ones to point out— privatization under the capitalist system and the dominance of it. He notes how the moment a space or a resource is privatized, which as a process usually happens very easily, it becomes much more difficult to reclaim. According to him, this is a fundamental issue in creating communal and shared spaces that belong to everyone, as these efforts often struggle against a strong system and power that has control and prioritizes this private ownership. Still, similar to the thoughts from other

previously mentioned members of the different communities, he adds:

"The question that floats in my head is mostly, »How am I able to do something in a world that feels so stuck or where options seem to be so complicated for a certain amount of people but also for certain projects that are not part of mainstream society?«"

In contrast to Belgium and the case of Brussels, in the Balkans a different social reality prevails, making the mere fact of creating or being part of an alternative, intentional community to be felt as a powerful multidimensional political statement. The example of Termokiss, the community-run center in Prishtina, Kosova illustrates this dynamic. Orbis, a jurist, researcher and activist was greatly involved in the consultation process of law regulations regarding the public spaces in Kosova. As a member and representative of Termokiss at the Ministry of Local Government Administration, he pushed for the communities' needs for public spaces in the interests of a fairer, non-commercial, and more transparent law. In his text *"Termokiss: Fighting Old Policies with New Practices in Prishtina" (2022)*, he discusses how Termokiss was established as a response to the wave of increasing privatisation of public spaces in the after-war period.

The text was written as a contribution to the digital atlas "School of Departure", Research project by the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation: https://atlas.bauhaus-dessau.de/en/journal/the-new-designer-design-as-a-profession/termokiss-fighting-old-policies-with-new-practices-in-pristina

The war in Kosova officially lasted from 28 February 1998 until 11 June 1999. It was fought between the forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which controlled Kosova before the war, and the Kosova Liberation Army.

During this time, under the influence of neo-liberal policies caused by different circumstantial factors, a great number of factories were given to international and also local businesses and corporations, with the aim of economic revival of the country. He then continues to explain how the creation of Termokiss and its community's collaborative practices, joining forces with different NGOs across the city of Prishtina, through an initiative called "Mundësi për krejt" (Opportunity for All) played a significant role in legal changes of certain parts of the law for governing allocations for use and exchange of municipal properties and public spaces to allow NGOs and other initiatives to claim and use municipal properties. In his article, he notes:

"After six years of existence, Termokiss is no longer a novelty, but an integral part of daily life. It has made people believe that sustainable and safe social and community spaces can – and should – continue to exist. Even state institutions have come to recognise the value of this kind of initiative. Many of their representatives have grown to respect the ideas such initiatives represent and explore, and to look to the innovative ways in which they have shown community spaces can be used and can contribute to the social fabric."

The case of Termokiss demonstrates how the impact of grassroots initiatives helps reshape and transform public perceptions regarding public spaces and participation in urban development and use, but it also spreads a culture of collaboration between different initiatives and communities. The very structure of these communities, by contrasting drastically with the conventional surrounding culture, challenges the understanding of other spheres such as work value, volunteer culture, and collaborative horizontal decision-making practices. Likewise, members from the neighbouring countries share similar concerns about misunderstandings between the community and the wider society. As Asja from DKC Sarajevo puts it:

"It's very hard for the 'average person' to wrap their mind around it, because it's always like how do you put so much

effort into this? How do you give everything that you've got, but you don't get anything in return? And by anything in return, they mostly always mean money."

The assumption that work must always be compensated with financial benefits reflects the inability to recognise other forms of compensation and fulfilment, such as, in Asja's words *"the things that I do get in return is a space, and I can see it continue to grow and then develop further"*. This reward also, according to her, is the impact she makes with her participation in the counterculture and the mentality rooted in collective creation. She explains how this Space and the way it functions is very different to the mainstream, not only in terms of arts and creative expressions but also in regards to how it is perceived by outsiders for whom is difficult to grasp its purpose and function. Nikola and Anika from Pomorandza, the Podgorica sociocultural center, echo the same sentiment of struggling to legitimise their role as part of their community and space in the eyes of outsiders. Nikola explains:

"It's crazy sometimes to hear 400 times, things like: Who is the leader of it? Who is the owner of it? Do you earn anything? What are you doing without money there? Are you crazy? You are in your 20s and you are losing your time there! And this kind of stuff. It's a common thing to ask even for people that we see regularly."

Hearing these doubts about financial sustainability, ownership, leadership and other general concerns from outsiders regarding the function of such spaces as a waste of time and hobbies, doesn't seem to discourage the members that are part of these communities. Instead, they cherish the feeling of meeting people who, as Nikola puts it *"from the very first day, felt the energy, felt the value of all of the stuff,"*. However, these dynamics that show some kind of tension between the ideal of inclusivity that the members of these spaces share and the structural capitalist mindset that surrounds them, don't stop the cultural resistance by those who see these spaces as transformative. Under-

standing the social and ideological dimensions of choice in becoming part of these communities and adopting and developing such communal practices requires a thorough approach that integrates everyday life into broader 'revolutionary strategies'. The narratives from participants of these communities demonstrate what Portwood-Stacer notes in her book *Lifestyle Politics and Radical Activism (2013)* that seemingly mundane choices and decisions – what to eat and consume, how to dress, how to organize, how to take decisions, how to resolve conflicts – can become political acts and carry significant implications for social change. These insights reveal that living as resistance is not only possible but also essential for imagining and enacting a more equitable and sustainable world.

Concluding remarks

Culture is more than just a backdrop; it profoundly influences how individuals and groups perceive issues of power, resistance, and co-operation. Unconventional strategies that seek meaningful engagement must be attuned to the cultural contexts in which they operate. Without this cultural sensitivity, even the most well-meaning revolutionary efforts risk being out of touch with the local realities that define people's lived experiences. Cultural particulars shape many things, from the rituals and practices that bind communities together to the symbols and narratives that provide meaning to their struggles. For these to be put into function, the need for space is revealed to be imperative and as it turns out, the role of space is not merely a physical construct. Drawing on Soja's concept of geographical contextualization where places can demonstrate social practice (1993) and Casey's approach to the 'embodiment of the self through places' (2001), Gaál-Szabó in his article *"Cultural Geography and the Fiction of Zora Neale Hurston" (2016)* argues that places are not a passive scenery, but essential to

identity formation, as well individual and collective subjectivity. Continuing the analysis of the work of the American writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, in another article (Gaál-Szabó, 2011), discusses the notion 'negotiation spaces', which involves a restructuring of space, referring to the concept of "third space".

The concept in the text is used in terms of Hurston's use of 'hybridisation' in her characters.

The idea of "thirding-as-othering" from Soja's (1996) viewpoint as an 'alternative paradigm' equally emphasises the assertion and negotiation of identity within a cultural framework.

This perspective resonates with the case study of this paper, where in a certain sociocultural context, the construction and negotiation of space – physical and tangible but also substantially trans-formative – can be seen as a deeply cultural and political act, helping to shape both multiple power relations and personal narratives. In these nego-tiations, what might emerge are different com-munal arrangements such as – horizontal organisa-tional structures and decision-making processes, values systems of mutual aid, safer and inclusive spaces, and others – that serve as countercultural responses to components of modern life that produce a sense of alienation from hyper-indi-vidualism, neoliberalism or capitalist consumerism. These contexts illustrate that even though the rejection of capitalist values can only reach a certain level, the resistance seems to be undeniably tied to it, as much as it is to the creation and maintenance of spaces of autonomy, which aim for inclusivity and collective well-being, rather than merely being in alignment with the normative pre-existing cultural traditions and sociopolitical realities.

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INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE
– A LOCAL WISDOM-BASED APPROACH IN INDONESIA (LITERATURE REVIEW)

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore how indigenous communities in Indonesia play an important role in environmental management based on local wisdom that has been passed down through generations. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative research. The data for this study were obtained through

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a literature review. The method employed is descriptive qualitative analysis, examined through various social, anthropological, and environmental theories. These theories highlight the close relationship between social norms, ecological knowledge, and environmental sustainability. The results of the literature study indicate that various indigenous communities in Indonesia implement sustainable ecological systems through traditional conservation practices, such as the subak system in Bali, sasi for marine and terrestrial resources in Maluku, and prohibitions on indiscriminate tree cutting in Waerebo and among the Baduy community. This system is based on cultural and spiritual values that emphasize the balance between humans and nature. However, the continuity of this indigenous system faces challenges from modernization, the exploitation of natural resources, as well as changes in land use policies and marine environmental pollution. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of legal protection and inclusive policies that recognize the rights of indigenous communities in environmental management. Integrating local wisdom with modern conservation policies is a strategic step towards achieving sustainable development based on the participation of indigenous communities. This study contribute to social cultural and environment areas.

Keywords: Indigenous communities, local wisdom, environmental management, sustainability, community-based conservation

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

Absztrakt

ŐSHONOS TUDÁS ÉS KÖRNYEZETI KORMÁNYZÁS – A HELYI BÖLCSESSÉGEN ALAPULÓ MEGKÖZELÍTÉS INDONÉZIÁBAN (IRODALMI ÁTTEKINTÉS)

A tanulmány azt vizsgálja, hogy Indonézia őshonos közösségei milyen fontos szerepet játszanak a környezetgazdálkodásban, a generációkon átörökített helyi bölcsesség alapján. A kutatás módszere leíró kvalitatív vizsgálat. Az adatok szakirodalmi áttekintés révén kerültek összegyűjtésre. Az alkalmazott módszer a leíró kvalitatív elemzés, amelyet különböző társadalmi, antropológiai és környezeti elméletek segítségével vizsgáltunk. Ezek az elméletek rávilágítanak a társadalmi normák, az ökológiai tudás és a környezeti fenntarthatóság szoros kapcsolatára. A szakirodalmi vizsgálat eredményei azt mutatják, hogy Indonézia különböző őshonos közösségei fenntartható ökológiai rendszereket alkalmaznak hagyományos természetvédelmi gyakorlatokon keresztül. Ilyen például a subak öntözőrendszer Balin, a sasi szabályrendszer a tengeri és szárazföldi erőforrások védelmére Malukuban, valamint a válogatás nélküli fakivágás tilalma Waerebóban és a Baduy közösség körében. Ezek a rendszerek kulturális és spirituális értékeken alapulnak, amelyek az ember és a természet közötti egyensúly fenntartását hangsúlyozzák. Az őshonos rendszerek folytonosságát azonban számos kihívás fenyegeti, például a modernizáció, a természeti erőforrások kizsákmányolása, valamint a földhasználati politikák változása és a tengeri környezetszennyezés. Ezért a tanulmány kiemeli a jogi védelem és az inkluzív politikák fontosságát, amelyek elismerik az őshonos közösségek jogait a környezetgazdálkodásban. A helyi bölcsesség integrálása a modern természetvédelmi politikákba stratégiai lépést jelent a fenntartható fejlődés elérése érdekében, az őshonos közösségek részvételére alapozva. A kutatás hozzájárul a társadalmi, kulturális és környezeti tudományok területének meértéséhez.

Kulcsszavak: őshonos közösségek, helyi bölcsesség, környezetgazdálkodás, fenntarthatóság, közösségalapú természetvédelem

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

Indigenous communities are social groups that have lived for generations in specific territories inherited from their ancestors. They hold sovereignty over the land and natural resources in their surroundings and conduct social and cultural life regulated by customary law. The continuity of these communities is maintained through customary institutions that play a role in preserving traditions and managing communal life. This concept aligns with the idea of indigenous populations popularized by Jose R. Martinez Cobo in his research on discrimination and minority protection at the UN, where groups with historical continuity from pre-invasion and pre-colonial communities are defined as indigenous. These groups exhibit cultural, social, and political characteristics that differ from the dominant society in their country and strive to maintain their unique identity despite facing pressures from colonization and modernization (Cobo, 1987). The definition of indigenous communities is also influenced by various international legal instruments, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) adopted in 2007, and ILO Convention No. 169 of 1989, which affirm the protection of their rights to land, natural resources, and cultural practices. In various literature, the term "indigenous communities" is often used interchangeably with terms such as native inhabitants, indigenous ethnic groups, or minority groups marginalized due to differences in identity from the dominant group (International Labour Organisation, 2020).

Indonesia, as a country with an extraordinary wealth of culture and ecology, has indigenous communities that play a vital role in maintaining environmental balance through the management of natural resources based on local wisdom. Indigenous communities across various regions have long developed and passed down sustainable ecological systems as an integral part of their cultural identity and social structure. Traditional practices that have been preserved to this day, such as Subak in Bali, sasi marineand land in Maluku, and the ban on indiscriminate tree cutting in Waerebo, serve as clear evidence that indigenous communities possess a deep understanding of the relationship between humans and nature. This system not only functions to preserve the environment but also acts as a social regulatory mechanism that ensures the fair distribution of natural resources and maintains the natural balance of ecosystems

However, in recently the continuity of indigenous systems has increasingly faced various challenges, primarily due to modernization, natural resource exploitation, and changes in land use policies. The emergence of extractive industries such as mining, large-scale plantations, and modern infrastructure development has threatened indigenous territories that were once managed based on community-based conservation principles. Many companies and development projects have failed to consider the interests of indigenous communities, resulting in land seizures, environmental degradation, and the loss of access to land and forests that have long been integral to their way of life. Additionally, development policies that prioritize macro-economic growth often neglect the participation of indigenous communities in decision-making processes, leading to agrarian conflicts and environmental injustice.

Although laws in Indonesia have recognized the rights of indigenous communities through various regulations, their implementation in the field still faces many obstacles. The recognition of customary rights and indigenous land ownership is often not optimally enforced, leaving many indigenous communities grappling with legal uncertainties in protecting their territories. Furthermore, the indigenous-based environmental management system is frequently not fully integrated into national environmental policies, resulting in several modern conservation initiatives

that fail to incorporate the ecological knowledge of indigenous communities. Consequently, many conservation programs end up conflicting with traditional practices that have proven to be sustainable over time.

Therefore, research on indigenous communities and environmental management based on local wisdom is crucial for designing more inclusive and sustainable environmental policies. This study aims to examine how the implementation of traditional conservation practices by indigenous communities can contribute as a solution to the global ecological crisis. The community-based natural resource management approach is considered more effective than the top-down approach, which often does not reflect local social and ecological realities. By integrating the values of local wisdom into national environmental policies, it is expected that a development model that not only preserves the environment but also respects the rights of indigenous communities as guardians of traditional ecosystems can be realized.

Method

This investigation employs a literature review approach with a qualitative methodology, concentrating on the analysis of both textual and numerical data without directly engaging with field subjects. It is grounded in textual criticism, where the careful reading and interpretation of documents, books, and articles are essential for deriving academic insights (Snyder, 2019).). Since literature data consists of "dead" records preserved in writing (Creswell, 2012). it remains static and is not bound by spatial or temporal constraints. This allows researchers to access a wealth of information from diverse historical periods and sources without the need for fieldwork. Moreover, this method aligns with various relevant library theories. For example, John Dewey's concept of the Library as a Learning Resource suggests that

libraries serve not merely as storage spaces for information but as dynamic environments for constructing knowledge through the interpretation and analysis of texts a principle that mirrors the core focus of literature research.

In addition, according to the Bibliographic Paradigm theory developed by Jesse Shera and Margaret Egan, literature research is viewed as a systematic process of organizing, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge. According to this theory, library sources are not merely static objects but also serve as tools for understanding the development of a discipline through literature mapping and bibliographic analysis (Egan & Shera, 1952). Furthermore, literature research is closely linked to Paul Otlet's Documentation Theory, which argues that documents are dynamic entities that possess historical and epistemological value in constructing scientific understanding (Otlet, 2015). In this context, literature research enables a deeper exploration of texts and documented academic discourse.

In practice, the content analysis method used in literature research can be linked to the Shannon and Weaver Information Theory, which highlights how data is encoded, stored, and interpreted within a communication system. This is important for understanding how academic literature is categorized and analyzed in scientific research. Thus, literature research not only serves as a data collection method but also as a critical approach to understanding, organizing, and interpreting existing information (Shannon & Weaver, 1971). Through various literature theories, all information on indigenous communities, environmental management, and local wisdom is collected and utilized according to the needs of this paper, and then analyzed to produce a comprehensive scholarly work that contributes to the development of knowledge by offering a broader perspective on the dynamics of academic discourse and the evolution of literature across various disciplines.

Findings and interpretation

Indonesia is one of the largest archipelagic countries in the world, comprising more than 17,000 islands, stretching from Sabang in the west to Merauke in the east. Of these islands, approximately 6,000 are inhabited, while the rest remain as forests, conservation areas, or remote regions that have not yet undergone significant development. With a population exceeding 270 million, Indonesia ranks as the fourth most populous country in the world, following China, India, and the United States. Its geographical and demographic diversity presents various challenges, including equitable development, sustainable natural resource management, and the protection of indigenous rights across different regions (Kissiya & Biczó, 2024; Muhamad, 2014).

Geographically, Indonesia is located between two continents, Asia and Australia, and is flanked by two oceans, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Map of Indonesia. Source: Indonesia Map: Geographic and Demographic Information

This position makes Indonesia a strategically important region for trade and cultural exchange since ancient times. However, its vast archipelagic nature, consisting of thousands of islands, also presents challenges, particularly in infrastructure and interregional connectivity. These difficulties are more pronounced for indigenous communities, the majority of whom reside in remote areas, mountainous regions, or forested lands. Limited access to transportation and uneven development have created significant barriers for many indigenous groups in obtaining healthcare, education, and economic opportunities (Kissiya & Biczó, 2022).

Indonesia's social and geographical diversity also influences its governance system. As a democratic country with a presidential republic system, Indonesia implements the principle of decentralization through regional autonomy policies. This policy grants regional governments the authority to manage their territories more independently, adapting to their respective potentials and needs. However, given the country's vast territorial expanse and the varying social and economic conditions across different regions, ensuring equitable welfare distribution remains a major challenge in national development.

Despite facing various complex challenges, Indonesia continues to develop an inclusive and sustainable governance system. Its rich diversity serves as one of its greatest strengths in maintaining unity, as reflected in the national motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika", which emphasizes that despite differences, the Indonesian people remain united. The official language used is Bahasa Indonesia, which functions as both the national and official language across the country. Its role is crucial in shaping national identity, strengthening unity, and serving as the primary means of communication among the country's diverse ethnic groups and communities. Given the vast number of regional languages spoken throughout the archipelago, Bahasa Indonesia plays a fundamental role in uniting society within a multicultural environment (Soemarmi et al., 2019).

Indigenous Communities in Indonesia

Indigenous communities in Indonesia are recognized in various laws and regulations as social groups that possess customary legal systems,

cultural practices, and traditional ways of life passed down through generations. Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages defines indigenous communities as customary law communities that existed before the formation of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and have a distinct social structure. Additionally, Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management states that customary law communities are groups that have inhabited a particular area for generations, maintaining a close relationship with their environment, and possessing a value system that governs their social, economic, political, and legal aspects of life (van Leur, 2018).

Recognition of indigenous rights is also outlined in Law No. 41 of 1999 on Forestry, which stipulates that indigenous communities must have customary legal territories, traditional institutions, and customary rules that are still observed by their communities. Additionally, the Basic Agrarian Law No. 5 of 1960 acknowledges the customary land rights (hak ulayat) of indigenous peoples over their land, as long as they do not conflict with national interests. Although indigenous communities have been recognized in various regulations, their implementation still faces significant challenges, particularly concerning land disputes, natural resource exploitation, and the limited official recognition of customary territories. Therefore, strengthening policies and protecting indigenous rights are crucial to preserving cultural heritage and ensuring their well-being within national development efforts (FAO and Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, 2021; Boiral et al., 2020; Dove, 2006; Thornberry, 2013)).

Indonesia is known as a country with rich cultural diversity, including the presence of indigenous communities spread across various regions. The diversity of indigenous peoples in Indonesia is not only reflected in ethnic differences, but also in their social systems, languages, customs, beliefs, and ways of interacting with nature and their surrounding environment. With over 1,300 ethnic groups and 700 regional languages, Indonesia's indigenous communities possess distinct characteristics based on the geographical conditions and historical background of their respective regions.

Each indigenous group upholds unique cultural values, customary legal systems, and social practices. For instance, the Baduy people in Banten maintain a simple lifestyle and reject modern technology as a form of adherence to their traditional laws. Meanwhile, the Dayak people in Kalimantan uphold a strong customary legal system, with a sustainable forest management concept as a way to honor nature. The Mentawai people in West Sumatera are known for their traditional body tattoos, which hold deep spiritual meaning, whereas the Asmat people in Papua are recognized for their wood carving art, which reflects their deep connection with their ancestors and natural surroundings. Similarly, the Alifuru, Alune, and Wemale peoples in Maluku continue to practice and preserve their unique cultural traditions to this day (Nugroho, 2021).

Indigenous Communities and Environmental Management

Indigenous communities in Indonesia have an environmental management system based on local wisdom, which has been passed down through generations as part of their adaptive strategies to the natural environment. The core principle of indigenous ecological knowledge is maintaining harmony between humans and nature, where natural resource exploitation is carried out sustainably while ensuring ecosystem balance. From the perspective of social ecology, as proposed by Fikret Berkes, indigenous communities manage resources by integrating social, cultural, and ecological aspects in a balanced way. They believe that nature is not merely an economic

resource but also holds spiritual value that must be preserved for the sustainability of future generations.

In various regions of Indonesia, local wisdom-based environmental management practices have proven effective in preserving ecosystems. One well-known example is sasi sea dan land in Maluku, a marine resource management system that prohibits communities from fishing or harvesting marine resources in designated areas for a specific period. This practice allows for marine ecosystem regeneration and ensures resource availability for future generations. Sasi Laut is a tangible example of the Resilience Ecology approach, developed by C.S. Holling, which emphasizes that ecosystems must be given time to adapt and recover from pressures caused by human activities (Holling, 2010).

This concept demonstrates that ecosystem sustainability can be achieved by limiting exploitation and allowing natural resource regeneration. In practice, sasi sea and sasi land are implemented by designating protected zones and fishing prohibition periods, which are publicly announced and monitored by indigenous leaders and local community figures.

With the implementation of sasi, communities not only prevent overexploitation that could lead to marine and terrestrial ecosystem degradation, but also ensure that fishery and forest resources remain available for future generations. The success of this system demonstrates that traditional approaches based on local wisdom can serve as an effective solution for marine and terrestrial ecosystem conservation, while also maintaining a balance between economic needs and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, this practice reinforces the idea that indigenous communities play a crucial role in preserving natural resources, which should be supported and integrated into national and global environmental conservation policies.

In Kalimantan, the Dayak community follows a customary forest management system that is collectively managed and governed by strict traditional regulations. Their approach includes shifting cultivation, a rotational farming method that allows the soil to restore its fertility before being cultivated again, thereby helping to prevent large-scale deforestation. This traditional forest conservation system, rooted in local wisdom and passed down through generations, ensures that natural resource use follows established customary laws. These regulations not only determine who has access to forest resources but also set guidelines on how and when these resources can be utilized. The Dayak people's approach illustrates that they regard the forest as more than just an economic resource; it is a fundamental part of their cultural heritage and ecosystem that must be safeguarded to ensure both their present well-being and the sustainability of future generations. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: One of the stages in the shifting cultivation rotation. Source: Kalteng.aman.or.id

The principle of customary forest management aligns with the Sustainability Theory, developed by Herman Daly. This theory emphasizes that natural resource utilization must consider the regenerative capacity of nature and should not exceed the

environmental carrying capacity (Daly, 2014)In practice, the Dayak community ensures that only specific parts of the forest are used, while other areas are preserved as protected forests, serving as ecological reserves for future generations. Additionally, this system can also be linked to Political Ecology Theory, which highlights how power and policy influence the ways communities manage their environment. Many customary forests of the Dayak community are now under threat due to the interests of extractive industries, such as palm oil plantations and mining, which are replacing the shifting cultivation system with a monoculture farming model.

This situation can be related to Antonio Gramsci's Hegemony Theory, where dominant groups (the state and corporations) utilize legal and economic mechanisms to control indigenous communities' access to their own natural resources (Gramsci, 1971). Beyond ecological and political perspectives, the practice of shifting cultivation is also relevant to Eugen Ehrlich's Living Law Theory. This theory asserts that law does not solely originate from formal state regulations but also emerges from social norms and practices that develop within a community (Ehrlich, 1962). In the context of the Dayak community, customary laws governing the shifting cultivation system hold their own legal authority, where every community member is obligated to follow the rotational farming mechanisms that have been passed down for generations.

We shift our focus to Bali with local wisdom-based environmental management by indigenous communities there, where traditional irrigation management is implemented through the Subak system. Subak irrigation is one of Bali's cultural heritage systems, which has been used for centuries to manage and distribute water to rice fields fairly and efficiently. This system is not merely a method of water management for agriculture, but it also embodies philosophical values rooted in Tri Hita Karana, which emphasizes the balance between humans (pawongan), nature (palemahan), and God (parahyangan) (Armini, 2013).

This concept highlights that ecosystem sustainability is not only dependent on technical factors but also on the harmonious relationship between humans and their environment. From the perspective of Human Ecology Theory, developed by Amos H. Hawley (Hawley, 1944), the subak system can be categorized as a form of ecological adaptation where communities manage natural resources while considering social, economic, and spiritual aspects. Hawley argues that the relationship between humans and their environment is always dynamic, and the subak system exemplifies how the Balinese people have developed an irrigation method that not only supports agricultural productivity but also maintains ecological balance. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Traditional subak Irrigation, Fair and Efficient Water Management and Distribution to Rice Fields in Bali–Jatiluwih Rice Terrace. Source: Authors, 2024.

Additionally, subak can be explained through Marvin Harris's Cultural Adaptation Theory, which posits that social and cultural systems develop in response to environmental challenges (Harris, 1964). In the Balinese context, the subak system enables communities to manage water effectively and efficiently, ensuring that all farmers within a given area receive fair water distribution. Through coordination within Subak groups, water is allocated based on a hierarchical system that has

been passed down through generations, preventing conflicts over water access and ensuring the sustainability of agriculture (Yuliana, 2017).

In addition to being a water management system, Subak also serves as a social mechanism that strengthens community cohesion. This can be linked to Pierre Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1977). which suggests that the success of the subak system is not solely dependent on formal regulations, but also on social networks and trust among community members. Through this system, the community collaborates in maintaining irrigation channels, managing agricultural land, and conducting religious ceremonies aimed at preserving soil fertility and ecosystem balance (Adnyawati, 2019).

The subak system can also be examined through the lens of Émile Durkheim's Social Function Theory, which suggests that a well-structured social system helps maintain stability within society (Durkheim, 1975). Beyond being a technical irrigation system, Subak serves a vital role in upholding the social and religious fabric of Balinese culture. Farmers are engaged not only in agricultural production but also in ritual ceremonies at water temples (Pura Ulun Danu), which strengthen their cultural identity and communal ties within the system. From the perspective of Political Ecology Theory, subak also safeguards indigenous communities' rights to natural resources, particularly as tourism expansion and urbanization in Bali pose increasing threats. However, land-use changes, modernization, and economic-driven development policies present challenges to this system, as they often prioritize economic growth over environmental sustainability. This theory helps explain how conflicts of interest between the government, investors, and indigenous communities influence the long-term viability of traditional systems like subak.

We move now to the Baduy indigenous community in the Banten-West Java region. The Baduy community in Banten is recognized as one of the indigenous groups that strictly uphold environmental conservation practices, minimizing contact with the outside world and adhering to customary laws that restrict excessive resource exploitation. In their daily lives, the Baduy people, particularly those in Baduy dalam, reject modern technology, believing it can disrupt the natural balance. They lead a simple lifestyle and incorporate traditional wisdom in managing their environment by prohibiting indiscriminate tree felling, avoiding chemical use in farming, and limiting excessive resource extraction (Amanda & Purwanto, 2024). This approach aligns with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), a concept introduced by Fikret Berkes, which highlights how indigenous communities inherit ecological knowledge through generations, allowing them to maintain a balanced and sustainable relationship with nature.

Equally importan, the Baduy way of life can be linked to Deep Ecology Theory, developed by Arne Naess, which emphasizes that humans should not exploit nature solely for economic gain but must live in harmony with the ecosystem (Naess, 1993). In practice, the Baduy people show deep respect for their environment by limiting land use and extracting resources only as needed, rather than for commercial purposes or wealth accumulation. For example, in Baduy dalam, strict regulations prohibit the use of motorized vehicles, electricity, plastic, and modern infrastructure development, as these are believed to disrupt both ecological and spiritual harmony (Nadriana, 2024).

Baduy Dalam is one of the areas inhabited by the Baduy people, an indigenous Sundanese ethnic group from West Java. They reside in the mountainous region of Lebak Regency, Banten Province.

Apart from managing forests and marine resources, indigenous communities in Indonesia

also implement environmental conservation practices through rituals and traditional customs. In various areas of Sumatra and Sulawesi, indigenous groups conduct ceremonial rites before preparing land for agriculture, which serve both as a form of respect for nature and a social framework to regulate resource use responsibly. These rituals typically include spiritual ceremonies, ancestral prayers, and the designation of specific areas for cultivation or protection. By upholding these traditions, indigenous communities contribute to preserving ecological balance, ensuring that natural resources are utilized sustainably and not exploited excessively.

From the perspective of Structuralist Anthropology Theory, introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss, traditional rituals can be understood as a symbolic structure within society, where each component holds both social and ecological meaning. Indigenous communities perceive the connection between humans and nature as not only physical but also spiritual. By conducting rituals before clearing land, they are not just seeking ancestral and nature deities' blessings, but also establishing ethical boundaries to regulate environmental use, ensuring that overexploitation is prevented. Moreover, these ceremonial practices align with Victor Turner's Ritual Theory, which emphasizes that rituals serve as social mechanisms to reinforce communal unity. In the context of land use, these rituals act as a transitional phase and a form of social regulation, where the entire community collectively acknowledges that land utilization must comply with customary laws. Consequently, land-clearing decisions are made collectively rather than individually, ensuring that both environmental sustainability and communal welfare are prioritized.

From the perspective of Talcott Parsons' Functionalism Theory, rituals performed before land clearing also play a crucial role in maintaining social and ecological stability. Parsons argues that every social system has mechanisms that uphold

order and ensure the continuity of society. In this context, traditional ceremonies function as a form of social control, ensuring that land clearing is conducted responsibly and in accordance with sustainability principles that have been passed down through generations.

Not to mention, this practice can also be linked to Aldo Leopold's Environmental Ethics Theory, which emphasizes that humans should adopt a "land ethic" approach to treating nature as part of their moral community. This concept asserts that humans should not view nature merely as a resource for exploitation but should treat it with respect and responsibility (Leopold, 2020). Traditional rituals performed before land clearing reflect this principle, as they reinforce the idea that natural resource utilization must be guided by moral and ecological considerations, rather than solely for short-term economic gain. What's more, from the perspective of Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory, these customary rituals function as a form of social regulation within indigenous communities. The requirement to conduct rituals before land clearing ensures that community members are bound by customary norms, which limit irresponsible exploitation. This demonstrates that customary systems serve not only a spiritual purpose but also act as a community-based resource management mechanism (Hirschi, 2001).

Although this system has been proven effective in preserving ecological balance, the impact of modernization and large-scale development policies has caused many indigenous communities to lose authority over their ancestral lands. Numerous major corporations fail to acknowledge customary rituals and traditional land-use regulations, leading to agrarian conflicts and environmental deterioration that significantly affect both indigenous societies and nearby ecosystems. From this perspective, Karl Marx's Conflict Theory offers insight into how conflicting interests between indigenous communities and capitalist

entities often drive resource exploitation without considering long-standing sustainability principles embedded in traditional practices (Marx, 1867).

The indigenous people of Waerebo in East Nusa Tenggara uphold customary laws that forbid arbitrary tree cutting and emphasize reforestation as a crucial aspect of their communal life. Waerebo is a remote indigenous village located in Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. It is recognized as one of the cultural tourism destinations in the region. Situated at an altitude of 1,200 meters above sea level, Waerebo consists of only seven main traditional houses, known as Mbaru Niang. In August 2012, UNESCO designated Waerebo as a World Cultural Heritage Site, surpassing 42 other countries. In the Manggarai language, the word "Wae" means "water". The correct spelling is Waerebo, written as a single word without spaces, contrary to how it is often written in the media. The village has a history spanning 1,200 years, with its community now in its 20th generation, where each generation is estimated to last approximately 60 years. Kabupaten Manggarai , Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Situation of living area Waerebo in the mon-tain-Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT). Source: Florestourkomodo.com

These regulations serve not only as societal norms but also as an ecological strategy aimed at preserving forest ecosystem sustainability. The deep-rooted environmental consciousness, passed down through generations, reflects how indigenous communities have established effective adaptive measures to sustain ecological balance and safeguard natural resources.

From this perspective, the Waerebo community's conservation efforts can be analyzed through Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism Theory, which highlights that social meanings and symbols significantly influence human behavior. In Waerebo, the forest is not only valued for its economic benefits but is also regarded as a spiritual entity and a core part of their cultural heritage. The ban on indiscriminate tree cutting is more than just an environmental regulation—it is a manifestation of the belief that humans hold a moral duty to protect nature as an integral part of the broader community.

Moreover, the customary-based environmental management system aligns with William Ogburn's Social Change Theory, which describes how technological, economic, and social shifts impact how societies engage with their environment (Ogburn, 2023). In Waerebo, the shift from a traditional agrarian lifestyle to a tourism-driven economy introduces new challenges in preserving customary laws that have long maintained ecological stability. The rapid pace of modernization can create tensions between traditional conservation-oriented practices and economic demands that encourage resource exploitation. Thus, recognizing social change dynamics is essential for safeguarding local traditions while adapting to the pressures of globalization.

Beyond that, the community conservation efforts in Waerebo can be examined through the lens of Dependency Theory, introduced by Andre Gunder Frank. This theory suggests that developing nations frequently face resource exploitation due to

economic control exerted by external powers (Frank, 1967). In the context of Wae Rebo, the growth of tourism investments and capitalist influence presents a potential risk to their traditional system and ecological autonomy, especially if tourism management overlooks its effects on environmental balance and cultural preservation. Thus, it is essential to ensure that economic initiatives driven by local communities uphold environmental sustainability and safeguard long-standing indigenous traditions, which have proven to be effective in maintaining ecological harmony.

As well, the traditional conservation model in Wae Rebo can be associated with Warwick Fox's Ecocentrism Theory, which asserts that nature holds intrinsic value, regardless of its usefulness to humans (Fox, 1995). From this viewpoint, customary regulations that prohibit indiscriminate tree cutting are not solely focused on economic sustainability or human welfare, but rather on acknowledging ecosystems as entities with the right to persist and thrive. This perspective stands in stark contrast to anthropocentric views, which position humans as the primary focus and regard nature merely as a resource for exploitation.

Apart from ecological and social perspectives, environmental management in Wae Rebo can also be understood through Claude Lévi-Strauss' Structuralism Theory, which highlights that social structures function as a means to maintain order and stability within a community. In Wae Rebo, customary environmental regulations do more than just govern human interactions with nature they also strengthen social unity, uphold collective norms, and preserve traditional leadership systems, ensuring that conservation efforts continue across generations.

Considering these theoretical perspectives, it becomes evident that customary laws in Wae Rebo serve as a community-driven conservation model that has evolved naturally within their social framework. These rules not only protect the environment but also contribute to cultural identity formation and reinforce social sustainability. Thus, customary-based environmental approaches, like those in Waerebo, should be acknowledged and incorporated into national and global environmental policies as a viable and sustainable conservation strategy led by local communities.

Indigenous communities in Indonesia have long practiced sustainable resource management, predating the emergence of modern conservation principles. Despite their effectiveness, these traditional environmental practices face growing threats from the expansion of extractive industries, changes in land-use policies, and modernization, which disrupt established cultural and ecological systems. As a result, stronger legal protections are needed to preserve these practices and ensure their integration into both national and international environmental policies. The application of indigenous knowledge in environmental management illustrates that traditional wisdom offers a practical solution to the global environmental crisis. By acknowledging and strengthening the role of indigenous communities in natural resource governance, we can not only protect biodiversity but also guarantee that future generations continue to benefit from a sustainable environment.

In Indonesia, environmental governance approaches that integrate indigenous knowledge and local wisdom face numerous complex challenges. Although the government has established policies to protect the rights of indigenous communities, the implementation of these policies in the field still encounters significant obstacles. Differences in paradigms between modern science and traditional values often hinder effective integration into environmental policies, especially when the extractive industry sector and economic development dominate. Protective government policies have not yet fully accommodated local wisdom in natural resource management, resulting in limited

indigenous community participation in decision-making. Consequently, conflicts arise between development interests and the environmental preservation principles that have been passed down through generations by indigenous communities. Therefore, a better synergy between government policies and governance innovations based on local wisdom is needed to create inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Conclusion

Indigenous communities in Indonesia play a crucial role in environmental management based on local wisdom, which has been passed down through generations and has proven effective in maintaining ecosystem balance. Various traditional practices, such as sasi sea and land in Maluku, Subak in Bali, customary forest management by the Dayak people, as well as the strict environmental rules in Waerebo and Baduy, demonstrate that community-based resource management systems can sustain natural resources without disrupting ecological harmony. However, these traditional practices face numerous challenges, including the expansion of extractive industries, land-use changes, development policies that marginalize indigenous communities, and modernization that alters traditional ways of life. Although legal frameworks recognize indigenous rights to land and natural resources, their implementation remains inconsistent. Therefore, stronger legal protections and more inclusive policies are essential to ensure that traditional environmental management systems continue to thrive and are incorporated into national and international conservation strategies. By acknowledging and strengthening the role of indigenous communities in environmental governance, Indonesia can safeguard biodiversity, enhance ecological and social resilience, and uphold sustainability for future generations. Thus, integrating local wisdom into global environmental policies is essential not only for conserving nature but also for respecting the rights of indigenous peoples, who have long served as stewards of the ecosystem.

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THE EXISTENCE OF LARVUL NGABAL LAW IN THE LIFE OF THE KEI COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The legal status of larvul ngabal represents a customary legal system that serves as the fundamental framework governing the social, political, and cultural life of the Kei Islands community. This legal system functions not only as a normative regulatory framework but also as a repository of moral values and a mechanism for conflict resolution that has been passed down through generations. This study aims to examine the contemporary relevance of larvul ngabal within Kei society and explore the ways in which this customary legal system interacts with modern legal frameworks. Employing a qualitative methodology with a historical and cultural analytical approach, this research investigates the role of larvul ngabal law in shaping social structures, resolving conflicts, and preserving customary and cultural values. The findings reveal that larvul ngabal law continues to be a central pillar in maintaining social equilibrium within the Kei community, despite the increasing integration of positive law as part of the formal legal system. The seven principal articles within larvul ngabal law are categorized into three primary legal domains, namely

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nevnev (criminal law), hanilit (family law), and hawear balwirin (property law). This customary legal framework fundamentally asserts that blood symbolizes life, thereby designating violence and murder as grave offenses that necessitate resolution not only through state law but also through customary legal mechanisms. In instances of disputes or customary law violations, the Kei people predominantly favor resolution through customary legal assemblies rather than formal judicial proceedings, as customary law is perceived to be more culturally congruent and socially integrative. This research contributes to the scholarly discourse on customary law and socio-legal studies, offering insights into the continued significance of indigenous legal systems in fostering social cohesion, regulating communal interactions, and preserving traditional governance structures within indigenous societies at a global level.

Keywords: Eksistensi, hukum larvul ngabal, masyarakat Kei, dan Hukum Adat

Discipline: Cultural Anthropoloy

Absztrakt

A LARVUL NGABAL TÖRVÉNY LÉTEZÉSE A KEI KÖZÖSSÉG ÉLETÉBEN

A larvul ngabal jogi státusza egy szokásjogi rendszert képvisel, amely alapvető keretet biztosít a Kei-szigetek közösségének társadalmi, politikai és kulturális életének szabályozására. Ez a jogrendszer nem csupán normatív szabályozási keretként működik, hanem erkölcsi értékek tárházaként és konfliktuskezelési mechanizmusként is, amely nemzedékeken át öröklődött. A tanulmány célja, hogy megvizsgálja a larvul ngabal kortárs jelentőségét a Kei társadalomban, valamint feltárja, hogy ez a szokásjogi rendszer miként lép interakcióba a modern jogi keretekkel. A kutatás kvalitatív módszertannal, történeti és kulturális elemző megközelítéssel vizsgálja a larvul ngabal jog szerepét a társadalmi struktúrák formálásában, a konfliktusok megoldásában, valamint a szokásjogi és kulturális értékek megőrzésében. Az eredmények azt mutatják, hogy a larvul ngabal jog továbbra is központi pillérként szolgál a Kei közösség társadalmi egyensúlyának fenntartásában, annak ellenére, hogy a formális jogrendszer részeként egyre nagyobb mértékben integrálódik a pozitív jog. A larvul ngabal jog hét fő cikke három jogterületre osztható: nevnev (büntetőjog), hanilit (családjog) és hawear balwirin (tulajdonjog). Ez a szokásjogi keretrendszer alapvetően azt az elvet vallja, hogy a vér az életet szimbolizálja, így az erőszak és az emberölés súlyos bűncselekményeknek minősülnek, amelyek megoldása nemcsak az állami jog, hanem a szokásjogi mechanizmusok révén is szükséges. Vitás ügyek vagy szokásjogi jogsértések esetén a Kei nép előnyben részesíti a szokásjogi tanácsok általi rendezést a formális bírósági eljárásokkal szemben, mivel a szokásjogot kulturálisan összhangban lévőbbnek és társadalmilag integratívabbnak tekintik. Ez a kutatás hozzájárul a szokásjogi és társadalomjogi tanulmányok tudományos diskurzusához, betekintést nyújtva az őslakos jogrendszerek folyamatos jelentőségébe a társadalmi kohézió elősegítésében, a közösségi interakciók szabályozásában és a hagyományos kormányzási struktúrák fenntartásában világszinten.

Kulcsszavak: létezés, larvul ngabal jog, Kei társadalom, szokásjog

Diszciplínák: kulturális antropológia

Indonesian culture has evolved through a complex interplay of acculturation and assimilation among diverse ethnicities, religions, and traditions spread across thousands of islands within the archipelago. Its long historical development, from the period of local kingdoms and colonial occupation to the era of independence, has contributed to the formation of a vibrant and

dynamic cultural identity that incorporates both tangible and intangible elements. The tangible aspects include art, architecture, and traditional clothing, whereas the intangible dimensions comprise values, norms, beliefs, and social customs. In daily life, the principles of mutual cooperation (gotong royong), familial bonds, and tolerance are embodied in various cultural forms, such as dance, music, traditional rituals, and literary works, illustrating the nation's ability to harmonize diversity. Indonesian culture, characterized by its pluralistic nature, is not merely a legacy from past generations but also continuously evolves to keep pace with globalization and modernization. This adaptability ensures its continued significance and influence, serving as a source of inspiration in addressing contemporary societal challenges.

The cultural differences across various regions in Indonesia reflect the nation's long history, diverse geographical landscapes, and unique social dynamics. In Java, for example, traditions are heavily influenced by the royal court culture and deep-rooted spiritual values, as seen in art forms such as wayang (shadow puppetry), batik, and religious rituals rich in symbolism. In contrast, Sumatra exhibits a distinct cultural identity through unique customs, including the matrilineal kinship system of the Minangkabau and the strong oral traditions of the Batak people, both of which highlight the values of communal cooperation and family solidarity. In Bali, cultural identity is closely intertwined with Hindu religious traditions, where ritual ceremonies, dance performances, and artistic expressions serve as significant forms of spiritual and aesthetic devotion. Meanwhile, in eastern regions such as Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Papua, local wisdom is embedded in customary laws, traditional rituals, and linguistic diversity, which are deeply shaped by natural surroundings and re-source-based livelihoods. These cultural distinctions not only contribute to Indonesia's rich cultural landscape, but also reinforce the principle

of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity), which serves as the foundation of the nation's collective identity.

The Maluku region showcases a rich and diverse cultural heritage, where fundamental differences are evident in terms of language, customs, religious practices, and traditional arts. Each island and community in Maluku possesses its own distinct cultural identity, shaped by its geographical location and long history as a centre of the spice trade. In certain areas, Islamic influence is deeply embedded in religious rituals and social structures, while in other regions, Christianity plays a central role in community life and traditional ceremonies. Furthermore, variations in artistic expressions can be seen through dance, music, and handicrafts, each reflecting local wisdom and values of solidarity. This diversity not only enriches the cultural mosaic of Maluku but also strengthens the spirit of tolerance and harmony among communities, demonstrating how historical and cross-cultural interactions have shaped the region's unique social dynamics.

The Kei Islands are one of the archipelagos in the Maluku province, known for their rich cultural diversity. The variety of cultures in this region reflects the dynamic interaction between indigenous traditions passed down through generations and external influences introduced through trade routes and religious dissemination. In this area, cultural differences are distinctly visible in the diversity of customs, ceremonies, and rituals, which vary from island to island, as each community has developed unique symbolism and practices tailored to their historical and environ-mental contexts. The local languages spoken in the Kei Islands also exhibit dialectal variations, reflecting a distinct cultural identity while simultaneously serving as a means of preserving traditional values. Additionally, religious pluralism, particularly the influence of Christianity and Islam, plays a significant role in shaping religious practices

and social interactions within the community. This has fostered a harmonious form of pluralism, which not only maintains the region's cultural richness but also facilitates adaptation to modern societal developments. These cultural distinctions collectively enhance the cultural mosaic of the Kei Islands, reaffirming that the region's cultural identity remains dynamic and continues to evolve alongside social transformations and globalization.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method, aiming to provide a factual and accurate description of the existence of larvul ngabal in the daily life of the Kei Islands community. The research utilizes a historical and cultural approach and was conducted over a period of more than one month, specifically from July to August 2023 and from November to December 2024, in the Kei Islands. The data for this study were collected through interviews and observations. The informants were selected randomly to answer the research questions, with a total of 30 respondents, including village heads, traditional elders, religious leaders, and individuals knowledgeable about the historical origins of larvul ngabal. The selection of informants aligns with the criteria established by Garraghan and Lewenson as cited in Efilina & Biczó, which emphasize that in qualitative research, the selection of informants should be based on relevance and several key factors.

First, informants should possess expertise in the subject matter. Second, they should have experience or specialization, which indicates their depth of understanding of the research topic. Third, direct involvement with the research object is crucial to ensure that informants provide first-hand insights based on personal experience. Fourth, informants may hold positions as community leaders or officials related to the research topic, offering broader perspectives on relevant

policies and regulations. Lastly, informants can also be selected from the general public who are directly affected by the phenomenon under study, providing real-life accounts of how such phenomena influence daily life (Kissiya & Biczó, 2024).

Furthermore, to enrich this study, we also collected data through literature review. In this research, the authors directly engaged with texts or numerical data, without incorporating field observations or eyewitness accounts in the form of events, individuals, or other objects. Textual criticism is conducted as part of the literature study, making text analysis techniques such as reading books, articles, and documents a fundamental aspect of this research (Snyder, 2019). Based on the background of the research problem, the research question is formulated as follows: "How does the existence of larvul ngabal law manifest in contemporary Kei society?" The objective of this study is to explore the existence and role of larvul ngabal customary law in the daily life of the Kei Islands community.

Previous research

Several studies have been conducted to examine Larvul Ngabal customary law in various aspects of life within the Kei Islands community. J.P. Rahail, in his book Larvul Ngabal, provides an in-depth discussion on the history and structure of this customary law, including the seven fundamental articles that regulate social life in Kei society. Additionally, Nadia Lestari Tarantein, in her research titled "The Significance of larvul ngabal Customary Law and ain ni ain as the basis for Interfaith Interaction in Tual City, Kei Islands," highlights the role of larvul ngabal customary law in fostering religious harmony in Tual City. Furthermore, Abd. Rauf, in his thesis, examines the mechanisms of customary law in resolving interfaith conflicts, emphasizing the role of larvul

ngabal in maintaining peace within the Kei community.

In the environmental context, Temarwut and colleagues analyze the larvul ngabal customary law of sasi from the perspective of Fiqh al-Bi'ah, emphasizing the values of environmental protection and conservation embedded in the customary legal practices of the Kei people. This study demonstrates that larvul ngbal customary law remains relevant within the framework of modern law, social interactions, and environmental protection, making it an essential component of the Kei community's way of life. Furthermore, they link this practice to the concept of Fiqh al-Bi'ah in Islam, asserting that Kei customary law also carries a religious dimension in preserving nature (Temarwut et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, Muhamad Yusuf, Dewi Nofrita, Nanik Nikmal Mafiroh, and Afan Garamatan, in their study titled "Perceptions of larvul ngabal Customary Law Among the Kei Migrant Community in Jayapura City, Papua Province," analyze the understanding and application of Larvul Ngabal customary law among the Kei people residing in Jayapura. This research demonstrates that customary law remains firmly upheld by the Kei community, even after they have settled outside their place of origin (Yusuf et al., 2021). In the field of criminal law, R.H. Rado and Marlyn Jane Alputila, through their article "The Relevance of Kei larvul ngabal Customary Law in the Renewal of National Criminal Law," highlight how this customary legal system can contribute to Indonesia's modern legal framework, particularly in the principles of restorative justice and community-based dispute resolution. The findings of this study indicate that larvul ngabal embodies legal values that can be integrated into the national legal system, fostering a more inclusive legal mechanism that aligns with local cultural traditions (Rado & Alputila, 2022).

At the same time, Bumi Ayu and Mella Ismelina F. Rahayu, in their study "Legal Protection of Customary Land Ownership Rights in Kei," examine how larvul ngabal customary law plays a crucial role in safeguarding the land ownership rights of the Kei community. They also highlight the dispute resolution mechanisms facilitated by customary institutions, demonstrating that the customary legal system remains a primary instrument in addressing land ownership issues within Kei society (Ayu & Rahayu, 2019). From the discussion above, it is evident that existing studies on larvul ngabal have predominantly focused on its legal aspects. In contrast, this paper emphasizes historical and socio-cultural dimensions, employing social and cultural theories to enrich the study of larvul ngabal from these perspectives. The incorporation of these theories aims to foster a more critical, in-depth, and comprehensive analysis, ensuring that this study presents a scholarly work that is both rigorous and academically competent. As a result, the findings of this paper differ from previous research, offering a unique contribution to the discourse on larvul ngabal law.

Findings and interpretation
General Overview of the Kei Islands
The Kei Islands are an archipelago located in the southeastern part of Maluku, Indonesia, consisting of approximately 112 islands, both inhabited and uninhabited. The archipelago is administratively divided into two main regions: Southeast Maluku Regency and Tual City. Southeast Maluku Regency, with Langgur City as its capital, comprises eight districts, while Tual City, with Tual as its capital and consists of seven districts. Each district in the Kei Islands plays a strategic role in managing local potential, ranging from economic development and cultural preservation to natural resource management. This regional division not only facilitates coordination between governmental institutions

but also promotes community participation in decision making processes related to regional development. Consequently, the administrative structure comprising eight districts in Southeast Maluku and seven districts in the Kei Islands serves as a fundamental pillar in efforts to enhance community welfare and promote sustainable regional development. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Map Maluku Tenggara dan Kota Tual
Sumber: https://petatematikindo.wordpress.com
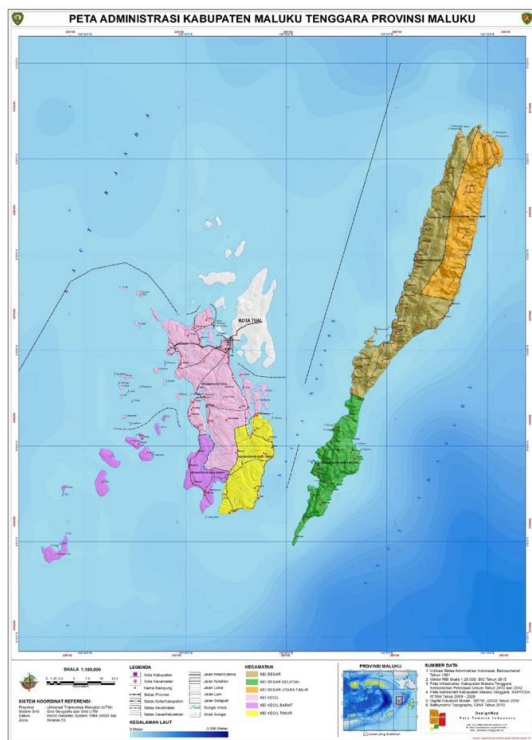
The economy of the Kei community is highly dependent on the marine and fisheries sector, given that the region consists of an archipelago. The majority of the population works as fishermen, catching various high-value fish species, such as yellowfin tuna, albacore, skipjack, bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, and other reef fish. In addition to capture fisheries, seaweed farming is also an important source of income for the community due to the highly favorable marine conditions. The fisheries and aquaculture products are not only utilized for local consumption but are also sold to other regions and even exported to international markets (BPS, 2021).

Aside from the marine sector, agriculture and plantations also serve as a source of livelihood for the local community, albeit on a smaller scale. Several key commodities cultivated in the region include coconuts, sago, nutmeg, and cloves. Sago is the staple food of the Kei people, while coconuts and nutmeg hold significant market value in both regional and national markets. Tourism has also begun to experience rapid growth, following the increasing popularity of the Kei Islands as a premier marine tourism destination. The stunning beaches, such as Ngurbloat Beach, Bair Island, and Ohoidertawun Beach, attract both domestic and international visitors. With the rising number of tourists, supporting industries such as accommodation, culinary services, and transportation have also witnessed significant growth, further contributing to the region's economic development (Tiwery, 2018).

In the realm of creative industries, the Kei community showcases expertise in producing a variety of handicrafts, including traditional textiles, pandanus weaving, and souvenirs crafted from seashells and wood. These items serve not only for local use but also as popular souvenirs for visitors and tourists. In general, the economic foundation of the Kei people continues to rely significantly on natural resources, especially in the fishing and agricultural sectors. However, with the growth of commerce and tourism, new economic prospects are emerging, facilitated by enhancements in infrastructure and increased efforts to promote local potential (BPS Provinsi Maluku, 2022).

The Inhabitants of the Kei Islands

The origins of the Kei Islands' inhabitants can be explained through various theories, including migration, cultural ecology, cultural diffusion, and social hegemony, which suggest that their identity was shaped by human movement, environmental adaptation, and cultural interactions with other groups across the Nusantara and beyond. From the perspective of Peter Bellwood's migration theory, the Kei people are part of the human movement from East Asia and the Sunda Shelf, which later spread to maritime regions of the Nusantara through trade routes and the expansion of Austronesian culture (Bellwood, 2013). This migration process exposed the Kei community to various external cultural influences, including those from India, the Middle East, and other civilizations in the Pacific and Southeast Asia (Lapian, 2017). Beyond physical migration, the existence of the Kei people has also been shaped by adaptation to the natural environment. Living in an archipelagic region, the Kei community has developed a maritime-based economy, including fishing, maritime trade, and coastal resource management. This adaptation is also reflected in the customary legal system of "hawear," which functions as a mechanism for sustainable resource management, ensuring the long-term survival of the community.

Interactions with other groups across the Nusantara have significantly enriched the language, customs, and social structure of the Kei community. Evidence suggests that cultural influences from Ternate, Tidore, India, and the Middle East can be observed in various aspects of Kei society, including the traditional leadership system, the use of gold and ceremonial fabrics in customary rituals, and the structure of larvul ngabal law, which bears similarities to the legal systems of Maluku and other kingdoms in the Nusantara. Additionally, in terms of social classification, the Kei people are categorized into eight ancestral groups, reflecting the diversity of their ethnic backgrounds and places

of origin, particularly when analyzed through the lens of migration history. These groups include those originating from the Strait of Java and Bali (Soat-Bal), Sumatra, and Sumbawa (Sumbaw). Furthermore, other groups trace their origins to Sulawesi and Muna (Mun), Luang and Mataram (Luang Mobes), as well as Ternate (Jailol Ternate). Additional groups have ancestral ties to Seram, Gorom, and Banda (Seran Ngoran), as well as Papua (Vu'ar Kovyay/Nisyav). This classification indicates that the Kei people have a complex migration history, shaped by various population movements across the Nusantara and its surrounding regions (N. A. Kubangun et al., 2023).

The phenomenon described above is referred to by Kroeber as the process of diffusion. He argues that culture does not develop in isolation, but rather through the spread of cultural elements from one society to another. This process occurs in various ways, such as direct contact through migration, trade, and colonization, as well as indirect interaction through foreign cultural influences that are received and locally adapted. Kroeber identifies several forms of cultural diffusion, including direct diffusion, where a culture adopts elements from another culture through physical interaction; indirect diffusion, which occurs through intermediaries without direct contact; and stimulus diffusion, in which a culture adopts an idea from another culture but modifies it to fit its own social context (Kroeber, 1939). Furthermore, the construction of Kei identity has also been influenced by political dynamics and social hegemony, as explained in Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory. Although evidence suggests that some of the ancestors of the Kei people originated from the Middle East and India, their social classification places greater emphasis on their Nusantara origins. This indicates that the formation of Kei identity was not solely a natural process but was also constructed through social and political factors. It is likely that this clas-

Tradition and Culture

The Kei Islands possess a rich and deeply rooted cultural tradition that plays a central role in the daily lives of its people. One of the most fundamental aspects of Kei culture is the customary law known as "larvul ngabal," which serves as a moral and social guideline for the community. This customary law governs various aspects of life, including etiquette, land ownership, social relationships, and conflict resolution. The Kei people hold this tradition in high regard, and its implementation remains strong to this day.

Note: Data is come from interviews. A, G. H, 50 year, male, in Kei Island on 1 November 2024. A. R, D, 45 year, male, in Kei Island, 23 September 2023. A. H, 68 year, male, in Kei Island. A. W. N, 56 year, male, in Kei Island   24 September 2023.

Additionally, the Kei community practices a tradition of mutual cooperation known as "Maren," where all community members work together for a collective purpose, such as house construction, organizing traditional ceremonies, or assisting those in need. This spirit of solidarity reflects the strong communal values embedded in Kei culture. Traditional arts and music also play a significant role in Kei cultural identity. One of the most notable traditional dances is tari sawat, which is often performed during customary rituals and religious ceremonies. This dance features dynamic movements symbolizing bravery and unity. Additionally, traditional musical instruments such as the gong and tifa are commonly played in various cultural and festive events. In the field of textile arts, the Kei people are known for their distinctive traditional weaving, which is often used in customary ceremonies and weddings. Kei woven fabrics feature unique motifs that embody the community's philosophy of life and their deep connection to nature (Silubun, 2020).

Beliefs and spirituality also play a significant role in the lives of the Kei people. Although the majority of the population adheres to Christianity and Islam, they continue to preserve ancestral values that have been passed down through generations. Traditional ceremonies, such as sea rituals to honor ancestors and pray for the safety of fishermen, are still frequently practiced in some traditional villages. Overall, the culture and traditions of the Kei Islands represent a fusion of ancestral customs and religious influences that have evolved over time. The Kei community remains deeply committed to preserving their cultural heritage, making it an inseparable part of their identity and daily life. This paper will not cover all the traditions and cultural aspects of the Kei people but will instead focus specifically on larvul ngabal.

Larvul ngabal Law in History

According to historical accounts obtained through interviews and literature, the term Larvul Ngabal has an etymological origin derived from a combination of words: "Lar" means blood, and "Vul" means red, while "nga" means spear, and "bal" refers to Bali. When translated literally, larvul ngabal means "red blood and the Bali spear." This term is closely linked to oral traditions passed down through generations, which describe historical events that form the foundation of the principles of larvul ngabal law. Larvul ngabal is one of the many forms of local wisdom preserved by the Kei Islands community. According to oral tradition, a family from Bali is believed to have arrived in the Kei Islands by boat, bringing their children and belongings as they sailed towards the

archipelago. Evidence of their arrival is found in the location where they first set foot in the Kei Islands, specifically in Wain village. See Figure 2.

Note: The data is coming from interviews. A, G. H, 50 year, male, in Kei Island on 1 November 2024. A. R, D, 45 year, male, in Kei Island, 23 September 2023. A. H, 68 year, male, in Kei Island. A. W. N, 56 year, male, in Kei Island 24 September 2023. Some other interpretations suggest that *larvul ngabal* originates from the combination of the words *"Lãr"* (with a long "a" sound), meaning "sail," and *"Vul,"* meaning "red." Thus, the term *larvul ngabal* actually refers to the Kei people's ancestral belief regarding the origins of the founders of this customary law. According to various versions of the story about the arrival of the two siblings, it is mentioned that the boat group led by Jangra was separated from Kasdeu's group due to a storm that struck the southern waters of the Kei Islands.

Figure 2. The boat used by the Kasdeu and Jangra families. Source: Author, 2024

Before Kasdeu and Jangra arrived in the Kei Islands, the local inhabitants had already established communal lives in various settlements, both large and small, each led by a hala'ai (traditional leader or chief). Some communities had formed alliances based on kinship or cooperation, and some had even developed their own customary legal systems. However, there was no single set of rules uniformly applied across the region, so the prevailing laws were often determined by the strength or dominance of particular groups. In Kei society, this condition is known as hukum dalo ternat, referring to laws influenced by Jailolo and Ternate.

Kasdeu and Jangra had one son and two daughters, one of whom was named Dit Somar. He inherited several spears from his father, who came from Bali Island. Carrying these spears, Dit Somar sought to build relationships and establish co-operation with local leaders. His efforts were supported by five leaders on Nustēn Island, who then gathered to formulate larvul ngabal law as a shared guideline (Silubun, 2020). This meeting also led to the formation of the lorlim (Union of Five), which became the foundation for cooperation among the leaders in the region.

Note: Data ini didapatkan melalui wawancara. A. R. male, 58 years, in Kei Island, on 21 Juli 2023. U. Y, male, 60 years, in Kei Island, on 1 Agustus 2023.

On Nusyanat Island, Dit Sakmas, the second daughter of Kasdeu and Jangra, experienced bullying while on her way to her future husband's village. This incident escalated into a conflict involving deception and bloodshed. In response, Tebtut, Dit Sakmas's brother, took the initiative to gather the leaders on Nusyanat Island to formulate laws that would regulate community life while also establishing an alliance to enforce them. This effort was positively received by eleven leaders, nine of whom agreed to draft Larvul Ngabal law and establish the Ursiu (Union of Nine) alliance. The symbol of the ursiu alliance is a buffalo. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Symbol of the Ursiu alliance (Union of Nine). Source: Author, 2024

The formation of the Ursiu (Nine) and Lorlim (Five) alliances in the Kei Islands was likely inspired by a mythical system also found in North and Central Maluku. The Siwa-Lima pattern, which is widespread across the Maluku Islands, is believed to have emerged as a result of centuries-long competition in the spice trade. This rivalry involved two major groups: traders who adhered to the Siwa faith, worshipping nine deities as rulers of the universe, and Buddhist traders who followed the five main prohibitions. Although the Kei Islands were not a spice-producing region, their strategic location made them an important stopover in trade routes connecting western Nusantara, the Aru Islands, the Onin Peninsula, the northern coast of Australia, and also a strategic area during the Asia-Pacific War in Maluku. Several places, such as Tual on Du Island and Hār on Nustēn Island, served as transit points for traders traveling along this route (Kissiya, 2020; Leirissa, 1982).

As in North and Central Maluku, the relationship between the ursiu (Union of nine) and lorlim (Union of five) in the Kei Islands was not always harmonious, often marked by power struggles and conflicts over territorial boundaries (Leirissa, 1997; Reid, 1988). Although tensions often arose, larvul

ngabal law was not seen as a conflicting system but rather as a set of complementary rules. Over time, both legal systems were eventually recognized as the primary customary laws governing the entire Kei Islands community, including those belonging to ursiu (Union of nine), lorlim (Union of five), and lorlabai (the neutral group).

Larvul Ngabal Law

The larvul ngabal legal system is summarized in seven main articles, which serve as legal guidelines for Kei society. For more details, see Table 1.

Table 1: Larvul Ngabal Law (Hukum Lavrul Ngabal) in the Kei Islands. Source: Author, 2023 & 2024.

Main Categories	Articles
1. Hukum *Nevnev*	*1. Uud entauk tavunad*
	2. Lelad ain fo mahiling
	3. Ulnit envil atumud
	4. Lar nakmot ivud
2. Hukum *Hanilit*	*5. Rek fo mahiling*
	6. Moryain fo kelmutun
3. Hukum *Hawear Balwirin*	*7. Hira ni fo i, ni it did fo itdid*

The Table 1 shows that the seven articles of larvul ngabal law are divided into three main categories: nevnev law, hanalit law, and hawear balwirin law. Each category governs different aspects of Kei community life, including social norms, family values, and property ownership. Articles one to four fall under nevnev law, which pertains to etiquette norms and criminal law. The next two articles, five and six, are classified under hanalit law, which regulates family norms and morality. The seventh article belongs to hawear balwirin law, which concerns ownership rights and social justice.

Interpretation

Understanding the Formation of Larvul Ngabal Law

From the perspective of etymological theory, which examines the origins and development of word meanings in a language, the term larvul ngabal demonstrates how language functions as a tool for recording the history and culture of a community. Wilhelm von Humboldt, a linguist, argued that language is not merely a means of communication but also reflects the way of thinking and cultural values of the society that uses it (von Humboldt, 2005). In this context, larvul ngabal is not just a combination of words with a literal meaning but also represents heroism, the customary legal system, and the identity of the Kei people, passed down through generations.

As previously explained, long before the arrival of Kasdeu and Jangra, the Kei Islands' society already had an established social structure. This phenomenon can be analyzed using the legal pluralism theory developed by Sally Engle Merry, which explains that in societies without a strong state legal system, there is often an overlap between various legal systems, including customary law, religious law, and external laws imposed by other powers (Merry, 1988). In relation to this, in the Kei Islands, hukum dalo Ternat illustrates how external influences (Jailolo and Ternate) played a role in shaping the local legal system, reflecting the existence of legal pluralism in Kei society before the codification of larvul ngabal customary law.

Additionally, Eugen Ehrlich's theory of customary law, as presented in Fundamental Principles of the Sociology of Law, emphasizes that law does not originate solely from the state or formal authorities but also develops organically within society through social norms and customs (Ehrlich, 1962). In the context of Kei, each community had its own customary legal system before the establishment of larvul ngabal law. This also relates to Roscoe Pound's concept of "living law", which asserts that law must be understood within the context of the social life of the society that practices it (Ehrlich, 1962).

From the perspective of Antonio Gramsci's hegemonic theory, hukum dalo ternat can be seen as a form of cultural and political domination (Gramsci, 2011) by the more powerful Maluku kingdoms over the Kei people. Jailolo and Ternate had significant economic power in the spice trade, making their influence on Kei's legal and social structures understandable as a process of hegemony, in which a dominant group establishes norms and rules that others follow. Thus, before the formulation of larvul ngabal law, the legal system in the Kei Islands was pluralistic and influenced by external power dynamics. The process of developing larvul ngabal customary law then became a step toward codifying a more unified legal system, replacing the previous system, which had been more dependent on power struggles and external influences from the Maluku kingdoms.

The story of Dit Somar in the formation of larvul ngabal law can be analyzed through various social, political, and legal theories that explain the development of legal systems and leadership within a society. Dit Somar represents charismatic leadership, where his influence did not stem from formal rules or lineage but rather from his personality, symbolism, and ability to build trust within the community. By carrying the spear inherited from his father, who came from Bali Island, Dit Somar used the spear as a symbol of legitimacy, enabling him to unite five leaders on Nustēn Island. This illustrates how a leader with charisma and moral influence can create a new social structure that is accepted by the community, as described by Max Weber in Economy and Society in Holton & Turner (Holton & Turner, 2010).

Furthermore, the process of formulating larvul ngabal law can be linked to the social contract

theory introduced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his work The Social Contract. Rousseau argued that laws emerge from a collective agreement within society to establish order and justice (Rousseau, 1938). In this context, the five leaders on Nustēn Island consciously gathered to formulate larvul ngabal law as a shared guideline, reflecting the existence of a social contract that bound them within an agreed legal system. This decision signifies a transition from an unstructured legal system based on the dominance of certain groups to a more organized, collective, and widely accepted legal framework within the community.

As previously explained, before Larvul Ngabal law was formulated, each community in the Kei Islands had its own distinct customary laws, but there was no single legal system that unified them. Dit Somar and the five leaders on Nustēn Island then consolidated these customary norms into a more structured legal framework, reflecting how customary law can emerge and evolve from the social practices of the community itself. From Antonio Gramsci's hegemonic perspective, the formation of the Lorlim (Union of Five) alliance can also be understood as a process of cultural hegemony, in which a group with greater influence creates a new social consensus and norms that are widely accepted by society. In Prison Notebooks, Gramsci argues that hegemony is not established solely through physical force but also through ideological influence and social consensus (Gramsci, 2011). In this context, larvul ngabal law became a hegemonic tool that unified Kei society under a widely accepted legal system. This law was not merely a set of rules but also a symbol of the social and cultural identity of the Kei people, demonstrating that the formation of law is not just a legal process but also a political and cultural one. Therefore, this event reflects how charismatic leadership, social contract theory, customary law, and cultural hegemony interact in the formation of legal and social structures in the Kei Islands. Dit

Somar was not only a visionary leader but also the initiator of a legal system that emerged from social consensus and the needs of the community. The formation of larvul ngabal law and the lorlim alliance demonstrates that law does not always originate from formal institutions but can also develop through social norms, political interactions, and cultural symbolism accepted by society.

The bullying incident involving Dit Sakmas, which ultimately led to bloodshed, illustrates a social conflict that triggered the transformation of the legal system on Nusyanat Island. Tebtut, as Dit Sakmas's brother, took on the role of a leader by initiating a gathering of local leaders to formulate a more systematic legal framework while also establishing the Ursiu (union of nine) alliance as the body responsible for enforcing these laws. From the perspective of social conflict theory, as proposed by Lewis Coser in The Functions of Social Conflict, conflict often serves as a catalyst for broader social change (Coser, 1964). In this case, the incident involving Dit Sakmas created tensions that compelled local leaders to establish a more structured legal system to prevent similar conflicts in the future. This event also aligns with Johan Galtung's conflict transformation theory, which emphasizes that conflict can lead to more just structural changes when addressed through dialogue and the formulation of new regulations.

Additionally, the formulation of larvul ngabal law by the nine leaders on Nusyanat Island can be linked to social contract theory. In this context, the agreement among the nine leaders to establish larvul ngabal law reflects the existence of a social contract, where laws were no longer determined by individuals or specific groups but were collectively agreed upon for the greater good of society. Before larvul ngabal was established, the people of Nusyanat Island had customary rules that were not yet centralized, making this new legal system a codification of pre-existing social values. This

demonstrates that customary law evolves as a response to emerging social challenges within a community. Larvul ngabal law and the Ursiu alliance became tools for local leaders to establish dominance through a legal agreement accepted by society. In this context, law not only functions as a normative regulation but also as a mechanism for building a more stable power structure, where the leader group (Hala'ai) plays a crucial role in law enforcement and social conflict management.

Thus, the bullying incident involving Dit Sakmas and Tebtut's initiative in formulating larvul ngabal law reflect how social conflict can serve as a catalyst for legal transformation and social order. In this process, various theories such as social conflict, social contract, customary law, and cultural hegemony help explain how larvul ngabal emerged as a product of societal consensus aimed at establishing order and stability in their social life. Fieldwork findings indicate that the formation of the ursiu (nine) and lorlim (five) alliances in the Kei Islands can be linked to social, economic, and legal theories that explain how social structures are formed and evolve within a society. The siwa-lima system, which is also found in North and Central Maluku, demonstrates the influence of trade and cultural interactions in shaping the social structure of the Kei community (Kissiya, 2019; N. Kubangun et al., 2023).

In relation to this, Karl Polanyi, in his book The Great Transformation, emphasizes that the economy of traditional societies is inseparable from social and cultural factors (Polanyi, 1944).

In this context, the existence of the group of nine and the group of Five reflects how the Nusantara trade system and economic networks played a role in shaping the social and legal identity of the Kei community.

Additionally, the formation of the two main groups (ursiu and lorlim) can also be analyzed through Furnivall's theory of social dualism, which explains how societies within a region can be divided into two social groups that develop in parallel while still interacting (Ohoira, 2016). In this context, ursiu and lorlim were linked to belief systems and trade alliances, yet they often competed to maintain influence and power in the Kei Islands. The conflict between these two groups aligns with Lewis Coser's social conflict theory, which emphasizes that competition between groups is often a driving force behind social and political change.

Although tensions often arose, larvul ngabal law remained recognized as the primary customary legal system governing the entire Kei community. This aligns with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's social contract theory, which states that societies establish laws as a result of a collective agreement to create order and social balance. In the Kei context, larvul ngabal law developed as a form of social contract between previously competing groups, who ultimately agreed on a set of rules to govern their shared way of life.

From the perspective of Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory, larvul ngabal law can also be understood as a cultural hegemony instrument that ensures a social order accepted by all parties. In Prison Notebooks, Gramsci explains that the ruling class or dominant group often creates norms and rules that are accepted by society as part of a social consensus (Gramsci, 1971). In this context, larvul ngabal is not merely a customary law but also a system that upholds power structures and unity within the Kei society.

The Existence of Larvul Ngabal Law by Articles
Larvul ngabal law remains the primary guideline in the lives of the Kei Islands' communities, despite modernization and the implementation of state law. This legal system functions not only as customary law but also as a set of moral values, social norms, and a conflict resolution mechanism within the community. Its presence remains

relevant in various aspects of life, including social relations, customary law, dispute resolution, as well as cultural and economic practices. The larvul ngabal law will be discussed article by article in this section.

The fisrt article uud entauk tavunad, meaning "the head rests on the nape," emphasizes that each individual is responsible for their own actions. This principle is evident in the customary conflict resolution system, where those who commit wrongdoing must be held accountable before customary institutions. For example, in cases of land disputes between families in Kei, the community prefers to resolve conflicts through customary deliberation rather than immediately taking the matter to formal legal institutions. In such cases, individuals who violate customary law are required to pay sanctions in the form of gold, traditional cloth, or livestock, depending on the severity of the offense. This concept can be explained through Talcott Parsons' structural-functionalism theory, which asserts that each individual in society has roles and responsibilities that must be fulfilled to maintain social balance. When a violation occurs, customary law functions as a social control mechanism to ensure that the individual returns to the established norms (Parsons, 1961).

The larvul ngabal law reinforces the values of politeness and ethics in social interactions. The principle of "lelad ain fo mahiling," which emphasizes the importance of maintaining dignity and honor, is still upheld in Kei society. For example, in customary marriage traditions, the groom's family must pay belis (bride price) according to the agreed terms as a sign of respect for the bride's family. If this obligation is not fulfilled, it may be considered an insult, potentially leading to family conflicts. This phenomenon can be linked to John Finnis' natural law theory, which asserts that law does not only originate from human-made rules but also from moral values

embedded within a society's culture (Finnis, 2011). In the Kei community, larvul ngabal law is followed not only because it is customary and binding but also because it is regarded as a moral value that must be respected to maintain social harmony.

Subsequently, the article "ulnit envil atumud" emphasizes the importance of patience, resilience, and social solidarity. This concept remains evident in the tradition of mutual cooperation, known as masohi, where the Kei community consistently works together in various aspects of life. For example, when someone needs assistance in building a house or faces economic difficulties, community members voluntarily help without expecting any compensation. This demonstrates that collective interests are prioritized over individual needs. This concept can be explained through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital, which states that social relationships within a community create value and resources that help maintain social balance (Bourdieu, 1977). In Kei society, mutual cooperation is not only an expression of social care but also strengthens social networks and trust among community members.

Succeeding, "lar nakmot ivud," meaning "blood as a symbol of life," is closely related to customary criminal law, which strictly prohibits acts of violence or murder. If a fight results in the loss of life, the perpetrator is not only punished under state law but must also undergo a customary trial and pay customary sanctions to the victim's family. For example, in cases of inter village conflicts in Kei Besar, perpetrators are required to pay compensation in the form of gold, traditional cloth, and other valuable items as a form of social responsibility and to restore balance within the community.

The principles of "rek fo mahiling" and "moryain fo kelmutun," which mean "the threshold must be guarded and respected," are part of Hanalit law within larvul ngabal, emphasizing the importance

of honor, the sanctity of the household, and respect for social boundaries in Kei society. This principle teaches that the family is a sacred institution, and any violation of household honor such as infidelity, adultery, or inappropriate behavior is considered a serious offense under customary law. In contemporary Kei society, this customary law is still highly respected and practiced in social interactions, the marriage system, and conflict resolution within families. As a case in point, in cases of infidelity or extramarital relationships that become known to the community, the guilty couple will be tried in a customary court, where they may face customary sanctions such as fines in the form of gold, traditional cloth, or the obligation to perform a customary ritual as an apology to the affected family. If the violation is committed by a married man, he may be required to pay compensation to his wife and her family or even be expelled from the village as a form of social punishment. This reflects the function of larvul ngabal law as a tool for maintaining social stability and preventing family discord.

In line with this, Travis Hirschi's social control theory states that social norms and cultural values play a role in regulating individual behavior, preventing deviation from societal rules (Hirschi, 2001). In Kei society, customary laws such as rek fo mahiling and moryain fo kelmutun function as social controls that regulate individual behavior within households and interfamily relationships. With these laws in place, people are more cautious in maintaining social ethics, particularly in interactions between men and women, and they show greater respect for household boundaries. Furthermore, these laws are closely related to Talcott Parsons' structural functionalism theory, which argues that every social norm serves a function in maintaining balance and order in society. In the Kei context, rek fo mahiling and moryain fo kelmutun acts as a social mechanism

ensuring that family relationships remain harmonious, the dignity of both men and women is upheld, and no violations occur that could disrupt the social structure. Thus, these customary laws serve not only as normative regulations but also as tools for preserving interfamily relationships and maintaining moral values within the community.

The article "hira ni Fo I, ni it did fo itdid," which means "What belongs to others remains theirs, what belongs to us remains ours," is part of hawear balwirin law within the larvul ngabal legal system. This article emphasizes fundamental principles of ownership, honesty, and respect for others' property, which serve as the foundation of social life in Kei society.The core value of this article is the prohibition against theft, confiscation, or any actions that harm others in terms of property ownership. In Kei customary law, personal and communal assets, land, and resources must be respected, and every individual is obliged to maintain their rights without violating the property rights of others.

In practice, if someone violates this article by stealing or taking property that does not belong to them, they will be subject to customary sanctions under larvul ngabal law. These sanctions may include returning the stolen goods along with paying customary fines, such as gold, traditional cloth, or livestock. Additionally, the perpetrator may face social punishment in the form of ostracization or moral sanctions from the community. A concrete example can be seen in cases of land theft or illegal exploitation of marine resources in the Kei Islands, where a customary court is immediately convened to resolve disputes based on customary law, ensuring that property rights are upheld and social balance is maintained. From the perspective of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's social contract theory, this article reflects how the Kei community establishes a social agreement to respect collective property rights as part of maintaining community order. Meanwhile, ac-

cording to Émile Durkheim's restitutive law theory, this article functions to restore social balance in cases of violations, where customary sanctions aim to repair social relationships between the offender and the victim. Thus, the article "Hira Ni Fo I, Ni It Did Fo Itdid" is not merely a customary rule but also a symbol of honesty, respect for property rights, and social balance within Kei society. Its continued existence demonstrates that the Kei people remain committed to the principles of justice and respect for ownership rights, despite undergoing various social and legal transformations in the modern era.

Conclusion

Larvul ngabal law is a customary legal system that serves as the fundamental framework for regulating the social, political, and cultural life of the Kei people. This law functions not only as a normative instrument but also as a reflection of moral values, justice, and social balance that have been passed down through generations. With its core principles embedded in nevnev (criminal law), hanalit (family law), and hawear balwirin (property law), larvul ngabal has established a legal system that emphasizes respect for life, family, and ownership within the community. The continuity of larvul ngabal law in Kei society demonstrates that customary law still plays a significant role despite legal modernization and the development of state law. The Kei people continue to rely on customary legal mechanisms to resolve conflicts, including family disputes, ownership disagreements, and violations of social norms, highlighting the law's restorative and community-based nature. Although state law now governs various aspects of society, larvul ngabal remains recognized and respected as an integral part of the Kei people's cultural identity. Its persistence proves that customary norms and laws possess resilience in maintaining social harmony and remain relevant in addressing modern social challenges. Thus, larvul ngabal is not merely a set of customary laws but a legal system deeply rooted in the cultural and spiritual values of the Kei community, continuing to endure as an essential part of their collective life.

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BRIDGING TRADITIONS: A STUDY OF CULTURAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VEDDA DANCE AND SABARAGAMUWA DANCE

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Abstract

The research was conducted to explore how the connection between the Sabaragamuwa region and the Vedda, as identified through a literature review, is reflected in the Vedda Dance and the Sabaragamuwa Dance. Data was collected mainly through studying relevant literature, interviews, and field visits. Consequently, the data analysis of the research revealed that the diffusionism that occurred between Sri Lankan indigenous culture and Sabaragamuwa province was the root cause for the identified correlation between Vedda dance and Sabaragamu Dance. Moreover, the diffusionism of the two cultures highlighted the shared cultural influences and the interconnectedness of the two.

Keywords: Correlation, Rituals, Beliefs, diffusionism, Sabaragamuwa dance, Vedda dance
Discipline: Cultural Anthropologhy

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Absztrakt

A HAGYOMÁNYOK ÁTHIDALÁSA: A VEDDA TÁNC ÉS A SABARAGAMUWA TÁNC KÖZÖTTI KULTURÁLIS KAPCSOLATOK TANULMÁNYOZÁSA

A kutatást annak feltárására végezték, hogy a Sabaragamuwa régió és a Vedda népcsoport között az irodalmi áttekintés során azonosított kapcsolat miként tükröződik a vedda táncban és a sabaragamuwa táncban. Az adatgyűjtés elsősorban releváns szakirodalom tanulmányozásával, interjúkkal és terep-látogatásokkal történt. Az adatelemzés eredményei azt mutatták, hogy a Srí Lanka-i őslakos kultúra és a Sabaragamuwa tartomány közötti diffúzió volt a vedda tánc és a sabaragamuwa tánc közötti kapcsolat oka. Ezen túlmenően, a két kultúra közötti diffúzió rávilágított a közös kulturális hatásokra és a két hagyomány összekapcsoltságára.

Kulcsszavak: kapcsolat, rituálék, hiedelmek, diffúzió, Sabaragamuwa tánc, Vedda tánc

Diszciplina: kulturális antropológia

The Vedda

The Vedda community, Sri Lankan indigenous people, use various rituals to express their cultural identity. Among these, the Vedda dance is considered a significant ritual form that reflects the essence of the Vedda community. Moreover, the Vedda dance, as a ritual, serves as a medium to preserve the unique traditions, beliefs, and identity of the Vedda community. This cultural practice highlights the connection between their spiritual beliefs and their everyday life. The research, employing Cultural Anthropology, provides an insight into the Vedda dance's role in maintaining cultural heritage and reveals how such rituals can contribute to the continuity of traditions in the Vedda community. The Vedda people have a traditional way of life that is connected with hunting, gathering, and fishing. They live in remote areas, away from the main population and historically they have survived by using the resources found in the forests. Their culture is deeply connected to nature, and their spiritual beliefs and rituals reflect the mentioned relationship.

The study is set in the areas of Dambana, bordering to Maduru Oya conservation from North and West and, Hennanigala, bordering to Marduru Oya conservation from the East. However, though the Vedda people have their own language and customs, which distinguish them from the broader Sri Lankan society, currently it is well evident that such are gradually changing with the influence of modern external society in their lives. But, it is noteworthy that, despite the mentioned external influences, the Vedda people in Dambana and Hennanigala still strive to maintain many of their traditional practices, especially in more isolated communities. Thus, the research cohort of this study was selected on the hypothesis that there are still some indigenous people in both Dambana and Hennanigala, who strive to pass their cultural and traditional values to the future generations, especially the dancing traditions.

Since the current society and culture of Sri Lankan indigenous people are directly involved with national and international tourism and have been commodified, the key values of Vedda dance cannot be either seen or studied currently. Unfortunately, this causes a lack of reliable information for a scholarly study on Vedda dance, especially in all the prevailing Vedda communities in the country. However, despite the identification of "Kiri Koraha Dance" (an Indigenous ritualistic

dance) as the Vedda dance, it was revealed in a conversation with the Wanniyalaeththa, Dambana (the leader of the current Vedda Community) that the Sri Lankan indigenous people own a great dancing tradition, which is old more than 37,000 years. Hence, such dancing traditions still prevailed, evolving with the contemporary changes in their cultural and social aspects.

The research aims to identify the correlation between the Veddha community and Sabaragamuwa province by comparing the social and cultural aspects of Vedda dance with the Sabaragamu Dance tradition, through a study conducted in several stages. And, the collected data of the study was analyzed through the application of contextual comparative analysis. Since the non-availability of secondary resources about the Vedda dance, this study has employed a part of the research by Seligmann, conducted 111 years ago on the Vedda Pooja dance as a secondary resource. In the research, a comparative study was conducted to examine the Vedda dance as it has been observed by Seligmann and the contemporary Vedda dance. Subsequently, a comparative study was conducted on both Vedda dance and Sabaragamu dance based on both primary and secondary resources. As the methods of data collection, observations were used by the researcher to gather data on the Vedda dance, and the Sabaragamu dance was studied by analyzing literature, interviews, and videos.

The study was conducted in four phases, which in the first, a thorough literature review was conducted to gather information on the Vedda people and their life, rituals, behavioral patterns, and their beliefs. As well, The Vedda dance and its evolution were also studied in the first phase of the study with a special reference to the Sabaragamu Dance.

In the second phase of the study, collected literature was analyzed and significant, data was collected through field visits and observations to Dambana and Hennanigala, the two villages selected for the research. Such data collection methods were specifically preferred for the study to lessen the peculiar feelings of the research cohort for the study and mainly to have genuine data on the traditions and rituals of the indigenous people.

In the third phase of the study, interviews were conducted to gather information. The interviews for the research were set in two stages, an interview with Wanniyalaeththan (current leader of Sri Lankan indigenous people) and a few other old indigenous people and young indigenous people from the community. The second stage of the interviews was conducted with the experts of the Sabaragamu Dancing tradition and the researchers of the field.

In the fourth phase of the study, both the Vedda dance and the Sabaragamu dance tradition were comparatively studied and analyzed to study the social and cultural aspects of Vedda dance to highlight the findings of the study.

Information received through analyzing literature paved the path for the study to examine the co-relationship and cultural diffusion between the Sabaragamu dance tradition and Vadda dance, based on the facts found on the relationship between the Vedda community and Sabaragamuwa province.

When studying literature, it is found that there are many assumptions on the origin of the term "Sabaragamuwa". Some argue that the name originated as the area was well known for the density of trees called "sabara" while some highlighted that the name originated as a result of commonly found gem called "Sappheiros" in the area. Also, some assume that the name was originated as a species of fish named "Sabara" inhibited in the particular area. Furthermore, another assumption suggests that the name was based on the name of traders called "Saraba", who used to trade gem in the particular province. However, the literature also suggests that the word "Sabara" was also used to refer to Vadda people.

Consequently, as stated by Medhananda (2003, pg 03) the name "Sabaragamuwa" may suggest the meaning that of the area inhabited by Vadda people.

Parker (1984, pg 32) analyzing a fresco of an ancient temple that indicates demons with bows and arrows, has tried to highlight the fact that both Vadda and Yakka belong to the same tribe while Davy (1821) has mentioned of Vadda people as Savages. As he stated, Vadda people have inhabited in the lands of Sabaragamuwa and the coastal areas of the country, which are known as Vadda rata, Binthanna, MahaVadda Rata, and Uva. According to Seneviratne (1915, pg 10), it is stated that a monk named Wajraboghi has met some people who resided in jungles on his pilgrimage to Sri Pada.(Adam's Peak) And, as Virchow stated, the Vadda people have inhabited the lands of Samanthakoota. (1886)

According to Baily (1863), the ancestors of the Vadda people perhaps were the Tamil people. To justify this opinion, he tries to compare the similarities of the term "Gona" used by the Sinhale to the word "Gawara" by the Vadda people to refer to the same animal. According to Daraniyagala (1963) an animal identified as "Gawara" has inhibited in Sabaragamuwa around 5000 years before and the area called "Gawaraeliya" is located between Nuwaraeliya and Sri Pada. A Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, written by D. Queyros (1603) describes the rituals of the Vedda people and their beliefs. In his writings, he mentions a dancing performance of an indigenous female at Saman Devalaya in Ratnapura. However, though there is very clear evidence of the dancing performance- Dig gei natuma performed by the female of Manikka Mahage ancestry, Queyro's writings can be considered as the first written evidence of a dancing performance of female Vedda people in Sabaragamu Maha Saman Devalaya. Thus, it can be considered as one of the prominent evidences of certifying the relationship between Sabaragamuwa and the Vadda community.

According to the skeletal examinations conducted by Prof. Kennedy (1971) from Cornale University - USA, of the Balangoda Man-homonics from Sri Lanka and Vadda people revel a relationship of over 180000 between the two communities and even suggest that the Vadda community has been originated from the homonics of the country. Moreover, as Howkey (2002) indicated, the analysis of Balangoda Man in Sri Lanka reveals an older history than the people who lived in the Mesolithic age in India. On the contrary, she also indicated the differences of the incisor teeth of both the Vadda people and Balangoda Man, stating that the incisor teeth of the Vadda people are smaller than of the Balangoda Man, implying his adoptions and changes of food.

As claimed by Dissanaike (2003), the first Vadda community was inhabited in Sinharaja, and this also has been related to the origins of the names of villages such as "Vaddagala"- the rock where the Vadda people recided. However, according to Seligmann and Brohier (1969), the Vadda community has been originated from the Yakka tribe of the country, and studies of Daraniyagala (1940, 1943, 1945, 1953-6,1963,1973) reveal that the Sabara, pulinda, yakka, and naga communities can be identified as Vadda people. Moreover, his studies conducted in 1971,192,1992,2004, and 2007 reveal that the physical appearance of Balangoda Man is very similar to the Vadda people in the country. Especially, the features such as a sharp forehead, sketch, strong cheek, tooth, and short nose were identified as the physical features of Balangoda man and such can again be identified in the primitive communities in Asia. (1964, pg 63)

The study conducted by Dr. Aravinda Ravibandu Sumanaratne, Kuruppu Bandara, and Iasminu Livia Hornoiu on the human and physical features of schools of Sabaragamuwa Dance can be studied as a significant comparative study on the topic. In the

study, the measurements of the physical features of the practitioners of the Sabaragamuwa dance have been compared to the Balangoda man and the studies of the fossils. Accordingly, the analysis has identified a very clear relationship between the two. (2017)

Consequently, a significant relationship between the Vadda people and Sabaragamuwa Province is very clearly revealed through the studies of the literature mentioned.

Collected data through historical evidence, literature, interviews, and observations were logically analyzed, mainly dividing them into three such as

  i) Music Instrument
 ii) Dance Movements
iii) Beliefs and Rituals

Music Instrument

In many dancing traditions in the world, a unique musical instrument is used to showcase their cultural and traditional identity. Subsequently, in the Sabaragamuwa dance, the Dawla (drum which is played with Kadippuwa, a wooden drumstick) can be identified as the main musical instrument used. Interestingly, many musical instruments in the world can be compared to the Dawla in Sabaragamuwa dance. According to Pieris (2012, p. 98), Dawla can be identified as one of the oldest musical instruments in Sri Lanka.

Dawla is especially played in all the ritualistic dances linked to the Sabaragamuwa tradition, as well as in performing offerings at both temples and Devala for Lord Buddha and gods. Currently, we can notice the use of Dawla in contemporary music too.

This particular musical instrument is made of the trunks of neem, Milla, or Ehela trees at a selected auspicious time. Though the skin of a deer was used to cover the head drum in the past, the skin of the buffalo is used now. (Kumarathunga, 2018, p.88) Similarly, Kadippuwa, which is used to play the drum is made of the sticks of the trees, either Atteria or Magul Karanda.

Sri Lankan Indigenous people also have a similar musical instrument to Dawla, which is named "Kande Ketu Yamake". They prepare the shell of this particular drum using the trunks of the trees, Ehela, Burutha, etc and the kadippuwa is made of the wood of the Veera tree. Furthermore, either the monkey skin or deer skin is used to cover the drum head. Consequently, it is well evident that both in Sabaragamu tradition and in Vedda culture, using the skin of a deer to cover the head of the musical instruments, both Dawla and Kande Ketu Yamake was common.

As stated by Gnanasiri Pieris, 09 shell shapes of drums have been mainly identified. Accordingly, the simplest shell shape identified is the cylindrical shape. , Dawla, which can be identified as a very simple musical instrument is the only instrument used in both Sabaragamu province and by the Vedda people. Due to the simplicity of the shell shape of the Dawla, we can identify many similar musical instruments among the indigenous people all over the world. The use of Dawla in Vedda dance has been clarified by the writings of Seligmann, "Then he began to dance in the usual manner to the accompaniment of a drum played by a Vedda lad" (1911, pg. 215)

Contrastingly, according to Seligmann (1911) Vedda people of Bediyan Gal Gei and Sithala Wanniya (two places where Sri Lankan Vedda people resided) have mentioned a lack/unavailability of a musical instrument when performing their dance. However, Seligmann has again mentioned that of a Dawla used by the Vedda people who lived in Bandaraduwa. Accordingly, it implies a possible diffusionism between the people in Sabaragamuwa and the Vedda people, which ultimately led them to use either Dawla or a similar music instrument. Yet, as explained by

Kumarathunga (2018, pg. 91), though there is an organized and well-practiced way of making Dawla in Sabaragamuwa, as revealed in the interviews, Vedda people do not own such a practice. The Vedda people were very concerned about the articulation of the sound and they played the instrument on the rhythm of their feet.

As discussed through the information gathered through the interviews, literature, and observations, a possible relationship is well evident between the Dawla in the Sabaragamu dance and Kande Ketu Yamake in the Vedda dance, despite the mentioned differences. Thus, it proves the visual, structural, and sound articulation similarities comparatively.

Dance Movement

Dance movement causes the differences of all dance traditions in the world. Though all dance forms share foundational concepts known as elements of dance, dance movements differ according to the socio-cultural aspects that it is placed and involved with. Accordingly given below is the observations of Seligmann (1911, p. 08) on the Vedda dance and its movements.

We shall shortly quote their description of this dance and meanwhile content ourselves with summarizing the movements of the Vedda dances. Essentially, these appear to consist of steps taken alternately with each foot, each step being followed by a couple of pats on the ground delivered with the ball of the foot that is in advance, and after each such movement with right or left foot a half turn is made. The rhythm of the dance is kept by swaying the body gently from the waist, the hands (when not beating the body or holding an object) being allowed to swing freely; with each half turn forward the body is inclined forward and the head bent so that the hair falls over the face, and with each half turn backward the head is thrown backward. The dance always begins slowly and gently, the back foot still touching the ground

while that foot with which the step has been made performs the double pat, so that just at first it is little more than a shuffle, soon, however, the feet are raised more and more and longer paces are taken, the back foot no longer remains on the ground while the double pat is made and the swaying and bending of the body is greatly increased.

However, unlike Vedda dance, Sabaragamu dance always implies a relationship with gravity through how the dance movements are posed through direct and parallel moves. Yet, the similarities between these two dance forms cannot be neglected since they can be studied as follows.

In Sabaragamu dance, Mandiya refers to the basic postures or foundational stances of Sabaragamuwa dance in which dancers assume semi-crouched positions, with knees slightly bent, emphasizing balance and flexibility and then the body remains upright but relaxed, with a poised demeanor that allows fluid transitions between movements. This particular stance forms the basis for other dynamic movements like jumps, footwork, and gestures. In Vedda dance movements, a similar stance can be observed and it is recognized as a primary stance of Sabaragamu Mandiya. Dwithwa Adi Pagima (Double Stamping Footwork is a specific footwork technique in Sabaragamu dance where the dancer emphasizes rhythm by stamping both feet in a patterned manner. As stated by Seligmann, a similar movement is observed in the Vedda dance as well. "these appear to consist of steps taken alternately with each foot, each step being followed by a couple of pats on the ground delivered with the ball of the foot that is in advance." (Seligman 1911, pg.211).

Furthermore, in Sabaragamu dance, thahar refers to the intricate and rhythmic foot movements in Sabaragamuwa dance. Such foot movements also can be observed in the Vedda dance.

Jumps are the dynamic leaps that add a dramatic flair to the performance, which is frequently

performed in sabaragamu tradition and this also is observed in the Hakma ritual of Vedda dance. Subsequently, Hamaraya and Adawwa elements in Sabaragamu dance are also significant since Hamaraya refers to circular body movements, while Adawwa involves rotational movements or spins. In the Vedda dance, especially in the Mal Eliya dance that worships Badara Devi and Kola Maduwa dance, we can observe the two movements of Hamaraya and Adawwa.

Conversations, symbolic interactions between dancers or with the audience, conveyed through movement and expression, possessing (trance states), a spiritual element where the dancer enters a trance-like state, symbolizing possession by a deity or spirit, imitating, movements that mimic elements of nature, animals, or deities, often as part of a ritual or narrative, gini pegima (fire movement or fire play), a spectacular element of Sabaragamuwa dance where the dancer interacts with fire as part of the performance, dancing with around an offering are the other movements in Sabaragamuwa dance that aligns with Vedda dance. Since Sabaragamuwa dance is considered a multidimensional art form that combines physical skill, rhythmic precision, and spiritual depth, elements like mandiya, dwithwa adi pegima, thahar, jumps, hamaraya and dawwa, conversations, possession, imitation, and gini pagima conjoin to create a dynamic and meaningful performance by imbuing each movement with cultural and spiritual significance. This blend moreover makes the dance both an artistic and ritualistic experience. Consequently, the influence of such dance performances in Vedda dance also becomes inevitable. For example, the foundational stances (Mandiya) and footwork techniques (Dwithwa Adi Pagima) in both dance forms suggest a shared cultural heritage while the similarities in these movements imply that they may have been diffused from one culture to the other, possibly through prolonged interaction.

It is well evident since Hamaraya (circular body movements) and Adawwa (rotational movements) in Sabaragamu dance are also observed in Vedda dance, particularly in rituals like the Mal Eliya dance and Kola Maduwa dance. This further confirms the concept of cultural diffusion, suggesting that these movements may have been adopted and adapted by the Vedda people from the Sabaragamuwa dance tradition.

Beliefs and Rituals

The concepts of Yakka (spirits or demons) and Deva (deities or divine beings) are central to many traditional Sri Lankan dance forms, particularly in the Sabaragamuwa dance tradition and the indigenous Vedda dances. These concepts are deeply rooted in Sri Lanka's spiritual, ritualistic, and animistic traditions, reflecting the coexistence of Buddhism, Hinduism, and indigenous beliefs.

In Sri Lankan cosmology, Yakka are supernatural beings often associated with natural forces, ancestral spirits, or malevolent entities. Though the term "demon" is sometimes used, it does not always imply evil as Yakka can also act as protectors or neutral forces, and Deva is considered benevolent divine beings who protect humans and grant blessings. They are often associated with Buddhist and Hindu traditions, merging with local animistic beliefs.

The Sabaragamuwa dance tradition incorporates Yakka and Deva concepts through elaborate rituals and dramatic performances, often performed in ceremonial contexts like Gam Maduwa or Devol Maduwa. In sabaragamuwa dance, rituals often involve dances to appease the Yakka, particularly when they are believed to be the cause of illness, misfortune, or natural disasters. In the Sabaragamu dance tradition, the yakka concept is highlighted by worshipping Amarapathi Kiri Amma, Kalu Kurumbaya, Kalu Wedhi Dewathawa, Ussangoda Yakku, Bandara Yakku and etc. The Thovil ceremony is a prominent example where dances

invoke Yakka spirits for exorcism or healing. Considering the movements, dances portraying Yakka are dynamic and intense, with sharp, forceful movements symbolizing their powerful and unpredictable nature, and facial expressions are exaggerated, sometimes using masks to depict specific Yakka. Moreover, rhythms played on traditional drums like the Daula and Thammattama are fast-paced and energetic to evoke the presence of Yakka.

The Concept of Deva in Sabaragamuwa tradition involves dances invoking Deva performed as offerings of gratitude or to seek blessings and protection. As an example, the Pattini Maduwa is a ceremonial dance invoking the goddess Pattini for fertility and well-being. The movements and expressions of dance include the gestures and poses which are graceful and harmonious, with fluid transitions and symmetrical postures that reflect their benevolence and divinity. And the rhythm for Deva dances is softer and more melodic, accompanied by devotional chants or invocations.

On the contrary, Vedda, Sri Lanka's indigenous community, has a rich tradition of dance and ritual deeply intertwined with animistic beliefs. Their understanding of Yakka and Deva is unique and reflective of their symbiotic relationship with nature.

Veddahs perceive Yakka as ancestral spirits or natural forces rather than purely malevolent entities. They are seen as guardians of the forest and intermediaries between the human and spiritual worlds. Their rituals aim to honor Yakka, seeking their guidance or appeasing them to avoid harm. Veddah dances for Yakka are raw and primal, reflecting their connection to nature and the spirit world. The dance movements are repetitive, rhythmic, and grounded, often mimicking animals or natural phenomena to symbolize harmony with the spirits. Serath Amaththaya, Mawaragala Amaththaya, Kehelpothagala Amath-

thaya, Divis Kiri Ammala Aththo, Miris Ge Loka, Maldampahe Amaththaya, Le Path Amaththaya, Maha Loku Kiri Ammala Aththo, Gal Iri Nachchila Aththo, Kiri Path Nachchila Aththo, Hamba Kumari, Mal Wadam Rassaya, Gale Rassaya are some of the ancestral Yakka spirits worshipped by them. The Kiri Koraha ritual is a significant Veddah ceremony where Yakka spirits are invoked through dance and drumming and offerings like honey, meat, or fruits are made to the Yakka as part of these rituals. Comparatively, Deva is less central in Veddah cosmology but has been incorporated into their rituals through cultural interaction with Buddhist and Hindu traditions.

The pre-historic era, in which the Sabaragamuwa dance originated, is considered to be the most important and the first stage of the origin of the Sabaragamuwa dance. As it is stated, "Yaku Pideema" or worshipping the devils is considered to be the oldest healing ritual in the country. The ancestors considered conducting a "pooja" for dead relatives would bring them a positive impact on their lives. Particularly, the Yakka tribe assumed that such rituals would please the dead spirits of powerful tribesmen thus benefiting and protecting the people of the tribe those who are alive. This traditional ritual can be seen among the present Sri Lankan aborigines people and Sabaragamu traditional rituals. There are many customs related to these activities. However, by this time, several ancient faiths in the '"Yakun Pideema" ritual of the Sabaragamu tradition could also be identified such as offering Pooja for '"Mahakalu Kiri Amma", "Ambarapathy Kiri Amma", '"Kalukumara" and "Mangara"… etc. and it is also believed that Sabaragamu dance was born through this rituals and sacrifices. (Kumarathunga, 2019, pg 03)

However, it is noted that both cultures share a deep connection to the concepts of Yakka (spirits or demons) and Deva (deities). And the rituals and dances associated with these beliefs, such as the Thovil ceremony in Sabaragamuwa and the Kiri

Koraha ritual in Vedda culture, implies a combination of both indigenous and external religious practices. A blend of spititual framework, resulted by cultural diffusion is indicated through worshipping Amarapathi Kiri Amma and Kalu Kurumbaya in Sabaragamuwa, and ancestral spirits like Serath Amaththaya and Maha Loku Kiri Ammala Aththo in Vedda culture.

Structural functionalism, which studies the role and function of cultural practices in a society examines how such practices impact social cohesion, identity, and continuity. Set in the theory, both Vedda dance and Sabaragamuwa dance explain how such cultural practices serve specific functions within their respective communities (Barnard, 2000 and Eriksen & Nielsen 2001).

Considering the social cohesion of Vedda dance and Sabaragamuwa dance, both can be identified as communal activities that involve the entire community. These dances bring people together, reinforcing social bonds, and maintaining a sense of collective identity. For example, the Thovil ceremony in Sabaragamuwa and the Kiri Koraha ritual in Vedda culture are not just individual performances but communal events that reinforce social ties. Moreover, these dances serve as the means of ritualistic functions since they serve specific functions within their societies. It is very obvious since the Thovil ceremony in Sabaragamuwa is often performed to appease spirits and heal illnesses, while the Kiri Koraha ritual in Vedda culture is a performance that honors ancestral spirits and seeks their guidance. Such rituals also address the psychological and social needs of the community, providing a sense of security and continuity. For example, the Pattini Maduwa in Sabaragamuwa, which is performed to allure the goddess Pattini for fertility and well-being, serves a similar function by addressing the community's spiritual and physical needs.

Significantly, the two traditions have used almost similar musical instruments as their main music instrument in dancing. However, according to the interview conducted with Dr. Waidyawathi, the question regarding the beginning of diffusionism remains unanswered as it is ambiguous whether the culture passed either from Sabaragamuwa to Vadda people or from Vadda people to Sabaragamuwa. However, due to the simplicity of and the advancement of the instrument, I believe that diffusionism may have occurred from the Vadda community to Sabaragamuwa since the instrument used by the Vadda people is simpler. Especially, this may have occurred due to the cross-cultural marriages between the Vadda community and the people from Sabragamuwa, which led the Sinhala people to use this specific musical instrument.

Importantly, the diffusion of dance and music knowledge from one generation to the next ensures the continuity of cultural traditions. As it is studied, in both the Vedda and Sabaragamuwa communities, elders pass down the knowledge of dance movements, musical instruments, and rituals to younger generations, resulting in these traditions remaining alive for years. For example, the use of specific instruments like Dawla and Kande Ketu Yamake, as well as the preservation of dance movements like Mandiya and Dwithwa Adi Pagima, indicates the continuity of cultural practices while reinforcing group identity and cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The significant role of cultural diffusion in shaping both the Sabaragamu dance tradition and Vadda dance is well evident through the similarities in the musical instruments, dance movements, and ritualistic beliefs between the two cultures. Moreover, the diffusion of the two cultural traits may have occurred in many ways such as interaction, trade, cross-cultural marriage and etc, causing the adoption and blend of cultural traits of both.

Similarly, the Vedda and Sabaragamuwa dances serve important functions within their respective societies, resulting in social cohesion, addressing spiritual and psychological needs, and ensuring cultural continuity. Hence, these practices cannot be considered just as artistic expressions and they obviously are deeply embedded in the social and cultural backdrops of these communities which are very much crucial in the survival and identity of their respective cultures.

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WOMEN IN THE GNAWA COMMUNITY IN MOROCCO: PSYCHOTHERAPY, SPIRITS POSSESSION AND HEALING

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Abstract:

Descendants of slaves from the Sub-Saharan countries brought to Morocco, characterized by their special music with unique rhythms accompanied with spiritual traditions and practices for healing purposes. The Gnawa community represents an intangible cultural heritage in Morocco due to its special rituals and traditions in healing the sick from various diseases by practicing syncretic rituals, trance dances and spiritual music that makes the participant left up with ecstasy. These practices are centred in a ceremony called 'lila' in which women play a significant role by leading the healing rituals and communicating with the spirits that possess the participant in order to reach God.

Keywords: Morocco, Women's role, Spirits possession, Psychotherapy, Healing

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

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Absztrakt

A NŐK SZEREPE A MAROKKÓI GNAWA KÖZÖSSÉGBEN:
PSZICHOTERÁPIA, SZELLEMIDÉZÉS ÉS GYÓGYÍTÁS

A Gnawa közösség tagjai a Szubszaharai Afrikából Marokkóba hurcolt rabszolgák leszármazottai, akik különleges ritmusokkal kísért zenéjükről, valamint spirituális hagyományaikról és gyógyító gyakorlataikról ismertek. A Gnawa kultúra Marokkó szellemi kulturális örökségének része, amely egyedülálló rituálékkal és hagyományokkal járul hozzá a betegek gyógyításához. A gyógyító szertartások szinkretikus rítusokat, transztáncokat és spirituális zenét foglalnak magukban, amelyek révén a résztvevők eksztatikus állapotba kerülnek. Ezek a gyakorlatok egy „*lila*" nevű ceremóniában összpontosulnak, amelyben a nők kiemelkedő szerepet játszanak: ők vezetik a gyógyító rítusokat, valamint kapcsolatot teremtenek a megszálló szellemekkel, hogy a résztvevők elérhessék Istent.

Kulcsszavak: Marokkó, nők szerepe, szellemidézés, pszichoterápia, gyógyítás

Diszciplína: kulturális antopológia

In Morocco, the term Gnawa refers in general to all the ancient slaves of African origin. However, not all of them belong to the Gnawa brotherhood, neither their ethnic origin is a criteria to define their belonging to this brotherhood as the majority of the Gnaoui adepts are mongrel (of Arabic, Berber or African origins)(K'hal-Laayoun, 2019). In June 2023, I conducted fieldwork research in Essaouira, Morocco, using anthropological and ethnographic methods to explore the intricate phenomenon of Gnawa. My approach was rooted in qualitative research, allowing for an in-depth understanding of this rich cultural tradition.

Women's status in Morocco

Morocco is a complex society, having inherited the great literary and religious traditions of Islam, and withstanding colonization the longest of North African countries while tolerating it the least (Combs-Schilling 1989; 'Arawi 1982). Since Morocco is not a post-industrial society, the term "liminoid" as defined by Turner may not apply here. But as a liminal nation in transit between complex and post-industrial, Morocco is rife with semantic diversity. Both liminal and liminoid apply, though neither term adequately describes the

transformations in Moroccan ritual life. (Kapchan 1996) In contemporary Morocco, women are the primary participants in all-night Gnawa spirit-possession ceremonies, the lila. Gnawa men play music to invoke spirits to possess their human hosts, who, in most cases, are women. As noted, photographs of female participation in Gnawa ceremonies from the colonial era are nonexistent. Compounding this ethnographic lacuna is the fact that detailed descriptions of Gnawa ceremonies and women's involvement are also rare. If Gnawa ceremonies are discussed at all in colonial accounts, it is in pejorative terms, signaling that Europeans had little interest in attending or recording such ceremonies. Legy, in his book Folklore of Morocco, for example, described Gnawa as a "devil-worshipping brotherhood organized on the lines of the religious societies," and wrote that orthodox Muslims referred to them as the "Brotherhood of Satan" (1935, 38). (Becker 2020)

Essaouira has become a city intimately connected to the term "Gnawa," which is used across the city to market such goods as paintings, clothing, hotels, and spices; numerous shops sell Gnawa recordings and musical instruments. So renowned are Gnawa in contemporary Essaouira that the artist Lamia

Naji, whose photographs were discussed at the beginning of this Introduction, traveled there to produce her series *couleurs primaires*. Gnawa as a cultural and musical form has gone from being a marginal religious practice associated with the enslaved to becoming a crucial part of Essaouira's identity and a major contributor to the city's tourist industry (Ross et al. 2002, 44). Furthermore, the popularity of Gnawa music has spread across Morocco and led to the transition of Gnawa musicians from those hired at a modest fee to perform private spirit- possession ceremonies to professional recording artists playing on the global music circuit. (Becker 2020)

Gnawa religious brotherhood
Gnawa sufi confrerie

There are other significant differences between Gnawa practice and Sufism. For the Gnawa, the spirit world is inhabited by ancestral spirits who, among other spiritual creatures, can be used for either good or evil purposes. Ancestors are believed to act as intermediaries between the living and the supreme God, and the Gnawa communicate with their ancestors through prayer and sacrifice. The spirit world is also invoked through special ceremonies, in which drumming, clapping, the sound of the castanets and dances were designed to enlist the aid of ancestral saints (El Hamel, 2008). The Gnawa have created for themselves an imagined ancestral link to Bilal, a link that constitutes a piece of the patchwork of their identity despite not being historically feasible. According to the Gnawa, Bilal danced and sang to cheer the sorrowful Fatima, favourite daughter of the Prophet Muhammed. As a reward, Muhammed offered Fatima in marriage to Bilal who declined on the grounds that a lowly slave did not deserve to marry the Prophet's daughter. Since Bilal was of "black" African descent, this story reinforces the

Gnawa claim to baraka and to a special status within Islam, even while it confirms their slave status (Becker,2011).

The Gnawa borrowed, adapted, mixed, and blended aesthetic styles from various groups, crossing geographic, cultural, and religious borders. During the Gnawa lila, musicians invoke individually named spirits with identifiable personalities, religions, and genders, referred to by the generalized term jnun (singular: jinn). The jnun are a race of spiritual beings, created before humans and made of vapor or flame. They can take on animal or human form, and some, who are believed to have individual personalities and specific names, are well known among Moroccans. Jnun, therefore, can be male or female, Muslim or non Muslim, and good or evil. Jnun are sometimes dangerous and cause paralysis, mental illness, and even death; however, in certain cases one establishes a symbiotic relationship with a specific jinn to treat illness.(Carpanzano 1973) The fact that the jnun are also referred to by the Arabic term mluk, meaning "the owners," indicates that spirits inhabit and claim the body. The Gnawa believe that possession by these spirits can inflict a person with physical illness and misfortune until one accepts their power and appeases them with animal sacrifice, incense, music, and trance dancing. (Kapchan 2007)

Psychotherapy and spirits procession in Gnawa community
Spirits

According to Westermarck (1899), The *jinn* have no fixed forms, but may assume almost any shape they like. They appear now as men, and now as goats, cats, dogs, donkeys, tortoises, snakes, or other animals, now as monsters with the body of a man and the legs of a donkey, now in other shapes, sometimes, for instance, with seven heads. Westermarck added that Gnawa, who stand in an

especially intimate relation to the *jnun*, and who are frequently called on to expel them from people who are ill, are said to dress both themselves and the patient in the colour of the *jinn* that is believed to be the cause of the patient's illness, but this I have not seen for myself. All the seven colours of the rainbow are used for magical purposes when the tribes of all the days of the week are concerned, and, also, when, as sometimes happens, the particular tribe immediately concerned cannot be found out. The performance by means of which the Gnawa endeavour to expel the *jnun* is often very complicated, and may last for days. They sing and dance; walk round the patient and make wry faces close to him; take him on their necks and carry him about (Westermarck, 1899).

Elements, or figures, believed to be external to the individual, such as demons, angels, and saints, can serve to symbolize certain "psychological dispositions," and the relationship that obtains between these elements may be symbolic of certain "psychic structures" or "psychological processes" (Crapanzano, 1971). I call such elements symbolic-interpretive elements (Crapanzano, 1973a, pp. 5-6). They both symbolize a reality and offer an interpretation that is expressed in a manifestly non-psychological idiom. It is even possible to argue that they "create" the dispositions, much as the recounting the articulation of a dream "creates" the dream (Pfander, esp. pp. 10-11). In any case, the fact remains that the idiom determines the articulation of "psychic reality" and that such articulations constitute the discourse upon which psychological, especially psychoanalytic, investigat-ions are based.

Possession by the spirits

In Sufi lexicon, the term *jadba* refers to a divinely inspired attraction to higher states of consciousness and a feeling of ecstasy that results in the desire to achieve a oneness with God, which is the general goal of Sufism (Fuson 2009, 24; Kapchan 2007,

42). Gnawa spirits, however, do not evoke a spiritual connection with God but permanently inhabit a person. A person possessed by a Gnawa spirit is referred to as *meskoun*, meaning "inhabited" in Arabic. People also refer to the possessed state as a *hal*, meaning a heightened state of emotion and transcendence (Chlyeh 1998; Kapchan 2007, 42). Possession by spirits is also common among groups in Sudanic Africa, and it is probable that the ancestors of the Ismkhan brought memories of these practices with them across the Sahara. For example, Hausa participants in bori believe that supernatural spirits may enter people and control them. Each spirit has its own personality, requires the follower to wear certain clothes, and perform particular trance dances that express the disposition of the spirit. (F.E. Besmer) Similar events occur during the holey-hoore of the Songhai in north-eastern Mali. (Jean Rouch) In the modern nation of the Sudan, spirit possession and trance are also features of the tumbura and the zar ceremonies. (G. Makris G. and Ahmed al-Safi) During the hadra Ismkhan men make a circle and men who wish to achieve trance stand in the middle. The men in the circle ensure that the dancers do not leave its centre. Ismkhan explained that the circle prevents men from breaking free and, in the midst of trance, attack an audience member wearing the colour associated with their malk. Women can also be possessed by the mlouk, but social conventions regarding female modesty prevent them from performing the hadra in public. Women, on the verge of going into trance, can sometimes be seen running from the public area so they can satisfy their malk away from the watchful eyes of the crowd. (Becker 2002).

In the article "Negro Influence in Morocco" (1934), Edward Westermarck also wrote about the many women possessed at a Gnawa ceremony, "danc[ing] for hours, even the whole night" and dressed in clothing associated with particular spirits.

Figure 1. Photograph by Lamia Naji, couleurs primaires, 2005.

His account emphasizes the sensational aspects of the spectacle: "Some of the women beat their necks with cords, which were among the clothes, or with sticks, or lacerate their thighs with a dagger, and many of them eat fire" (1934, 625). Unfortunately, it appears that Westermarck, like most foreigners who give accounts of Gnawa ceremonies, did not actually attend one. He wrote, "Unfortunately I did not arrive at the spot until the proceedings were just over, but I am speaking from credible hearsay" (1934, 626). (Becker 2020)

In Mernissi's book, one chapter dedicated to a woman named Lalla Mina provides insight into why spirit possession was restricted to shrines and/or private homes of Gnawa clients. Mernissi described Mina as a woman whose "serene black face" contrasted with the yellow gown and headscarf that she wore to honor the Gnawa spirit named Lalla Mira, whose preferred color was yellow (1994, 157). Mina attended Gnawa ceremonies in the home of a man named Sidi Belal, who, like Mina, "had originally come from the Sudan and begun his life in Morocco as an uprooted slave" (1994, 159). (Becker 2020) Mernissi refers to a Gnawa lila as a "forbidden" and "subversive" ceremony that was an expression of "women's solidarity" that freed women "for once

of all external pressures" (1994, 158–61). According to her, Moroccan men from the privileged class, who were more likely to be literate, dismissed Gnawa spirit possession as superstition derived from sub-Saharan animism, and elite women hid participation from their families. Several early twentieth-century documents reinforce Mernissi's account that both Moroccans and Europeans viewed Gnawa practices negatively, calling the elite women in Fes who attended *lila* with their slaves "ignorant" (Michaux-Bellaire 1907, 320).

Trance dance as a therapeutic practice

A Gnawa lila consists of a series of ritualized events typically occurring over a two-day period, commencing with an animal sacrifice on the first day. The second day starts with a public procession, followed by a performance known as fraja, which precedes the spirit-possession portion of the lila. Although the word fraja somewhat ironically means "amusement," the song lyrics deal with the personal and collective traumas experienced by the enslaved, such as being kidnapped from West Africa, separated from their mothers, placed in sacks, and forced to subsist on scraps of food. Most importantly, fraja performances serve to geolocate Gnawa ceremonies within a narrative that links them to a Sudani identity. As the music recounts historical struggles and hardships, the stage is set for the later possession portion of the Gnawa lila. Men wearing colorful tunics and cowrie-adorned headdresses perform fraja songs in front of the guinbri player, with the audience sitting in a semicircle around them, watching as Gnawa musicians perform acrobatic dance moves. (Becker 2020) The music and dance of the Gnawas (or Gnaouas) of the High Atlas are of black African and Arab traditions. It is a typical trance music used by members of the Sufi brotherhood to attain mystical ecstasy. Members of the group, who claim descent from Sidi Bilal, the ex-slave from Ethiopia who

became a highly respected caller to prayers (muezzin), include master musicians, drummers, intriguing-looking women, mediums, and others who a long time ago established their home in Marrakech and other southern regions. The West African slaves who arrived in North Africa in the sixteenth century brought this genre to Morocco; consequently, the lyrics have components of Senegalese, Guinean, and Malian traditions. A lute (qsbah) with a long neck of African origin called the gimbri, double-iron cymbals (qaraqab), and a double-headed cylindrical drum (tbel or ganga) played with curved sticks are common instruments of the Gnawa music. Members of the brotherhood observe a nocturnal rite of ceremonious possession (deiceba), during which participants practice the dances of possession and trance called derdeba. A master musician accompanies his troupe, and a female medium usually leads the spirituals used to invoke saints and supernatural beings. The percussion for the ritual processions comes specifically from a lute drum with a low register (guembri) and castanets (qraqech). Drums are used only during the beginning stage preceding the rite of possession. This nighttime ceremony also includes an irreligious session intended solely for the entertainment of members. Today, the tumblers of the Jemaa El Fna (or Djema el-Fna) in Marrakech have transformed Gnawa music and dance into a popular form of entertainment. The group retains the traditional large drums and wroughtiron castanets and the cowry shells and glass beads that adorn the performers. These cultural emblems remind the people about the dance's historical origins. The Gnawa performers dance with much agility, and their dangerous acrobatics flow with the beat of the rhythm. (Njoku 2006)

Women in the Moroccan society

The attitude and role of women in society are largely informed by the people's worldview, their customs, including prevalent economic, demographic, and political culture. (Rachel Simon 2000) In general, men enjoy a higher social status and appear to dominate the women in certain aspects of life. A stereotypical notion of a woman's role is to care for her children and the household. It is her responsibility to shop, cook, feed, and educate the children while the man is away at work. Moroccan women maintain a clean house, and during their leisure time they may visit family members, friends, or attend prayers at the neighborhood shrines or mosques. Even in the countryside, where Berber women share the agricultural duties with their husbands and do not wear restrictive veils, they are still obligated to conform to their primary responsibilities of childcare and food preparation. Also, Muslim women rarely accompany their husbands to social events outside the household, especially because they have so many responsibilities in the house to occupy their day. Whereas men live a much more unstructured life, women are expected, but not forced, to adhere to certain codes of behavior, especially before marriage. For instance, it is considered crude for young women to marry outside their race or faith, to travel abroad without obtaining parental consent, or to be unaccompanied late at night. In Morocco, it is forbidden for the predominantly Berber-Arab women to be married to either French, Spanish, or Jewish men, but their men are free to marry outsiders. Unlike men, women are scolded for smoking in public. When a wife errs, it is also part of the culture for a man to beat her—an act considered abuse in Western societies. (Njoku 2006)

The role of women in Gnawa rituals and practices

The Mqaddema: the spiritual leader

The Gnawa mqaddema, who is typically female, organizes the ceremony for one of her clients and hires the musicians. Participants at a Gnawa ceremony come from various ethnic backgrounds –

they may be Imazighen (Berber) or Arab – and most are women. The client of the mqaddema pays for the food consumed at the lila and hires the musicians, but also invited female guests to contribute offerings of money to the musicians during the ceremony. Most of these women would not define themselves as Gnawa, although they may regularly attend ceremonies. During Gnawa ceremonies women in possession-trance often remove their headscarves and dance by un-restrainedly swinging their long hair from side to side in front of the male musicians. This is unusual in Morocco, as most women will not dance or take their hair down, or both, in front of men who are not their relatives. However, women do not feel the need to restrict their behavior in front of the Gnawa because Gnawa continue to be linked to a history of slavery. In rural Morocco, a comfortable, familial-like joking relationship exists between the descendants of slaves (both male and female) and the descendants of their previous "owners" that does not require women to behave modestly. In other words, Gnawa are hired to perform a service, and, during the lila, their ancestral connection to slavery allows women to engage in unrestricted behavior, reenacting the historical relationship between "slaves" and their "owners" (Becker 2011)

Figure 2. Photograph by Lamia Naji, couleurs primaires, 2005.
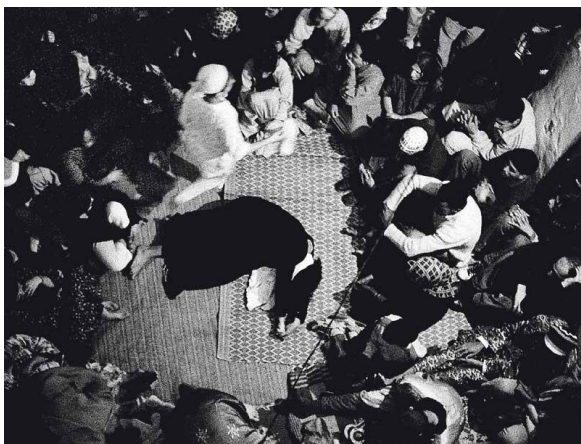
Maallem Essedik emphasized on the big role that the Mqeddma (Mqeddma: (plural:mqeddmate) is the chief-guard of the Gnawa sanctuary or dar. She is also the chief-organizer of Allila of Derdba or the Moussem. Chosen by all the Gnawa, and with the agreement of the mqeddem, Mqeddma is assisted by Laarifa another woman designed by mqeddma whose role consists of helping Tellaa (mediumnic fortune-teller) or Shouwafa (non-mediumnic fortune-teller) in carrying out the annual 'Allila' of Derdba -K'hal-Laayoun, 2019) plays because the lila can start with her, Women goes to the Mqeddma, she speaks to them, if it's necessary to organise the lila then they start the preparations, they talk to the Maallem, they buy the animal in order to sacrifice it, they arrange the day and the time when they will organise it. They slaughter the animal during the day. They organise the lila at night or the day after until five or six am, at they end it with fatha (Fatha: (Fatiha) the first Surrah in the Quran). The lila starts after the prayer of laacha (Laacha: The evening prayer and the last prayer of the day for the Muslims) at night and they finish before the prayer of sobh (Sobh: The dawn prayer and the first prayer of the day for the Muslims). He added that's what it was in the past. And there are the ones who starts after the prayer of sobh and they finish at ten or eleven in the morning. He said: 'We had many lila (Lilat: is the plural of lila which means many nights) one after the other we didn't have enough time to sleep just an hour'. In the month of chaaban in the past, they were many lilat not like now. If there is somebody for example who has something in his chest that bothers him and makes him feel suffocated but when he goes to Gnawa, he dances and get recovered. Maallem Essedik confirmed that there are the patients who have physical illnesses and the others who have psychological ones as well. He added that we work for them and they got healed here in the town and outside. We go outside, we start with the fatha, Baraka (Baraka: It means the

blessing from God) and good intention niya and the patient get recovered and there are the ones who organise the lila without being ill or having any kind of sickness. The patient invites his loved ones, neighbours and others and after that everyone goes to his own way.

Women's hierarchy in the Gnawa community:

According to K'hal-Laayoun, In the Gnawa confrerie, there are some women having ritually professional activities depending to their hierarchy such as:

1) Mqedma: The Gnawa brotherhood in general or Dar in particular is directed by a mqeddem or mqedma (plural: mqedmate) is the chief-guard of the Gnawa sanctuary or dar. She is also the chief-organizer of Lila of Derdba or the Moussem. Chosen by all the Gnawa, and with the agreement of the mqeddem, Mqedma is assisted by Laarifa another woman designed by mqedma whose role consists of helping Tellaa (mediumnic fortune-teller) or shouwafan (non-mediumic fortune-teller) in carrying out the annual 'Lilla' of Derdba.

2) Shouwafa: This term derives from the verb 'shouf' which means in the Moroccan Arabic 'look' or 'see' or forsee the future. Therefore, 'shouwafa' (plural:shouwafate) is the therapeutic fortune-teller who participates only in the divination by manipulation, using various objects without entering in trance while consulting these objects.

Having access to the statute and responsabilities of a shouwafa emanates from heritage or an initiatic illness followed by an election. However, the vocation is a necessary condition for the statute of a shouwafa who is also:

- mamlouka: ritually possessed and even ravished at any time or tormented by the mlouk.
- mlaykia: having privileged relationships with the mlouk who assist her in her career.
- mllaka: revealing the identity and exigencies of the mlouk tormenting a person.

- mqedma: at the head of the adepts members of her group, and a privileged intermediate between the mlouk and the patients in her change.

Shouwafa is healing her adept or patient by:

- kitaba: magic writings
- fumigations
- hlou: ritual food without salt
- zriba: to make part of the enclosure of shouwafa
- tbiqa: to have access to the ritual tray of fumigations as a symbol of the confrery for having constant contact between the adepts and shouwafa.

In return, the adepts or patient has to give offerings and gifts to shouwafa in order to have her therapy and Baraka.

Both of shouwafa and tellaa are responsible of organizing Derdba and Moussem.

3)Tellaa: The term refers to the verb 'tellae' which means to make go up or show off. Therefore, 'tellaa' is a gnawi woman who calls upon the mlouk (supernatural entities) and speaks via their tongue while practicing the divination by initiating the mediumnic trance.

4) Laarifa: is the woman assisting either shouwafa in her initiatic, therapeutic and divinatory functions, or tellaa in the mediumnic cases by translating the messages and the incomprehensible languages of mlouk to the clients.

5)Metaalma/khaddama: is the one executing domestic tasks in the aim of succeeding laarifa or waiting for a vocation initiating her to the forseeing and therapeutic career. (K'hal-Laayoun 2019)

A shouwafa's initiation: K'hal-Laayoun stated 'as a Moroccan Doctor in Ethnology and a Psychotherapist, Mr Abdelhafid Chlieh accompanies us to the initiatic itinerary of the trance and possession of a Gnawi woman. However, the motivation of a researcher are not so easy to comprehend in the popular and traditional lieus, mainly by the members of the religious orders. Moreover, it is difficult for a man as man to initiate the woman's

world, especially that of the therapeutic fortune-teller, shouwafa, in order to collect the ethnographic and ritual elements concerning the divination, initiation, and therapy. With a great interest and importance, Mr Chliyeh initiates us via some fragments of life recitals into the initiatic itinerary of a shouwafa from the Gnawa confrery named Zineb. After having been a simple adept for thirty years, Zineb finished by accepting the statute of shouwafa. She had been the subject of possession trances after a grave illness, when some invisible entities 'mlouk' incorporated in her, were often manifest in spectacular acrobaties according to her relatives. Then her vocation was confirmed by a ritual dance when at the trance, the mlouk required from her to be consecrated to the task of the therapy according to the gnawi ritual mode. Therby, the destiny of Zineb was traced by a serious illness leading her from a simple adept to a well known gnawi shouwafa 'therapeutic fortune-teller' in Marrakesh. (K'hal-Laayoun 2019)

Professional recordings featuring Gnawa music and ceremonies began to proliferate in the 1990s, a period that coincided with the creation of the Gnawa and World Music Festival in 1998, which gave Gnawa music greater international visibility. During the 1990s, various labels released recordings of male Gnawa musicians performing songs sung during the evocation of spirits, as well as recordings of fusion music recorded with jazz musicians from the United States, such as Randy Weston (Becker 2020)-

Gnawa: Au-delà de la musique includes a recognition of the increased national and global popularity of Gnawa music, with the narrator noting, "Now that Gnawa music has become popular, some musicians are so demanding that many followers abandon the idea of a derdeba [possession ceremony]." In other words, the international popularity of Gnawa musicians has resulted in male musicians demanding higher prices to perform at the traditional ceremonies (a fact also noted by the scholar Deborah Kapchan in her recent book on Gnawa), further marginalizing women in Gnawa ritual life as many women can no longer afford to hire musicians to play at their lila (Kapchan 2007).

Conclusion

Women's role in the Gnawa community is essential as Maallem Essedik explained and emphasized that Gnawa was made for women only. The healing process cannot be possible without Gnawa women. The healing rituals takes a great part of the Gnawa identity. Due to social and economic reasons, that has a massive impact on Gnawa community in Morocco and despite of the changes and the contemporary impacts Gnawa remains a spiritual art that has a significant position in the Moroccan culture.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE AND MIGRATION:
THE ARCHITECTURE OF IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This article examines the connection between cultural heritage, migration, and architecture, highlighting how immigrant communities navigate identity and memory through built environments. The study investigates the reflection of the built environment in response to new environmental and social conditions. Through a theoretical analysis of heritage, assimilation, national architecture, and vernacular architecture, the findings aim to contribute to broader discussions on multicultural inclusivity and immigrant architecture's role in shaping national and local identities.

Keywords: migration, cultural heritage, vernacular architecture, national architecture.

Disciplines: Cultural Anthropoloy, Ethnography

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Absztrakt

KULTURÁLIS ÖRÖKSÉG ÉS MIGRÁCIÓ: AZ IMMIGRÁNS KÖZÖSSÉGEK ÉPÍTÉSZETE

A tanulmány a kulturális örökség, a migráció és az építészet összefüggéseit vizsgálja, kiemelve, hogy az immigráns közösségek hogyan alakítják identitásukat és emlékezetüket az épített környezeten keresztül. A kutatás azt elemzi, hogy az épített környezet miként reagál az új társadalmi és környezeti feltételekre. Az örökség, az asszimiláció, a nemzeti építészet és a népi építészet elméleti elemzésén keresztül a tanulmány célja hozzájárulni a multikulturális inkluzivitás szélesebb körű diskurzusaihoz, valamint az immigráns építészet nemzeti és helyi identitásformáló szerepének megértéséhez.

Kulcsszavak: migráció, kulturális örökség, népi építészet, nemzeti építészet

Diszciplínák: kulturális antropológia, etnográfia

Cultural landscapes and routes are a cultural heritage that represent human activity and the pathways through which cultural influences move. According to earlier scholars, these spaces are not merely physical locations but are imbued with symbolic meanings, shaping how communities understand their place in history and society. As individuals and groups relocate, they adapt to new environments and engage in cultural transformation, which is reflected in their architectural practices.

This article focuses on the theoretical framework to examine the architecture of immigrants, particularly focusing on Brazilian examples and their architectural paths, as well as contextualizing these experiences within the broader frameworks of memory, assimilation, and cultural heritage. The study of immigration reveals the layered processes through which individuals and groups relocate, adapt, and reshape both themselves and their new environments, blending past and present that is visible in the cultural landscape. Architecture is at the center of this transformation, emerging as a medium of cultural expression, reflecting the building traditions, styles, and materials that immigrants can bring with them and modify to suit new climates, landscapes, and needs. These are tangible elements that provide shelter and encode the identities and memories of immigrant groups,

symbolizing the act of settling down in a new landscape.

The review of such theoretical pillars will help to develop a further reading of the cultural expression in the Hungarian Cultural Route of Jaraguá do Sul, Santa Catarina, Brazil based on the memory narratives. A route that was colonized by Hungarian immigrants who underwent a transformation process, including nationalist-imposed measures. This discussion will cover various dimensions of cultural heritage, from tangible architectural forms to the intangible practices that sustain community identities, revealing many aspects of the human experience that architecture embodies. Through this exploration, the aim is to contribute to understanding how immigrant architecture not only shapes the physical landscape but also enriches the cultural fabric of host societies.

Architecture of the Immigrant: Movement and Settlement

Architecture and migration refer to two opposing meanings (Cairns, 2004). While architecture is related to permanence, to the act of rooting and building, working to develop a place, and delimiting boundaries in spaces, immigration, on the other hand, is related to the movement and transition of people or groups. In this way, it is also

possible to refer to them as settlement and movement, and human life oscillates between these two poles, movement and settlement (Mumford, 1961).

We observe this in history, through nomad behaviors, that their spatial needs are adaptable and temporary structures and often constructed from locally available materials. Such mobility has historically enabled the connection between distant regions, enabling cultural diffusion and exchange. Thus, architecture for nomadic peoples emphasizes adaptability and portability (Munford, 1961). We have seen the Silk Road as an example, transporting goods and spreading ideas, art, and technologies across continents (Whitfield, 2015). In addition, the human need for movement and settlement is identified in trade cities, where we observe the growth as hubs of mobility, with their spatiality often reflecting this function, providing infrastructure and permanence to support these exchanges, facilitating further cultural diffusion (Munford, 1961; Lefebvre, 1991). For example, the first capital of Brazil, the city of Salvador, was a major trade hub during the Portuguese colonial period. It was central to the sugarcane and slave trade, connecting Brazil to Africa, Europe, and other parts of the Americas (Freyre, 1933).

The evolving nature of cultural heritage is closely tied to these dynamics of movement and settlement. For example, cultural landscapes combine natural and man-made elements, creating environments that reflect how geography, culture, and identity interact. These landscapes transform as societies modify natural environments, such as transforming forests into agricultural lands, while maintaining symbolic connections to their history and culture. Cultural landscapes are not static environments but living entities that change over time, shaped by the interaction of human activities and natural processes (Fejérdy, 2012; Sonkoly, 2017). Traditional cultural geography approaches - such as those of geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer (1889–1975) and his followers at the Berkeley School – emphasized material artifacts without establishing relationships between people and places. However, the New Cultural Geography expanded by introducing theories that underscored the symbolic dimensions of landscapes, including identity, perception, and social meaning (Cosgrove & Jackson, 1987). This shift recognizes that cultural landscapes are constantly reshaped by evolving social meanings, values, and power structures. For example, the symbolic interpretations of a village square or a pilgrimage site may change as new generations bring contemporary meanings to it while maintaining links to its cultural origins. For instance, a village square that once served as a market for trade and social interactions may now function as a symbolic link to the ethnic origins of migrant communities.

Likewise, cultural routes exemplify the cultural heritage transmission and transformation through the movement of people, ideas, and goods. These routes, such as the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrimage Route, demonstrate how cultural practices are not fixed to static locations but are enriched and adapted through exchanges between regions and civilizations. Kroeber (1948) and Lévi-Strauss (1966) explored how cultural diffusion occurs, providing a theoretical foundation for interpreting the dynamics of cultural diffusion along such routes, influencing everything from language and religion to art and social structures. Silk Road also illustrates this characteristic of cultural transmission through its cultural route. In addition to facilitating the exchange of goods like silk, spices, and precious metals, this network of trade routes allowed ideas, technologies, and beliefs to flow across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The Silk Road saw the spread of Buddhism from India to China and beyond, Islamic art and architecture absorbing influences from Central Asia, and paper-making technology spreading from China to the West. In this sense, art, language, and social practices enriched local cultures as a result of

these interactions (Whitfield, 2015). In this way, cultural routes can be understood as means for tangible and intangible heritage, demonstrating how culture is fluid and constantly evolving through interaction.

Thus, memory plays an important role in shaping personal and collective identities, particularly in the context of cultural practices and national narratives (Nora, 1989). Similar to Assmann's (2011) discussion, which focuses on how memory serves as a bridge between personal and collective histories, particularly for migrants. Memory is an active process of negotiation, bringing to light the untold stories (Ricoeur, 2004) of individuals who cross borders, contributing to reshaping diasporic identities within host societies, as illustrated by Hall (1990). The ongoing negotiation and adaptation of cultural identity is embedded in memory into the evolving frameworks of movement and settlement. The need to preserve the past and identity composes collective human experiences, reaffirming that identity is constructed in the past (D'Aléssio, 1992).

Cultural Heritage:
The Evolution of The Concept
Through Anthropological Lenses

The concept of cultural heritage has evolved since the first attempt to define its meaning and significance. The evolution of the concept shows a transition from a narrow focus on tangible elements to a broader understanding that incorporates intangible dimensions, as we have previously seen through Cultural Landscapes and Cultural Routes. This shifts the movement from static, object-centered perspectives to dynamic and lived experiences. Such a transition will be explored and discussed in the following paragraphs through anthropological lenses and reflected on architectural examples.

Early heritage studies emphasized material artifacts like monuments, buildings, and physical objects, which aligned with anthropology's early focus on archaeology and material culture at the time. Scholars like Lewis Henry Morgan, Edward Burnett Tylor, and Augustus Pitt-Rivers emphasized material artifacts as representations of cultural evolution and societal progress (Barnard, 2004).

Afterward, Franz Boas (1911) argued against the evolutionist framework that characterized culture as static and material-focused, reducing it to what could be observed and preserved in physical form only. Samuels (2018) identifies Franz Boas as an important figure in introducing the concept of cultural relativism, arguing that cultures should be understood on their own terms rather than ranked according to Western standards. Although Boas acknowledged the importance of material culture, he emphasized that understanding the broader social, historical, and symbolic context was equally important (Barnard, 2004).

This idea has influenced the approach to cultural heritage by promoting appreciation for cultural diversity and emphasizing the need to protect various cultural expressions without imposing external judgments, such as ranking cultures on an evolutionary scale or valuing written traditions over oral ones. A Brazilian example illustrates the devaluation of Indigenous structures during the country's colonization, with Jesuits playing a significant role in shaping the built environment. Missions were constructed as part of the effort to evangelize the Indigenous population. In many instances, Indigenous sites were dismantled to make way for colonial structures featuring European-style churches and urban layouts based on Portuguese town-planning principles, such as the Jesuit mission of São Miguel das Missões, a UNESCO World Heritage site established in the 17th and 18th centuries (Figure 1). The archaeological site showcases the ruins of a Baroque-style

Figure 1. The Church of São Miguel, in baroque style, was built by the Italian architect Gian Batista Primoli, from 1735. Source: IPHAN, 2025

church, now celebrated as a historical landmark reflecting the cultural relations established between the Indigenous native peoples and European Jesuit missionaries. It also serves as a reminder of the imposed assimilation of Indigenous peoples, leading to a cultural rupture of their ancient values and traditions (IPHAN, 2025).

Building on Boas' ideas, anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict (1934) and Margaret Mead (1935) emphasized the dynamic and patterned nature of culture, highlighting its adaptation to historical and social contexts. This perspective was crucial for recognizing intangible heritage, including rituals, oral traditions, and knowledge systems. Later, Clifford Geertz's concept of "thick description" shifted the focus to the symbolic and experiential dimensions of culture, framing it as a system of meanings rather than merely material objects. This view reinforced recognition of the intangible aspects of heritage, a notion further developed by Lowenthal (1985), who argued that heritage is continually reinterpreted through memory and community practices. More recent discussions, such as those by Sonkoly (2020) and Fejérdy (2012), support this processual approach, framing heritage as a social construction that evolves, demonstrating that contemporary communities actively shape both tangible and intangible elements.

The incorporation of tangible and intangible elements in cultural heritage discourses can also be seen in the Historic Centre of Salvador (a UNESCO World Heritage site, Figure 2). The colonial-period architecture, marked by Portuguese influences, baroque churches, and colorful facades, represents the tangible heritage. Meanwhile, the Afro-Brazilian traditions, music, cuisine, and religious practices (such as Candomblé) that animate the streets of Salvador embody the intangible heritage.

Figure 2. Colonial mansions of Pelourinho in the historic center and the Historic Center, Salvador, State of Bahia, Brazil. Source: M & G Therin Weise / Shutterstock

Early anthropology's focus on material culture has gradually evolved into a broader understanding of culture as a dynamic and lived experience that includes both the physical and non-physical aspects. Scholars such as Franz Boas, Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, and Michael Herzfeld have all contributed to this evolving perspective, emphasizing the importance of both tangible and intangible heritage in comprehending the full scope of cultural identity, memory, and meaning, as reflected in the cultural heritage discourses illustrated above. This shift in viewpoint is particularly significant in the context of migration, as migrant communities navigate new environments while simultaneously preserving, transforming, and integrating elements of their cultural identity, illustrating a dual process of adaptation and continuity.

Assimilation and the Revival of Cultural Origin

Assimilation theory can be understood as a layer that reflects the transformation that immigrant groups go through, which is often seen as a necessary process for migrants to integrate into their new environment but is not straightforward. Such a transformation process is here understood as continuous negotiation of identity, where migrants adjust their practices to fit into the new society while still maintaining ties to their cultural memory, such as the concept of third space introduced by Bhabha (1994), reflecting a complex interaction between experiences and influences (Ribeiro, 1995). This duality is manifested in spatial and cultural practices, particularly in the architectural adaptations migrants undertake (Ribeiro, 1996). The architecture of immigrants — whether through the adaptation of existing structures or the creation of new spaces — becomes a crucial tool for preserving memories of the homeland while engaging in the cultural practices of the new country. In this sense, architectural spaces reflect the hybridization of cultural identities, where memory and identity are preserved and transformed (Lesser, 1999; Bhabha, 1994). Architecture thus serves as a space of negotiation, embodying memory, migration, and cultural adaptation.

Initially, assimilation theories focused on the integration of newcomers into the host society — social, economic, and cultural. Over time, the

theory evolved from a simple model of cultural assimilation to a more complex understanding of how immigrant groups adjust to their host societies, considering diversity, structural obstacles, and the mutual interaction between different cultures

The straight-line assimilation theory developed by Park & Burgess (1921) was expanded upon by Milton Gordon (1964), who provided a framework for understanding how minority groups integrate into dominant cultures. Park and Burgess (1921) outlined a cycle of race relations that progresses through contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation, emphasizing cultural conformity in urban settings. Gordon (1964), however, introduced a more nuanced and multistage model of assimilation, identifying types such as cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identification assimilation, and civic assimilation. These stages highlight distinct dimensions of integration that occur at different speeds and intensities. The built environment often reflects the challenges that persist despite the stages proposed by the author, where tensions between inclusion and exclusion are reflected. For example, the favelas in Brazil highlight the incomplete nature of structural assimilation, where migrant and marginalized communities remain physically and symbolically segregated from formal urban spaces.

Favela: "Favelas and Urban Communities are popular territories originating from the various strategies used by the population to meet, generally autonomously and collectively, their housing needs and associated uses (commerce, services, leisure, culture, among others), in the face of insufficiency and inadequacy of public policies and private investments aimed at guaranteeing the right to the city [...] Favelas and urban communities express the socio-spatial inequality of Brazilian urbanization. They portray the incompleteness – at the limit, the precariousness – of government policies and private investments to provide urban infra-structure, public services, collective equipment and environmental protection to the sites where they are located, reproducing conditions of vulner-ability." (IBGE, 2025).

On the other hand, projects such as the Immigration Museum in São Paulo aim to address these gaps by using architecture to honor migrant stories and promote inclusion.

In the 1990s, scholars responded to criticisms of traditional assimilation theory by recognizing that immigrant groups do not follow a single linear path toward integration (Jacoby, 2009; Kivisto, 2016). For example, Portes and Zhou (1993) introduced the concept of segmented assimilation to explain the varying outcomes for different immigrant groups, noting that some immigrants achieve upward mobility by entering the professional or entrepreneurial classes, while others face downward assimilation, remaining at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy (Kivisto, 2016). This theory focuses particularly on the second generation of immigrant families, emphasizing the role of selective acculturation. Immigrant children often retain aspects of their parents' culture, which helps them succeed in the host society without fully assimilating. This selective retention of cultural elements allows second-generation immigrants to avoid downward assimilation and secure upward mobility, navigating a path that is shaped by their heritage and the opportunities available in the broader society.

For example, we can observe the idea of dual identification, which becomes crucial in the case of the third and fourth generations. These generations often identify with both their ancestral heritage and the national culture of their new home (Gans, 1997). This dual identification is visible in architectural spaces where the coexistence of

cultural influences from both the immigrants' origin and the host society can be observed. These hybrid spaces symbolically represent the ongoing process of integration while also serving as physical manifestations of the complex identities that evolve over generations.

From the 2000s, a new theory of assimilation emerged as a revision of earlier models, with sociologists such as Richard Alba and Victor Nee in Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration (2003) arguing for a more complex and dynamic model of immigrant integration. The authors proposed that assimilation should be understood as a multi-dimensional and reciprocal process involving adaptation by both immigrant groups and the host society. According to Alba and Nee (2003), immigrants may retain elements of their ethnic heritage while still integrating into the economic and social structures of the host society. Like the ideas of Gans (1979), ethnic identity may persist in a more symbolic or voluntary form for younger generations, where individuals continue to identify with their heritage, but it does not define their everyday social and economic behavior. This perspective enriches the understanding of immigrant identities by emphasizing the fluidity of cultural connections and the complexity of integration, particularly in architectural spaces where these evolving identities are reflected and embodied in the built environment.

Brazilian discussions of cultural assimilation and integration have proposed alternative frameworks for understanding how diverse cultural identities coexist within the nation. Gilberto Freyre, in his work Casa-grande & Senzala (1933), argued that Brazil's identity emerged through a process of miscegenation, where cultural mixing — particularly of Indigenous, African, and European influences — shaped the country's social and cultural fabric. Freyre's concept of "luso-tropicalism" (1933) celebrates this hybridization as an integral aspect of Brazilian identity, framing the country as a place where different cultural traits were not just assimilated but mixed. This notion contrasts with the more rigid forms of assimilation.

Luso-tropicalism: "Lusotropicalismo, or Luso-tropicalism, was officially coined in 1951 by Gilberto Freyre when delivering an invited talk in Goa, India, during his visit to the Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia. Freyre did not invent the concept on the spot: it evolved from his earlier analysis of Brazilian society and colonial history as a tale of three peoples (Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous) — a tale in which the Portuguese were portrayed in a positive manner, with a tendency to mix and mingle that ultimately resulted from their own history of mixtures and mingling." (Bastos & Castelo, 2024)

It is reflected architecturally in spaces such as the Pelourinho in Salvador (Figure 3), where Portuguese colonial buildings and African-influenced structures coexist. However, Freyre's vision of Brazil as a racially inclusive society was later rejected by the sociologist Florestan Fernandes in A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes (1964) and O Negro no Mundo Dos Brancos (1972), which highlighted the ongoing racial inequalities and limited the full integration of non-European groups. Fernandes' work pointed out the persistence of social stratification despite the myth of racial democracy. This can also be seen in Salvador, where, despite shared cultural influences, clear socioeconomic and racial divisions still exist, limiting the true integration and equality between diverse communities. Therefore, Pelourinho, the historical center of Salvador, is a space for celebrating diversity, but it also reflects the social tensions that persist in Brazil.

Figure 3. Pelourinho in Salvador. Source: Tripadvisor

The work of Canclini (2022) explored the understanding of migration and cultural assimilation through his concept of hybrid cultures, providing a framework for understanding the nature of cultural change in contemporary societies. Although Canclini's focus extends to Latin American cities more broadly, his ideas have influenced the discourse on Brazilian cultural dynamics. This can be observed in cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where architecture plays a key role in negotiating local traditions and global influences. These urban spaces reflect the ongoing negotiation of identities as immigrant communities adapt to their new environments while preserving cultural heritage elements. For example, the architectural landscape of São Paulo illustrates a mix of global and local influences, particularly in immigrant neighborhoods.

As noted by recent scholars (Alba and Nee, 2003; Canclini, 2022), the process of assimilation is not linear and can take many forms depending on individual and group circumstances. Thus, architecture plays an important role in this negotiation of identity, as it serves as a tangible expression of cultural memory. Through the creation of new spaces — be they homes, community centers, or public monuments — migrants reshape their environment, reconciling their past with their present. These spaces allow them to preserve connections to their cultural heritage while engaging with the new society they inhabit simultaneously, contributing to the larger and unique narrative of assimilation, identity, and belonging.

The importance of local narratives in identifying cultural heritage becomes evident in this context. As migrants interact with the built environment, they are not passive recipients of the dominant culture but active participants in constructing spaces that reflect their evolving identities. For migrants, these places are not static; they are sites of transformation where individual histories and collective identities are inscribed and reinterpreted.

This interaction between migration, architecture, and memory highlights the complexities of assimilation. Architecture and local narratives provide migrants with a way to reconcile their heritage with their new social and physical environments. By framing cultural heritage as an evolutionary process (Sonkoly, 2012; Fejérdy, 2012; Harlov-Csórtan, 2022), communities actively participate in creating spaces that incorporate their lived experiences, contributing to the continuous reformulation of identity in a globalized world.

National Architecture, Homogenization, and Vernacular Architecture

For nation-states, architecture serves as an essential tool for constructing and expressing national identity, encompassing everything from monumental public buildings to symbols that visually and spatially define the state (Anderson, 1983; Lefebvre, 1991). These national symbols embedded in the built environment foster a sense of belonging for citizens, reinforcing their connection to the nation's collective identity (Nora, 1989). Anderson argues that nations are social constructs, uniting individuals who have never met but share a common identity through symbols, narratives, and rituals. In architecture, buildings can

serve as symbols, representing a pure and authentic reflection of the original nation, fulfilling a key requirement for the national culture narrative (Harlov-Csortán, 2015). However, while national architecture often aims to project a unified and cohesive identity, vernacular architecture presents a contrasting narrative deeply rooted in local traditions, environmental conditions, and community-driven practices.

Architecture is a key representation of national identity, and it plays a significant role in materializing and symbolizing that identity. National architecture not only shapes a country's image on the global stage but also serves as a means to express, reinforce, or even reject specific portrayals of national identity (Moravanszky, 1998). The connection between architecture and nationalism highlights how material culture can embody a nation's values, aspirations, and collective memory.

The National Congress Building in Brasília (Figure 4.), designed by Oscar Niemeyer, is a clear example of nationalism expressed through architecture. The building structure embodies the ideals of modernism and the aspirations of Brazil as a progressive and unified nation. Built in the late 1950s as part of the Brasília city layout, it reflects the ambition of creating a cohesive national identity through innovative design and urban planning (Cavalcanti, 2006).

Several authors have also explored the relationship between architecture and national identity, often highlighting how structures reflect the nation's cultural and historical context. Lina Bo Bardi's Glass House (1951, see: Figure 5) is a significant example, blending modernist principles with sensitivity to the Brazilian environment.

The house's integration with the local landscape, the use of glass to invite nature in, and the minimalist aesthetic reflect an intention to align modern architecture with local culture and climate. Similarly, Carlos Lemos and Nestor Goulart Reis

Figure 4. National Congress Building in Brasília. Source: Filipe Frazao

Figure 5. Glass House's Inner Garden. Source: Nelson Kon

Filho focus on the historical dimension of national architecture, with Lemos's Casa Paulista (1999) documenting São Paulo's vernacular traditions and Reis Filho's Imagens de Vilas e Cidades do Brasil Colonial (2001) examining the colonial urban fabric as a foundation of Brazilian cultural identity. These works highlight how Brazilian architecture navigates the tension between tradition and modernity, linking global ideas with local identities to create a distinctly Brazilian architectural narrative.

In this way, national architecture functions as a site of inclusion and exclusion, reflecting the values and narratives of the nation-state while also delineating spaces of belonging and otherness. National monuments and government buildings, often designed to symbolize collective identity and national unity, can simultaneously marginalize those whose histories and identities diverge from the dominant cultural narrative (Said, 1990; Lefebvre, 1991). These structures project a homogenized vision of national memory, reflecting it in the built environment, but often fail to take into account the pluralistic realities of migrant and diasporic communities.

We have witnessed a shift from ancient times, when people were both creators and intuitive readers of buildings and environments, to modern times, where walking in a city or along a specific route requires explicit learning. Several theorists have addressed this transition, emphasizing the loss of organic connection between people and their built environments. In A Pattern Language (1977),

Alexander introduced how builders intuitively followed "patterns" derived from human experiences and natural interactions with space, enabling us to "read" and navigate their environments. Similarly, Norberg-Schulz (1979) argued that pre-modern societies created spaces embodying the genius loci, the spirit of a place. This contrasts with modern cities that prioritize abstraction, efficiency, and functionality, resulting in environments where we may feel alienated or disoriented (Lynch, 1960; Kunstler, 1993).

As Oliver explains, vernacular architecture is shaped by the specific circumstances of a community, adapting to local conditions and cultural practices (Asadpour, 2020). In Brazil, vernacular architecture exemplifies how built environments emerge from practical needs and cultural contexts rather than aesthetic theories (Figure 6). Rural techniques, such as pau-a-pique (wattle and daub) and taipa-de-pilão (rammed earth), reflect a connection with the environment.

Figure 6. Handmade mud house. Source: Dante Laurini Jr, 2023

> Pau a Pique: wooden frameworks filled with woven sticks or branches, which are then covered with a mixture of clay and straw, creating a lightweight yet durable wall.
>
> Taipa de Pilão: involves compacting earth between wooden forms to create thick, insulated walls.

These construction methods are responses to regional climates, providing resilience, thermal comfort, and low environmental impact, offering designs rooted in human experience and the environment rather than imposed theories.

Roberts (1996) highlights the significance of local materials and construction methods in vernacular architecture. Building shapes and forms serve as evidence of social and economic processes. One can "read" a building and interpret its cultural context by examining these elements. This process of interpretation is central to understanding architecture as a form of cultural expression (Tamáska, 2018; Ingraham, 2004). Vernacular architecture, in turn, is understandable in that it represents a continuous dialogue with the surrounding environment; meanwhile, modern architecture, influenced by global trends, lacks these inherently readable elements.

From Global to Local

The analogous heritage characteristic, also noted by Fejérdy (2012), is shaped by the interaction between local practices and global influences. This becomes especially evident in migrant communities, where preserving memory is not about safeguarding a fixed cultural identity but about continually negotiating and adapting that identity within the context of migration. Migrants may alter architectural spaces, cultural practices, and symbols to reflect both their homeland's heritage and the new cultural influences they encounter upon arriving in a new environment. Thus, cultural heritage serves as a testimony to the layered processes experienced by distinct groups, where the act of remembering is continually redefined.

Halbwachs (1980) points out that memory is a social phenomenon and never entirely personal; it is shaped by the collective experiences of the group. For migrants, memory serves as both a means of survival and a tool of resistance. In the context of migration, places of memory — Nora's lieux de mémoire — are essential for preserving connections with the homeland. These places, whether physical structures, monuments, or everyday objects, serve as anchors to the past, allowing individuals to maintain ties to their cultural heritage even when physically distant from their home country. In this sense, architecture becomes a mediator of memory, providing a space to remember and reinterpret their cultural identity as they adjust to a new environment.

Global efforts aim to preserve cultural remnants across borders, such as monuments, artifacts, and sites. However, this universal approach often overlooks individuals' and communities' personal, lived experiences. While pointing out the growth of tensions between global and local, Fejérdy (2012) also draws attention to the need for local communities and civil society participation in the discussions, suggesting that local and regional values are a growing tendency in an attempt to preserve the unique self-identity of local communities.

A key question is how migrant groups adapt and create a sense of home in their new environment. This process involves socialization in their homeland and adjusting to new social and natural conditions. In Brazil, for instance, immigrant communities have left a lasting architectural legacy by adapting their traditional techniques to local materials and conditions. In Vale do Itajaí, German immigrants had to adjust to their new reality, where the climate and social and cultural conditions were

different, and one of the most notable changes was the addition of porches to half-timbered homes, a response to Brazil's heat (Weimer, 2005).

Another example is the Japanese neighborhood called Liberdade in São Paulo, which holds rich cultural significance as the heart of Japanese culture in Brazil and is home to one of the largest Japanese communities outside Japan (see: Figure 7). The entrance to the neighborhood is marked by the Immigrant Portal, which features a style, colors, and shapes that immediately evoke Japanese cultural identity. The portal and the neighbor-hood's elements contrast with the urban landscape of São Paulo, symbolizing the cultural blending and adaptation of Japanese immigrants who arrived in Brazil in the early 20th century. However, it is not only Japanese immigrants; "In the Liberdade neighborhood, the colonial city, the industrial city and the global city meet and confront each other through the different social groups that have settled there over the last four centuries" (da Cruz Paina, 2022). In addition to the Japanese presence, we also observe today the Korean and Chinese communities, as well as the attempts to erase the Black presence in the region (Popperl, 2019).

From the immigrant's perspective, moving from one place to another reveals additional layers of transformation, including nationalist influences that shape collective identity. Migrants and diaspora communities, with their cross-border connections, often challenge the idea of national homogeneity. They cultivate fluid identities that transcend traditional national boundaries, sometimes leading to their being perceived as problematic (Hall, 1990). The meanings assigned to places, stored in collective memory, provide a sense of stability. Yet, these transnational identities complicate the traditional nationalist narratives, as they embody the coexistence of multiple cultural influences within a single spatial context, demonstrating how heritage and identity are continually redefined through migration and adaptation.

In the context of global and local understandings of heritage, memories play a crucial role in shaping these spaces. Each nation has its own collective memory connected to its history, values, and cultural symbols. Simultaneously, ethnic com-munities within that nation preserve their own distinct memories and identities, often creating unique spaces where their heritage is honored and maintained.

This tension between local ethnic heritage and national identity is not always harmonious, and it can lead to contradictions and conflicts. Migrant

Figure 7. Liberdade neighborhood, SP with the oriental lamps and portal / Chapel of Nossa Senhora dos Aflitos in the background. Source: Edu Lyra, 2022 / Alf Ribeiro, 2014

communities in host countries often find themselves caught between the local heritage of the nation-state and their own ethnic and cultural memories, reflecting broader tensions between global and local identities in the built environment (Bhabha, 1994; Assmann, 2011).

Concluding Remarks

This research analyzes architecture through an anthropological lens, focusing on its subjectivity and cultural significance. Rather than objectively documenting architecture, this investigation seeks to understand how it embodies cultural identities, experiences, and relationships with the environment. By examining the arrangement of forms, materials, patterns, details, and meanings, we can "read" a building and interpret it within its context, which will be deeply explored through collective memory. This unique combination of elements will help describe the local distinctiveness in future work focusing on the Hungarian Cultural Route of Jaraguá do Sul, SC, Brazil.

Immigrant architecture is more than a physical structure; it is a dynamic space where cultural heritage is preserved, transformed, and negotiated. Migrants adapt their environments to reflect both their roots and influences from their host country, engaging in a continuous process of identity formation. To explore this empirically, memory narratives gathered through interviews and observations of architectural sites in Jaraguá do Sul, Brazil, and Veszprém County, Hungary, will later reveal how spaces embody collective memory and cultural adaptation. This approach highlights how Hungarian immigrants' architectural choices reflect their histories and ongoing negotiations between homeland and Brazilian influences.

This will contribute to a deeper understanding of immigrant experiences and the cultural diversity shaped by migration and focus on the answer to how the Hungarian immigrant from a rural area

created a new home in Brazil. How did they assimilate to the local issues and environment? And what are the paths of a hybrid cultural space on the Hungarian Cultural Road?

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NATIONAL COMMEMORATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE LIGHT OF CHANGING TRADITIONS: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF KUWAIT'S NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS

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Abstract

This study undertakes an anthropological analysis of Kuwaiti National celebrations. It examines the construction and reinforcement of national identity, the development of the nation-state, and how these are expressed within the local community. Through an examination of historical narratives, governmental influence, and public performative expressions, this paper aims to identify the mechanisms by which these national commemorations function as tools for collective memory, social integration, and the processing of historical trauma within Kuwait's diverse demographic landscape. The anthropological investigation also considers the historical evolution of these commemorations, the role of governmental influence in the construction of collective memory, and the performative aspects of public participation, particularly concerning the processing of transgenerational war trauma and intergroup relational dynamics. The study's

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objective is to provide a nuanced understanding of how these traditions function to construct identity, facilitate social integration, and shape historical narratives within the local group context. Examining the development and historical changes of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days reveals a dynamic interplay between official commemoration and popular expression.

Keywords: kuwait national holidays, national identity, anthropology

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

Absztrakt

A NEMZETI MEGEMLÉKEZÉS ÉS KULTURÁLIS IDENTITÁS A VÁLTOZÓ HAGYO-MÁNYOK TÜKRÉBEN: ANTROPOLÓGIAI TANULMÁNY KUVAIT NEMZETI ÉS FELSZA-BADULÁSI NAPJÁRÓL

Jelen tanulmány Kuvait Nemzeti ünnepeinek antropológia szemszögű elemzését kísérli meg, melynek során vizsgálja a nemzeti identitás konstrukciójának és megerősítésének, a nemzetállam kialakulásának és annak artikulációs módjait a lokális közösségen belül. A történelmi narratívák, a kormányzati befolyás és a nyilvános performatív kifejezések vizsgálatán keresztül a dolgozat elvégzi azon mechanizmusok feltárását melyek révén a tárgyalt nemzeti megemlékezések a kollektív emlékezet, a társadalmi integráció és a történelmi trauma feldolgozásának eszközeiként funkcionálnak Kuvait sokszínű demográfiai tájképén belül. Az antropológiai vizsgálat tárgya továbbá a megemlékezések történelmi fejlődése, a kormányzati befolyás szerepe a kollektív emlékezet konstrukciójában, valamint a nyilvános részvétel performatív aspektusai, különös tekintettel a transzgenerációs háború okozta trauma feldolgozására és a csoportközi kapcsolati dinamikákra. A tanulmány célja, hogy árnyalt képet nyújtson ezen hagyományok identitáskonstruáló, társadalmi integrációs és történelmi narratíva-képző szerepéről a lokális csoport kontextusában. Kuvait Nemzeti és Felszabadulási Napjainak kialakulásának és történeti változásainak vizsgálata a hivatalos megemlékezés és a népi kifejezés dinamikus kölcsönhatásainak játékát tárja elénk.

Kulcsszavak: Kuvait Nemzeti ünnepek, nemzeti identitás, antropológia

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

This study delves into the socio-cultural dynamics of Kuwait's National and Liberation Day celebrations, employing an anthropological lens to analyze the construction and reinforcement of national identity. Through an examination of historical narratives, governmental influence, and public performative expressions, this paper aims to elucidate the mechanisms by which these national commemorations function as vehicles for collective memory, social integration, and the negotiation of historical trauma within the diverse demographic landscape of Kuwait. Through an anthropological approach, we examine the historical evolution of these celebrations, the role of governmental influence in shaping collective memory, and the performative aspects of public participation, particularly in relation to trauma processing and intergroup relations. This study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how these traditions function as mechanisms for identity construction, social integration, and the negotiation of historical narratives within the Kuwaiti context. The evolution of Kuwait's National and Liberation Day celebrations reveals a dynamic interplay between official commemoration and popular expression. National Day, initially characterized by organized parades, transitioned to widespread residential decorations, reflecting a shift towards broader

public engagement. Liberation Day past practices, post-conflict traditions, emerged as a spontaneous expression of victory and remembrance. The Kuwaiti government plays a central role in shaping national memory through organized events, memorials, and regulations, demonstrating a top-down approach to collective memory formation. The spontaneous historical re-enactment of the liberation war, involving both Kuwaiti citizens and expatriates, served as a temporary suspension of social norms and hierarchies, fostering a sense of social integration and acceptance. While historically prevalent, these re-enactments are now prohibited due to safety and resource concerns. The Iraqi invasion left a deep psychological impact, with re-enactments analyzed as potential subconscious attempts to process trauma, though scholarly debate exists regarding their therapeutic value. Notably, a clear distinction exists between everyday social interactions and the temporary dissolution of boundaries observed during these celebrations. The celebrations themselves can be seen as a form of releasing frustrations caused by trauma.

A brief history of Kuwait

Established as a fishing settlement in 1613 under Portuguese rule, Kuwait transitioned to Ottoman-aligned governance by the late 17th century. The 18th century saw Kuwait develop significant regional diplomatic and commercial ties, notably as a key trade hub between Aleppo and the Gulf. Its maritime trade flourished, leading to its reputation as a cosmopolitan and tolerant center. The Al-Sabah family, from the Bani Utbah, assumed rulership in the late 17th century and continue to rule Kuwait today. In 1899 Shaikh Mubarak Al-Sabah reinforced the country's diplomatic relationships with Great-Britain by signing the Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement which made Kuwait a British protectorate until 1961. The 1st and the 2nd World War were governed by the continuous fight between East and West for the control of (also)

Kuwaiti territory due to its geopolitical importance which affects the country's political, economic and military position even today. In 1961, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah terminated the British Protectorate, enabling Kuwait to cultivate stronger commercial and political relations with the United States. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah promulgated the 1962 constitution, leading to the establishment of Parliament in 1963. Kuwait is considered one of the most democratic Gulf countries and is a significant US ally, hosting a persistent US military presence. The first commercial oil well was dug in Burgan, in 1938, and since, Kuwait has become an increasingly important actor in international politics and economy.

The Invasion and the Liberation – the beginning of a tradition

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, under Saddam Hussein, stemmed from a complex interplay of factors. Potential reasons include territorial disputes over oil resources, Iraq's debt to Kuwait, and the historical Iraqi claim of Kuwait as a lost province. Operation Desert Storm, the subsequent US-led coalition intervention, liberated Kuwait and significantly solidified its alliance with the United States, contrasting sharply with Saddam Hussein's anti-Western stance. Despite his execution, Saddam Hussein retains a degree of popularity within certain segments of the Arab world, where he is viewed as a symbol of Arab independence and a leader who modernized Iraq's infrastructure, including healthcare and education systems, which were subsequently damaged during the US-led military intervention. The Desert Storm Operation concluded in 3 days, contrasting sharply with the Iraqi invasion's occupation, which lasted over 7 months. During this period, Kuwaiti citizens were subjected to hostage-taking, torture, and interrogation, with numerous executions occurring. Iraqi forces also engaged in deliberate

environmental damage, setting oil wells ablaze, and employed chemical warfare across the country. While many Hungarian and other Western expatriates evacuated during the invasion, some remained to witness the conflict. It is notable that, in general, the Western expatriate population did not experience the same magnitude of tragic losses as the Kuwaiti citizens. Anecdotal evidence from the local Hungarian community indicates that Kuwaiti citizens were the primary targets of the Iraqi occupation and search. Following Iraq's refusal to comply with multiple United Nations resolutions demanding withdrawal, the United States initiated Operation Desert Storm, liberating Kuwait and conducting military operations against Iraq, commencing on February 24, 1991.

Demographic key takeaways

Kuwait exhibits a high degree of ethnic diversity within the Gulf region, a consequence of its historical, geopolitical, and economic circumstances. Kuwaiti citizens constitute approximately 31.3% of the resident population, with the remaining majority comprising stateless residents and foreign expatriates. This demographic includes roughly 27.9% Arab nationals, 37.8% South Asians, 1.9% Africans, and 1.1% other nationalities, predominantly from the United States and Europe. A significant 98% of the population resides in urbanized areas, encompassing approximately 25% of Kuwait's total land area. These urban centers are concentrated along the coastal region, where the more advanced infrastructure is prevalent. The remaining landmass consists of arid and semi-arid terrain utilized for oil production, military installations, and irrigated agriculture. Kuwait is characterized by significant ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity, forming an ethnic mosaic, which (among other factors) has fostered a heightened sense of national identity. This is evident in initiatives such as Kuwaitization, a centrally administered program designed to prioritize Kuwaiti citizens in the labor market, particularly within the government sector.

The history of the National and Liberation Day

Interview

Amer S. (24. f., Iraqi-Kuwaiti, BSc, Debrecen.)

About the National Day:

„My parents told me that the celebrations started around 1977, back at that time the houses were not decorated with the flag and the lights as you can see it nowadays. Instead, there was a big show on the Gulf Street, on the seaside, where private companies and governmental institutions decorated cars, and big carts, and they were driving them through the Gulf Street, and people would be standing on the sides to see the show. So, you can say it was something similar to the Virágkarnevál in Debrecen, but with the decoration of Kuwait, with Kuwaiti flags. This thing remained until around 1986, when I think it was the 26th anniversary of the independence of Kuwait, when the Amir of Kuwait ordered the people of Kuwait to decorate their houses, with all the lights and the flags we see nowadays, and the big show and festival on the Gulf Street stopped, it wasn't done anymore. Still people were going out in the streets, playing songs, carrying the flags, so much of what we see nowadays. But the foam and the water were not used at this time.

So, the celebration remained the same until the end of the war in 1991, when people started to use as a new way of celebration after the war ended, and it remained in use for several years, until it got banned because of the incidents that happened, the damage that the foam caused in the paint of cars and getting in contact with the skin and the eyes. This is the reason it got banned and replaced by water. But even until recently the government is trying to minimize or even prohibit the celebration with water, as it is considered wasteful, and some people are using contaminated water, some of them are using even liquids other than water. So even until now, they are trying to minimize or even completely prohibit the celebration with water."

Analysis of the interview data reveals a gradual evolution in the celebration of Kuwait's national holidays. The National Day, observed on February 25th since the 1970s, has consistently been a centrally organized event. According to Amer, the government initially mandated the display of the Kuwaiti national flag on residential facades. Currently, the national flag is ubiquitously displayed on large villas, vehicles, and even within smaller residences. Vehicle decorations are particularly elaborate, with portraits of past and present leaders adorning the exteriors of various vehicles, including jeeps and land cruisers, alongside large national flags. These elaborate decorations, as described by Amer, bear resemblance to the Debrecen Flower Carnival. A military air show, featuring national colors and the flag, constitutes an integral component of the national celebrations. Furthermore, skyscrapers in Kuwait and other regional cities, such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi, are illuminated in the national colors, a practice also observed during significant sporting events. The Liberation Day, commemorating the 1991 victory over the Iraqi forces, emerged as a celebration post-conflict. While the precise origins and rationale for these celebrations remain largely undocumented, they appear to have arisen as spontaneous and collectively accepted forms of commemoration, potentially serving as a mechanism for collective trauma processing.

The two celebrations – key takeaways

Kuwait's National Day, observed on February 25th, commemorates the ascension of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah to the throne in 1950. Notably, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah is revered as a pivotal figure in Kuwaiti history, credited with terminating British protectorate status and solidifying the nation's sovereignty. The subsequent day, February 26th, marks the celebration of Kuwait's liberation following the Iraqi invasion. Historical accounts indicate that the inaugural National Day celebrations occurred in 1963. Contemporary celebrations are characterized by a diverse array of events, including concerts, firework displays, and family-oriented programs, fostering communal gatherings. Public parks serve as focal points for these festivities, attracting both Kuwaiti citizens and expatriate residents. These spaces facilitate a confluence of diverse populations, united in the celebration of national identity and resilience, as evidenced by the shared anticipation of roadshows, pyrotechnic displays, and aerial demonstrations.

Kuwait commemorates its liberation from the Iraqi army on February 26, 1991. While the Kuwaiti government actively engages in initiatives aimed at mitigating the enduring psychological impact of the invasion—through the construction of memorials and the organization of public commemorations—the socio-psychological ramifications remain substantial.

Empirical evidence, derived from interviews, suggests a significant reluctance among individuals to recount their experiences during the invasion. Interview subjects consistently provided limited responses, demonstrating an unwillingness to engage in detailed narratives of their personal traumas. This reticence resulted in a scarcity of in-depth, first-hand accounts.

Despite this reluctance, the narratives of the invasion are preserved through ongoing oral history projects (AUK oral history project), demonstrating a commitment to documenting collective memory. Furthermore, the invasion is a recurring theme in Kuwaiti media and is visibly memorialized in public spaces, particularly in high-traffic areas. These public representations serve as tangible reminders of the historical event and its lasting impact, while providing space for grieving.

A plausible hypothesis posits that the construction of national collective memory, encompassing its structure, content, and narrative, and the mechanisms by which transgenerational

traumas are processed, are subject to centralized definition and organization. Consequently, it may be inferred that collective consciousness operates within a hierarchical framework, exhibiting a top-down rather than bottom-up organizational structure in this regard. This assertion finds potential support in the selective representation and emphasis of elements within national commemorative practices.

Strategies of Historical Commemoration

Top to bottom: For maintaining and establishing historical remembrance, the government has erected numerous memorials for the martyrs. One such example is the Wall of Martyrs in Al-Shaheed Park, which is one of the most frequented areas of Kuwait during festivities, and it's among the first places that tourists visit.

Thus, the martyrs central to Kuwait's historical narrative and independence are positioned within the visual purview of tourists. This strategic placement serves to communicate the national narrative to local citizens, tourists, and expatriate residents alike. The observances of National Day have retained their fundamental structure; however, there appears to be a heightened emphasis on carnival-esque festivities following the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, National Day celebrations in Kuwait were primarily characterized by events such as the Gulf Road show, fireworks displays, picnics, concerts, and the public veneration of past sheikhs, reflecting a degree of personality cult. Contemporary celebrations, however, have shifted towards staged performances, organized carnivals, and events held at historically significant locations. A consistent feature throughout both periods has been the prominent attendance and active engagement of children across all age groups.

Bottom to top: Historically, certain elements were consistent across both commemorative days. However, the 26th of February, Liberation Day, was particularly notable for the spontaneous re-enactments of the conflict, utilizing water guns and water balloons. During these celebrations, roadsides were populated by vendors selling toy weapons and balloons, and a temporary suspension of normative social conduct was observed. This manifested in playful, albeit unregulated, interactions, including mock attacks with water guns, the projectile use of water-filled balloons against pedestrians and vehicles, and simulated vehicular assaults.

Additionally, individuals engaged in deceptive tactics, feigning injury at roadsides to elicit assistance, only to then execute ambush-style attacks on unsuspecting individuals. The scene used to be a whirlwind of chaos. Cars, plastered with portraits of sheikhs, children perched through sunroofs, unleashed torrents of water on unsuspecting passersby. Modern and traditional Arabic music blared from every direction. Children, decked out in national colors, and expatriates alike, joined in the revelry, creating a melting pot of celebration where everyday practices of norm control were temporarily suspended. While these re-enactments were historically a recurring feature, they are now officially prohibited by authorities during contemporary celebrations. This prohibition was initially implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period in which all large-scale celebrations and public gatherings were legally restricted.

Although limited observances were permitted, the use of water, toy weapons, and any implements simulating weaponry is strictly forbidden. This measure was predicated on the understanding that the dispersal of water and the close-contact nature of re-enacted combat could facilitate viral transmission within crowds. Furthermore, the significant water consumption associated with these activities was deemed unsustainable in a region characterized by limited freshwater resources, while several individuals got injured each

year in the heat of these games. The prohibition has remained in effect post-pandemic.

The phenomenon of both expatriate and local participation in the re-enactment of the conflict and the subsequent victory over the Iraqi forces may be interpreted as a symbolic act of social integration, potentially signifying a degree of acceptance of expatriate communities within the broader Kuwaiti social fabric. This symbolic action is particularly noteworthy given the pronounced social differentiation that characterizes everyday interactions between Kuwaiti citizens and expatriate populations, encompassing Arab, Asian, and Western communities.

It is pertinent to acknowledge the prevalence of symbolic competition and inter-Arab national rivalries within everyday public discourse. Condescending narratives concerning Kuwait's cultural and economic achievements are frequently articulated in casual conversations, often positing that these successes are contingent upon territorial claims against Iraq or the intervention of the United States. Consequently, the re-enactment of the conflict, and even the mere presence of diverse Arab nationalities at a celebration commemorating the definitive act of Kuwait's sovereignty, can be interpreted as a tacit act of legitimation and acceptance by other Arab nations.

In conclusion, regardless of the inclusion of re-enactments, the carnival-esque emphasis of both National and Liberation Days, coupled with the active participation of Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti populations, can be interpreted as a reciprocal act of acceptance and legitimation. Kuwaiti citizens, through their inclusive celebrations, recognize the integration of other nationalities within their cultural and historical narrative, as evidenced by the inclusion of non-Kuwaitis on the Wall of Martyrs in Al-Shaheed Park. Conversely, the active involvement of other Arab nations in the re-enactments and celebrations serves as a performative affirmation of Kuwait's sovereign status.

The aforementioned performative act stands in stark contrast to everyday social interactions, which are characterized by a separation between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti populations. Observational data collected over an eleven-year period reveals a hierarchical structure of social distance, with Kuwaiti citizens demonstrating the closest proximity to other Arab nationalities, followed by Western citizens, and subsequently, Asian populations.

The re-enactment of the conflict can be conceptualized as a mechanism for the temporary suspension of normative social controls and social order, specifically those governing intergroup interactions between Kuwaiti citizens and non-Kuwaiti residents. Through the medium of play, which permits otherwise prohibited actions such as mock attacks, and unconventional social interactions, a temporary dissolution of social boundaries is facilitated, a characteristic feature of carnival culture.

In contrast to Bakhtin's concept of social hierarchy inversion, the observed phenomenon demonstrates a more profound dissolution of social stratification. During these events, social hierarchies are effectively abolished, as evidenced by the indiscriminate participation of all social groups, irrespective of socioeconomic or racial background, in the re-enactment's spontaneous play. The inherent nature of the games, specifically the simulation of combat, constitutes a manifestation of aggression. This aggression is expressed among individuals, irrespective of their aforementioned social backgrounds, and is characterized by a temporary suspension of customary social consequences, thus social roles and hierarchies are blurred, taboos are temporarily lifted.

In this very custom, the uncustomary became a

tradition, spontaneously. Since the dissolution of customary social norms releases inhibitions and may channel frustrations, we may conclude that this temporary tradition evolved spontaneously as a channel to ease frustrations resulting the transgenerational trauma caused by the Iraqi invasion and group asymmetries.

The observed spontaneity of these re-enactments, when compared with established literature on trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suggests a potential interpretation as subconscious repetitions of the traumatic events. It is posited that the victory itself does not fully mitigate the underlying traumatic factors, and these repetitions may represent a subconscious attempt at resolution.

While some scholarly work cautions against the potential for re-traumatization through such re-enactments, empirical observations indicate that the playful, decontextualized nature of these events, devoid of real danger, may facilitate a process of re-contextualizing traumatic experiences for the general population. Notably, ongoing clinical research endeavors are investigating the long-term psychological sequelae of the Iraqi invasion and subsequent liberation.

Group identity and celebrations

National celebrations and commemorations, particularly those intended for public self-representation, such as Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, serve as critical platforms for the articulation of core cultural values and identity markers. These events, functioning as international spectacles, facilitate the symbolic enactment of essential identity construction elements. Consequently, a confluence of intended external representation and internalized self-perception is manifested, offering a unique lens through which to examine the interplay between performative identity and collective self-understanding.

Consequently, to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the group's self-perception, it is imperative to examine the most prevalent and consistently recurring elements within these celebratory events. The elements consistently observed within these celebrations, without hierarchical prioritization include:

- the ubiquitous display of Kuwaiti flags (historical and contemporary);
- the prominent visual representation of past and present rulers;
- the performance of the national anthem;
- the historical re-enactment of the fights;
- the military air show;
- traditional dance performances (Al-Ardha)

The flags

The contemporary national flag, featuring a horizontal tricolor of green, white, and red with a black trapezoid, has been in official use since 1961, at the same time with Kuwait's attainment of independence from British protectorate status. These colors—green, red, white, and black—are recognized as pan-Arab symbols, representing, respectively, the land, peace, sacrifice, and historical military engagements. Prior to 1961, a red flag bearing an inscription of the name of Kuwait was utilized. While acknowledging the existence of other pre-1961 flags, this analysis focuses on the red flag with inscription, and the four-color contemporary flag, given their prominent representation during national commemorations.

As Kuwait times writes: *"For centuries, Kuwait's flag, emblem and national anthem have been more than just national symbols — they have navigated the tides of history, adapting to shifting alliances, economic realities and the pursuit of independence. As Kuwait grew, so did its symbols, evolving from foreign influences to proudly represent the nation's strength and heritage. Each transformation tells a story of resilience, identity, and freedom. […]*

By 1914, after becoming a British protectorate, Kuwait introduced a red flag with the word "Kuwait" in white, replacing the Ottoman crescent and star. This marked Kuwait's first distinct national flag, symbolizing a turning point in its political identity. In the 1940s, under Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the flag was modified into a triangular version, incorporating Islamic inscriptions and symbols to reflect Kuwait's growing national consciousness.
The most significant transformation came in 1961 with Kuwait's independence. The country adopted its current flag, featuring four colors — green for the land, white for peace, red for sacrifice, and black for battles fought. Inspired by an Arab poetic verse, this flag became a symbol of Kuwait's sovereignty and unity, replacing all previous versions tied to foreign influences." (2025, February 20).

This recent publication in the Kuwait Times, dated February 20, 2025, preceding the national celebrations, presents a narrative of national sovereignty and introspective self-definition, effectively serving as a symbolic representation of Kuwait's identity as an independent nation-state. Furthermore, the historical evolution of Kuwait's flag designs can be interpreted as a tangible manifestation of the nation's progressive liberation from external influences, with each successive iteration signifying a step towards consolidated autonomy.

Both the contemporary and historical national flags are prominently displayed throughout the commemorative period. Citizens exhibit these symbols through various means, including personal attire, vehicular adornment with flag-themed wraps and national color decals, and the installation of large-scale flags on building facades. Public spaces are similarly decorated, with palm trees illuminated by national color lighting and the Kuwait Towers, a significant architectural landmark, bathed in the same palette. Children's attire, including traditional female dress (the Ra), is rendered in the national colors. Furthermore, a range of merchandise, such as baseball hats, badges, gloves, pictures, accessories, face paintings, and balloons, adheres to this consistent color scheme during these nationally significant observances.

The pervasive and diverse display of both historical and contemporary national flags during Kuwait's commemorative periods reveals a complex cultural phenomenon. Anthropological inquiry suggests that this ubiquitous display functions as a potent symbolic articulation of shared national identity and collective unity, reflecting a culturally embedded desire to express patriotism. The deliberate display of historical and contemporary flags at the same time underscores the cultural importance of historical continuity and the nation's narrative of independence, serving as a *mnemonic* device for collective memory. The extensive decoration of public spaces, including iconic landmarks like the Kuwait Towers, points to the role of the state in shaping and reinforcing cultural expressions of patriotism, potentially fostering a shared sense of belonging. Furthermore, the incorporation of national colors into children's attire and commercial merchandise acts as a form of cultural transmission, ensuring the perpetuation of national identity across generations and different nationalities present. The sheer diversity of media employed in the display of national symbols highlights the cultural significance of these commemorations as a public performance of shared values and historical narratives. Ultimately, the consistent application of the national color scheme across various cultural artifacts reinforces the visual representation of culturally salient values and historical narratives, serving as a material expression of collective identity.

The National Anthem
The Kuwaiti national anthem (Table 1), as a cultural artifact, functions as a salient instrument in the construction and r einforcement of national

identity. This process resonates with the theoretical frameworks articulated by Benedict Anderson (1983), particularly when considering Kuwait's demographic mosaic. The anthem, through its symbolic content, serves to bind diverse ethnic and social groups under a unified national identity, thereby delineating shared norms, values, and a collective sense of belonging.

The lyrical content of the Kuwaiti national anthem articulates core cultural values, including prosperity, peace, and strong leadership, thereby reflecting the nation-building processes elucidated by Ernest Gellner (1983) in Nations and Nationalism.

Table 1. The Kuwaiti National Anthem

Arabic language	English language
Waṭanī l-Kuwayta salimta li-l-majdi Wa-ʿalā jabīnika ṭāliʿa s-saʿdi *Jawqa:* Waṭanī l-Kuwayta salimta li-l-majdi Wa-ʿalā jabīnika ṭāliʿa s-saʿdi Waṭanī l-Kuwayt waṭanī l-Kuwayt Waṭanī l-Kuwayta salimta li-l-majdi	My homeland Kuwait, you have prospered to glory, And on your forehead is an omen of fortune. *Chorus:* My homeland Kuwait, you have prospered to glory, And on your forehead is an omen of fortune. My homeland Kuwait, my homeland Kuwait, My homeland Kuwait, you have prospered to glory.
I Yā mahda ʾābāʾi l-ʾūlā katabū Sifr al-xulūdi fa-nādat iš-šuhubu Allāhu ʾakbaru ʾinnahum ʿArabu Ṭalaʿat Kawākibu jannati l-xuldi	*I* Oh cradle of forefathers, they wrote A book of eternity, then the meteors called God is the greatest, indeed Arabs Ascended as the planets of paradise of perpetuity.
Jawqa	*Chorus*
II Būrikta yā waṭanī l-Kuwayta lanā Sakanan wa-ʿišta ʿalī l-mada waṭanan Yafdīka ḥurrun fī ḥimāka banā Ṣarha l-ḥayati bi-ʾakrami l-ʾaydī	*II* Blessed be my homeland Kuwait, for us It was peaceful, and you lived on the extent of the homeland Kept free in your protection to build A palace of life with the most generous arms.
Jawqa	*Chorus*
III Naḥmīka yā waṭanī wa-šāhidunā Šarʿu l-huda wa-l-ḥaqqu rāʾidunā Wa-ʾAmīrunā li-l-ʿizzi qāʾidunā Rabbu l-ḥamiyati ṣādiqu l-waʿdi	*III* Let us protect, oh my homeland, and we witnessed The revealing of the guidance and the truth, our pioneer, And our Amir is the powerful, our leader, The master of my protection, the truthful of the promise.
Jawqa	*Chorus*

Gellner's book, which emphasizes the role of industrialization, modernization, and subsequent standardization through institutionalization, finds resonance in the historical trajectory of Kuwait. The nation's transition from Portuguese rule, Ottoman, Iraqi administration, and British protectorate to full sovereignty in the 20th century aligns with Gellner's theoretical framework. Kuwait's accelerated industrialization and modernization, particularly following the commencement of commercial oil production and trade, have precipitated rapid population growth, industrial expansion, and the development of administrative and infrastructural systems. This process necessitates standardization and the reinforcement of national identity through symbolic expressions, encompassing shared values and norms (e.g., Islam as the state religion) and diverse public cultural manifestations. These manifestations include, but are not limited to, musical and choreographic performances, the display of national flags and emblems, the organization of national celebrations, and the commemoration of individuals who have made significant contributions to the nation's historical development.

Also, interview data reveals that the Kuwaiti dialect is a significant marker of national distinctiveness from other Khaleeji (Gulf) countries, underscoring the role of language as a critical component of national identity and cultural expression.

The performative aspect of the anthem, particularly during national celebrations and official events, functions as a collective ritual, akin to Emile Durkheim's concept of 'collective effervescence,' fostering a sense of unity and belonging among Kuwaiti citizens.

The anthem's opening line, "My homeland Kuwait, you have prospered to glory", actively constructs a narrative of national achievement, fostering a collective identity, while the phrase 'Oh cradle of forefathers' establishes a historical continuity, legitimizing the nation-state through ancestral lineage and tying modern Kuwait to a broader Arab identity.

The inclusion of religious and ethnic markers, such as "God is the greatest, indeed Arabs ascended", reinforces a shared cultural and religious identity, emphasizing Kuwait's place within the Arab and Islamic world and simultaneously distinguishing it from other nations.

The line "And on your forehead is an omen of fortune" suggests a belief in a prosperous future, serving as a cultural expression of hope and aspiration, central to the nation-building project. The emphasis on the Amir as a strong and benevolent leader, as seen in "Our Amir is the powerful, our leader", reinforces the political structure and legitimizes the ruling authority, highlighting the importance of leadership in national unity. "Kept free in your protection" reflects a sense of security and protection provided by the nation, essential for fostering national cohesion. The anthem's emphasis on independence and prosperity reflects the historical context of Kuwait's emergence as a modern nation-state, while the mention of 'forefathers' and 'Arabs' connects the modern nation to its historical and cultural roots, reinforcing a sense of continuity and tradition.

The military air show
The significance of a military air show and an exhibition like "Safe Kuwait" during national celebrations can be analyzed from several Anthropological perspectives, particularly in the context of a rising nation-state.

Military displays during Kuwait's national celebrations serve as a multifaceted symbolic performance, projecting national power and reinforcing state authority. These visual representations of military capabilities, particularly poignant in the context of Kuwait's history marked by the Iraqi invasion, reaffirm the nation's capacity for self-

defense and contribute to the establishment of security and stability, crucial elements in nation-building (Giddens, 1984).

Moreover, these events function as potent instruments for the construction of national identity and patriotism, evoking feelings of pride and fostering a sense of collective belonging, aligning with Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983).

The spectacle of military prowess inspires awe and reinforces nationalistic sentiments, while the shared experience of witnessing these displays cultivates community and solidarity, reminiscent of Durkheim's 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim, 1912).

The military and associated forces embody national values such as discipline, courage, and dedication to service. From a ritualistic perspective, parades and exhibitions reinforce social order and hierarchy, with disciplined movements symbolizing the state's structure (Turner, 1969). These events also serve as a public display of state power, demonstrating the government's ability to mobilize resources and project force, and as a means of commemoration and remembrance, honoring those who have served and reminding citizens of past struggles. Anthropologically, military displays can be interpreted as a form of symbolic violence, representing the state's monopoly on force and its means of social control (Bourdieu, 1977). They function as cultural performances, where the state enacts its authority through symbolic actions, contributing to national myth-making and re-inforcing the narrative of a strong, unified nation, particularly in Kuwait's case, as a testament to its resilience and ability to rebuild after trauma.

Al-Ardha

Given Kuwait's historical prominence as a significant musical center within the Gulf region, dance and musical expressions hold particular cultural salience for Kuwaiti citizens. Among the enduring traditions, the Al-Ardha dance occupies a position of notable significance. The Al-Ardha, as recognized by UNESCO's 2015 inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, serves as a quintessential cultural expression for the indigenous populations of the Arabian Peninsula, maintaining its wide-spread practice in contemporary society. While its precise origins remain obscured, with scholarly speculation placing its emergence no later than the 17th century, the Al-Ardha functions as a multi-faceted traditional performance. It integrates dance, percussive instrumentation, and poetic recitation, signifying the commencement and conclusion of culturally significant events, including religious observances, rites of passage, and national commemorations. Male participants, carrying ceremonial swords, align themselves in opposing rows, creating a space for the percussive ensemble. A poet's vocal delivery of occasion-specific verses is met with antiphonal responses from the participants.

The UNESCO description highlights the performative synchronicity, noting the rhythmic swaying and sword movements, harmonized with the percussion and vocalizations, culminating in a collective gathering around the national flag.

Notably, the Al-Ardha's inclusive nature allows for participation across diverse social scope, age groups, and professional backgrounds, underscoring its role as a unifying cultural practice. This performance, therefore, acts as a powerful symbolic representation of shared heritage and collective identity, demonstrating the enduring significance of intangible cultural heritage in the Arabian Peninsula. (Kuwait Times, February 29, 2024).

The Al-Ardha, this traditional sword dance performed during Kuwait's National Day, transcends mere entertainment, functioning as an expression of national identity and cultural heritage. This living embodiment of Kuwaiti tradition connects con-

temporary citizens to their ancestral past, reinforcing the importance of cultural preservation and asserting a distinct Arab identity within the broader cultural landscape of the Arabian Peninsula.

As a potent national symbol, the Al-Ardha represents Kuwait's strength, resilience, and cultural distinctiveness, serving as a powerful historical commemoration. Evoking martial traditions, it honors the bravery of ancestors and reinforces shared historical narratives, fostering a sense of continuity across generations. In the context of National Day, it becomes a symbolic celebration of victory and resilience, particularly relevant in light of Kuwait's historical experiences. Functioning as a public display of Kuwaiti culture, it showcases rich heritage to diverse audiences, serving as a ritualistic performance that reinforces social norms. Anthropologically, the Al-Ardha is an embodied form of cultural expression, transmitting values through physical movement and serving as a cultural performance that enacts and reinforces social roles and identities, communicating symbolic messages about national identity, history, and social values.

The adoption and prominent display of the Al-Ardha, a generic Arabian tradition, as a defining element of Kuwaiti heritage during National and Liberation Day celebrations holds significant anthropological weight. By selecting this shared cultural practice, Kuwait strategically reinforces its connection to the broader Arabian Peninsula, solidifying its regional identity and historical continuity. This choice serves to construct a cultural narrative that transcends immediate political boundaries, emphasizing a shared ancestral heritage and fostering a sense of belonging within the larger Arab world. Furthermore, showcasing the Al-Ardha on national holidays underscores its symbolic role in representing Kuwaiti resilience and unity, particularly in the context of nation-building and post-conflict commemoration. The performance, with its martial undertones and collective participation, acts as a potent visual and kinesthetic representation of national strength and cultural cohesion, effectively communicating a narrative of shared values and historical experience to both domestic and international audiences. By weaving this tradition into the fabric of national celebrations, Kuwait underscores the enduring significance of cultural heritage in constructing and maintaining a cohesive national identity.

Summary
This micro-research explored the dimensions of Kuwait's National and Liberation Day celebrations, focusing on their role in shaping national identity and fostering social cohesion. The analysis traces the historical evolution of these celebrations, highlighting the interplay between state-directed commemorations and spontaneous public expressions. The study emphasizes the significance of national symbols, such as flags and the national anthem, in constructing a unified national narrative, particularly in the context of Kuwait's diverse population and historical experiences. The performative aspects of these celebrations, including military displays and traditional dances like the Al-Ardha, are examined as cultural rituals that reinforce national values and historical memory. The research also addresses the matter of trans-generational trauma processing, particularly in relation to the Iraqi invasion, and explores how re-enactments and public commemorations serve as potential mechanisms for collective healing. Furthermore, the paper investigates the role of these celebrations in mediating intergroup relations, highlighting the temporary suspension of social hierarchies and the promotion of social integration. By weaving together historical analysis, ethnographic observations, and anthropological theory, this study aims to provide a comprehensive

understanding of how national celebrations in Kuwait contribute to the ongoing negotiation of identity, history, and social dynamics.

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SELF-CONCEPT AS A CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

Special education has shifted from a position of delivering professional services to students with disabilities to a system that seeks to encompass the broad concept of promoting quality education for students. This study examined the self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research type. Special needs students in the three local government areas in Ilorin, Ilorin South, East and West Local Governments Area constituted the total population for this research. The researchers designed a questionnaire entitled: self-concept as a correlate of academic achievement of special needs students' questionnaire" (SCCASNSQ). 200 questionnaire forms were administered. Research questions were answered using mean score, while

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inferential statistics of mean, standard deviation and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to test the formulated hypotheses. The finding of the study revealed that academic ability, physical ability, social ability, emotional ability, general self-worth ability and scholastic ability influence self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. More so, there was no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara state in Kwara state. There was significant relationship between religion, school type, age and self-concept and academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. The findings concluded that while self-concept may not directly influence academic achievement among special needs students in Kwara State, factors such as religion, school type, and age significantly impact both self-concept and academic performance. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that parents and other stakeholders in the education sector should enhance adolescents' interpersonal relationship by strengthening their physical, social and emotional self-concepts through relevant social skills training.

Keywords: Self-concept, academic achievement, special needs students

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

Absztrakt

A TANULÓI ÉN-KÉP MINT A SAJÁTOS NEVELÉSI IGÉNYŰ DIÁKOK TANULMÁNYI TELJESÍTMÉNYÉNEK KORRELÁTUMA KWARA ÁLLAMBAN

A gyógypedagógia fejlődése során a hangsúly a fogyatékkal élő tanulók számára nyújtott szakmai szolgáltatások biztosításáról egy átfogóbb rendszer felé tolódott el, amely a minőségi oktatás előmozdítását célozza. Ez a tanulmány azt vizsgálta, hogy a tanulói én-kép milyen kapcsolatban áll a különleges igényű diákok tanulmányi teljesítményével Kwara államban. A kutatás leíró felmérési módszert alkalmazott. A vizsgálat teljes populációját Ilorin három helyi önkormányzati területén (Ilorin Dél, Kelet és Nyugat) élő különleges igényű diákok alkották. A kutatók egy saját tervezésű kérdőívet készítettek „A tanulói én-kép mint a különleges igényű diákok tanulmányi teljesítményének korrelátuma" (SCCASNSQ) címmel. Összesen 200 kérdőívet osztottak ki. A kutatási kérdéseket átlagpontszámok segítségével elemezték, míg a feltételezések ellenőrzésére a statisztikai elemzés során az átlag, a szórás és a Pearson-féle korrelációs együttható (PPMC) módszerét alkalmazták. A kutatás eredményei azt mutatták, hogy a tanulmányi képesség, fizikai képesség, szociális képesség, érzelmi képesség, általános önértékelési képesség és iskolai képesség befolyásolja a tanulói én-képet, mint a különleges igényű diákok tanulmányi teljesítményének korrelátumát Kwara államban. Ugyanakkor nem volt szignifikáns kapcsolat az én-kép és a tanulmányi teljesítmény között a különleges igényű diákok körében Kwara államban. Viszont szignifikáns összefüggés volt kimutatható a vallás, az iskolatípus, az életkor és az én-kép, valamint a tanulmányi teljesítmény között. A tanulmány megállapításai alapján arra a következtetésre jutott, hogy bár az én-kép nem befolyásolja közvetlenül a különleges igényű diákok tanulmányi teljesítményét Kwara államban, olyan tényezők, mint a vallás, az iskolatípus és az életkor jelentős hatással vannak mind az én-képre, mind pedig a tanulmányi eredményekre. A kutatás ajánlásai között szerepel, hogy a szülők és az oktatási ágazat egyéb szereplői erősítsék a serdülők közötti interperszonális kapcsolatokat fizikai, társas és érzelmi én-képük fejlesztésével, amelyet releváns szociális készségfejlesztő tréningekkel lehet támogatni.

Kulcsszavak: énkép, tanulmányi teljesítmény, különleges igényű diákok

Discipline: Cultural Antrophology

In recent time, Nigeria has witnessed drastic decline in academic performance of students in both internal and external examinations such as WAEC, NECO, and NABTEB. The annual release of Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) results conducted by the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) justified the problematic nature and generalization of poor secondary school students' performance in different school subjects (Garba, 2022). The differential scholastic achievement of students in Nigeria has been and is still a source of concern and research interest to educators, government, parents, students and other stakeholders in the educational industry. This does not affect only the regular students but also the students with special needs.

Yssel, Waxman, and Knoche (2019) stated that "special education is a system designed to provide services to students with special needs". Yssel (2019) informs us that special education has shifted from a position of delivering professional services to students with disabilities to a system that seeks to encompass the broad concept of promoting quality education for students. This quest has led to an expectation for a challenged student to receive the same opportunities at success as a regular education student. Consequently, several research over the decades have accumulated evidences and numerous factors that are associated with students' performance at all levels of education. Such factors could include: abstract nature of concepts, inadequate qualified teachers, poor infrastructural and inadequate facilities, teacher centred instruction, non-availability and utilization of instructional materials, academic engagement (Jimoh, Abdusallam & Rahseed, 2015).

Much interest in self-concept as a factor that could influence academic performance of students has not been explored especially in Kwara State, Nigeria. The literature on self-concept is voluminous and cannot be reviewed completely here.

Self-concept is a multidimensional construct that encompasses various aspects of an individual's self-perception, including their self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-image, and self-worth (Jimoh, 2015). In essence, self-concept is defined as tan individual's perception of oneself, including attributes, abilities, attitudes, and self-worth. This personal understanding can significantly impact various aspects of one's life, including academic achievement. When it comes to special needs students, self-concept can play a particularly pivotal role due to the unique challenges they may face in academic environments.

Similarly, Muhammed and Rafique (2018) stated that self-concept is the intellectual attitude of personality. It is commonly referred to the complex, planned and self-motivated system of opinions, outlooks, and thoughts that each human comprehends to be accurate practically regarding his survival. Self-concept is vibrant and dynamic in nature as it gains maturity with age of the person and this aspect basically play a vital role in determining that it can be modified and changed.

It is not constant because as the person become older, he/she gets more insight about his/her abilities, capacities and get more knowledge about his/her potentialities and know how to come across different situations in life (Franken, 2014). In another view, Self-concept is the set of views and opinions an individual has about himself, such as qualities, characteristics, lacks, deficiencies, capabilities and capacities, limits and relationships which an individual thinks/describes his individu-ality (Marsh & Yeung, 2017).

Self-concept is therefore the knowledge and approach person has about himself. It is the insight that the individual has about himself and the way how he describes his abilities and potentials. Self-concept has great significance and it contributed a lot in building personality of an individual.

Academic achievement describes academic outcomes that indicate the extent to which a student has achieved their learning goals. This may refer to completing educational benchmarks such as a bachelor's degree. Academic achievement is often measured through examinations or continuous assessments. Consequently, academic achievement can be referred to as the extent to which a student or institution has achieved either short- or long-term educational goals. This may be measured through students' grade point average, whereas for institutions, achievement may be measured through graduation rates. Adedigba (2019) established that academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, and university. School systems mostly define cognitive goals that either apply across multiple subject areas (e.g., critical thinking) or include the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in a specific intellectual domain (e.g., numeracy, literacy, science, history). Therefore, academic achievement should be considered to be a multifaceted construct that comprises different domains of learning. The field of academic achievement is very wide ranging and covers a broad variety of educational outcomes, the definition of academic achievement depends on the indicators used to measure it (Lawal, 2016).

There are various indicators of academic achievement such as procedural and declarative knowledge acquired in an educational system, more curricular – based criteria such as grades or performance on an educational achievement test, and cumulative indicators of academic achievement such as educational degrees and certificates. All criteria have in common that they represent intellectual endeavors and thus, more or less, mirror the intellectual capacity of a person. In developed societies, academic achievement plays an important role in every person's life. Research into the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement among students has indicated that there is a connection between how students view themselves and their performance in academic settings (Afolayan, Donald, Onasoga & Babefemi, 2015). A positive self-concept is often correlated with greater motivation to learn and persist through challenges, while a negative self-concept might lead to lower academic achievement and decreased effort.

An area of concern for students with special needs is the effects of their self-concept on academic performance. Much research has been done on the effects of self-concept and self-perception on the academic performance of mainstream students. However, how does this affect the academic performance of students with disabilities? Unfortunately, it is quite common for these students to place limited expectations on their own academic achievement, both from an early age and throughout their school careers (Ajmal & Rafique, 2018). There are four main influences that affect the self-concept of students with disabilities: reactions of others, social comparison, performance and feedback. All of these factors are interrelated and can either have a positive effect on the students' self-concept and motivation, or a negative one.

The correlation between self-concept and academic achievement among students in Kwara State is a topic of considerable significance in the realm of education. Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves in various domains, including academic abilities, social skills, and personal attributes. Academic achievement, on the other hand, pertains to the level of success a student attains in their educational endeavors. Understanding how these two factors intersect can provide valuable insights into the educational experiences and outcomes of special needs students in Kwara State (Akintunde, 2019). Self-concept plays a crucial role in shaping students'

academic performance and overall educational experiences. Research such as: Abdusalam, Jimoh and Rasheed (2015), Garba (2022), Daliko, Sameer and Bindu (2023), Ajiboye, Kolawole, Adeleke and Jesuseun (2023) among others has consistently shown that individuals with a positive self-concept tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation, engagement, and resilience, which are essential factors for academic success. Conversely, students with a negative self-concept may experience feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and decreased motivation, which can hinder their academic progress.

In the context of special needs students in Kwara State, the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement may be influenced by various factors. Firstly, the nature and severity of the students' disabilities can impact their self-perception and academic abilities (Albalawi, 2019). Students with disabilities may face unique challenges in accessing educational resources, participating in classroom activities, and interacting with peers, which can affect their self-concept and academic performance. Furthermore, the availability of support services and accommodations within the educational system can significantly influence students' self-concept and academic achievement. Schools that provide tailored support, such as individualized education plans (IEPs), assistive technologies, and specialized instruction, can help empower special needs students and enhance their sense of self-efficacy and competence. Conversely, a lack of adequate support services may contribute to feelings of frustration, isolation, and low academic achievement among special needs students.

Additionally, the attitudes and perceptions of teachers, peers, and society towards disability can impact students' self-concept and academic outcomes. Positive and inclusive learning environments that foster acceptance, understanding, and support for special needs students can promote a positive self-concept and facilitate academic success. Conversely, negative stereotypes, stigma, and discrimination can undermine students' confidence, self-worth, and academic performance (Artino & Stephens, 2020). Self-concept plays a critical role in shaping the academic achievement of special needs students. By understanding the interplay between self-concept, disability, support services, and societal attitudes, educators and policymakers can work towards creating inclusive, supportive, and empowering learning environments that enable all students to thrive academically and personally.

Empirical studies, such as the work done by Moein, Wael, and Hussein, Zahra, among gifted and non-gifted students in the light of some variables provide valuable insights into these correlations (Hamouda & Deiwa, 2022). Such research can help educators, and policymakers understand the influence of self-concept on the academic achievement of special needs students and the importance of creating supportive and empowering educational environments. To foster positive self-concept among special needs students, which could positively correlate with their academic achievement, several strategies can be implemented. Such strategies include but not limited to positive reinforcement, tailored instruction, inclusive practices, support services and family involvement.

Ultimately, the correlation between self-concept and academic achievement among special needs students in Kwara State would reflect the broader findings in this area: a stronger, more positive self-concept could be defined as individuals' understanding of their roles and characteristics. Self-concept is also seen as the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings (Rosenberg, 2019). It refers to an overall evaluation of a person's life domains which has influence on individual's perception of himself or herself, which varies from situation to situation and goes through many changes with age. It moves from infancy to

adulthood. Self-concept is the apex of the conceptualization. It is a general affective self-evaluation of a person as a whole. It is the general evaluation of attitude and feelings that students have about a subject.

Self-concept and academic achievement are collaborative and mutual. Each one is equally emphasizing to the degree that any change whether positive or negative in one enables the appropriate variation in the other. Relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement has a strong relationship with scholastic self-concept rather than general self-concept (Kumari & Chamundeswari, 2014).

Kumari and Chamundeswari (2018) in her study found that some psychological aspects like self-concept have great impact on the achievement of students and it helps in determining the level of competence among students' potentials. It was also concluded that the way students behave in academic settings depends upon self-awareness. It is on this note that this study investigates the self-concept as a correlates of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara state.

Self-concept and interpersonal relationship are important development of one's personality, especially, for adolescents. Because the environment plays a significant role is the socialization process of adolescents, their relationship with significant others such as parents, family, friends, teachers and others cannot be undermined. However, secondary school students tend to experience a low or negative self-concept during adolescence stage of life. For some, the decline can become so severe that they may be unable to cope; thus, battling this till adulthood (Awodun & Oyeniyi, 2018). This therefore, marks their relationship with others. For example, in Kwara State, students had been found in the secondary schools having difficulty making friends, some had withdrawn from others, many were unable to take chances in the presence of others and inferiority complex had

affected their problem-solving and decision-making process to the extent that they feel nothing is good about themselves as they battle with the feeling of worthlessness. A negative self-concept had been linked with a poor social competence or relationships (Oladiran, 2020). So, addressing self-concept as related to students' academic achievement is significant to the development of students with special needs' total personality for overall success in life. These and others reasons motivated this study examined self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State.

Problem

It has been a general notion over the years that level of academic performance has been very low among secondary school students in Ilorin, Kwara state (see: West African Examination Council (Dawson-Brew, Saani & Laryea, 2014). This trend has been attributed to certain factors including social, economic, religion and psychological, under which self-concept finds expression (Abdul-Jaleel, 2014). Besides, the culture of the school has also been tagged as one of the factors that hinder students' academic performance (Saani, 2019).

Self-concept is totality of the individual thought and feelings. Thus, it is capable of influencing attitude, feelings, aspiration and performance of learners about certain subject matter. It is a general wish and aspiration of students, parents, educators and all stakeholders of education, that students and for that matter, learners at all levels of education, excel in their pursuance of academic work at all times (Chineze & Sandra, 2015). In view of this, various attempts are being made by students, parents, teachers among others in Ilorin, Kwara state to ensure high academic performance among students. Many researches have also been conducted on various factors determining students' academic performance. For instance, Dawson-Brew, Saani and Laryea (2014) investigated the

influence of student's self-concept on their academic performance in the Elmina Township, Ghana. The study found out that student's self-concept is perceived positively by students; however, this self-concept does not directly predict students' academic performance.

Similarly, Oghenekaro and Okoye (2020) investigated the relationship between self-esteem, academic procrastination and test anxiety with academic achievement of post graduate diploma in education (PGDE) students in Delta state university, Abraka. Findings of the study revealed a positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement among PGDE students. The study discovered a negative and significant relationship between academic procrastination and academic achievement. Moreso, recently, Ajiboye, Kolawole, Adeleke and Jesuseun (2023) investigated self-concept as a correlate of aggressive behaviour among undergraduate students of University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings show that there was low level of self-concept among respondents; males have lower self-concept than female undergraduate students and high level of aggressive behaviour among respondents; males have more aggressive behaviour.

Despite the number of studies carried out on self-concept and academic performance, most of the studies were carried out outside Kwara state. Moreso, none of the studies considered recognition of such effect on the special need students which are the gaps there-in. These and many other factors propelled this current study. Hence, this study seeks to investigate self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This research question was raised to guide the construct of this study: What is the self-concept of special needs students in Kwara state?

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the conduct of this study;

1. Self-concept will not significantly correlate academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State.

2. Religion, age and school type will not significantly correlate with the self-concept of special needs students in Kwara State.

3. Religion, age and school type will not significantly correlate with the academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State.

Methods

The method that was used to carry out this research is the descriptive survey method. According to Best and Khan (2009), descriptive survey design is concern with conditions or relationships that exists, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing. The survey research type is considered appropriate because there is no manipulation of the independent variables by the researcher. This method involves the collection of data or information from a sample of a population through the use of a researcher-designed questionnaire. The descriptive survey method was chosen because it offers the researcher the opportunity of direct contact with a population which has features, qualities or attitudes which are relevant to the particular findings. It also allows the use of adequate and appropriate samples which results in valid judgment.

The population is the entire group from which the researcher is interested in gaining information and upon which subsequent conclusions are drawn (Daramola, 2016). Sample is defined by Ojo (2018) as a smaller set of data that a researcher selects using a predetermined selection process from a larger population. These components are referred to as observations, sampling units, or sample points. It also refers to a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain

information about the whole. A sample is the representative of the entire population. The population for this study will consists of all secondary school students with special needs in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara.

The respondents responded to the questionnaire chosen using the purposive sampling technique and were selected based on the characteristics of a population and objectivity of the study.

Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers intentionally select individuals or groups for inclusion in a study based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Unlike probability sampling methods where every member of the population has a known chance of being included in the sample, purposive sampling relies on the different stages to select participants who are deemed most appropriate for the study. The stages are explained below:

First stage: Kwara State currently has a total of 7 special public and private schools and learning centres for children with disabilities with the combined enrolment capacity of about 2000 pupils. The population for this study are all the secondary school students with special needs in Ilorin Metropolis. The reasons for choosing the students as respondents is because they are in the best position to rate self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State

Stage Two: The target population of this study was made up of all the senior secondary school students with special needs in Ilorin Metropolis covering (Ilorin South, East and West) of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Stage Three: However, for the purpose of this study, random sampling technique was used to select 4 secondary schools of students with special needs and the same technique was used to select two hundred (200) students with special needs as

participants drawn among the senior secondary school students with special needs.

The instrument that was used is a structured questionnaire entitled "self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students' questionnaire" (SCCASNSQ). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A contains the biographic information of the respondents E.g., gender, age and school type while Section B was made up of twenty (20) items structured for the students.

The respondents were required to respond by placing a tick at the appropriate column. The questionnaire requires the respondents to tick ($\sqrt{}$) for the appropriate response where applicable to agree or disagree.

Content validity was employed to determine the validity of the instrument. This was achieved by seeking the assistance of experts in psychology, sociology and counselling in screening the items. The researchers adopted a test re-test method whereby 10 copies of the questionnaire forms were administered to a group of respondents twice at an interval of three weeks to ascertain the reliability. The results obtained from the two tests were correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and a coefficient value of 0.85 obtained showed the instrument was reliable enough for the study.

The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis. The data were analyzed based on the stated research question and hypotheses using both descriptive and inferential statistics (mean and standard deviation). Specifically, the demographic data was analysed using the percentage while the research hypotheses was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Correlation Matrix at 0.05 level of significance

Results

The demographic data involves personal information of respondents which was analyzed using

frequency count and percentage. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by age. Among the respondents, 61 (30.5%) were between the age range of 10-15 years, 112 (56.0%) were between 16-20 years old and 27 (13.5%) were 20 ye ars old and above.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age. Source: the Authors

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
10-15 years	61	30.5%
16-20 years	112	56.0%
20 years and above	27	13.5%
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents by nature of religion. 9 (4.5%), were African traditional religion, 91 (42.0%) were Christianity while 100 (53.5%) were Islam.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Religion. Source: the Authors

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
ATR	9	4.5%
Christianity	91	42.0%
Islam	100	53.5%
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

Table 3 shows the distribution of the res-pondents by school type. 95 (47.5%) of the respondents attended private school while 105 (52.5%) attend public school.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by school type. Source: the Authors

Type of school	Frequency	Percentage
Private	95	47.5%
Public	105	52.5%
Total	**200**	**100.0%**

What is the self-concept of special needs students in Kwara state? Table 4 shows the ranking items on the self-concept as a correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State according to their mean scores about respondents. Item 20 has the highest mean score of 3.66 which shows that most of the respondents perceived that 1 am good at mathematics based on their academic ability. Item 11 ranked 2nd with a mean score of 3.60 showing that I am a stronger reader is a self-concept as a correlate of academic achievement of special needs. Item 18 ranked 3rd with a mean score of 3.50 showing that the respondents are excellent in problem-solving in self-concept as a correlate of academic achievement of special needs. Item 17 ranked 4th with a mean score of 3.46 showing that the majority of the respondents are athletic and coordinated in self-concept as a correlate of academic achievement of special needs. Item 15 ranked 5th with a mean of 3.39 showing that the majority of respondents are good at sports which helps in self-concept as a correlate of academic achievement of special needs. Item 14 ranked 7th with a mean score of 3.36 indicating that the respondents are strong and physically fit which helps in self-concept as a correlate of academic achievement of special needs.

Table 4: Mean summary of self-concept of special needs students in Kwara state. Source: the Authors

Item No	self-concept of special needs students	Mean score	S.D	Rank
20	I am good at mathematics	3.66	.475	1st
11	I am a strong reader	3.60	.575	2nd
18	I am excellent in problem-solving	3.50	.501	3rd
17	I am an athletic and coordinated	3.46	.769	4th
15	I am good at sport	3.39	.489	5th
14	I am strong and physically fit	3.33	.471	6th
9	I am popular among my peers	3.33	.471	6th
6	I am a good listener	3.30	.802	7th
12	I am outgoing and sociable	3.29	.543	8th
16	I am good at making friends	3.16	1.077	9th
13	I am a calm and relaxed person	3.16	.690	9th
19	I am sensitive to the feelings of others	3.16	1.077	9th
1	I am able to handle	3.15	.724	10th
7	I am a capable and competent person	2.99	.901	11th
5	I am happy with myself	2.98	1.007	12th
3	I am proud of my accomplishments	2.84	1.160	13th
2	I am as smart as other kids	2.84	.690	13th
4	I am as good as other kids in school	2.70	.690	14th
8	I am as skilled as other kids in school	2.65	.939	15th
10	I am as resourceful as other kids in school	2.50	.365	16th

Hypotheses Testing

Three null hypotheses were formulated and tested for this study. The hypotheses were tested using PPMC statistical methods at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara state. Table 5 shows that the calculated r-value of -0.86 and a corresponding p-value of 0.27 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is greater than level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara state in Kwara state.

Table 5: Pearson showing relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of special needs students. Source: the Authors

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	r	p
Academic Achievement	200	9.15	3.10	198	-0.86	0.27
Self-Concept	200	48.83	3.167			

Hypothesis Two: Religion, School type and Age will not significantly correlate with the self-concept of special needs students in Kwara state. Table 6 shows the Pearson relationship between religion, school type, age and self-concept among special needs students. The results of the test indicated that religion had a calculated r-value of 1.0 and a corresponding p-value of 0.01 which is less than

0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is less than the level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between religion and the self-concept of special needs students in Kwara State.

The results of the test also indicated that school type had a calculated r-value of -2.65 and a corresponding p-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is less than the level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between school type and self-concept of special needs students in Kwara State.

The results of the test also indicated that age had a calculated r-value of 0.23 and a corresponding p-value of 0.01 which is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is less than the level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between age and self-concept of special needs students in Kwara State.

Table 6: Pearson showing relationship between Religion, School type and Age will not significantly correlate with the self-concept of special needs students in Kwara state. Source: the Authors

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	r	p
Religion	200	2.49	0.58	198	1.0	0.01
School Type	200	1.53	0.50	198	-2.65	0.00
Age	200	1.84	0.65	198	0.23	0.01
Self-concept	200	48.83	3.17	198	0.53	.000

Hypothesis Three: Religion, age and school type will not significantly correlate with the academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara state. Table 7 shows the Pearson relationship between religion, school type, age and academic achievement among special needs students. The results of the test indicated that religion had a calculated r-value of 1.0 and a corresponding p-value of 0.01 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is less than the level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between religion and the academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State.

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Discussion of the Findings

The analysis of the research question of this study shows the mean values of the respondents

on the self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. From the results, majority of the respondents believes that academic ability, physical ability, social ability, emotional ability, general self-worth ability and scholastic ability influence self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. The result is in consonance with the study of Ogbonna (2017) who understand that students with special needs face unique challenges in achieving academic success, but with the right support, accommodations, and inclusive practices, they can reach their full potential. By recognizing and addressing individual strengths and needs, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and implementing evidence-based strategies, educators can create inclusive learning environments where every student can thrive academically and socially. Inclusive education is not only a legal and ethical imperative but also a pathway to a more equitable and inclusive society where diversity is

Table 7: Pearson showing relationship between Religion, School type and Age academic achievement of special needs students. Source: the Authors

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	r	p
Religion	200	2.49	0.58	198	0.01	0.00
School Type	200	1.53	0.50	198	-2.65	0.00
Age	200	1.84	0.65	198	2.33	0.01
Academic Achievement	200	9.150	3.11	198	0.37	0.61

celebrated, and all individuals have equal opportunities to learn and succeed. Singh, Malik and Singh (2016) presented a straight and significant connect between academic performance of students and the socio-economic development of a country, because acquisition of relevant knowledge as well as skill development become evident through students' academic performance

There is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara state in Kwara state. The finding that there is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement among special needs students suggests that self-concept, as a measure of self-esteem and self-worth, may not directly impact academic performance for this group. This could indicate that factors other than self-concept might play a more crucial role in determining academic outcomes for special needs students. The finding is inline with Sharma and Deshmukh (2013) that "Self-concept and Academic Achievement of Students with Learning disabilities this study found mixed results regarding the impact of self-concept on academic achievement in students with learning disabilities, suggesting that self-concept may not always be a significant predictor of academic success. The finding is also supported by Graham and Weiner (2017) that discusses how various motivational and self-perceptive factors, including self-concept, interact with academic achievement and highlights the complexity of these relationships.

There is significant relationship between religion, school type, age and self-concept of special needs students in Kwara State. The significant relation-

ships between religion, school type, age, and self-concept suggest that these factors are important in shaping how special needs students view themselves. Religion might influence self-concept through its impact on values and community support, while school type and age could affect self-perception through social interactions and developmental stages. This agrees with Crocker and Park (2014) that explored how various external factors, such as community and environment, impact self-concept, relevant to understanding the influence of religion and school type.

There is significant relationship between religion, school type, age and academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. The significant relationships between religion, school type, age, and academic achievement indicate that these factors have a meaningful impact on academic performance among special needs students. Religion might contribute to academic success through its influence on values and motivation, while school type and age affect access to resources and developmental support. This finding conforms with Martin and Marsh (2008) that examined how factors such as age and school environment impact academic self-efficacy and achievement, relevant to understanding the relationship between these variables and academic success

Conclusion

The study investigated self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. However, findings of the present study, can also be concluded that majority of the respondents believes that academic ability, physical ability, social ability, emotional ability, general self-worth ability and scholastic ability influence self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. The findings suggest that while self-concept may not directly influence academic achievement among special

needs students in Kwara State, factors such as religion, school type, and age significantly impact both self-concept and academic performance. These relationships highlight the importance of considering a range of contextual and personal factors when addressing the needs of special needs students and developing strategies to support their academic and personal development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- School counsellors, parents and other stakeholders in the education sector should enhance adolescents' interpersonal relationships by strengthening their physical, social and emotional self-concepts through relevant social skills training and counselling interventions.
- School Counsellors should design and develop programs that leverage the positive aspects of students' religious beliefs and community values to support their academic and personal development.
- Schools should adapt teaching methods and resources based on the specific needs and characteristics of different types of schools (e.g., public vs. private, special education vs. mainstream).
- There should be proper workshop sessions specifically to enhance the self-concept of students so that they may understand their hidden potentials and use their abilities to achieve better in academics.
- Schools should implement age-appropriate educational and support interventions that cater to the developmental stages of special needs students.

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APPENDIX

SELF-CONCEPT AS CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN KWARA STATE QUESTIONNAIRE (SCAASNSQ)

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of the study is to determine the self-concept as a correlate of academic achievement of special needs students in Kwara State. The responses herein are solely for academic purpose. Please respond as honestly as possible. The researcher encourages you to honestly supply required information and bearing in mind that your responses will be strictly for research purposes treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.
Researchers.

SECTION A: Demographic Data
Instruction: please tick (√) the appropriate
1. Religion: ATR ( );
        Christianity ( );   Islam (.).
2. School Type: Private ( );
        Public   ( ).
3. Age: 10-15 years ( );
        16-20 years ( );   20 years and above ( )

SECTION B: self-concept as correlate of academic achievement of special needs students. Please, tick (√) answer of your choice as applicable to you using the following keys:
SA -- Strongly Agree, A --Agree, D ---Disagree and SD ---- Strongly Disagree

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
	Academic Ability				
1	1 am good at mathematics				
2	I am a strong reader				
3	I am excellent in problem-solving				
	Physical Ability				
4	1 am an athletic and coordinated				
5	I am good at sport				
6	I am strong and physically fit				
	Social Ability				
7	I am popular among my peers				
8	I am a good listener				
9	I am outgoing and sociable				
10	I am good at making friends				
	Emotional Ability				
11	I am a calm and relaxed person				
12	I am sensitive to the feelings of others				

13	I am able to handle				
	General Self-Worth Ability				
14	I am a capable and competent person				
15	I am happy with myself				
16	I am proud of my accomplishments				
	Scholastic Ability				
17	I am as smart as other kids				

18	I am as good as other kids in school				
19	I am as skilled as other kids in school				
20	I am as resourceful as other kids in school				

EXPLORING TRADITIONAL ROLES OF WOMEN AMONG THE BUKUSU IN PRECOLONIAL KENYA

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Abstract

From existing scholarly sources, the traditional Bukusu community in western Kenya existed on a structured socio-economic, political, and cultural framework. Gender roles were played out distinctively by men and women, boys and girls. However, external factors continue to influence the contemporary community, creating a fluid and blurry distinction of roles. This paper focuses on women's roles in the

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traditional Bukusu community to uncover their cultural significance and impact on social structures. This article analyzes how these roles shaped the community's identity and influenced interpersonal and generational dynamics. To achieve this objective, the study uses a comprehensive literature review methodology and authors' observations from the Bukusu community to identify patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the current body of knowledge. The literature review synthesizes data from ethnographic studies, historical texts, and relevant scholarly works; hence, this article provides a basis for understanding the historical and cultural significance of the roles of Bukusu women. We establish that women's traditional roles in the Bukusu community were based on the community's patrilineal structure, some of which continue to be reinforced. These included marriage, fecundity, childbearing, caregiving, food security, home management, ownership and wealth sources, and craftsmanship. In contrast, others continue to undergo significant transformations due to underlying factors that are not the focal point of this paper for now. Further, women's roles are deeply rooted in Bukusu cultural values and practices, which are critical in maintaining social cohesion and transmitting cultural heritage. This work is a foundation for further scholarly work on women, culture, and change.

Keywords: Traditional roles, Bukusu women, Cultural norms, Precolonial Kenya

Discipline: Cultural Anthropologhy

Absztrakt

A NŐK HAGYOMÁNYOS SZEREPEI A BUKUSU KÖZÖSSÉGBEN A GYARMATOSÍTÁS ELŐTTI KENYÁBAN

A nyugati kenyai Bukusu közösség a rendelkezésre álló tudományos források alapján strukturált társadalmi-gazdasági, politikai és kulturális keretek között létezett. A nemi szerepek markánsan elkülönültek a férfiak és nők, valamint a fiúk és lányok között. Azonban a külső tényezők folyamatosan alakítják a kortárs közösséget, elmosva a hagyományos szerepek közötti határokat. Jelen tanulmány a Bukusu közösségben betöltött női szerepekre fókuszál, feltárva azok kulturális jelentőségét és társadalmi struktúrákra gyakorolt hatását. A cikk elemzi, hogy ezek a szerepek miként formálták a közösség identitását, valamint befolyásolták a társas és generációs dinamikát. A kutatás céljának elérése érdekében átfogó szakirodalmi elemzést alkalmazunk, amely kiegészül a szerzők Bukusu közösségben szerzett megfigyeléseivel. Az irodalmi áttekintés etnográfiai tanulmányok, történeti szövegek és releváns tudományos művek adatainak szintézisére épül. A tanulmány megállapítja, hogy a Bukusu közösség patrilineáris szerkezete határozta meg a nők hagyományos szerepeit, amelyek közül néhány továbbra is fennmaradt. Ide tartozik a házasság, a termékenység, a gyermekvállalás, a gondoskodás, az élelmezés-biztonság fenntartása, a háztartás irányítása, a tulajdon és vagyon forrásainak biztosítása, valamint a kézművesség. Ezzel szemben más szerepek jelentős átalakuláson mentek keresztül olyan tényezők hatására, amelyek nem képezik e tanulmány fókuszát. Továbbá a női szerepek mélyen beágyazódnak a Bukusu kulturális értékeibe és gyakorlataiba, amelyek elengedhetetlenek a társadalmi kohézió fenntartásában és a kulturális örökség átadásában. E munka alapot biztosít a nők, a kultúra és a társadalmi változások további tudományos vizsgálatához.

Kulcsszavak: tradicionális szerepek, bukusu nők, kulturális normák, gyarmatosítás előtti Kenya

Diszciplina: kulturális antropológia

For a long time, gender has been a basis of social organization in many communities, shaping not only individual identities but also collective societal dynamics (Meyers, 2002). Oftentimes, these roles are deeply trenched in cultural norms, determining expectations, responsibilities, and behaviors that are deemed appropriate for women and men (Kimmel, 2000). African traditional pre-colonial societies had dynamic gender relations and categorization of roles in which some roles were exclusive to each gender while others were mutually interdependent (Saidi, 2020). Similarly, the pur-views of females and males in African societies were often described as separate and complementary (Sudarkasa, 1986). Similarly, the Bukusu people of western Kenya are renowned for their vibrant and deeply engrained traditions. At the core of their way of life are clearly defined roles that govern their activities such as ceremonial activities, leadership, economy, religion, and customs to list but a few (Hepburn, 2023). These roles are, however, constructed oriented, practiced, and passed down through generations. Delving into these roles with special reference to women in the Bukusu community offers worthy insights into how cultural traditions, values, and power dynamics are conserved, contested, and changed periodically as noted by Shepherd (2014).

In this community, gender roles are more than fixed constructs but are highly embedded in rituals, language, and day-to-day practices. For instance, men were given responsibilities ranging from providers to protectors and were mostly responsible for public-facing activities. In contrast, women on the other hand focused on roles of nurturing, and caretaking and revolved around domestic responsibilities. These distinctions of the roles will further be delved into in the discussion and analysis sections of the article. It is worth mentioning that while the review will deal with Bukusu community specificities in women's roles, there is a chance to have a comparative analysis of other communities to unearth patterns of cultural similarities and differences. Of key concern in this paper is the different roles of women in the traditional community. This owes to the contemporary gender roles that seem fluid and blurry, hence the need to trace the traditional roles with a focus on women.

This paper, thus, explores the traditional roles of women focusing on the clear distinction between men and women to illuminate how they sustained their socio-economic and political structures and cultural fixations with little situational adjustments. Compared to the contemporary context, the current organization of the community structure and gender role-playing appears to have become blurry due to the cross-cutting factors that continue to influence the community. Among the prevailing factors of influence comprise religious activities such as Christianity, Islam, trading activities, colonialism, and globalization, all considered external influences of modernity. While these factors affected all and sundry, this study's question is, what were the roles of women among the Bukusu in the traditional setting? To answer this question, this paper deductively explores the traditional ways of life of the Bukusu community. It is relevant to approach this aspect historically and chronologically so that we can understand deeply and comprehensively how the traditional activities of the community's culture, cognition, behavior, and interaction patterns manifested while narrowing down to the gender role dynamics that ensued around this era.

This article is based on the field of Anthropological study, focusing on the role of women in the Bukusu community during the traditional epoch in Kenya. The community mainly inhabits Bungoma County located in western Kenya bordering Uganda to the west and several other Kenyan counties including Busia, Kakamega, Busia, and Trans-Nzoia. The County is rich in socio-cultural identity, dominated by the Bukusu sub-

tribe of the Luhya ethnic Bantu-speaking group alongside other small communities such as the Sabaot, Teso, and Kikuyu with a general population of 1.8 million approximately (Statistics Kenya, 2025). Figure 1 below shows the geographical location of the Bukusu people on the map.

This study adopted a literature review as its primary method of investigation. It analyzed the existing academic works, ethnographic accounts, and historical records. This is not a comprehensive review, rather it is an introduction to exploring the traditional roles of women within the Bukusu community. The review examines cultural and societal phenomena owing to the diversity of perspectives and insights drawing from previous scholarly works and data from personal observations made during the 2024 field trip to

Bungoma County Kenya from August to September 2024. Although there exists a significant gap in knowledge of the Bukusu women. This review article identifies patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the knowledge pointing out the need for field research to help seal the knowledge gap. It is worth noting that the literature on the women in the Bukusu community is fragmented and does not directly relate to this research focus.

Traditional Roles and their Categorization in Bukusu Society

Among the classical scholars who studied individual roles in the African tribal communities is Radcliff-Brown. While in South Africa, Radcliff Brown taught the African Kinship system in some African communities.

Figure 1. The map of Bungoma County inside the Kenyan map
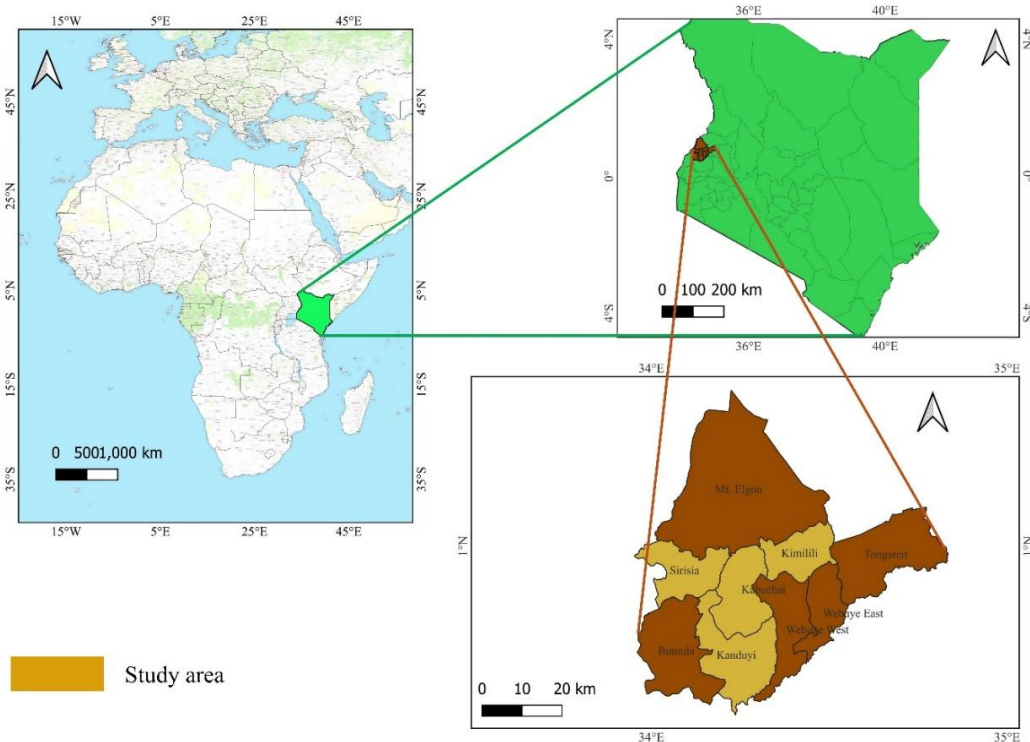
In one of his essays, he studied the relationship between the mother's brother and the sister's son among the Thonga people of South Africa. He establishes that a son often had certain unique property rights over his mother's brother (uncle). Radcliff-Brown concluded that the Thonga community was at some point in the past a matrilineal system (Radcliff-Brown, 1994). Radcliffe-Brown's study of the Thonga people is comparable to the Bukusu community due to shared cultural and structural features. The kinship structures define relationships and responsibilities within the family and community. At the beginning of the early nineteenth century, the East African interior was still very secluded in the region in comparison with other eras of Africa. In Kenya, apart from the coastal region that was already vibrant with the Arab, Swahili, and Portuguese traders' activities who did not venture beyond the small stretch of land along the Indian Ocean. Suggestively, the rest of the country was traditionally intact with communities sparely scattered in various parts (Ombongi & Rutten, 2005). The reflection of women's roles was demonstrated in their daily activities as part of their contribution to the community but also as the bearers of cultural heritage and identity. All these were passed down to generations through all the stages of growth and development. The lived experiences of boys and girls centered on orientating them to adult responsibilities in the community (Mbiti, 1990). For this article, we focus on the Bukusu society in the western region of Kenya, where the study is centered. Both men and women in Bukusu society are believed as persons of almost the same physical and spiritual parts except for biological functioning in their reproductive system. However, the term person (omundu) is only used to denote men. According to Menkiti (1948:172), the term "omundu" includes an idea of excellence, of the "fullness of maturity." Thus, according to the Bukusu community, women do not possess

excellence and maturity (Wolf, 2019). Rather a woman (Omukhasi) is a generic term that connotes her genderhood as opposed to her personhood.

While the argument is true in separating womanhood from personhood, I think the seemingly derogative connotation is misleading since a man also has a connotation to the term "omusecha" which separates man from his personhood. Nevertheless, the separation of man and woman based on these connotations forms the basis upon which their productive activities are constructed as male or female roles and others being common to both genders (Nangendo, 1994). Interestingly, it is culturally acceptable for women to perform certain activities identified with the male gender, however, a man should not cross to perform female roles as will be seen in subsequent sections on the separated roles of both genders, the activities performed by both genders included milking, cows, and pottery, although the latter was limited in the sense that men exclusively potted pots meant for rituals. Women's status such as age or marital status determined their specified roles. While both men and women passed through the same life stages of the growth and development cycle, there were rituals performed at every stage from birth to death of a person. Some of the rituals were parallel to each other but at other times, they were different.

Traditionally, many of these rituals were practically marked through rites of passage whereas others were simply acknowledged without any basic ritual (Wolf, 2019). For instance, in the Gikuyu community, when a woman gave birth, she ululated five times if the child was a boy and four times if it was a girl. However, this was not the case among the Bukusu as there were no ululations, although the birth of a child elicited excitement followed by a myriad of complex rituals that were meant to protect the mother and the newborn from the evil eyes as well as to cleanse the baby who was believed to be ritually unclean at birth. According to Neille and Penn (2017), traditional

gender roles often confine women to domestic responsibilities, limiting their participation in public life. Almost from birth, girls are raised for marriage and raising a family. Rather, according to Fafunwa (1982), a girl is perceived as a responsible person from early childhood. The way she is raised qualifies her to uphold the role of her mother. She must be restricted to domestic space to be a good wife and avoid flaws. In the Bukusu community, a girl child is raised with some attendance that shows activities around the house and home vicinity. This perspective is sought in this article to demonstrate the perspective of the Bukusu people on a girl child.

While having an informal chat with a middle-aged woman, she narrated that when a child is born, their value to the community is determined by their gender. According to her, the value of a boy is less as it is upon him to appreciate his value. For the girlchild, her value is seen in her role as a mother and as a wife to the community. Girls in traditional settings were confined in the home setting and mainly under the care of their mothers. Conversely, boys would be taken as outsiders such as in the grazing fields. A portrayal of this was by Shostak (1983) who actively observed the way the Kung people of Botswana raised their children. According to Shostak, girls were always under the clock of their mothers. This was seen when mothers went to gather fruits, Nisa the protagonist of Shostak's book, a middle-aged woman in the Kung community was in the company of her mother, learning how to gather wild fruits. On the other hand, her brother accompanied his father on a hunting mission, demonstrating how the traditional roles of girls and boys were played and nurtured in their adulthood. The analysis of the book about Nisa's experience from childhood to womanhood resonates with the Bukusu society's traditional women's cultural expectations. Still, around childbirth, women were expected to meet certain expectations as there were occurrences that

called for ritual performances since they were con-sidered unusual or "abnormal". Bukusu society where the birth of a child was determined and the ritualistic activities that followed afterward. For example, the birth of twins was considered a blessing as it enhanced the respect the mother enjoyed in the family, especially the in-laws. Thus, elaborate celebrations that involved music and dance were reserved for twins and not single-born children. On the contrary, twin boys born as firstborns were believed to be a bad omen. They were never celebrated as they were believed to cause misfortune to the family and clan. To mitigate this, infanticide was performed on one of the twins secretly.

In similar cases, a mother could also be divorced as she was also considered a bad omen to the family (Wekesa, 2015). We interpret this that it was believed that women were vested with the responsibility of the gender of children. They were also expected to give birth to the beliefs, values, and expectations of the clan. Thus, the occurrence of unexpected meant women were unfit to bear their belonging to the family and the matrimonial clan. In the same vein, women who gave birth to twins in "normal" circumstances were secluded from the rest of the family and clan to protect the mother and the twins. Owing to their birth being unusual, twins were considered to be in danger hence their protection through the seclusion process until the time of coming out (Khukhwikula bukhwana) through a welcome ceremony of music and dance among other rituals of gifting the newborns (Wekesa, 2015).

We postulate that the seclusion of the mother and the twin was meant to help avoid "bad" eyes at least not at that vulnerable stage of life. Thus, women like, men during the initiation period were secluded from the community. Women are agents of lineage propagation and life producers through giving birth were protected from the evil forces of the community at such times. With children came

the responsibility of childcare. There is a phrase in Bukusu that goes "*Embwa ebukulanga khuchochomala khwa mawe*"; meaning, a puppy/dog squats like her mother. So, it was the prerogative of women to raise their children especially girls who were perceived as the reflection of their identity (Barasa et al., 2023). In essence, children were required to emulate the virtues displayed by their mothers. The values including what was deemed good morals in children were to be instilled by mothers and women in general, since the commonality of the community allowed for collective responsibility to discipline children whenever it was necessary. This is also due to the belief in numerous African societies that children belonged to society and thus, society was responsible for raising the very children (Adeyemi, 2002). Plucknett and Smith (2012) assert that children were a valuable source of labor for the family and community.

Comparatively, another study conducted on the Idakho community, a related Luhya community that shares some customs with the Bukusu, established that children were trained at an early age to share the duties of family life. At about the age of six, boys began to herd sheep, goats, and cattle, a duty that they outgrew after being circumcised (Kavulavu, 2015). The two sources postulate the responsibility of a woman to be fruitful in terms of bearing children, or rather indirectly women determined the source and continuity of labor in the family and clan through generation continuity. Transitioning from child-hood to adolescence involved various aspects of traditions that revolved around orientation to soon-to-be adult responsibilities. Thus, before, marriage, a Bukusu girl was cicatrized with razors on her face and body symbolizing her readiness for marriage (Nangendo, 1994). Observations made during interaction with interlocutors point out that the cicatrization was a common practice in preparation for Bukusu women for marriage since the elderly women and the youngest 70 years old

appeared to have scars on their faces. They attested that they had undergone the ritual before getting married and it was not only a symbol of marriage readiness but also a beautification exercise and they associated the markings with tattoos.

Other rituals followed during marriage included the virginity test by the aunts on the wedding day ushering a girl's transition to womanhood and this case married woman omukhasi. Like the Luo community where girls were expected to keep themselves virgins until marriage (Ngutuku & Okwany, 2024), Bukusu girls too were expected to abstain from penetrative sex until marriage as chastity was a virtue for raising good families. They were cautioned from having sex and falling pregnant before marriage as they were highly stigmatized for bearing children out of marriage. However, if it happened, girls were referred to derogatively as nasikoko. Such a woman would be married off to an elderly man (Ngutuku & Okwany, 2024). This pares also with the sentiments by Akong'a, (1988) that among the Luo and Abaluhya (Bukusu are part of) people of western Kenya, virginity at marriage for women was rewarded with high status in society and her mother received material rewards in addition to the negotiated bridewealth payment usually received and controlled by the male household heads. Thus, it was in the interest of a Bukusu woman to keep themselves pure until marriage to protect their own and families honor and integrity. Comparatively, this is opposed to some of the Bantu-speaking communities in Kenya like the Akamba and the Amerus where it was shameful for a bride to be a virgin as they were expected to "know men" and fears of infertility among other sexual anomalies (Kioli, 2012).

African worldview envisions the child as an active agent, developing in a sociocultural field in which full personhood is a matter of assent, acquired by degrees during growth (Nsamenang, 1992). In their assent to adulthood, adolescents

construct and shape their social identities through successive interpersonal encounters and experiences that make up their history. In this essence, adolescents are obliged to construct a gender and ethnic identity consistent with the cultural scripts and gender demands of their world perception (Grigorenko, 2009).

Generally conceived, traditional African socialization can be viewed as cultivation into and through fundamental roles at different phases of life (Brown et al., 2002). Adolescents in traditional African societies have historically played significant roles in their families and communities, often shaped by cultural norms, rites of passage, and communal responsibilities (du Plessis & Naude, 2017.)These roles were intertwined with the social, economic, and spiritual fabric of their communities. Kenya, like most African countries, is a multiethnic country with diverse ethnic groups. These groups raised their children based on the norms, values, and beliefs of their culture. For instance, girls and boys underwent rites of passage in transitioning into adulthood. Some of the rites of passage included initiation. For some Bantu communities such as the Gusii community, girls were and are even now undergoing initiation in preparation for marriage (Nakamura et al., 2023).

In the case of the Bukusu community, a cultural memory by a group of respondents averred that Bukusu adolescent girls were circumcised. However, they noted with caution that this was not a typical traditional practice among the Bukusu, rather it was an acculturated practice from the neighboring Kalenjin communities such as the Sabaot in Mt. Elgon and Trans-Nzoia regions of western Kenya (Were, 2014). This was especially true when asked about the significance of the circumcision of Bukusu girls, they said it had no significance as it was a borrowed practice that did not last for long. There is barely any evidence of the origin of the practice in the Bukusu society. In other roles, Bukusu girls were taught to be home-makers, nurturers, and community caretakers. These roles were taught to them by their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. It was the collective responsibility of the community to inculcate communalism through activities such as communal labor on farms, ceremonies, and home-building (Gumo, 2018).

In the adolescent stage girls just like boys ceased sleeping in their parent's house into esimba, (the house of a bachelor), and in this case it was usually the house of an old woman, the real or classificatory grandmother, unlike boys who constructed a new house or moved into a friends' houses. The role of this elderly woman is to supervise the moral conduct of the girls as a prerequisite for their nearing marriage life after puberty. Since they lived in a communal setting, one elderly house was preferred for a couple of girls in one village. They would spend the day at their parents' homestead and perform their daily chores, however, they would go to sleep in the elderly woman's house.

Girls and boys played roles in labor and economic contributions to sustain their families and communities. In agriculture, boys and girls offered surplus labor in planting, weeding, harvesting, and tending livestock. The division of labor was evident through their assistance whereas boys helped men break soil and tend to livestock, girls on the other hand planted and weeded crops. This was reiterated by Kavulavu (2015) who asserted that in precolonial Kenya, men would go and clear virgin land, break the earth, and help women plant crops while women weeded crops.

In craftsmanship, girls learned basket weaving although the latter was carried out by both genders (Wolff, 1970) . Pottery was practiced by old women who were beyond childbearing age, therefore, girls were forbidden from pottery as it was believed it could affect their fertility. Economic activity has dwindled and is on the verge of disappearance.

Household duties were performed by adolescent girls in the Bukusu community. They were responsible for fetching water for the family and community. According to Kavulavu (2015), Idakho girls assisted their mothers in the daily work of fetching water, gathering firewood, wild roots, and vegetables, and grinding finger millet on the traditional grinding stone. They shared responsibilities with their peers from the Bukusu community. Further, they performed motherly duties of babysitting younger siblings especially when their mothers were attending to other duties such as cooking or weeding.

Other than family roles, girls and boys participated in communal activities helping to uphold cohesion. Boys and girls took part in traditional dances, singing, and storytelling to preserve their cultural heritage (Ogbomo, 2005). While women oversaw taking care of the elderly in families and communities, children also helped relieve women of such responsibilities. Boys and girls were sent to their grandparents to help them with some tasks and even offer company to them. For instance, girls were sent to live with their grandmothers to help them fetch water, collect firewood, and even weed the garden. In communal ceremonies, girls were relied upon to ensure guests were received, served with food, and washing of utensils. In the same vein, water fetching and firewood collection for the ceremony were their main role. This not only showed their assistance role but also instilled in them a sense of cooperation, leadership, and accountability.

As averred by Seroto, (2011), the African notably among the Bantu-speaking societies, a child was brought up by the community and educated in the culture and traditions of the community. The indigenous education system comprised traditions, legends and tales, and the procedures and knowledge associated with rituals which were passed down orally from generation to generation within each tribe. In the Bukusu community, girls were trained through apprenticeship to learn some skills in roles such as marriage, fecundity, midwifery, caregiving, and home management as discussed successively. Marriage was and still is a valuable sacred and religious institution among the Bukusus just like communities in Kenya.

However, there were practices, beliefs, values, and expectations of a Bukusu woman. Expected to get married upon attaining puberty, the girl was to be married off to a partner who earned her parent's and clan elder's approval. However, upon learning that the lady was due to get married, the mother to the prospective husband would visit the boy's family and bring along with her a hoe in a woven basket with a friend. This is symbolic indicating they are asking their daughter for a hand in marriage and this information is reported to the boy's father. The father would respond by making a wooden hand fit onto the hoe meaning they accept the marriage. Therefore, absconding marriage was considered taboo among the Bukusu. Since marriage was a family matter, every step was taken to ensure that a suitable spouse was chosen (Wepukhulu et al., 2023).

Efforts were invested in conducting thorough background checks on potential suitors to ensure it helped evade any cases of abomination such as exogamy, or witchcraft. This implies that the Bukusu community women were all raised to become married off as it was a prerequisite for one's community status as an adult female. In contemporary times, women and men alike are at liberty to stay celibate or unmarried as it is deemed one's personal choice whereas traditionally, it was in the best interest of the community and not the individual.

A woman's status in marriage was reinforced through socialization. The culturally supposed and appropriate conduct assumed the roles that were composed of submission, nurturance, subordination, and docility (Bah & Barasa, 2023). In a similar study, a married woman was expected to be

submissive, and docile while her husband enjoyed her obedience from her (Nangendo, 1994). The submission did not warrant any level of cruelty or violence and in case of it, the woman would separate from the husband. This move was supported by the clan. Even with that, there have been studies such as (Mbembe, 2001) and (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, 2015) to same just a new pointing out that women in African societies held lower status compared to men.

Well, we think that this view is portrayed through the contemporary lens of movements such as women's movements, otherwise, our analysis gives the impression that the expectations of men and women were perceived as complementary and in the best interest of community cohesion. Wolf (2019) suggests that the married woman's status was augmented based on her fulfillment of biological reproductive functions and other social roles. Motherhood is the elevated status of a married woman to the family and clan as well as the entire community. A woman was expected to be prolific to provide their spouse with a large family by bearing many children. This owes to the value of many children as a source of wealth, labor, and propagation of the name of the husband, his lineage, and clan.

A barren woman's status was relegated as it was believed that she possessed evil spirits and thus, was given some herbal medicines procured from an old woman to make her fertile. Further, at times, the woman was taken to her father's home where cattle was slaughtered for her and a piece of skin cut and put around her head to ward off the evil spirit and bring on fertility (Nangendo, 1994).

From our perspective, the Bukusu community believed in progeny and that everyone was born to propagate their lineage, thus, the inability to reproduce which was mainly measured by women was viewed as negative forces such as curses or spells, thus, rituals were formed to welcome good forces of fertility and reproduction.

Cultural heritage was highly valued in the Bukusu community as women and men alike played significant parts in passing down knowledge, practices, beliefs and from one generation to another mainly through oral traditions (Wafukho et al., 2022). As such motherhood was associated with the responsibility of nurturing babies into children, adolescents, and mature responsible women. In their early years, children spent a lot of their time with their mothers. Mothers taught children good conduct such as how to carry themselves in society being responsible courteous, brave, and obedient to name a few. Oral traditions were significantly utilized to orient children with good behavior. For example, riddles, songs, and tales were used to encourage virtues and discourage vices respectively. Grandmothers too helped married daughters and daughters-in-law especially when slept with their grandchildren in their huts (Nangendo, 1994). Elderly women were sources of oral traditions through which good morals, life skills, and lessons were passed down from one generation to another through myths, and folktales. Personal observation shows a disparate relationship between the old and the young generations. Rarely are older women living with their grandchildren as the latter spend most of their time in schools and towns rather than in the villages.

According to (Wolf, 2019), there was a sexual division of production in the community of the Bukusu people. Men and women had clear expectations for each sex. Traditionally, Bukusuland historically played roles around household management, and caregiving to the family and community. They were confined to domestic responsibilities such as sustenance occupations on the farm including weeding, collecting firewood, foraging for vegetables, fetching water, cleaning, cooking, raising children, and supporting the elderly members of the family and the clan. Notwithstanding, the Bukusu women had unique roles constructed and oriented to them by the

community. For example, it was established that Bukusu women's role was not only to bear children but also to bear many children. Fecundity (the ability to bear many children) was one precondition to a sustainable marriage for a Bukusu couple.

While it was not solely dependent on the woman as men too were known to be potentially impotent, women often bore the burden of barrenness in the families. According to Wekesa, (2015), barrenness among married couples in the Bukusu was blamed on women. A woman who did not bear children was referred to derogatorily and was often subjected to a co-wife in the that she bore children and had to endure ridicule from the co-wife and community as a waste. More often, they would be divorced and whenever they died, they were buried on the edge of the homestead. Further, a deceased barren Bukusu woman's body was passed through a hole opening created at the rear end of the house to the burial site. From these revelations, it can be postulated that largely, Bukusu women were responsible for children in a marriage and that men were believed to be potent. Fertility issues were the woman's responsibility since a woman's first contribution to the family was seen through the lens of her ability to conceive and bear children. Bareness was believed to be a curse. Muyila (1992) also reveals that a Bukusu man was allowed to get an additional wife if the current one was unable to bear children. This confirms the belief that women were believed to be responsible for bearing children for their spouses since a man's progeny was through his children. In line with the caregiving roles of women were their ritualistic roles in community events such as circumcision, marriage, and divinity.

Wolf (1971) observes that during the boy's traditional circumcision, there were specified roles for individual kin members of the initiate noting that on the day of circumcision, the initiate's maternal aunt washed away the superfluous mud on the riverbank when he was on the other hand being smeared on with mud by his father's younger brother or initiate's elder brother alternately. Upon arriving home from the river, the paternal aunt gave him some freshly brewed beer. He also mentions that after circumcision, the grandmother of the circumcised boy would clean him by removing the mud off his head and clear up the prepuce that was dropped on the ground by wrapping them in banana fibers and disposing of them secretly not allowing anybody to see as this would help avoid people with ill intentions on the boy.

Women's Role in Bukusu Society Economic System

As active agents of cultural heritage, women lived through expressions through traditions that were inherited from ancestors and passed them down to descendants through intangible resources including already mentioned oral traditions, social practices, rituals, and the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. This section tackles how women expressed their skills in crafts (Banda et al., 2024).

Traditional craftsmanship was shaped by an intricate interplay of environmental, social, economic, cultural, and technological factors. These factors reflected the community's values, identity, and environments, ensuring the crafts were not only functional but also culturally significant. For instance, the availability of natural resources locally often dictated the types of crafts that developed in the region. Wood carving was practiced by communities living around forested areas while pottery was in regions with abundant clay soil. In these craft activities, social structures were played as gender roles. The discussion about women's craftmanship in the Bukusu community involves a comparison with neighboring communities in which economic activities were carried out in barter trade. It is also worth highlighting that craftsmanship is the cultural heritage in preserving traditional skills and transmission from one

generation to the next. Thus, such crafts carry symbolic, motifs and techniques unique to the Bukusu and demonstrate the gendered cultural daily activities of men and women. Simiyu (1991) notes that women were active participants in the gender-decision craftwork whereby women beyond childbearing age were responsible for pottery since this art of modeling was considered sacred. Hence, partaking in it would likely affect one's fertility. On the other hand, men practiced wood carvings, basketry, leather working, and smelting, whose products were used in barter trade. According to Nangendo (1994), weaved baskets and traditional food baskets (chindubi, vikono, bitelu) were smeared with a thin layer of cow dung by women ready for use or sale. Women within the child-bearing age bracket were restricted by Bukusu cultural taboos that considered them impure to practice an almost sacred associated practice. It is further noted that the art of pottery not only served subsistence needs such as water pre-servation and traditional liquor "Chang'aa" and "Busaa" but also led barter trade with other Luhya and non-Luhya communities.

Retrospection on the author's precursor works, Simiyu (1973)) notes that women in the Bukusu community were responsible for nurturing children and adolescent girls and instilling acceptable conduct such as obedience. Conversely, nurturing circumcised boys was the responsibility of their fathers and uncles. With similar sentiments in sup-port of the curator's words are Muleka and Okoth (2022) who note that one of the salient statuses of a woman in the Luhya community of western Kenya was participation in housebuilding whereby they were required to smoothen walls and floors with mud and cow dung while men put up the structure with wooden poles and thatched the roofs of their huts. They reiterate that it is taboo for women to climb on house roofs. Conversely, the case was different in other non-Luhya communities like Kikuyu where women thatched

houses an action equated to covering something. Therefore, it was symbolic of implying the ability to keep their home secretes and women were guardians of family and homes from being exposed to outsiders. To the Bukusu people, women were forbidden because it was indecent for a woman to be watched from the ground since they were supposed to carry themselves modestly. Climbing the top of a house or a tree seemed to contradict the demure and decorous expectations of a woman. Rather, the only time that woman climbed on the top of the house was when her husband died; she was obliged to remove the shaft that was installed on the pinnacle of their hut's rood symbolizing the male as the head of the home.

Therefore, a widow was allowed to remove it three days after her husband's death (Nangendo, 1994, Wandibba, 1972 Nangendo, 1994). This also meant that in the absence of the husband, the widow takes up the responsibility as demonstrated in the preceding discussion. Another craft of women was making traditional salt which is more of vegetable salt. Women used a variety of plants including dry banana leaves (Kamsanja), star grass (lukhafwa, maize cobs (bisokoro), and palm trees (Kamakhendu). A mix of either of the leaves from these plants would be mixed further with dry cattle dung before being burnt to ash. The ash was left to cool; after which the ash would be mixed with water through a filtration process and the resulting liquid was used as liquid salt. The ash salt would be kept in baskets and pots for future use (Nangendo, 1994). This practice of traditional salt-making is still evident as observed during the visit to two villages in Bungoma County.

Traditional ways of preparing vegetables still use this ash salt despite the availability of commercial salt. All elderly women interlocutors unanimously confirmed that they use ash salt to supplement the commercial salt, and they use it specifically for their traditional vegetables which provides a unique and nostalgic taste of food. Aside from that,

calabash making was a women's monopoly and was made from gourds (Nangendo, 1994). They made calabashes purely domestic items as they were mostly used for storing household goods such as seeds, ash salt, water, and milk, and served as utensils such as food bowls, scoops, spoons, ladles, etc. In our view, the domestic nature of the functions of calabashes, and their manufacturing was exclusively Bukusu women's responsibility.

The goods they produced were not only meant for local consumption but rather trading them for other goods with other communities was a viable economic activity among the Bukusu people. They thrived in exchange for goods for goods among themselves and with other neighboring communities, such as the Sabaot. From home, they received smoked meat, honey, and milk and from the Nandi and Maasai, they got bows, arrows, and spears respectively while they obtained hoes from the Samia people. The above-mentioned crafts were instrumental in the trading activities.

Although pots, calabash, salt, iron, and leather were not the only items being traded, other commodities included farm produce such as vegetables, sorghum, finger millet, sweet potatoes, and bananas (Nangendo, 1994). This literature confirms that women in this community were actively involved in economic activities although selectively participated took part as others were reserved for men. While men were active in trading weapons, women traded on food staffs and household-related items.

Other than being creators of wealth and resources through craftmanship activities, women were also regarded as sources of wealth, and ownership; exemplified through levirate and sororate marriages. Such marriage arrangements for women served to preserve wealth, property, and social stability within families and kinship groups of the Bukusu. When they were married off, the bride's wealth paid to her parents in terms of cattle and other gifts fetched a substantial amount of wealth. More bride's wealth (kumwaulo) would be circulated and used by her brothers to pay for the bride's wealth when getting married (Wepukhulu et al., 2023). It is deserving to compare the Bukusu women to their neighbors. Like their counterparts such as the Idakho, a married woman among the Bukusu people belonged to the clan (Kavulavu, 2015).

A Bukusu woman was obliged to be inherited by the husband's brother upon the demise of her husband whether the husband had paid off the wealth to her parents. They could continue siring children and the bride's wealth be paid to seal the marriage and for the woman and children to remain within the clan. This was meant to continue the progeny of the clan. An informant stated that it was a Bukusu belief that if they let the widow get married elsewhere, she would deprive the family and clan of their wealth as she would take some resources with her to another clan.

In considering credible sources for understanding cultural and socio-economic dynamics in Bukusu society, Cultural Hub TV (Bukusu local television channel) serves as a credible source for understanding the Bukusu society's socio-cultural dynamics, offering expert insights, indigenous knowledge, investigative reporting, multimedia evidence, and collaborations with reputable institutions. An informant on Culture Hub TV airing Bukusu cultural insight, confirmed exceptions for wife inheritance; and that letting go of the widow depended on two factors; one was whether or not her bride's price had been paid fully being her deceased husband. If the bride price had not been paid, the clan would let her family decide on her stay. Additionally, if the dowry had been paid fully or partially, the widow's family was at liberty to return the dowry and claim their daughter in cases where they felt it was a bad omen for their daughter to be a widow at a young age; hence believed the family is not well suitable for their daughter. Secondly, if children were involved,

especially boys, she was compelled to stay in her matrimonial home and hence be inherited (Hub TV, 2024). Further, while inheritance occurred, a widow had some "isolated" role to play in her inheritance. In varied instances, a widow was autonomous in determining her potential inheritor. She would evaluate her potential clansmen's conduct, such as, but not limited to, how they treated her and her children and what they brought to her home during visits. This helped widows shun men who were just driven by sexual desires rather than genuine care for her, children and their general welfare (Hub TV, 2024).

The literature corroborates what (Wepukhulu et al. (2023) assert that marriage was meant to be permanent and did not end in death as a woman whose bridewealth was paid was inherited by the deceased man's kin who would sire children with her to continue their brother's lineage. Moreover, a woman also played a role in determining her welfare and that of her children upon the death of her husband. Children cemented the widow's status in the clan she was married to unless her family decided otherwise by returning her dowry. The woman was "owned" by the clan and thus, justified her inheritance. In the same vein, a study by (Wepukhulu et al., 2023) state that according to Bukusu customary law, a man could inherit his brother's wife, a widow from his lineage, and a young wife of his father, assuming that his father's brothers or father's cousins in the same clan have declined or if the widow herself has refused them and specifically chosen him. Also, a man could inherit his cousin's wife provided that the cousin dies leaving no brother who can inherit the widow.

Nevertheless, in as much as marriages were arranged, a woman was not compelled to get married to a man she objected to as it was believed she would become a troublemaker in the marriage and the union would not last and hence bring shame to the family. Widows who were likable in their matrimonial homes were more likely to be inherited than those who were less likable. For example, hardworking women were seen as an asset to the clan and thus worth keeping. A Bukusu expression "omukoko silundu" or "a sister is a garden" signifies their hard work on the farm to ensure the family's welfare (Precious & Onyango, 2020). Hard work was a prerequisite for a Bukusu woman as she was seen as she would perform all farming-related activities to keep away poverty and hunger from her home. A lazy woman who could not showcase skills in tilling land, bearing children, and cooking for the clan and visitors was considered a liability to the husband.

Laziness was likely to lead to divorce or polygamy kind of marriage. Commenting on the same, a respondent alluded that a lazy woman was married off to an old man. Alternatively, if she married, people would say that motherhood would wake her from slumber. This means that bearing and raising children was a vast responsibility that demanded hard work as it was a woman's responsibility. Being a mother, her circumstances would force her to be responsible.

Bukusu women played a significant role in decision-making processes in the family and community. Women had great powers regarding land matters and made decisions concerning their marital land (Natembeya, 1999). For example, a man could not lease or give out his price of land without the wife's consent. Bukusu women likely played a key role in food production and distribution in the community, which may explain their significant influence in land-related decision-making. We interpret that women's involvement in land matters also owed to land being their main means of production and as food custodians, they were directly involved. In cases of old age or impairment, the wife cultivated the land and could sue anyone who trespassed and could evict anyone who forcefully cultivated the land. In fact, in cases of death, the son had to seek the mother's consent to sue anyone regarding land matters. In inter-

gender relations, a wife represents the husband in many family and marital matters. For example, although uncircumcised, a woman shared her husband's age set and therefore could enjoy the privilege of earning a token (lubaka) associated with age set (sisingilo) mates (bakoki) if the husband is dead (Wandibba & Ikanda, 2005). The dynamics of widow inheritance and her role in sealing her husband's gap in family property inheritance were evident in the traditional Bukusu community. This could have been the reason widows were inherited by the inheritor, to help the deceased husband's lineage continue and to manage the resources left behind, including children.

We postulate that in the traditional Bukusu land tenure, women had the right to sue and evict trespassers and settle land disputes as they were the main cultivators of the land. This was due to the communal land ownership where despite the patrilineality, women equally owned land through their husbands. For example, once the married men demarcated their portions of land, they allotted portions to their wives, married sons, and daughters for cultivation, although the latter could not inherit land as they were expected to marry outside the clans and so they could inherit land through their future husbands (Kevane, 2011).

Unlike the unmarred son, an unmarried daughter owned granaries or bibiaki/birara where she stored farm reap and whenever it was full, the show would be given another granary to fill with food harvest. Upon her marriage, all the produce in her granaries was transferred to her father-in-law's granary who then would distribute the food to his kith and his kin, and more than half went to his daughter-in-law for her household consumption (Nangendo, 1994). This suggests that unmarried girls owned land and utilized it to equip themselves for their future life as a married woman, as they were expected to bring some food reserves into their marital homes. As always already mentioned,

women ensured food security and this was symbolic of their role as food custodians.

Summary and Conclusion

This study underscores the importance of the traditional roles of women as a cornerstone of the Bukusu community's cultural heritage, demonstrating their role in fostering social cohesion and passing down values across generations. It established that women's roles in the Bukusu community are intertwined with the Bukusu community's identity, and values to serve as a basis for social organization and cultural preservation. From childhood to adulthood, women were socialized into the cultural definitions of the community expectations of men and women.

Girls were raised to take up the roles of motherhood, thus, the form of traditional learning through apprenticeship shapes them for adult life. With several expectations for daughters transitioning into wives, mothers, and nurturers. As sources of wealth and ownership, women partook in cultural expectations of women in the Bukusu community passing through rituals for life transitions such as childbirth, marriage, motherhood, old age, and death. Women were custodians of the family and clan social welfare including, caregiving, nurturing, wealth sources, ownership, and food security. They were instruments of cultural identity and heritage through their daily activities such as craftsmanship as part of their individual and collective economic contribution.

However, the study also established the changing nature of the same roles due to external influences such as colonialism, and Christianity, all of which amount to what is deemed modernization and globalization. This study brings a nuanced understanding of the intersection between culture, identity, and societal evolution, stressing the need for ongoing research to understand contemporary patterns of change in the traditional practices of Bukusu women.

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SAYAW NG BATI: THE SYSTEM OF EASTER DANCE SPONSORSHIP IN ANGONO, RIZAL, THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

The brand of Catholicism that exists in the Philippines blends both Christian and folk traditions. During the precolonial period, sponsoring community rituals was obligatory for the *datu* (chieftain) and the local aristocracy, as these events consumed significant resources. The Christianization of the country through Spanish colonization transformed precolonial sponsorship traditions as new sponsorship practices emerged among the local elites, aligning them with the veneration of the *santo* (images of saints) and the *fiesta* (the feast of the town's patron saint). This article explores a distinct Catholic sponsorship system in the Southern Tagalog region called *sayaw ng bati* or *bati*, a dance ritual performed in Angono, Rizal, during Easter. Based on in-depth interviews conducted with three performers, the article provided an overview of *bati* as a sponsorship system, focusing on the process of becoming a performer and the corresponding

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motivations, the material and economic aspects of the practice, and the positioning of *bati* within the context of *panata* (devotional pledge).

Absztrakt

SAYAW NG BATI - A KÖSZÖNTÉS TÁNCA: A HÚSVÉTI TÁNCOS PATRÓNUSI RENDSZER A FÜLÖP-SZIGETEKI ANGONO VÁROSÁBAN

A Fülöp-szigeteken létező katolicizmus ötvözi a keresztény és a népi hagyományokat. A gyarmatosítás előtti időszakban a közösségi rituálék támogatása kötelezettséget jelentett a *datu* (törzsfőnök) és a helyi arisztokrácia számára, mivel ezek az események jelentős erőforrásokat igényeltek. Az ország spanyol gyarmatosítása során bekövetkezett keresztényesítés átalakította ezeket a patrónusi hagyományokat: új támogatási gyakorlatok alakultak ki a helyi elit körében, amelyek a *santo* (szentképek) tiszteletéhez és a *fiesta* (a település védőszentjének ünnepe) kultuszához kapcsolódtak. Jelen tanulmány egy sajátos katolikus patrónusi rendszert vizsgál a Dél-Tagalog régióban, amely *sayaw ng bati* vagy egyszerűen bati néven ismert. Ez egy táncos rituálé, amelyet a Fülöp-szigeteki Angono városában, Rizal tartományban, húsvétkor adnak elő. A három előadóval készített mélyinterjúk alapján a tanulmány áttekintést nyújt a bati mint patrónusi rendszer működéséről, különös tekintettel az előadóvá válás folyamatára és annak motivációira, a gyakorlat anyagi és gazdasági vonatkozásaira, valamint a bati vallásos *fogadalom*ként (panata) való értelmezésére.

Kulcsszavak: pagbati, sayaw ng bati, bati, katolikus vallásos tánc, népi vallásosság, patrónusi rendszer, húsvéti tánc, Angono, Rizal, Fülöp-szigetek

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

Dance was part of the cultural fabric of precolonial Philippine society and functioned to strengthen solidarity among the community and protect their well-being. Together with songs and music, our ancestors used dancing in rituals to express their beliefs to a higher being. Outside of rituals, dances were performed to celebrate social occasions or for the conduct of agricultural activities such as planting crops, fishing, or hunting (Villaruz, 2020). Rituals in various communities were led by priestesses (also known as *babaylan*, *catalona*, *mombaki*, *dawak*, *mambunong*, *mangngallag*, or *ma-aram* depending on the ethnolinguistic group) who served as spiritual leaders and a medium of men to the spirit world (Center for Babaylan Studies, n.d.). In the animistic worldview of precolonial Filipinos, rituals intend to set a balance between man and nature. An imbalance between the two realms could cause a catastrophe and rituals were essential to troubleshoot this imbalance. Dancing always accompanies these rituals because it is considered the "highest symbolic form" in precolonial society (Obusan, n.d.).

An important feature of these rituals is the sponsorship system that existed during the precolonial times. As our ancestors believed that *Bathala* – the supreme being who created the world – was far away, ornate houses of worship or temples did not exist. Instead, they showered this god and other supernatural beings with elaborate rituals performed everywhere (Reyes, 1985). Often, an altar is erected at the *datu*'s (chieftain) home where the rituals are conducted and joined by the *nagaanito*, the worshippers (Del Castillo, 2015). The rituals performed by the priestesses and the corresponding feasting that follows come with hefty costs, which are sponsored by the *datu* and the local aristocracy (Tamayo, 2022). The system of sponsorship that existed at the time also ensured

the expansion of the elite's social and political prestige in the community (Calma, 2009). With the arrival and colonization of the Spaniards in the 16th century, they introduced Christianity to the archipelago which was met with less resistance and embraced as part of the local culture. The success of Christianization in the Philippines is attributed to several factors: given the many semblances it had to the animistic beliefs of the natives, it did not cause immense psychological difficulty among the population; while the archaic beliefs of the natives reappeared in another form, it also depicts the resiliency, flexibility, and creativity of early Filipinos (Elesterio, 1989; Mercado, 1994).

From their idols and deities, the natives quickly recognized the potency of Christian saints and martyrs and turned to them for supplications. If not fleeing to the mountains and branded as witches or joining the uprisings staged by some *datus*, the role of the converted priestesses who were once the spiritual leaders of various communities was reduced to assisting the parish priest during mass or conducting preparations for the processions (Salazar, 1996; Limos, 2019). The natives also had an alternative to their priestesses through the person of the Virgin Mary, who was promoted as the "mediator and intercessor with the divine" (Reyes, 2015). The sponsorship system that existed during the precolonial period also experienced a transition. As the Spaniards restructured the social hierarchy, they changed the status of the *datus* including their families, their descendants, and the *maharlikas* (local aristocracy) to the so-called *principales*. From this class emerged the privileged individuals who ascertained the only government positions available to the natives: *cabeza de barangay* (village lieutenant), *gobernadorcillo* (town executive), and *juez* (judge). Most *principales* were also powerful lords who owned vast landholdings (Padua, 1994).

In the newly formed *pueblos* (towns), the *principales'* close affinity with the clergy can be observed in their large dwellings often placed near the parish church alongside the main square, town hall complex, and abodes of Spanish settlers (Santiago, 2005). Given the wealth of the *principales*, their prestige extends into the religious affairs of the *pueblo*. The way they sponsored the rituals and feasting in the precolonial context was sustained through their patronage of many church-related affairs. Most *principales* donated lands to the religious orders (Padua, 1994). If not land, they extended their help to the parish by donating money or shouldering certain expenses. In return, the religious orders made sure to further the status of the *principales* by introducing two forms of sponsorship system in the church: they were elevated to become *camareras* (custodians) of processional images or they assumed the position of *hermano mayor* (sponsor) during the *fiesta* (feast day) of the town's patron saint.

Despite the sponsorship systems' material, economic, and hierarchical nature, they preserve elements of Philippine indigenous values. Inter-personalism is at the core of these sponsorship systems. For a *camarero* and *hermano mayor*, there is fulfillment when they share something with other people because the values of *pakikipagkapwa* (fellowship) and *pakikisama* (belongingness) are central elements in Filipino spirituality and religiosity (Macaranas, 2021; Tamayo, 2022). The two sponsorship systems also underscore the practice of *panata* or devotional pledge. When the supplicant requests or receives something from a higher being, he enacts a *panata* due to *utang na loob*, a feeling of indebtedness (Macaranas, 2021). In the studies regarding the *camareros* and *hermanos mayores*, the majority – if not all practitioners – continue to practice *santo* and *fiesta* sponsorship mainly because of their answered prayers and current intentions that they continue to pray for (Tamayo, 2020; Tamayo, 2022). Parallel to other devotions that ordinary Filipino Catholics practice, being a *camarero* or *hermano mayor* can also be transferred or

inherited by family members. This 'transferability' is a facet of *panata* unique to Filipino religiosity (Zialcita, 1986, as cited in Espiritu, 2023). Jayeel Cornelio's (2014) concept of everyday authenticity also applies to the contemporary sponsorship traditions in the Catholic Church. Sponsorship, as an act of doing religion, inherently showcases "the self"; however, it also considers the well-being of others, including family and the broader community, aside from one's spirituality and piety. These practices mirror authentic expressions of faith.

In this article, I explore another sponsorship system, the sayaw *ng bati* (dance of greeting), an Easter dance ritual performed during Holy Week in Angono, Rizal. It is commonly known as *bati*, a relatively new sponsorship tradition compared to *pagsasanto* and *hermano mayor* practices. The earlier sponsorship systems also exhibit a pan-regional orientation, whereas *bati* is primarily practiced in the Southern Tagalog region of the country. Rosalie Matilac (2018) defines the *bati* in the Encyclopedia of Philippine Art: "a flag dance performed in Angono, Rizal as part of the religious rituals before and during the *salubong* which is the dramatized meeting of the Virgin Mary and the resurrected Christ on Easter Sunday." Available sources on *bati* focus on its historical origins and choreography. The article "Philippine Dance in the Spanish Period" by Basilio Esteban Villaruz (n.d.) highlights "*bate*" as an example of a Christianized dance. Conversely, Bryan Levina Viray's (2019) article examines the 'dancerly attitude' of the performers and concludes that Marian veneration shapes the choreography of *bati*. Meanwhile, Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo's (2023) recent study explores the precolonial and Spanish colonial contexts in the Philippines and argues that the concept of transculturation played a part in the creation of *bati*.

While the choreography and historical underpinnings of *bati* in Angono are well documented, the sponsorship system behind it is an uncharted territory that begs further exploration and analysis. Through interviews with three performers, the present article aims to describe the process of becoming a dancer in *bati* and elaborate on the Easter dance as a sponsorship system, focusing on its material and economic aspects. It also examines the performers' motivations and explores whether the practice can be identified with *panata* (devotional pledge).

Angono, the 'Art Capital' fusing art and religion

Angono is known informally among Filipinos as the 'Art Capital' of the Philippines. The town produced renowned artists such as Carlos "Botong" Francisco, the National Artist for Visual Arts, Lucio San Pedro, the National Artist for Music, and painters such as Jose Blanco and Nemesio Miranda. More than anything, Angono is home to a thriving art scene that blends folk and fine arts, both of which are reflected in the people's practice of the Catholic faith. It is interesting to note that the town has artwork for various religious celebrations and holds elaborate *fiestas* or commemorations relating to Christmas, New Year, Epiphany, Holy Week, and the feasts of *San Isidro* (St. Isidore) and *San Clemente* (St. Clement) that feature intricate and vibrant structures as well as decorations (Manalo, 2004). Understanding the fusion of art and religion in Angono requires a closer look at its history. The story starts at the Angono Petroglyphs – considered the oldest artwork in the Philippines – featuring 127 human and animal figures etched on a rock wall since the late Neolithic period (before 2000 BC), which were associated with healing and sympathetic magic. The early Tagalogs who settled in the area considered it a sacred ground where their deities dwelt (Angeles, 2021). The natives' relationship with the lake also cultivated their pre-colonial beliefs. Aside from

being a source of livelihood, the natives believed in the presence of *sirenas* (mermaids) who supposedly protected the place. With Christianity arriving in town, the missionaries replaced the *sirenas* with a Christian saint through *San Clemente* who had a close association with water. The way the natives venerated *San Clemente* paralleled how they worshipped the *sirenas* of the old: a fluvial procession called *pagoda* was conducted, which for the missionaries was symbolic of Emperor Trajan's order to drown the saint to the Crimean seas (Tiamson-Rubin, 1992, as cited in Asilum, 2018). Between 1751 and 1766, Angono was elevated to a *pueblo* under the jurisdiction of the Province of Laguna and the Distrito delas Montes de San Mateo, later known as Politico Militar del Distrito de Morong. When the Spaniards left and the Americans became the next colonizer, Angono experienced various reorganizations including its incorporation with Taytay in October 1903 and fusing it with Binangonan in November 1903. In 1939, the town gained independence through the declaration of President Manuel L. Quezon, comprising five *barrios*: Bagong Bayan, Poblacion, San Isidro, San Roque, and San Vicente. By 1975, the Province of Rizal was reorganized during the term of President Ferdinand Marcos. Angono and thirteen other towns remained under the Province of Rizal while fifteen others were created as independent cities and fused into Metro Manila (MPDC, 2016, as cited in Asilum, 2018).

Despite the changing political climate and the ravages of the Second World War, Angono retained its centuries-old traditions highlighting the intersection of art and religion. The use of bamboo is particularly prominent during religious festivities. Adding a festive flair during the feast of *San Clemente* are the *endramadas*, which are rows of bamboo installations along the processional route decorated with colorful motifs of shrimp, fish, and an assortment of garlands and buntings (Tiamson-Rubin, 1992, as cited in Asilum, 2018; Manalo,

2004). During the mass in the Epiphany, resident Simeon Tolentino devised a pulley that brings three *estrellas* (stars) to the altar fashioned out of bamboo and paper lanterns (Manalo, 2004). A *Galilea*, a platform where dancers of the *bati* perform on Easter Sunday, also features bamboo poles that support an enormous bird and a heart made of papier-mâché. This heart blooms gently and reveals a child dressed like an angel. Moreover, Angono is most famous for its folk art called *higantes* or giant figures that appear in various festivities. Giant figures resembling male and female characters are attractions during the feast of *San Clemente*, *higante* carabaos are paraded to honor *San Isidro*, and *higante* lanterns also appear as part of the local Christmas tradition (Asilum, 2018). Beyond the entertaining façade that the *higantes* portray, its origins depict the resistance that locals imposed against the *haciendaros* (powerful landed families) during the Spanish colonial period. Except for one festivity, the *haciendaros* prohibited the common folk from joining other festivities in town; as a result, the locals protested by mocking powerful landlords through the *higantes* which resembled the latter showing commands and one hand on the waist (Angeles, 2021).

Public spaces in Angono have become a platform for locals to express their faith and communal spirit. Religious expressions and art intersect in public. In the processions, paintings of several Angono masters abound like the oval oil paintings on metal plates which were mostly the work of 19th-century painter Juan Senson, the *birang* (cloth) held by the image of Veronica during Holy Week featuring the face of Christ painted by Carlos "Botong" Francisco, or the Senson painting of the crucifixion adorning the backdrop of the Dead Christ, the *Santo Entierro* (Manalo, 2004). In the streets, locals witness the *bati* performances, the *sagalas* (maidens) in their beautiful costumes during the *Santacruzan* (Holy Cross procession), or the vibrant handiworks adorning the streets during

fiestas. The lakeshore provides an avenue to witness the intricate bamboo installation in the *pagoda* of *San Clemente*. Public spaces allow outsiders to witness the locals' pious expressions of faith, made tangible through the art forms they produce. As Ino Manalo (2004) notes, art forms in public spaces are deconstructed after religious festivities and reconstructed annually without fail. It serves as a reminder of how art becomes a tangible expression of the people's devotion. More than anything, the process of deconstruction and reconstruction strengthens the spirit of renewal enacted by one's *panata* and the Filipino values of *pakikipagkapwa* and *samahan* (group solidarity) – the foundation for preserving these artistic and religious traditions in Angono.

Sayaw ng bati as an Easter ritual dance

The *bati* is a unique Easter dance ritual performed in many towns in the Southern Tagalog region. In Parañaque City, once part of the Province of Rizal, young girls and boys perform the '*bati-bati*'. The town of Ibaan in Batangas has the '*bati de bandera*' performed by three dancers composed of two males and a female. Despite the differing terms, a common element among these *bati* variations is the *bandera* (flag). The exact birthplace of *bati* is still a lingering question, given that several towns claim ownership of the original choreography. In Angono, Rizal, which is the location of this study, the choreography of the *bati* was formulated by Tandang Apang Gil in the late 19th century while Tandang Juan Petiza provided the music (Matilac, 2018; Viray, 2019). In 1870, the first recorded *kapitana*, Dominga Reyes, performed the *bati*. Since *bati* is sacred to the locals, the choreography is only taught among chosen performers (Matilac, 2018). There are two dancers in Angono's *bati*: the *kapitana* and the *tenyenta*. In the past, the *tenyenta* only served as an attendant to the *kapitana* until it was decided in 1972 to allow

the former to perform. Both dancers are selected by lottery on the evening of Easter Sunday. Eight *konsehalas* are chosen as well by sortition; although they simply sit on the stage during *bati*, a possible *kapitana* and *tenyenta* is selected among them in case something untoward happens to the incumbent dancers (M.E.T. De Leon, personal communication, October 7, 2024).

The *bati* is characterized by a distinct movement called *bali* or *kiling* or "the steep and sinuous bending of the torso from the waist on either side towards the back, rotating the whole body in an engaging swirl" (Matilac, 2018). Viray (2019) adds that the dancers embody the virtues of the Virgin Mary as emphasized in the *dicho*: "*babaeng matimtiman* (decorous woman), *maganda* (beautiful), *matapat* (honest), *marunong* (wise), and *malinis* (clean)." The *bandera* is the most important element in *bati*. It is approximately 1 x 1.5 feet long and contains an insignia bearing the 'Alleluia' for the *kapitana* and the 'Auspice Maria' for the *tenyenta* (Matilac, 2018; A.M.G. Diestro, personal communication, October 16, 2024). The *bandera* accentuates the ritual dance as it sways gracefully during the performances. It alludes to the cross with a banner that the image of the resurrected Christ holds, which symbolizes the joy of the resurrection and Christ's sacrifice in redeeming mankind from sin (Eke, 2020). Given the *bandera* is considered a sacred object, the dancers take good care of it as the locals believe that misfortunes happen to the community when it falls to the ground (Matilac, 2018).

In Angono, *bati* is performed multiple times during Holy Week: on *Viernes de Dolores* (Friday before Holy Week) during *Harap sa Banda* (Facing the Band); on Palm Sunday the *Unang Panaog* (First Descent) at the residence or within the area of the *kapitana*; on Holy Tuesday the *Ikalawang Panaog* (Second Descent) at the residence or within the area of the *tenyenta*; on Holy Wednesday the *Ikatlong Panaog* (Third Descent) at Poblacion Ibaba; and

two performances on Easter Sunday consisting of *Salubong* early in the morning and *Bunutan* (Lottery) after the last mass in the evening (A.M.G. Diestro, personal communication, October 16, 2024). The performances before Easter Sunday serve as rehearsals that eventually culminate during *Salubong*. In each performance, both dancers wear different attire following the style of the *terno*, a Filipiñana attire accentuated with butterfly sleeves.

Out of the five performances during Holy Week, the one in *Salubong* on the dawn of Easter Sunday is the most significant. Two processions are conducted simultaneously during that time. Starting from the church, the parish priest accompanies the image of the resurrected Christ with the *kapitana* and *tenyenta*. Meanwhile, the image of *Birhen ng Pagbati* (Virgin Mary) comes from *Poblacion Itaas* (Upper Town) and is accompanied by the *andas* (shoulder-borne float) bearing *Santa Maria Jacobe* (St. Mary of Clopas), *Santa Maria Salome* (St. Mary Salome), *Santa Maria Magdalena* (St. Mary Magdalene), and *San Juan Evangelista* (St. John the Evangelist). Both processions end and meet at a designated location where a *Galilea* is erected particularly for the main event (Viray, 2019). Resembling a stage supported by four bamboo poles, it is decorated with palm leaves, flowers, flaglets, colorful buntings, giant papier-mâché doves, and an enormous flower bud. In the past, *bati* was performed in a different location until it was transferred to Bloomingdale Subdivision, given that the owners sold the previous space where the Galilea once stood. The lack of space in the vicinity of the parish church explains why the ritual dance is performed elsewhere (M.E.T. De Leon, personal communication, October 7, 2024).

The *tenyenta* begins performing *bati*, which signifies the greeting of *Santinakpan* (the creation) to *Dakilang Mananakop* (the Risen Christ) to the rhythm of *Gavotte* (a march) often the version by National Artist for Music Lucio San Pedro and rendered by the local band (Tiamson-Rubin, 1999;

Matilac, 2018). The musical scoring for the *tenyenta* and *kapitana* may change annually as its selection is also done by sortition (L.C. De Leon, personal communication, February 2, 2025). Compared with the *kapitana*, the *tenyenta*'s movement is slow and somber, depicting the sorrowful moments encountered in the previous days of Holy Week. After this, the *kapitana* recites a 20-minute poem called *dicho*, a composition of 31 stanzas proclaiming both the sorrows and triumphs of the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Christ (Matilac, 2018). As the *kapitana* reaches the line *nabuksan na* (it is revealed) toward the end of the *dicho*, spectators hold their breath as the giant doves race to peck the flower bud, which then gently opens to reveal a child dressed as an angel (Viray, 2019; Tiamson-Rubin, 1999).

While the angel descends slowly singing the Regina Coeli and showering the Virgin Mary with confetti, the doves target a bag that showers the same material to the *kapitana*, an allegory of heaven's blessing to the people (Tiamson-Rubin, 1999; L.C. De Leon, personal communication, February 8, 2025). The way the confetti falls to the ground is also shrouded in folk beliefs. If it falls gently, bountiful harvest is expected; if too sudden, calamities may ensue (M.E.T. De Leon, personal communication, October 7, 2024). Upon reaching the image, the angel reaches the *lambong* (black veil) and uncovers the face of the Virgin Mary to signify the end of mourning (Viray, 2019). Meanwhile, the *kapitana* recites the remaining parts of the *dicho*. The people then shout "*Viva Resurrecion!*" (Hail the Resurrected Christ!) after the *dicho* and the *kapitana* finally performs her *bati*. In contrast to the *tenyenta*'s *bati*, the *kapitana*'s dance has a tempo reflecting the joyous occasion – lively and fast – and the music heralds the triumph of the resurrection. The *andas* bearing the saints also join the merriment as those carrying them below gently sway the floats; from afar, the saints appear to be dancing (Tiamson-Rubin, 1999). Finally, the dance ritual concludes

when the *kapitana* kneels, spreads her arms sideways, and affectionately holds the *bandera* with her right hand (Viray, 2019). After the *kapitana*'s performance, the parish priest gives his blessing and then a procession commences going back to the church. The liturgy is completed in the church which ends by nine in the morning (L.C. De Leon, personal communication, February 8, 2025).

The system of sponsorship in sayaw ng bati

To explore and document the system of sponsorship existing in *sayaw ng bati*, I interviewed three respondents from Angono, Rizal in October 2024. They assumed the position of *kapitana* and *tenyenta* in the past. Two *kapitanas* were interviewed for this study: Ma. Elena De Leon, 65 years old and a retired employee, became a *kapitana* in 1982 when she was 19 years old, and Denise Bautista, 20 years old and a university student, performed in 2023. Another respondent is Gianina Diestro, 30 years old and working in a multinational bank. She performed as *tenyenta* together with Bautista in 2023. From childhood, all respondents have a strong sense of their local traditions as they witnessed early on the practices aligned with Holy Week, especially the performance of *bati* in Angono. Their families also contribute to this strong sense of heritage, given that their families are either active in church or directly involved in certain components of *bati*. Diestro's father, for example, was a conductor for the Angono National Symphonic Band who made several compositions for the *kapitana* and *tenyenta*. On the one hand, Bautista's aunt who was a *kapitana* before is active in church and encouraged her to become a *kapitana* one day.

De Leon and Bautista admit that they could see themselves performing *bati* from an early age. De Leon's motivation stemmed from her deep devotion to the Virgin Mary and early exposure to the activities of the *kapitanas* and *tenyentas*. She expresses, "*May call kay Mama Mary. Kasama na ako sa pag-aalay ng bulaklak at the age of six years old. Nakakasama ko na ang mga kapitana at tenyenta*" (I have a calling from Mama Mary. I'm already offering flowers by the age of six. I'm already with the *kapitanas* and *tenyentas*). Aside from personal volition, Bautista's desire to dance is further motivated by his father who encouraged her to participate in the sortition in due time. In contrast, Diestro did not imagine herself performing *bati*. Her father was also hesitant since people tended to criticize those who performed. Diestro explains, "*Syempre, sa kanya naman kung gusto ko, okay lang naman. Very protective lang sya nung kabataan ko. Nung nagdadalaga ako secretly siguro gusto na din nya kasi iba nga rin naman na maging part ka ng tradisyon*" (Of course, it's fine with him if I want to join. He was just very protective when I was younger. When I was in my teenage years, maybe he wanted it for me secretly since it's also meaningful if you become part of tradition).

Aside from personal devotion and encouragement from family members, the respondents emphasize that external factors (e.g., the desire for fame) did not influence their decision to take part in *bati*. Bautista and Diestro admit that they are inherently reserved. However, becoming a *kapitana* and *tenyenta* provided them with a platform to improve their confidence. Bautista also notes that she has become more proactive in church activities and the *Samahan* (organization of *kapitanas* and *tenyentas*).

Diestro adds that the overall experience is a form of personal development. She asserts, "*Marami kang matututunan na skills aside sa sayaw. Sense of belongingness at nagkaroon ka ng impact sa community. Part ka na ng history, tradisyon kung baga*" (You will learn many skills aside from the dance. It is the sense of belongingness and having an impact on the community. You become part of history and tradition). De Leon, on the one hand, states that she received many blessings after performing *bati*.

In return, she remains committed to her obligation to serve the parish, which continues to this day.

I asked the respondents their definitions of *panata* and how it related to *bati*. For De Leon, it should be coming from one's heart. Although a serious obligation, she was certain that nothing could go wrong because she had been chosen by the Virgin Mary to become a *kapitana*. Bautista shares that *panata* is a matter of showing respect and time in one's devotion. "*Pagbibigay ng energy na maging deboto na walang hinihinging kapalit. Once maniwala ka kay Mama Mary, maraming blessings na matatanggap. I felt nagstrengthen ang faith ko since naging kapitana ako*" (It is about giving one's energy as a devotee without asking anything in return. Once you believe in Mama Mary, you will receive many blessings. I felt my faith has strengthened since I assumed the role of *kapitana*), she elaborates. Diestro emphasizes that *panata* is a "lifelong commitment" that could be related to Christ and the Virgin Mary. It is something she can offer as a "manifestation" of her faith and a way to praise the Lord and honor the Virgin Mary. Meanwhile, all respondents agree that *bati* can be classified as *panata*. It is something that everyone thinks and anticipates every year including their immediate families. Even if they are not directly involved, they make it a point to witness the Easter ritual without fail.

Transferability is a unique aspect of *panata* in the Philippines. Many practices aligned with *panata* can be passed on from father to son or from one generation to the next. I am eager to explore if transferability is possible in *bati* as the selection of dancers undergoes a rigorous process. This includes applying through an online form shared by the parish's Facebook page, a pre-screening interview, and a discussion where the duties and obligations of a *kapitana*, a *tenyenta*, and a pool of *konsehalas* are elaborated on together with the applicants' parents. Regardless of socioeconomic status, any female between the ages of 18 and 30 can apply as long as they are Catholics, residents of Angono, and not married or in a relationship. De Leon shares that the age requirement in the new booklet will be changed from 21 to 30. According to De Leon, the age restriction is enacted for these reasons: based on previous experience, it was challenging to teach those younger than 18 and, considering the schedule of the dancers, they need to practice every day for two hours from January till the week before the first performance (*Harap sa Banda*). The prospective dancers should also be single to prevent pregnancy during their tenure, as this would be a delicate situation. If a dancer becomes pregnant, her performance will be revoked, and she will be replaced by a *konsehala*. These considerations and the sortition that follows on the evening of Easter Sunday may hinder transferability in the context of *bati*.

Exemplifying the complexity of the selection process, Diestro joined the sortition four times. She was a *konsehala* in the first three sortitions and only assumed the role of *tenyenta* during the fourth sortition. De Leon and Bautista, on the one hand, became a *kapitana* immediately after joining one sortition. Except for Bautista, the other respondents have other relatives who were a *tenyenta* or *kapitana* in the past. The two respondents reveal that a family can have several *tenyentas* or *kapitanas*. Diestro notes that a family in Angono has dancers in *bati* for three generations. This is supported by De Leon who says, "*Anghel ako ng kapitana ko. Yung anak nya naging kapitana. Yung apo nya naging kapitana…Merong situation na sa isang pamilya meron*" (I'm an angel of my *kapitana*. Her daughter became a *kapitana*. Her granddaughter became a *kapitana*…This situation is possible for a certain family). Moreover, the interviews disclose several *pamamanata* practices involved in *bati*. Those teaching the choreography and the *dicho* (Estelita Gil; Josefina Reyes), the composers, the sponsors of gowns, and even the individuals who erect the *Galilea* annually made

their obligations a lifelong commitment. "*Panata din sya in a sense na pati yung mga nagtuturo talagang ginagawa na nilang lifelong commitment na every Holy Week magtuturo ng bati, ng dicho. Naka-embed na sa buhay nila*" (It is a *panata* in a sense that even the teachers make it a lifelong commitment that every Holy Week they will teach *bati*'s choreography and the *dicho*. It is already embedded in their lives), Diestro adds.

A clear misconception in *bati* is aligned with the obligations of the chosen dancers. Prospective applicants in the contemporary period think that their obligation is solely the dancing component during Holy Week. However, to be selected during the sortition means that they also need to engage in several church activities including the daily floral offering to the Virgin Mary in May, the processions where the image of *Birhen ng Pagbati* joins, and on Christmas time where they need to help in preparing the giant *parols* (Christmas lanterns). Even after their tenure as *tenyenta* and *kapitana*, they are expected to join the *Samahan* when their presence is needed in church. De Leon shares that attendance at these functions is challenging, but the *Samahan* continuously encourages their members to allot time and serve the church. She shares, "*Itong way back 13, 14, 15, 16, awa ng Diyos napapunta na naming sa simbahan. Napush naming sila na maglingkod sa simbahan. Sinasabihan namin na nakakahiya sa mga matatanda. Kayo naman ang pumalit*" (Through God's providence, we were able to encourage the dancers from batch 13, 14, 15, 16 to go to church. We were able to push them to serve the church. We told them that it was embarrassing for the senior members. They have to replace them).

Aside from the tedious physical preparations and obligations that dancers undergo before their performances, the most complex aspect of *bati* is the corresponding expenses. Each performance entails a different set of gowns. They also share expenses for the materials to be used in building the *Galilea* and meals for people involved in the construction. Most importantly, the dancers are expected to feed the band after each performance. They are also required to open house and provide a meal to anybody who wishes to come to their residence on Easter Sunday. Traditionally, the *kapitana* sponsors the *umagahan* (breakfast) and the *tenyenta* prepares the *merienda* (snacks) in the afternoon. Regarding the costs, Bautista estimates that her family spent at least half a million pesos (USD9,259) during her tenure while Diestro shouldered around PHP200,000 (USD3,703). Bautista shares that her immediate family and some relatives paid the expenses. Since Diestro is already in the workforce, she shouldered the expenditure and her mother also contributed. Both respondents affirm that the bulk of the expenses go to food and the commissioning of gowns from local designers. Despite the hefty costs, certain expenses are sponsored by the parish church, the *Samahan*, and the local government. The parish church and the *Samahan* pay for the band, whereas the local government extends help in logistical concerns and provides LCD screens during the *Salubong*. There are also local designers who sponsor the gowns of the *tenyenta* and *kapitana*. In more ways than one, the sponsorship system inherent in *bati* mirrors the spirit of *bayanihan* (community cooperation) in Angono.

Criticisms are unavoidable especially when the tradition is closely associated with the practice of the gentry. Based on the interviews, it is interesting that the *bati* is not criticized for accommodating certain socioeconomic brackets, given that the practice is open to anybody who wishes to participate. The criticisms, however, mostly refer to the physical appearance of the dancers and the way the choreography is executed. Bautista notes certain comments she heard through the years: "*Dapat maganda ang kapitana o tenyenta. Yung criticisms na narinig ko katulad na medyo chubby nabunot. Dapat payat lang ang nabubunot. Kaya napepressure din ang iba*" (The *kapitana* or *tenyenta* should be beautiful. Some

criticisms refer to the weight of the performer. They say slimmer performers should be chosen. This is the reason why others are somehow pressured). As for the choreography, some individuals train the *tenyenta* and *kapitana* in secret, deviating from certain stylistic forms in the choreography. While most spectators do not give importance to *bati*'s execution on stage, these deviations are easily recognized by the incumbent choreographer and the older folks in Angono.

Conclusion

The ritual dance *sayaw ng bati* performed during Easter in Angono, Rizal can be differentiated from other sponsorship traditions (i.e., *santo sponsorship*, *hermano mayor*). While these sponsorship systems gained transformation by opening the practice to other socioeconomic brackets, the sponsorship system in *bati* contains a complex set of processes, especially in selecting the performers and the obligations they need to fulfill. The dancers' pious expressions of faith, the practice's connection with *Flores de Mayo*, and the processions where the dancers accompany the image of *Birhen ng Pagbati* resonate with *bati*'s strong association with the devotion to the Virgin Mary. In addition, elements in the *dicho* describing the values of the Virgin Mary are reinforced in the selection of the *tenyenta* and *kapitana*. As such, *bati* is a gendered practice closely linked to the female gender. Its annual repetition coincides with the idea of gender performativity highlighting not only the role of the female gender in this ritual dance but also the idealized virtues that women should project from the point of view of religion. Borrowing the idea of feminist philosopher Judith Butler (1988), *bati* can be classified as a social performance with "temporal and collective dimensions" and is publicly demonstrated to frame the female gender in the existing social codes.

Moreover, the present study uncovers layers of practices related to the conduct of *panata*. Aside from the dancers who view the practice as a form of *panata*, they also affirm that the people directly involved in the tradition (e.g., choreographers, composers, *Galilea* builders) who committed themselves for a lifetime to sustain the practice consider their obligations a form of a devotional pledge.

Further, the transferability of the practice within the family is feasible. Although restrictive on the dancers' part due to the aspect of sortition, it is not entirely impossible as some families produced a *tenyenta* or a *kapitana* per generation. Anthropologist Maurice Bloch (1986) argues that ritual is governed by an ideology that aims to sustain social hierarchy and social continuity. In *bati*, the *tenyenta* and *kapitana* embody an idealized Marian devotion in the community. This, together with related *pamamanata* practices, serves as a mechanism for sustaining social order and demonstrating the influence of the Catholic Church even in the contemporary period.

Transferability is also echoed in how the *bati* is passed down to succeeding generations. This study reveals that *bati* is an ongoing and internalized cultural practice that enriches people's identity and reinforces solidarity. Such a notion reminds of Cornelio's (2014) concept of everyday authenticity where people's faith is not merely confined to the formality of religion; they express it through diverse, personal, and meaningful ways. More so, the concept of *habitus* by sociologist

Pierre Bourdieu frames the discussion on the transferability of the practice in Angono. For Bourdieu, *habitus* are embodied dispositions influenced by the community's social structures and historical conditions. These are durable, can surpass the tests of time, and generate practices, beliefs, perceptions, and feelings (Bourdieu, as cited in Maton, 2008). *Habitus* is deeply ingrained in the locals' consciousness and reflected through an ongoing transmission of the practice: the continued participation of former dancers, the mentorship of

future *tenyentas* and *kapitanas*, and acts of sponsorship reflecting the spirit of *bayanihan*.

Finally, the locals' financial investment to sustain *bati* is remarkable. Despite the hefty costs that the annual event incurs, it reflects the profound cultural significance that the locals attach to their Easter tradition. This illustrates what anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1972) calls "deep play" wherein the amount of financial investment becomes irrelevant for as long as people attach significant meaning to a practice. In this case, *bati* is a powerful expression of faith that combines Marian symbolism, elaborate choreography, and material components.

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EXPLORING THE VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCE IN HUNGARY: AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The way Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest negotiate their multiple identities is by all means but simple. It is a mix of personal belongings, culture, and how society sees them. In today's more and more globalized world, people move between different cultures all the time, adjusting themselves to new social rules and expectations. Identity is not something fixed—it changes all the time, influenced by both a person's background and the pressure to fit into the new society. For Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest, this idea means trying to keep their traditions and connections to their community while also finding a place in Hungarian society. In this process, big questions come up: Where do they belong? Are they accepted or excluded? How do they define themselves? The immigrant experience is often full of mixed feelings—sometimes they feel close to both cultures, sometimes they feel distant from both. They are always rethinking where they stand between their old home and their new. This paper attempts to explore

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the ways Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest navigate through the host society while balancing their multiple identities in a multicultural context.

Keywords: intersectionality, Vietnamese immigrants, identity

Discipline: Cultural Anthropology

Absztrakt

A VIETNÁMI BEVÁNDORLÓK TAPASZTALATAI MAGYARORSZÁGON:
EGY INTERSZEKCIONÁLIS ELEMZÉS

A Budapesten élő vietnámi bevándorlók számára identitásuk alakítása összetett folyamat, amelyben a személyes hovatartozás, a kulturális örökség és a társadalmi megítélés egyaránt szerepet játszik. A globalizáció hatására az emberek folyamatosan különböző kultúrák között mozognak, alkalmazkodva az új társadalmi normákhoz és elvárásokhoz. Az identitás nem statikus, hanem folyamatosan változó jelenség, amelyet egyszerre befolyásol a személyes háttér és a befogadó társadalomba való beilleszkedés kényszere. A Budapesten élő vietnámi bevándorlók számára ez azt jelenti, hogy meg kell találniuk az egyensúlyt hagyományaik és közösségi kapcsolataik megőrzése, valamint a magyar társadalomba való integráció között. Ebben a folyamatban alapvető kérdések merülnek fel: Hová tartoznak? Befogadják őket vagy kirekesztés áldozatai? Hogyan határozzák meg önmagukat? A bevándorlói lét gyakran kettős érzésekkel jár – egyes helyzetekben közel érzik magukat mindkét kultúrához, máskor viszont mindkettőtől távolinak. Az identitás folyamatosan újraértelmeződik az eredeti és a befogadó kultúra között. Jelen tanulmány azt vizsgálja, hogyan navigálnak a vietnámi bevándorlók a magyar társadalomban, miközben többes identitásukat egy multikulturális közegben próbálják fenntartani.

Kulcsszavak: interszekcionalitás, vietnámi bevándorlók, identitás

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

Cultural and Historical Context

Hungary, as part of the European Union, has a special context for looking at how people deal with identity in a multicultural setting. To study Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest, it is important to consider both the larger social structures and the personal choices that shape this process. The way Vietnamese immigrants experience life here is influenced by Hungary's history and politics, but also by their own migration stories. Things such as the political situation, past migration trends, and job opportunities all affect how they interact with Hungarian society. This paper looks at how Vietnamese immigrants find their place in a city that, even though it has different ethnic groups, still holds strong nationalistic and sometimes xenophobic sentiments (Kovács, 2020).

To have a better understanding at this it is important to look at Vietnamese immigrants' experiences within Hungary's history and society. The first major wave of Vietnamese migration to Hungary took place in the late 20th century mostly for political and economic reasons, especially during the socialist period. After the Vietnam War, Hungary welcomed many Vietnamese, which set the foundation for their community. Over time, as more people arrived, Vietnamese groups started to build their own space in Budapest mainly in business and trade. However, their connection with the Hungarian society was not always smooth.

During communism, Hungary viewed these immigrants as part of socialist brotherhood but this feeling was not always mutual. At first, many Vietnamese came to Hungary as guest workers or refugees, but after socialism ended, they faced difficulty as immigration policies changed, making it harder for non-EU migrants to integrate (Bognár & Tóth, 2013).

Since the 1990s, Hungary has changed significantly, particularly from communism to a market economy, and later joining the European Union. These changes had created an impact on the Vietnamese community. In some ways, the shift to a market economy created new chances for Vietnamese immigrants especially in small businesses such as retail and food. But at the same time, as Hungary followed more neoliberal economic policies, problems such as discrimination, unemployment, and social exclusion became more common. This was especially hard for those who didn't have the right skills or legal status to get better jobs (Illés & Kin, 2012).

In a society that is mostly Hungarian, which already has its own national and ethnic values, Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest struggles to keep their. Despite Budapest being a multicultural city, Vietnamese immigrants still face marginalization in their daily lives. Often viewed as "outsiders" because of their ethnicity and culture, Vietnamese immigrants often deal with stereotypes that put them into certain roles such as street vendors and restaurant owners, which only strengthens generalized views about their community. This problem is exacerbated by the general situation in Europe where xenophobia and anti-immigrant attitudes have run rampant in recent years. In Hungary where the general attitude is already nationalistic and the fact that the Hungarian government often promotes ethnic homogeneity and resistance to immigration, Vietnamese immigrants face challenges to find their place in public life (Kovács, 2020).

At the same time, the Vietnamese immigrants keep strong connections to their homeland, both emotionally and financially. These very connections help them hold on to their culture while also figuring out how to thrive in Hungary. For example, the Vietnamese community in Budapest still celebrates traditional festivals, speaks their native language, and creates spaces where they can practice Vietnamese traditions together. Keeping their culture alive is not just about missing Vietnam, it is also a way to push back against the pressure to fully assimilate. Nevertheless, balancing these cultural ties with the reality of living in Hungary has shown to be more complicated and led to identities that are both connected to Vietnam and shaped by the need to adapt to Hungarian society (Faist, 2000).

In the next sections, this paper will look at how these cultural and historical factors connect with personal identity struggles. It will focus on intersectionality and how different parts of social identity such as gender, class, and migration status, affect the daily lives of Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest.

Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Vietnamese Immigrant Community

When analyzing the data concerning the Vietnamese community in Budapest, it is necessary to consider how factors such as gender, ethnicity, and class intersect with one another to shape the immigrants' experience. The aforementioned aspects of identity do not just influence the way Vietnamese immigrants experience life in Hungary but also the social dynamics and power structures within their community and the Hungarian society. When it comes to gender roles in the Vietnamese community, it is largely influenced by traditional values from Vietnam, but at the same time it changes and adapts when the immigrants interact with the Hungarian society. Similar notions can be said for ethnicity as they also influence the ways

Vietnamese immigrants are perceived and treated, both among themselves and in the wider context of the Hungarian society where they often face racial stereotypes and sometimes exclusion. Another notable aspect would be class, which decides who has access to resources, opportunities, and social mobility, ultimately complicates the ways Vietnamese immigrants navigate their identity. The following session of this paper will attempt to take a look at how all these factors intersect and shape the Vietnamese immigrants' experience in Hungary, together with their social positionings, and strategies for their survival in the multicultural city of Budapest.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity plays an important role in shaping the Vietnamese immigrants' identity in Budapest, particularly influencing how they interact with one another within the Vietnamese community and in the wider context of Budapest. For many in the Vietnamese community, ethnic identity remains a core value of their self-image, especially in a multicultural city where they often face racialization and marginalization. When it comes to the perception related to their physical appearance, language, and cultural practices, Vietnamese immigrants are often labeled as "other" in Hungary These stereotypes can result in the exclusion from mainstream social, political, and economic spaces (Wimmer, 2007).

At the same time, ethnicity provides a strong sense of solidarity within the Vietnamese community. Shared cultural traditions, language, and migration experiences create a collective identity that resists the pressures to assimilate. For first-generation Vietnamese immigrants, holding on to these cultural practices such as celebrating Tet (Vietnamese Lunar New Year) or cooking traditional foods, is not just about keeping their heritage alive but also to serve as a way to resist assimilation and maintain a connection to their homeland (Nguyen, 2004).

However, ethnic identity among Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest does not function in the same way for everyone. There is a noticeable difference between the first and second generations. First-generation immigrants often have a more defined sense of ethnic identity because they are more likely to experience exclusion from the Hungarian society. Their lives are often tied to maintaining close connections with other Vietnamese, creating close-knit networks for support in a foreign country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

On the other hand, second-generation Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest tend to navigate their ethnic identity in a more complex way. Generally, they have native level proficiency of the Hungarian language, and are more integrated into the local educational and work systems; their racialization however means that they are still often seen as outsiders despite the aforementioned factors. This very idea creates tension, as many young Vietnamese immigrants struggle to reconcile their ties to Hungarian culture with their desire to maintain a connection to their Vietnamese heritage. The generational divide highlights the ongoing negotiation of ethnic identity as they balance their cultural heritage with the realities of living in a society that sees them as foreign (Foner, 2001).

Ethnic identity for Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest is also shaped by the wider racial context in Hungary. In Hungary, like in many countries in Europe, immigrants from non-European backgrounds are often seen differently from the local population. Vietnamese immigrants, along with other minorities, are sometimes seen as "exotic" or just a source of cheap labor, often working in areas like restaurants, shops, and services. These views can limit the opportunities for immigrants, pushing them into lower-paying jobs and making it harder to fully join in society (Jönköping University, 2012).

This kind of marginalization creates a stronger divide between the Vietnamese community and the local Hungarians, making it tough for immigrants to move up or feel fully accepted.

At the same time, ethnicity can sometimes work as a kind of strength for Vietnamese immigrants, especially in certain parts of society. The stereotype that the Vietnamese community is hardworking and clever helps them find jobs in areas where their skills are needed. Many Vietnamese businesses, like small shops, restaurants, or nail salons, do well because they meet a specific need in the Hungarian market. These businesses not only give immigrants financial stability but also create spaces where their ethnic identity stays strong, with people sharing the same language, culture, and customs.

Still, racialization is not always just a barrier for Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest. Over time, younger generations have a chance to redefine their ethnic identity through their involvement in Hungarian society and their changing connections to both their own community and the wider Hungarian population. These younger people often experience different cultural influences, which allows them to create mixed identities that combine both their Vietnamese background and the Hungarian context they live in. As they grow older, their experience of ethnicity is shaped more by their ability to move between different cultures, redefining who they are in ways that challenge the traditional ideas of ethnic belonging and integration (Schiller & Çağlar, 2009).

Ethnicity still significantly influences the ways Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest define themselves. It offers them a sense of belonging and support within the community, but at the same time it also brings challenges, considering the already existing racialization and exclusion they often face in the host society. With that being said, the negotiation of ethnic identity is a complex process that depends on things such as generational differences, how immigrant are

racialized, and the constantly changing social and economic roles in the host society. Understanding ethnicity as something that shifts and evolves over time facilitates the understanding of how Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest actively engage with their heritage while also adjusting to life in a multicultural environment.

Gender

Gender roles have shown to have an impact on the Vietnamese immigrants' experience in Budapest, which shapes their relationships both inside their own community and with the host society. Regarding the Vietnamese community, traditional gender roles, oftened based on Confucian values, are the dominant forces. These roles usually view men as providers and women as caretakers, responsible for the home and maintaining cultural tradition (Tran, 2004). However, upon arriving in Hungary, both Vietnamese men and women face new expectation in the host society that make it difficult to maintain the mentioned traditional roles.

For many Vietnamese women in Budapest, moving to another country changes their roles in the family and society. In Vietnam, women are expected to take care of the household and raise children. But when they come to Hungary, many women need to work because of financial reasons. First-generation women often work in restaurants, retail, and nail salons, which is very different from what they did in Vietnam (Kibria, 1993). These jobs give them some independence, but they can also be hard work, with long hours and low pay. This change challenges the old gender expectations in the Vietnamese community, as women's work becomes more important and visible.

However, even though women start working, they still have to follow many traditional gender roles. They are still expected to take care of the home, look after children, and manage family matters, which can be a double burden. Many

immigrant women experience this, not just Vietnamese women (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997). So, even though the roles of women in the Vietnamese community are changing because of the new economy in Hungary, they are still influenced by old expectations from their home country. In some cases, women's roles as caretakers and leaders in their communities may get stronger, but they are also changing as they live in Hungary.

Regarding Vietnamese men, there exist a notable change as well. In Vietnamese society, men are oftentimes viewed are providers. But when they come to Hungary, many men have a hard time finding stable jobs. Their certifications and experience from Vietnam are not always re-cognized, which leads to doing works below their skills. This can make them feel less like the providers they are used to being in Vietnam, which may make them frustrated or feel less "manly" (Hoang, 2009). Moreover, the traditional expectation that men should be the head of the house can create tension, especially when they cannot fulfill this role due to their job situation or the way they are seen by the Hungarian society.

The changes in gender roles can create op-portunities to redefine family dynamics. Some Vietnamese men now living in Hungary, especially those who are involved in the local job market and social systems, may start to share home duties with their partners, which in a way redefines what it means to be masculine. The stark difference between traditional roles expectations and new reality in Hungary creates a space where men and women can challange or reshape their gender roles. For this, gender roles have shown to be not static but constantly evolving as people also constantly negotiate their multiple identities to adapt to the new demands and opportunities of migration.

The younger generation of Vietnamese im-migrants, especially those who born and raised in Hungary, is often the first to tackle gender dynamics. Having grown up in a multicultural city like Budapest, they are exposed to progressive gender norms that actively challenge the traditional gender roles expectations from their parents' generations. They ultimately reject or adapt to these expectations, which means embracing more equal gender roles shaped by the new society and global influences. For instance, second-generation women in Budapest who are both fluent in the Hungarian language and more well-integrated into the education system, are often exposed to opportunities outside traditional gender norms. Many of them are able to pursue careers, edu-cation, and activism, which effectively challenges inherited expectations while balancing the culture of their roots with the Hungarian culture.

These changes however are not always easy. Second-generation women oftentimes face societal pressures when it comes to their ethnic background despite having access to more opportunities. They often carry a "double burden", meaning they have to negotiate their roles when it comes to balancing the expectations from the Vietnamese community while adapting to the wider Hungarian gender norms. This has rendered second-generation Vietnamese women in Budapest in a challenging position where they must constantly navigate through their personal hopes and desires alongside family and cultural res-ponsibility (Nguyen, 2007). In quite the same way, second-generation men also struggle with re-defining what it means to be masculine in this multicultural setting, negotiating their roles in the family and society while staying connected to their Vietnamese heritage.

Generally, it can be said that gender dynamics in the Vietnamese community in Budapest are constantly changing and not static. Both men and woman face challenges in adapting their roles and identities while they navigate through the two realities: traditional cultural values and new life in the host society. Factors such as migration, job market, family and social expectations have

influenced these changes. As gender roles continue to evolve, they will express core patterns of adaptation, change, and resilience among the community.

Class

Class and socioeconomic status are important for Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest, and they affect a lot how they live and try to fit in. When they first come to Hungary, many Vietnamese immigrants have low social status, mostly because they are non-EU migrants and do not have good chances for high-skill jobs. A lot of first-generation Vietnamese immigrants work in the service sector, like in restaurants, nail salons, or retail. These jobs are usually low-wage and not high-status. They help immigrants get by, but they also come with hard work and poor conditions. There is little chance to move up in the job market (Friedman, 2005). Also, their qualifications from Vietnam are not always accepted, which makes it harder to get better jobs or improve their situation.

Even with these challenges, the social class is important in how immigrants create social networks. Many Vietnamese immigrants stay in close communities where they can share resources. These networks give emotional support and help find jobs or information about living in Budapest. For immigrants with fewer resources, these connections are a way to survive and feel more secure (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). But even in the Vietnamese community, there are some differences. While many immigrants work in low-wage jobs, some have started their own businesses like restaurants, grocery stores, or beauty salons. These people are in a higher social class because their businesses are doing well. They have better housing and more financial security. But even they face the problem of being seen as foreigners, which makes it harder for them to be fully accepted in Hungarian society. So, even though they are doing better, the fact that they are outsiders still holds them back from completely integrating into the larger society (Jönköping University, 2012).

Class and socioeconomic status, therefore, are not just about money but also about how people are seen in society. They affect how Vietnamese immigrants connect with each other and with the wider Hungarian society. While class decides who gets what kind of opportunities or resources, it also shapes how people see their place in society and how much control they think they have over their lives. When you add in gender and ethnicity, these issues become more complicated, as women and ethnic minorities in the Vietnamese community often face more challenges, both in the workplace and socially.

Generational Differences in the Vietnamese Diaspora

Generational differences play an important role in understanding how identities shift and how people engage with their cultural heritage and the society they live in. In the Vietnamese community in Budapest, these differences are particularly noticeable. First-generation immigrants and second-generation individuals experience migration and adaptation in very different ways. The first generation who moved to Hungary to seek better economic opportunities or safety often face a set of challenges that directly impact their sense of identity. These challenges include being excluded from the social mainstream, economic struggles, and trying to hold on to their cultural values in a foreign environment (Rumbaut, 2004). For them, migration does not just mean to be about physically moving to a new place but also an ongoing process to figure out where they stand in the Hungarian society while still keeping their Vietnamese roots.

On the other hand, the second generation, usually born or raised in Hungary, face their own

unique identity struggles. While they grow up exposed to Hungarian culture and often speak Hungarian fluently, their Vietnamese heritage still influences who they are. For them, the tension between the cultural values their parents pass down and the social pressure to fit in with the Hungarian majority creates a complex identity process (Nguyen, 2017). This paper looks at the generational differences within the Vietnamese immigrant community in Budapest, focusing on how the migration experience, cultural adaptation, and social integration are different for the first and second generations. It also examines how each generation negotiates their identity, deals with societal expectations, and figures out their place in Hungary.

First-generation Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest face a distinct set of challenges that shape both their migration experience and their identities. Many of them came to Hungary searching for better opportunities, escaping political instability or economic struggles in Vietnam. Upon arriving in Hungary, they are confronted with the realities of a new environment: language barriers, cultural differences, and the difficulty of securing stable work. All of these factors contribute to a sense of displacement as they try to balance preserving their Vietnamese roots while adjusting to their new home.

Language remains one of the biggest obstacles for first-generation immigrants. Many do not speak Hungarian fluently and find themselves stuck in low-wage, low-skill jobs, often in areas like cleaning, food service, or manufacturing (Friedman, 2005). For example, M., a man who came to Budapest more than 20 years ago, shared how hard it was for him to find work beyond the Vietnamese-owned restaurant where he first started. His limited Hungarian made it hard to move beyond these low-status jobs. This is a common issue among first-generation immigrants, who often face economic marginalization because of language barriers, even though they work hard (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Aside from economic challenges, many first-generation immigrants are also motivated by the desire to keep their cultural heritage alive. Community organizations and religious groups are crucial for maintaining cultural traditions and giving people a sense of belonging. T., arrived in Hungary as a teenager, is actively involved in organizing Tet celebrations in the community, an important way to keep the Vietnamese language and traditions alive. These events help her stay connected to her roots and also serve as a collective reminder of shared history. However, the desire to hold on to these traditions often clashes with the pressure to fit into Hungarian society, which might not always recognize or value these customs.

Traditional Vietnamese family structures, with their hierarchical relationships and collectivist values, also contrast with the more individualistic and egalitarian norms found in Hungary. These differences can lead to generational tensions, particularly as younger people are exposed to more liberal Hungarian values. T., for instance, described how she sometimes clashed with her parents, who held strongly to traditional Vietnamese ideas, especially around the autonomy of women. She spoke about how her parents' focus on family duties often conflicted with her wish for more personal freedom, highlighting the ongoing tension between her Vietnamese upbringing and the more individualistic culture she encountered in Hungary.

Despite these struggles, first-generation immigrants show impressive resilience. They build spaces where they can preserve their cultural identities while adapting to their new surroundings, and this process of negotiating identity is ongoing. These experiences not only shape their personal sense of self but also lay the groundwork for future generations to engage with both their

heritage and their host society in unique and meaningful ways.

The second generation of Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest represents a distinct group within the diaspora, shaped by both their parents' migration experiences and their own growing up in Hungary. Typically born in Hungary or arriving at a young age, second-generation Vietnamese immigrants face the complex task of holding dual identities. On one hand, they are immersed in Hungarian culture through school, friendships, and the wider society, but at home, they live in an environment where Vietnamese cultural values, language, and customs are upheld. This creates a unique set of opportunities and challenges as they try to balance between the Vietnamese community and Hungarian society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). While first-generation immigrants often face integration barriers because of language or unfamiliarity with Hungarian norms, the second generation has better access to the resources of their host country. Still, they struggle with reconciling their Vietnamese heritage with the pressure to assimilate into a largely Hungarian culture (Nguyen, 2011).

One major aspect of identity for second-generation Vietnamese immigrants is negotiating their cultural heritage during the acculturation process. While the first generation often focuses on preserving Vietnamese traditions, the second generation faces a sense of cultural dissonance, caught between the expectations of their parents and the norms of Hungarian society (Rumbaut, 2004). Many second-generation individuals feel pressure from their families to maintain Vietnamese customs—such as speaking the Vietnamese language or celebrating traditional holidays—while also adapting to the liberal, individualistic culture of Hungary (Nguyen, 2011). This constant balancing act leads to generational tensions. For example, T., a 21-year-old second-generation student in Budapest, described her

experience as "feeling like a bridge between two worlds." She explained that, on one side, her parents want her to follow traditional Vietnamese values, but on the other, her Hungarian peers encourage her to adopt a more independent, Westernized lifestyle. This tug-of-war between cultural norms creates an ongoing negotiation of identity, with varying outcomes depending on the person's ability to manage both cultural influences.

Language is a central aspect of the generational divide within the Vietnamese immigrant community. While many first-generation immigrants in Budapest struggle with Hungarian, the second generation often becomes fluent in Hungarian, using it as their primary language in social settings, education, and work. However, this language skill does not always mean full integration. Even though second-generation individuals can easily interact with Hungarian society, their fluency in Vietnamese tends to diminish over time, creating a gap between them and their parents, as well as their cultural roots (Nguyen, 2011). During my fieldwork, A., a 23-year-old second-generation Vietnamese university student, shared that while she can understand Vietnamese, speaking it fluently has become difficult. *"My parents speak to me in Vietnamese, but I mostly reply in Hungarian now. I feel bad about it sometimes, but Hungarian feels more natural in daily life,"* she said. This language divide can lead to a sense of alienation within the family, as second-generation members may feel disconnected from family discussions or cultural practices. However, A.'s Hungarian fluency also gives her more opportunities in Hungarian society, such as accessing higher education and pursuing professional careers more easily than her parents could.

When it comes to their social life, second-generation Vietnamese immigrants often feel distanced from their parents' generation. While they share the same cultural background, their lived

experiences are significantly different from each other. Unlike their parents who faced notable discrimination and difficulties integrating when they first arrived, second-generation Vietnamese in Budapest are more likely to form relationships with Hungarian peers. They can navigate these friendships easily, as they are often perceived as "Hungarian" by classmates and colleagues, even though their ethnic background might lead to occasional microaggressions or discrimination (Chau, 2017). This creates a hybrid identity, where second-generation individuals may feel closer to Hungarian culture than to their parents' Vietnamese culture. L., a 22-year-old second-generation Vietnamese participant in my study, explained how she navigates this: *"At school, I'm just seen as Hungarian. I've never felt like I had to explain myself. But when I visit my relatives, I'm reminded that I'm different because I do not fully speak Vietnamese, and I can't participate in all the rituals they do."* This illustrates the subtle identity struggles that second-generation immigrants face, as they are caught between two cultures and the expectations of both.

Second-generation immigrants also experience shifting gender roles, which differ from those experienced by their parents. While traditional Vietnamese culture places greater expectations on women to fulfill more conservative roles within the family and society, the second generation is exposed to more progressive gender norms in Hungarian society. This exposure often leads to tensions, especially for second-generation women, who may seek more autonomy and career opportunities than their mothers had when they first came to Hungary. For example, M., shared her desire to pursue a career in business despite her mother's disapproval. *"My mom wants me to stay close to home and be a good wife and daughter, but I want to make my own career,"* M. said. These tensions reflect how gender dynamics can create generational conflict, especially for second-generation women who may challenge the patriarchal structures that

were more prominent in their parents' generation (Nguyen, 2011).

The second-generation immigrant experience in Budapest, therefore, is defined by a constant negotiation of identity. It is shaped by the clash between Hungarian societal norms and the Vietnamese cultural traditions their parents uphold. While they have better access to education and social mobility than their parents, the second generation still faces challenges, such as ethnic discrimination and difficulties fully integrating into Hungarian society. By looking at this through an intersectional lens, we see how gender, ethnicity, and the intersection of these factors with Hungarian nationality influence the experiences of second-generation Vietnamese immigrants, who continue to redefine their identities and sense of belonging in Hungary.

Generational Conflict and Adaptation

Generational conflict is a crucial part of the immigrant experience, especially when it comes to cultural negotiation and identity formation. For Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest, the first generation's strong attachment to traditional values often clashes with the more flexible, mixed identities of the second generation, who grow up in Hungary. As many scholars have said, immigrants usually want to keep their cultural heritage, but their children, who are born or raised in the host country, often want to adapt and fit into the local culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This generational tension is clear in the Vietnamese community in Budapest, where first-generation parents want to preserve their culture, while second-generation children try to create a more fluid, hybrid identity.

According to first generation, maintaining traditional Vietnamese values is very important. They expect their children to follow these values such as

speaking Vietnamese at home, celebrating Tet (Lunar New Year), and showing respect through filial piety. As Waters (2001) points out, these traditions are seen as crucial to maintaining a sense of community and identity when living in a foreign country. But for second-generation immigrants, these expectations can sometimes feel limiting. As they try to fit into Hungarian society while also holding on to their Vietnamese roots, they often feel torn between the two. This generational divide, as Glick Schiller et al. (1992) explain, is common in immigrant families, where younger people often feel caught between meeting their parents' expectations and adapting to the culture of the host country.

For example, A., a 25-year-old second-generation Vietnamese Hungarian, describes the conflict she faces when trying to balance what her immigrant parents want with the lifestyle of her Hungarian peers. *"At home, my parents want me to study hard and keep the traditions. But my friends just want to hang out at cafés or go to parties like any other Hungarian university student,"* A. said. This example shows the generational tension that often happens when young people want more freedom to do things that fit into the Hungarian lifestyle, while their parents want them to follow traditional values. A.'s experience shows the difficulty of trying to live in two worlds – her Vietnamese family's expectations and the more relaxed, Westernized life of her Hungarian friends.

At the same time, the second generation also has to figure out how to combine their Vietnamese identity with the norms of Hungarian society. Growing up in Hungary, young immigrants go through a process of cultural negotiation, where they take aspects of Hungarian culture but still keep important Vietnamese traditions. This process is not about rejecting their culture but about building a new identity that mixes both. For example, T., a 21-year-old university student, shared how she manages this balance: *"At home, we always have family dinners with Vietnamese dishes, but when I go out with my friends, we often eat at Hungarian restaurants. I enjoy both, but they are very different from each other."* This shows how second-generation immigrant identities are flexible, mixing elements from both cultures in everyday life. It also shows the personal negotiations they make to balance the expectations of their parents with the culture of their peers.

These generational conflicts are also part of the adaptation process within the immigrant communities. As second-generation Vietnamese immigrants try to fit into Hungarian society, they face challenges when dealing with social structures that are different from what their parents experienced. This is especially clear in education and work, where second-generation individuals must deal with discrimination, language barriers, and their parents' expectations.

As Pedraza (2007) notes, second-generation immigrants often have an advantage because they are bilingual and more familiar with the cultural norms of the host society. However, this adaptation also means they have to manage a balance, keeping their cultural heritage while also finding their place in a new environment.

In this way, generational conflict and adaptation are key to understanding identity negotiation among Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest. The younger generation's hybrid identities come from both generational negotiations and the mix of cultural practices, social expectations, and personal desires. These young people actively combine both Vietnamese and Hungarian cultures, creating identities that are more flexible and fluid, instead of being limited by one set of values.

Even though generational conflict often happens because of these changes, it also creates opportunities for both parents and children to redefine what it means to be Vietnamese in Hungary, opening up new ways for cultural exchange and transformation.

Generational Influence on Social Networks

Social networks within the Vietnamese immigrant community in Budapest play a critical role in helping individuals survive, integrate socially, and maintain their emotional well-being. These networks are shaped by cultural expectations from Vietnam and the challenges immigrants face in Hungary. They provide connections, mutual support, and also serve as spaces for preserving culture, showing resistance, and building resilience. These networks are complex and change over time, influenced by the social, economic, and political situations that immigrants navigate in their new environment.

The core of these social networks within the Vietnamese community is centered around family, close friends, and community organizations. The family, especially the extended family, remains the most important unit for maintaining these networks. Many Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest have strong family ties that offer both financial and emotional support when needed. For example, L., a 34-year-old woman working as a waitress in Budapest, shared that her parents, who had moved to Hungary years before her, continue to provide essential help – financial support and childcare for her children. L.'s extended family network is vital for both practical daily support and emotional strength, especially given the challenges of working in a low-wage job. Through these family-centered networks, Vietnamese immigrants manage to create a sense of community even while being far away from home.

Besides family, the Vietnamese community in Budapest also organizes around social and cultural institutions, such as temples, cultural centers, and business associations. These spaces provide opportunities for immigrants to preserve their language, traditions, and customs. For example, the Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Budapest serves as a gathering point for community members, where they meet regularly for religious ceremonies, cultural activities, and social events. This temple acts as a vital link for people who may not have close family in Hungary but still seek a sense of belonging through shared cultural practices. Through this temple, individuals like T., a 55-year-old woman from Hanoi, receive both spiritual and practical support, attending weekly meetings where information about local resources, job opportunities, and community events is shared. These spaces help immigrants stay connected to their Vietnamese culture and provide social safety nets that make life in Hungary easier to navigate.

In some situations, these social networks also become sites of resistance, especially for those who face discrimination or exclusion in Hungarian society. H., a 28-year-old assistant cook, shared how his involvement with the Vietnamese restaurant owners' association helped him address unfair treatment at work. "When I faced discrimination, I turned to the restaurant network. They helped me understand my rights and connected me to legal resources." Through these networks, immigrants support each other, ensuring their rights are respected in a country where they might otherwise feel powerless.

Therefore, the social networks within the Vietnamese community in Budapest are multifaceted: they provide social and emotional support, preserve cultural identity, and protect against discrimination. Family is still at the core of these networks, but community organizations play a key role in helping Vietnamese immigrants hold onto their heritage while adjusting to the challenges of living in a multicultural society. The flexibility of these networks, which combine both traditional and modern forms of social organization, shows the resilience and adaptability of the Vietnamese immigrant community. These networks are not only survival tools but also places of empowerment, allowing immigrants to stay connected to their cultural roots while integrating into Hungarian society.

Case studies

Case Study 1: Doan and his journey to Germany

Doan is a 28-year-old man who arrived in Hungary just two years ago, seeking a better life after years of hardship in Vietnam. Coming from a rural village in Vietnam, Doan grew up in poverty, with limited access to education and opportunities. His family, although close-knit, struggled to make ends meet, and Doan felt the pressure to find a way to improve his circumstances. Motivated by the desire for financial stability and a brighter future, he decided to migrate to Europe. After hearing from a friend who had migrated to Hungary, Doan chose to follow a similar path, using connections to get a work visa for a job in the kitchen of a Vietnamese restaurant in Budapest.

Upon arriving in Hungary, Doan found himself facing the familiar challenges of a first-generation immigrant: a new language, unfamiliar customs, and limited access to job opportunities outside of the Vietnamese community. He worked long hours as a kitchen assistant, performing physically demanding tasks in a small kitchen under the supervision of other Vietnamese immigrants. The work was exhausting, and the pay was low, but Doan was driven by the hope of improving his life over time. The restaurant, owned by a fellow Vietnamese immigrant, was a hub for the local Vietnamese community in Budapest, where many of Doan's coworkers were also first-generation immigrants who had come to Hungary in search of better opportunities.

During his time in Budapest, Doan began to build a small social network, primarily consisting of other Vietnamese workers in the restaurant and a few people from the local community. These networks proved to be invaluable when Doan learned about opportunities for better work prospects in Germany. Through a connection at the restaurant, Doan was introduced to a network of Vietnamese migrants who had already settled in Germany, working in the hospitality and restaurant industries. He learned that there was a demand for workers in Germany, particularly in the food service sector, where wages were significantly higher than in Hungary.

Seizing the opportunity, Doan leveraged his new connections and began to plan his move to Germany. With the help of a fellow Vietnamese immigrant who had successfully made the transition, Doan managed to secure a job at a high-end Vietnamese restaurant in Munich. The job offer was much better than his position in Hungary, both in terms of salary and working conditions. Doan quickly made the decision to leave Budapest and head to Germany, seeing it as the next step in his journey toward economic mobility and a better life.

After arriving in Munich, Doan was immediately impressed by the difference in living standards. The job in Germany came with better pay, better working hours, and even the opportunity for tips. The restaurant was part of a larger network of Vietnamese-run businesses, and Doan found it easier to communicate with his colleagues, as many of them spoke fluent German. Although Doan still faced the challenges of living in a foreign country and navigating a new language and culture, the financial stability provided by his job in Germany allowed him to rent a small apartment and start saving money for his future.

His success story was largely due to the social networks he had developed in Budapest, which served as a bridge to his improved circumstances in Germany. These networks not only provided him with information about job opportunities but also gave him a sense of belonging and support during his transition from Hungary to Germany. Through the connections he made, Doan was able to find a better-paying job, improve his living conditions, and set himself on a path to further integration and economic success in Europe.

Analysis Using the Intersectionality Approach

Doan's story shows how different factors like ethnicity, labor status, social networks, and class all come together to shape the experiences of first-generation immigrants. His migration path from Vietnam to Hungary, and then to Germany, is a clear example of how migration and labor markets intersect with these factors to create opportunities or challenges for upward mobility.

Ethnicity and Social Networks: Doan's experience highlights the key role that social networks play in transnational migration. His first connection to Hungary came through a Vietnamese friend who helped him find a job in a restaurant. This shows how ethnic networks are often crucial for immigrants who are new to a country. These networks help newcomers find jobs, get support, and learn about opportunities. Doan used his network in Hungary to learn about better prospects in Germany, which allowed him to move to a better labor market. Even though his Vietnamese ethnicity in Hungary posed challenges at first – like language barriers and being marginalized – it later became an advantage as it connected him to a larger community of Vietnamese migrants in Europe. This shows how ethnicity can be both a challenge and an opportunity, depending on the situation.

Labor and Social Class: Doan's case also shows how labor status and social class impact migrants. When he arrived in Hungary, he was stuck with low-paying, tough work in the restaurant industry, which is common for many first-generation immigrants. Many end up in jobs with little chance of moving up. However, Doan's use of his social networks helped him break out of this cycle. When he moved to Germany, he found a better job with higher wages, better conditions, and more chances for growth. This change from low-wage labor in Hungary to a better job in Germany shows how labor status and social networks can shape migrants' experiences. By using the networks he built, Doan was able to improve his social class and overall quality of life.

Gender and Migrant Labor: Although Doan's story focuses on his experiences as a man, it is important to think about how women face different challenges. Female migrants may deal with exploitation or have fewer chances to move up because of family duties or gender expectations. For example, Vietnamese women working in restaurants or in domestic jobs often face more barriers to upward mobility because of these roles. While Doan was able to use his networks to improve his situation, women in similar jobs may have to face more challenges because of their gender.

Transnationalism and Economic Mobility: Doan's journey shows how transnational migration networks can help improve the economic status of migrants. His ability to move between Hungary and Germany, improving his life each time, shows how these networks allow migrants to access better opportunities in different countries. Doan used his contacts in Hungary to move to Germany, showing how ethnic and social networks can help migrants find better conditions. His success shows the potential for upward mobility when migrants can use their connections across borders.

In conclusion, Doan's case illustrates how different factors like ethnicity, labor status, and social networks come together to shape migration experiences. By using his ethnic networks and connections, Doan was able to move from a difficult situation in Hungary to a better life in Germany. This highlights the role of social networks in migration and shows how migration can be influenced by labor status, ethnicity, and the opportunities these networks bring.

Case study 2: Mai and her constrained relationship with her parents

Mai is 21 years old and was born in Budapest to Vietnamese parents who immigrated to Hungary in

the late 1990s. Like many first-generation immigrants, her parents faced many difficulties when they arrived – language problems, low-paying jobs, and limited opportunities for advancement. They worked hard in Vietnamese-owned restaurants and cleaning businesses to make sure that Mai and her younger brother would have a better life. From a young age, Mai was aware of her parents' struggles, but also felt proud of their resilience. Her parents always told her how important education was because they knew it was the best way to help their children have a better future.

Growing up in Budapest, Mai had to deal with balancing two cultures. While her parents worked long hours, she went to Hungarian schools and learned the language quickly. She got along well with her Hungarian classmates, joining extracurricular activities and socializing freely. But at home, she had to follow Vietnamese traditions. Her parents made sure she spoke Vietnamese, celebrated Vietnamese holidays, and participated in community events, especially the Tet celebrations. Even though they tried to keep their cultural heritage alive, Mai sometimes felt like she was living in two different worlds: one where Hungarian values of individualism and independence were important, and the other where family and tradition came first.

As she got older, Mai started to feel the challenges that many second-generation immigrants face. There was always a feeling of being caught between two cultures. At school, she was just "Hungarian," and no one really asked about her ethnicity. But at home, her parents reminded her of her duties as a Vietnamese daughter. This included helping her mom around the house and taking care of her younger brother. These two roles – being independent at school and being responsible for family at home – became harder for Mai to manage, especially as she started to become more independent during her teenage years and made her own decisions about career and social life.

After finishing high school, Mai decided to study sociology at a Hungarian university. She wanted to understand more about the issues of identity, migration, and social integration – things she had always thought about because of her own experiences. During her university years, Mai navigated her academic life in Hungarian, but she still stayed involved in the Vietnamese community. She volunteered at cultural events and helped her parents at their restaurant. Even though she did well at school and had a Hungarian social life, Mai still faced microaggressions from both her Hungarian peers and the Vietnamese community.

While her parents were proud of her success in school, they were worried when Mai started spending more time with her Hungarian friends and distanced herself from the Vietnamese community. They were afraid she would forget her heritage and the sacrifices they made to give her a better life. On the other hand, Mai was starting to feel frustrated by the pressure to follow cultural traditions that felt more distant from her everyday life in Hungary. She was grateful for everything her parents had done, but at the same time, she wanted the freedom to define her own identity in her own way.

Mai's story shows the struggles of second-generation immigrants, especially when it comes to balancing two cultures. She had to navigate between the traditions of her Vietnamese parents and the Hungarian world outside. This tension is common for second-generation immigrants who often feel torn between fulfilling family expectations and finding their own place in the society where they live.

Analysis Using the Intersectionality Approach

Mai's experience shows how her gender, ethnicity, and social class come together and shape her identity, her way of dealing with different cultures, and her place in Hungarian society.

Ethnicity and Social Integration: As a second-generation immigrant, Mai faces the challenge of balancing her Vietnamese background with life in Hungary. She speaks Hungarian fluently and has done well at school, so she fits into Hungarian social circles easily. However, even though she is doing well in Hungarian society, Mai still experiences exclusion because of her ethnicity. Sometimes, her peers make assumptions about her, thinking she does not belong, even if she speaks the language and participates in Hungarian culture. Mai also feels torn between her Hungarian identity and her Vietnamese heritage. Growing up with both Hungarian individualism and Vietnamese collectivism, she finds it hard to blend these two ways of thinking. She tries to find an identity that makes space for both (Rumbaut, 2004). So, her ethnicity is both a tool that helps her connect to Hungarian society and a barrier, marking her as different, even though Hungary is a diverse country.

Gender and Family Expectations: Gender also plays a big role in Mai's life as a second-generation immigrant. As a young woman, she has to balance her dreams for school and her career with the expectations her family has of her. Her parents, especially her mother, still have traditional gender roles for Mai, asking her to help at home and to take part in the Vietnamese community. But Mai also feels the Hungarian value of independence, which clashes with her parents' expectations. This is a common problem for second-generation immigrants, who often have to live with both the cultural expectations from home and the new values of the country they live in (Chau, 2017). For Mai, this problem is even harder because the expectations placed on her are gendered. While her Hungarian peers are encouraged to focus only on themselves and their careers, Mai is expected to fulfill cultural duties, which adds more pressure to her sense of self.

Generational Conflict and Cultural Continuity: Another important issue in Mai's story is the conflict between her and her parents, which is something many immigrant families experience. As Mai gets older, her relationship with her parents becomes more difficult because they have different views on culture. She wants to honor the sacrifices her parents made, but at the same time, she wants to build her own life in Hungary. This is typical of many second-generation immigrants, where the first generation holds onto traditions while the second generation is exposed to new values that focus on independence and social mobility (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Mai's decision to spend less time with the Vietnamese community, but still join in cultural events, shows this conflict. She is trying to find a balance between the two cultures she belongs to.

Mai's story is a good example of how intersectionality works in the lives of second-generation immigrants. Her experience of dealing with Hungarian society, her ethnic identity, and the expectations from her family show how complicated it can be to form an identity as a migrant. Gender, ethnicity, and the different generations in her family all influence how Mai sees herself and her role in both the Hungarian and Vietnamese communities. Even though her journey is not easy, it shows her ability to navigate these challenges, making choices that reflect her unique position as a second-generation immigrant in Budapest.

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INTER-DIASPORIC RELATIONS: THE TUNISIAN DIASPORA AND ARAB/MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN HUNGARY

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Abstract

As the study of human cultures, traditions, and the way communities develop their cultural identities, cultural anthropology analyzes how various groups develop and evolve in different socio-cultural environments. The primary focus of this scientific field of studies is the investigation of migration, diasporas, and cultural exchanges which represent the main factors contributing to identity creation and adaptability within heterogeneous contexts. Within this framework, this paper explores inter-diasporic relations. More specifically, the Tunisian diaspora in Hungary and its contacts with other Arab and Muslim populations, particularly Turkish, Moroccan, and Syrian groups, in addition to their interactions with locals and other different groups.

Keywords: Tunisian Diaspora, Inter-Diasporic Relations, Hybridity, Cultural Identity, Acculturation, Migration and Integration

Diszcipline: Cultural Anthroplogy

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Absztrakt

INTERDIASZPÓRIKUS KAPCSOLATOK: A TUNÉZIAI DIASZPÓRA ÉS AZ ARAB/MUSZLIM KÖZÖSSÉGEK MAGYARORSZÁGON

A kulturális antropológia, mint az emberi kultúrák, hagyományok és a közösségek kulturális identitásának kialakulását vizsgáló tudományág, elemzi a különböző csoportok fejlődését és alkalmazkodását eltérő társadalmi-kulturális környezetekben. E tudományterület egyik központi kutatási területe a migráció, a diaszpórák és a kulturális cserefolyamatok vizsgálata, amelyek meghatározó szerepet játszanak az identitásformálásban és a heterogén kontextusokban történő alkalmazkodásban. A tanulmány az interdiaszpórikus kapcsolatokat elemzi, különös tekintettel a Magyarországon élő tunéziai diaszpórára és annak kapcsolataira más arab és muszlim csoportokkal – kiemelten a török, marokkói és szíriai közösségekkel –, valamint a helyi társadalommal és egyéb kulturális csoportokkal folytatott interakcióira.

Kulcsszavak: tunéziai diaszpóra, interdiaszpórikus kapcsolatok, hibriditás, kulturális identitás, akkulturáció, migráció és integráció.

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

The concept of Diaspora developed from the Greek word "diaspeirō", (to scatter) referring to displaced groups, to describe migrant communities which although left their homelands still try to preserve their original identities engaging in a complex and endless process of identity construction. Within a multicultural setting, this preservation mission seems to be a fare reach. To survive in a heterogeneous world cultural identities rely heavily on the social formation provided by diasporic structures. Diasporic studies in this case represents the framework within which we can explain the complex challenges facing these groups; ranging from cultural preservation, to hybrid identities until a seemingly total assimilation. Consequently, the mass movements of people in a highly globalized world, throughout the lens of diasporic studies, incorporates the interaction of several migrant groups with different settings, cultures, and communities. The importance of the concept of diaspora lies in its ability to dig into the dynamics surrounding these cultural ties including social networks, economic opportunities, and cultural adaptations.

Throughout a qualitative research method, we managed to uncover some aspects of this complex process by investigating one of the potential groups which are involved. Combining semi-structured interviews and participant observation among ethnographic techniques, the Tunisian community living in Hungary led us to some valuable results. Our research was centered on Debrecen and Budapest which are the most attracting locations to this group. We chose as our specific fieldworks mosques, restaurants, and universities since they are the earliest spaces in which this group forms its early inter-diasporic relationships then we moved to other spaces such as workplaces, mixed social settings, and multicultural public spheres, which mark an advanced stage of their socio-economic integration. These different settings helped us track the process of identity construction in the host country. The former, were places in which Tunisians attempt to preserve their national identity by maintaining similar traditions, language use, and religious practices. However, the latter were places in which there is more exposure to new languages, cultural norms, and social dynamics. Consequently, a space in which the multicultural contact happens allowing the gradual construction of a blended identity, which may later develop to a new identity

different from the original one. The collected data revealed some correlation between these different spaces and the Tunisian identity development. We found several reoccurring themes in line with our theoretical framework, which is mainly targeting the concepts of inter-diasporal cooperation, hybridity and assimilation.

Inter-diasporic cooperation refers to the earlier phase in which a migrant or a migrant group tries to preserve or reestablish a parallel home-like setting by seeking interaction with similar group. In our case the concept is embodied in Tunisians interacting, to some extent, exclusively with Arab or Muslim groups. They do so through social media connections, community gatherings and meetings in spaces which directly reflect their national identity such as mosques, Tunisian or Arab owned restaurants, and events. According to David Carment and Ariane Sadjed (2017) the defining quality of a diaspora is a dynamic linkage with the country of origin. This is exactly what we observed during our investigation of the early migrant(s) experience.

Although the initial phase is characterized by some sort of isolation it serves as a necessary transitional phase to the more advanced ones in which they start to diverge from "niche-identities" which links them to their origin" (Carment and Sadjed, 2017). afterwards, migrants start to establish multicultural links with other groups either locals or from different social backgrounds. At this stage a hybrid identity starts to build up. They tend to oscillate between two identities depending on the social setting or the required social norms of the particular group they are in contact with. As described by Homi K. Bhabha (1994:164) "The hybrid object […] retains the actual semblance of the authoritative symbol but revalues its presence by resisting it as the signifier of Entstellung – after the intervention of difference.". This highlights the way in which migrants start to adopt some features of the hosting culture. although the migrant at this stage is more open to "difference" there is still some degree of agency in the sense that they exert some change on the borrowed cultural items. In addition, this hybrid phase is but a coping mechanism that allows migrants to have access to areas that are not accessible in the first isolation phase. The final phase, a relative one, which depends on the degree of openness to integration and the social and economic motivations, is the phase of assimilation. Assimilation defines as the "process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, [which] are incorporated with them in a common cultural life […] assimilation, is central in the historical and cultural processes." (Park and Burgess, 1921: 736).

In order to understand the correlation between the above mentioned concepts and the processes by which the selected community for this research, develop, interact and negotiate their identities we must first have a close look at this group, their specific characteristics, background, and aims which can be potential variables guiding our research development.

The Tunisian Diaspora in Hungary

Although a small community The Tunisian diaspora in Hungary is a potentially dynamic group, shaped by many personal, economic, and political influences. Tunisians in Hungary, unlike other larger and more established groups are engaged with a special socio-cultural landscape that merges their background with the central European realities. The main push factors for Tunisian migration to Europe, especially to Hungary, are educational advancement, work, and social mobility. Socioeconomic and geopolitical aims primarily influence these migrations.

Whether they are laborers, settled professionals, entrepreneurs, or employees in Hungary's growing

service sector, immigrants add to the country's diversity. Hungary becomes appealing for Tunisian students due to its broadening scholarship opportunities, most especially under scholarships like the Stipendium Hungaricum, under which both material assistance and academic sponsorship are provided for in various disciplines. These students engage with the wider Arab and Tunisian communities in pursuit of familiarity and cultural continuity, as they are mainly occupied by their studies. Entrepreneurs and professionals therefore form businesses to cater to the local and expatriate communities and thereby create an economy of interdependence. Restaurants and shops refer to the need not only in maintaining cultural identity but also in creating a niche in Hungary's economic life. Besides economic and educational interests, diaspora people's personal and family relationships further reinforce their feeling of belonging. Family members in most cases remain extremely connected to Tunisia with frequent visits to the country or even ongoing regular communications notwithstanding physical separation. Remittances serve not only as a source of financial sustenance but also as an affirmation of remaining tied to home. Hungarian families are likely to maintain traditional values like social responsibility, religious affiliation, and cultural identification. Generational experience also plays a role in identity formation as younger Tunisians struggle with a mixed culture formed by their family background and living with Hungarian society.

The public and social life of the Tunisian diaspora is centered on religious institutions, businesses, and cultural networks that enable contact with Hungarian culture and other Arab and Muslim communities. Religious practice and community meeting centers, mosques and Islamic centers enable Tunisians to preserve their religious tradition, celebrate Islamic holidays, and debate religion and identity. Enabling inter-diasporal relations with Turkish, Moroccan, and Syrian communities, these locations also serve as gateways to other Muslim groups. Tunisian businesspeople regularly engage with suppliers and customers from diverse backgrounds, thereby strengthening these connections and fostering a networked economic system. Social and cultural exchange between the diaspora thrives outside of official institutions through online networks, social circles, and underground gatherings. Maintaining connectivity, which allows individuals to share experiences, encourage activities, and provide support to one another as they travel through life in a foreign land, depends on social media. Cultural groups and community events provide the chance to participate in Tunisian cultures, for example, food festivals and Arabic-language lectures, thereby keeping a shared identity within a foreign environment. These transactions enrich the larger discourse of migration, adaptation, and identity in modern-day Hungary and aid in cultural preservation.

Acculturation, Hybridity, and Inter-Diasporic Relations

People's cultural changes and how they handle their background in a new society influences their movement behavior. Adapting for the Tunisian population in Hungary is challenging as they are retaining their traditional origins and gradually embracing new ones. Acculturation, hybridity, and interactions between individuals from several Diasporas help to define migration from Tunisia to Hungary. For instance, "In its most recent descriptive and realist usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at 'the edge' or contact point of diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration." (Virinder et al., 2005:70). This is particularly evident when the immigrants strive to strike a compromise between their own past and the demands of Hungarian society. From the loss of old cultural traditions to the emergence of

identities combining Tunisian and Hungarian social conventions, these developments occur on several levels.

Among the Tunisian diaspora, acculturation is complete and intricate, especially in religious environments, business communities, and cultural interactions. For the sake of interaction among Tunisians and most Arab and Muslim societies, such as Syrian, Moroccan, and Turkish societies, mosques and Islamic centers take the central stage. Mosques and Islamic centers encourage familiarity and cultural continuity and thus facilitate religious activities, Arabic language, and social interactions leading to the creation of social ties. At the same time, mosques also serve as inter-diasporic contact points, hence presenting a platform for varying groups to share experiences, provide assistance to each other, and address living challenges together in Hungary. As Nielsen, Jørgen S., et al., editors highlight "While formal religiosity has increased amongst Muslims in diaspora, the growth of mosques in the 1970s and 1980s accompanied the reuniting of families, which in turn raised issues concerning the transmission of Islam to a new generation, as well as unemployment and global religious revival. (Nielsen, Jørgen S., 2010: 552)

Economic ties reveal even more the complicated nature of acculturation and inter-diasporal linkages. Particularly in halal marketplaces and Arab restaurants, Tunisian businesspeople seek to interact with Syrian and Moroccan ones. By means of these commercial networks, Tunisian companies are able to survive and flourish under the possibility of cultural values exchange. Business exchanges in commodities, business cooperation, and reciprocity of Arab immigrants create a type of economic interdependence that supports loyalty to the national heritage. This collaboration is not just financial but also a result of cultural solidarity whereby similar experiences of migration unite many people in common traditions. One of the most significant issues of migration is the

progressive erosion of the native culture, particularly over generations. The first-generation Tunisian migrants tend to remain closely attached to their country of origin, therefore retaining customs, religious practices, and language skills in everyday life. Hence we can rely on the book of "Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation", where (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) stated: "Adult immigrants in the United States typically combine instrumental learning of English with efforts to maintain their culture and language. They also seek to pass this heritage to their children. Of all the distinct legacies transmitted across generations, language is arguably the most important, but it is also the most difficult to transmit because of strong opposing forces." (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001: 114-115).Born in Hungary, the second generation, however, tends to suffer from cultural dualism. Although they acquire beliefs and rituals from their parents, they also step into Hungarian standards, and therefore there is a mix of the cultural aspects. The language use clearly indicates this transformation between generations; Arabic is still the shared language used at home, whereas Hungarian and English prevail in work and school life. This change in language affects identification over time since young Tunisians integrate more smoothly into Hungarian society yet continue to maintain elements of their Tunisian identity. "The instrumental acculturation of the first generation in the United States is followed by a second that speaks English in school and parental languages at home, often responding to remarks in those languages in English. Limited bilingualism leads, almost inevitably, to English becoming the home language in adulthood". (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001: 114-115).Coming into Hungarian society accelerates this process of cultural assimilation even further. Frequent encounters in public life, institutions, and schools challenge the immigrants with newer social norms, work ethics, and lifestyles. While some of the

Tunisians accept these as a welcome change and adopt some Hungarian traditions, others consciously prefer to retain their cultural identity through continued contact with the wider Arab and Muslim society. It's a flexible identity where people exchange the demands of their home country and the homeland they live in. It's not a process of linear assimilation but rather an exchange of ongoing negotiation where portions of both the Hungarian and the Tunisian ways are chosen, taken up, or modified.

Assimilation in Hungarian society significantly accelerates the integration process. Challenges in the public sphere, institutions, and schools compel migrants to adapt to modern social norms, work patterns, and lifestyles. Tunisians adapt to some extent and adopt some of Hungary's traditions as a welcome change, while others consciously prefer to retain their cultural heritage through exposure to the broader Arab and Muslim community. Individuals are still negotiating between the obligations of their birth country and host country with a fluid sense of self. This leads to an ongoing process of combining parts of the Hungarian and Tunisian cultures that have been chosen, adopted, or changed, rather than a straight-forward blending. Second-generation Tunisians, for example, combine Tunisian, Hungarian, and more general Arab identities by negotiating several cultural influences. Language, social conduct, and even lifestyle choices mirror this hybridity. Inter-diasporic relationships also help to form hybrid identities as interactions with Moroccan, Syrian, and Turkish populations bring extra cultural aspects that broaden their experiences. As Stuart Hall emphasizes, "Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall, 1990: 235).

The Tunisian diaspora in Hungary is positioned within a larger configuration of Arab and Muslim Diasporas as a community that reproduces cultural identity far beyond individual silos. In social, economic, and religious networks, Tunisians maintain heritage and exchange cultural practices, producing new dynamic formations of identity. The tradition-accommodation conversation is meant to highlight the resilience of diaspora society as it tells us how, at all times, immigrants find themselves in the ever-evolving social scene but still cling to the motherland. The use of the Hungarian language by the Tunisians illustrates the variety of ways adaptation in a language can happen, whether as a requirement of social and economic integration or an indicator of assimilation. Religion also has a significant role in preserving cultural identity, as common Islamic practice will serve as an integrating factor in multicultural Arab and Muslim societies. Public and social life for Tunisians in Hungary also involves both adapting to Hungarian culture and maintaining Tunisian traditions. Although the diaspora identity has been founded on the previous Tunisian customs, such as shared celebrations and observance of religious holidays, Hungarian culture, particularly social norms and public morals, has also found its place in life. The second-generation Tunisians especially display this kind of cultural exchange because they are weighing their parents' customs with the presence of Hungarian society.

Conclusion

The Tunisian diaspora community in Hungary is the relevant example of how intra-diasporic relations are complex in nature and how preservation and adaptation are facing each other. The first generation clings to the home country's culture, and the second generation has a dilemma between hybrid identity, which is the outcome of

both parent culture and Hungarian social norm. Mosques and Islamic community centers are indicators of cultural belonging, representative of religious continuity and inter-diasporic identity with other Arab and Muslim diasporic communities. Economic networks and social space facilitate cultural hybridity, reflective of the dynamic nature of diasporic identity. Yet language is still dominant in delineating this process, where young people use Hungarian and English as public markers but retain Arabic in the private realm. This change in language is symptomatic of broader acculturation trends, wherein host culture integration does not imply complete assimilation. Rather, Tunisian migrants build identity by selective adaptation for cultural fitness but engage in transnational exchange. Relations between inter-diasporas among Syrians, Moroccans, Tunisians, and Turks also serve to reinforce diasporic identity over national ones. Economic rivalry and social hierarchy sometimes yield tensions that reveal the limits of diaspora networking. It is argued that more research may look into how social media and policy interventions influence such inter-diasporic relations.

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KONFERENCIA/CONFERENCE

MEGHÍVÓ A X. KÜLÖNLEGES BÁNÁSMÓD NEMZETKÖZI INTERDISZCIPLINÁRIS KONFERENCIÁRA

INVITATION TO THE 10TH 'SPECIAL TREATMENT" INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

A konferencia címe:	Title of the conference:
X. Különleges Bánásmód Nemzetközi Interdiszciplináris Konferencia	10th 'Special Treatment' International Interdisciplinary Conference
A konferencia időpontja:	**Date of conference:**
2025. április 24-25.26.	24-25-26 April, 2025
A konferencia helyszíne:	**Venue of the conference:**
Debreceni Egyetem Gyermeknevelési és Gyógypedagógiai Kar (Hajdúböszörmény, Désány u.7-9)	University Of Debrecen, Faculty of Education for Children and Special Educational Needs, 1-9. Désány str., 4220, Hajdúböszörmény (Hungary)

Regisztráció és bővebb információk/ Registration and deatelid informations:
https://konferencia.unideb.hu/hu/kb_interdiszciplinaris_konferencia

2025 április 24-25-26-án kerül megrendezésre a 10. Jubileumi Különleges Bánásmód Nemzetközi Inter-diszciplináris Konferencia (helyszín: DE GYGYK, Hajdúböszörmény), mely egy évtizede nyújt teret a kiemelt figyelmet, a különleges bánásmódot igénylő személyek (pl. sajátos nevelési igényűek; fogyaté-kossággal élők; beilleszkedési, tanulási és magatartási nehézséggel élők; tehetségek; hátrányos helyzetűek stb.) helyzetével, ellátásával, fejlesztésével, a problémáik megoldásával foglal-kozó hazai és külföldi tudományos kutatóknak és szakembereknek a tudományos eredményeik megje-lentetéséhez. A konferencia történetében először, három napos rendezvény megvalósítására készü-lünk, mely során várhatóan több, mint 10 országból érkeznek előadók, hogy megosszák a tapaszta-taikat, kutatási eredményeiket a témával kap-csolatban.

Jelen rendezvény kiemelten támogatja az olyan, a Neumann János Program által is fókuszba állított témák felszínre kerülését, mint a) az egészséges élet megőrzését szolgáló megelőző, gyógyító és ellátó fejlesztések/rendszerek kiépülése, fejlődése a kora gyermekkortól kezdve az időskorig; b) környezettudatos és fenntartható fejlődésre épülő, klímasemlegességet hangsúlyozó új technológiák

On 24-25-26 April 2025, the 10th Anniversary International Interdisciplinary Conference about Special Treatment will take place (venue: DE GYGYK, Hajdúböszörmény), which has been providing space for a decade for the publication of the scientific results of hungarian and international researchers wich focus on dealing with the situation, care and development of persons requiring special attention, special treatment and the solution of their problems (e.g. persons with special educational needs; persons with disabilities; persons with integration, learning and behavioural difficulties; gifted persons; disadvantaged persons, etc.). For the first time in the history of the conference, we are preparing to hold a three-day event, during which speakers are expected to come from more than 10 countries to share their experiences and research results related to the topic.

This event will highlight and support the emergence of themes that are also in the focus of the János Neumann Programme, such as a) the development and evolution of preventive, curative and care developments/systems for healthy living from early childhood to old age; b) the use of new technologies based on environmentally sound and

alkalmazása; c) a mesterséges intelligencia, a digitális eszközpark és digitális átállás fellendülése, a magas szintű digitális készségek fejlesztését lehetővé tevő megoldások, készségfejlesztő oktatási metódusok bevezetése az érintettek oktatásában, nevelésében, fejlesztésében és teljes körű ellátásában.

A konferencia különlegessége, hogy sor kerül egy bárki számára nyitott, nyílt előadás megrendezésére a konferencia egyik kiemelt előadójával, valamint egy 'Special Treatment' International Research Network elnevezésű nemzetközi kutatóhálózat megalapítására is.

A konferencia inter- és multidiszciplináris jellege miatt nemcsak a pedagógia és pszichológia területéről szóló témák számára biztosít helyet, hanem lehetőséget ad más tudományágak – mint például orvostudomány, jog, antropológia, szociológia, mérnöki tudományok stb. – tudományos képviselőinek is az eredményeik prezentálására, kapcsolatok építésre.

sustainable development, emphasising climate neutrality; c) the boom of artificial intelligence, digital tools and digital switchover, the introduction of solutions enabling the development of high-level digital skills, skill-enhancing teaching methods in the education, training, development and overall care of stakeholders.

A special feature of the conference will be an open lecture by one of the conference's keynote speakers and the establishment of an international research group called the 'Special Treatment' International Research Network.

Due to its inter- and multi-disciplinary nature, the conference is not only open to topics from the field of pedagogy and psychology, but also provides a platform for the scientific representatives of other disciplines such as medicine, law, anthropology, sociology, engineering, etc.

Nagy izgalommal várjuk a közelgő konferenciát, és reméljük, hogy Önöket is köszönthetjük a konferencia előadói és vendégei között!

We are very excited for the approaching conference, and we hope to welcome you among the speakers and guests of the conference!

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TéT-2025/LandS-2025 KONFERENCIA FELHÍVÁS