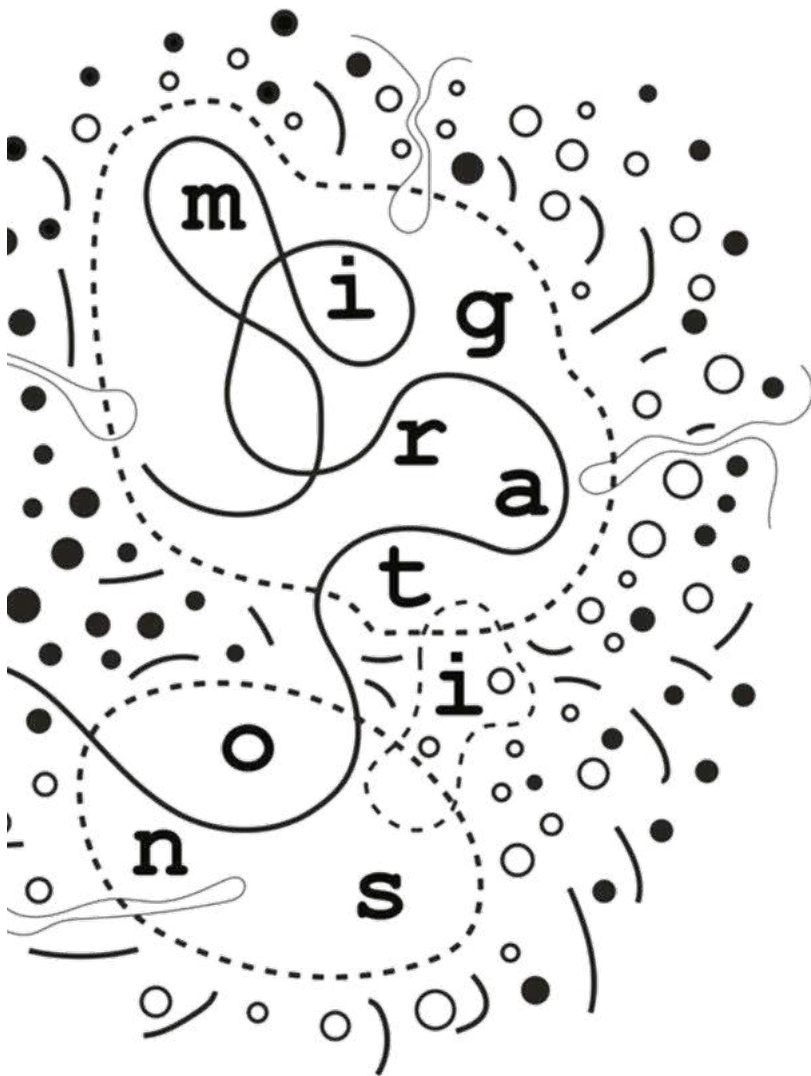# Transcending Borders

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## Session 9

# Session 9
# Transcending Borders: Reshaping Cultures through Ideas and Images

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Interdisciplinary studies are encouraged by scholars to create and acclaim cultural awareness as society progresses. With the dispersion of the ethnic population, the initiatives to understand the new human state and multi-cultural studies are crucial to assimilate better the consciousness of human behavior and influence of cultural context upon him. Human nature has been constantly interpreted and determined by each unique and specific cultural background. Transcultural perspicacity helps simplify the attitude of a researcher to understand different perspectives better.

Being part of the Indian Subcontinent, we have been familiar with the multicultural facets and diversity of beliefs that the past has given and acknowledge the relationship that historical and contemporary research require to widen the aesthetic, cultural, material, and socio-political context of art.

Progressively rising technology, such as social media platforms, online interactive techniques platforms, and a broad range of contemporary art forms, are crucial and integrated into intercultural understanding.

The term "transcultural" probably constitutes one of the most important and widely discussed conceptual keywords in recent years' humanities and social sciences. This session aimed at analyzing and evaluating the relationship between the transcultural paradigm and various more or less established academic disciplines or research fields. The

contributors to this session have all worked in the context of an interdisciplinary research institution dedicated to developing and advancing the transcultural approach in the humanities and the social sciences.

CIHA has been one of the communities of researchers and practitioners to place the effort of finding new ways to approach the field. Such studies show how these developments have influenced human culture and education in promoting mutual understanding among various ethnic groups for better cultural development in a pluralistic society.

In this 35th session of CIHA, we discussed and shared our ideas on different migrations in a concrete, historiographical, and conceptual way.

The session also attempted to articulate new ways to highlight/outline the complexity that goes into the makings of transdisciplinary practices.

This session offers the contributors the chance to describe their traditionally defined academic research fields while also showcasing the merits of applying a transcultural approach.

# Shifting Frameworks: The Common Foundations of *Kulturwissenschaft* and *Kunstwissenschaft* in the 19th Century

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## ABSTRACT

While Aby Warburg worked under the title of *Kulturwissenschaft*, some of his contemporary art historians intended to establish *Kunstwissenschaft*. Nonetheless, the two fields, both born in a similar intellectual milieu, shared theoretical sources and methodological approaches in many aspects. By exploring and comparing the thoughts and views of several leading scholars on some core issues, this essay attempts to reveal that the boundaries between these two frameworks were not always explicit and settled.

Edgar Wind once distinguished Warburg's *Kulturwissenschaft*, which situated art in its cultural milieu, from Wölfflin or Riegl's *Kunstwissenschaft*, based on pure artistic vision.[1] Even in a recent lexicon of *Kunstwissenschaft*, the development of art historical methods is described as oscillating between the poles of isolation and contextualization of works of art.[2] Trained as an art historian, Warburg turned to work he described as *Kulturwissenschaft*. What is the similarity or difference between *Kunstwissenschaft* and *Kulturwissenschaft*? Do they have anything in common in the methodological approaches and primary problems they seek to solve? How did they construct their respective frameworks from scientific instruments and theories, either natural or human?

To answer the questions, we need to observe both frameworks in the interdisciplinary context of the 19th century, rather than describing the development of art history as a single, autonomous line of enquiry. *Kunstwissenschaft* and *Kulturwissenschaft* were woven into a complicated and interrelated tapestry of theoretical sources and intellectual concepts, most of which were born in other fields.

### Psychic Unity

Although Warburg is thought to have had a "burning faith in the potentialities of *Kulturwissenschaft*", as Gombrich put it,[3] he was concerned with the *essential* problems of art history, most of which were also debated in the realm of *Kunstwissenschaft*. The aims of Warburg, I shall argue, did not differ very much from those of contemporary art historians, and the main difference between them is the means they used. Warburg's approach, in his own words, is "a cultural science oriented towards the study of art".[4] Instead of demarcating between disciplines, knowledge and ways of researching, which are not always fixed but shifting at all times, Warburg famously encouraged his colleagues, in his article on the astrological decoration of the Palazzo Schifanoia, to extend the methodological boarders of *Kunstwissenschaft* without fear of "grenzpolizeiliche Befangenheit".[5]

In this article, Warburg concentrated on the work of a "schwächere" (weaker) artist, Francesco Cossa, to explore how antiquity influenced the

artistic culture of the early Renaissance. He believed the flaws of undistinguished work could, more clearly, reveal the intention of the artist, since "the complicated structure of the major work made the problem much harder to pick out, because the artist resolved it with such a display of virtuosity".[6] With a similar attitude, Warburg sought the parallels between the cultures of American Indian tribes and pagan Europe in order to investigate how the pagan worldview developed, in his words, "from primitive paganism, through the paganism of classical antiquity, to modern man",[7] so enabling him, as he thought, to trace the origin of *Pathosformeln* in "primitive" cultural phenomena.

Warburg hoped to observe the history of symbolic forms in the ornaments on Hopi vessels and kachina headdresses.[8] Ornamentation, as preliminary forms of art, attracted not only Warburg, but also many protagonists of *Kunstwissenschaft*, who wanted to investigate the laws of art history. Semper, Riegl, Strzygowski and Worringer had all published works about the history of ornament.[9] It was an interest in the origins of art that led art historians to look at "primitive" culture, and this interest relied heavily on contemporary *Völkerpsychologie* and anthropology.

In a review of a book on ethnology, Adolf Bastian maintained that stereotypes of thought were most clearly evident in primitive mentalities and that these stereotypes would permit the highest cultural questions to be addressed.[10] As one of the founders of the Berlin Anthropological Society, Bastian's argument reflects the interest in *Naturvölker* of the time.[11] From 'natural people' anthropologists hoped to examine the essence of the nature of men. With the evolution of culture, it was argued intellectual life becomes richer and more complex, in which the mind is relatively independent, and the matter is under the influence of its environment. The original patterns of primitive societies are "passed on as truth to the next generation."[12] The anthropologists' quest for the nature of humanity in primitive societies was echoed by art historians' research into the origin of art.

The fundamental idea underlying the quest for stereotypes in *Naturvölker* is the belief in the psychic unity of mankind. Bastian claimed that psychological elements were "circulating in regular and uniform rotation in

the heads of all people and that this is so for all times and places" and encouraged a psychological approach to human civilization.[13] Theodore Waitz, in the introduction to his *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, stated that psychology was a crucial method to research the cultural phenomena of mankind and insisted on the "general uniform intellectual capacity in all human populations from the Greeks to the Hottentots". [14] In a similar sense, Warburg put the sentence "Das ist ein altes Buch zu blättern/Athen-Oraibi alles Vettern" at the beginning of his "Serpent Ritual" lecture, which was based on his journey to the region of the Pueblo Indians.[15]

Following earlier studies of *Völkerpsychologie*, Bastian believed that all people had the same psychological elements, but local and temporal variations caused different thought patterns.[16] Although there is no evidence of Riegl's reading of Bastian, his *Kunstwollen*, which was discussed among scholars of the time, paralleled Bastian's theory.[17] Riegl advocated the view of creative autonomy and persisted that the artistic forms and concepts were transmitted from one generation to the next and from one culture to another, similar to Bastian's argument that "original patterns of primitive societies passed on to the next generation". [18] All people all over the world and at all times have their artistic impulses. Still, they are different because of "outside local, and temporal variations," which in Riegl's words is "All such human *Wollen* is directed towards self-satisfaction in relation to the surrounding environment...man wants to interpret the world in accordance with his inner drive (which may change with nation, location and time). The character of this *Wollen* is always determined by what may be termed the conception of the world at a given time [*Weltanschauung*]".[19] As the driving force of art, Riegl's *Kunstwollen* is also a kind of stereotype shared by all humans but appearing in different forms, which are recognized as styles.

*Völkerpsychologie*, which emphasizes the psychological force behind the cultural phenomena of all peoples, not only expanded the research scope of art historians to objects outside fine art, but also enabled *Kunstwissenschaftlers*, such as August Schmarsow, to construct the science of art.[20] Ernst Grosse, in a book on the origins of art, discussed the purposes and methods of *Kunstwissenschaft*. He tried to make art history more

scientific with the help of comparative ethnological methods. Based on his belief in psychic unity, the essential motives, means, and aims of the earliest art are at one with those of art of all times.[21]

### Body-based Psychology

In the late 19th century, as today, art history borrowed ideas and methods from other fields but aimed to establish its autonomy. Influenced by and following the classification systems of the natural sciences, *Kunstwissenschaft* subjected works of art to an analysis of, in the words of Hans Sedlmayr, "their internal organization and structure; it can accurately classify works according to their natural groups and establish genetic connections among works based on their properties; it can arrive at an understanding of the historical events the products of which it is studying and of the forces at work behind these events."[22] Studies in style offered a chance for art history to practice the classification of works of art and the law of their evolution. Sedlmayr concluded that the purpose of *Kunstwissenschaft* was practically the history of style.[23]

Wickhoff, Riegl, and Wölfflin linked styles with modes of visual perception, which echoed the kinesthetic theory of Hildebrand, and regarded psychology as the foundation of the historical study.[24] The rise of psychology not merely supplied art history with a fundamental approach but also built up the entire ground of *Geisteswissenschaften* in the sense of Dilthey. Psychology was considered one of the most important scientific methods to interpret human cultures and to enable the human sciences, which study consciousness or inner experience, to be on an equal footing with the natural sciences, which focus on outer experience.[25]

Although Max Dessoir, the founder of the *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, traced the history of psychology from the ancient conception of the life of the soul, Kant seems to be more closely associated with later psychological approaches in art history.[26] In his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781), Kant analyses the faculties through which the human mind represents reality and perceives time and space. The *a priori* features of the mind were further discussed and developed into cognitive

psychology in *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798).[27] Later philosophers and psychologists developed Kant's transcendental aesthetics in a more materialized direction, which led art historians to concern themselves with the physiological functions of the human body.[28]

Herbart, the successor of Kant's chair at Königsberg, observed ideas in the human mind from a mathematical perspective which is not dissimilar to physiologists' quantification of neurological behavior. With the efforts of figures like Hermann Helmholtz, Gustav Fechner, Hermann Lotze, and Wilhelm Wundt, all of whom shared a medical background, a more experimental data-based psychology was shaped, which emphasized the mathematical relation between mind and body. Wundt, for example, analyzed the sensations and reflexes of the body and the neural activity of the eye when studying the perception of color. [29] He explored the concept of *Ausdrucksbewegung* (expressive movement), which readily finds its echo in Warburg's "historischen Psychologie des menschlichen Ausdruck", and linked the inner psychic emotions with outer expressions of the body.[30]

Under the influence of Wundt, Robert Vischer distinguished *Sehen* (seeing) and *Schauen* (scanning) in visual perception, in his *Über das optische Formgefühl* (1872). The former is merely a passive reception of optical organs when we have a first impression of the object, and the latter involves the active wandering of eyes to explore individual characteristics.[31] Hildebrand, twenty years later in his *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (1893), argued that "If his vantage point is distant, …the overall image is two-dimensional…If the observer steps closer to the object, …He will divide the overall appearance into several visual impressions connected by his eye movements of his eyes…Now seeing becomes scanning, and the resulting ideas are not visual [*Gesichtsvorstellungen*] but kinesthetic [*Bewegungsvorstellung*]".[32] This has many points of contact with those well-known polarized schemas of *Kunstwissenschaftlers*, such as Wölfflin's linear and painterly and Riegl's tactile and optical.[33]

August Schmarsow was also indebted to physiologically based psychology. In his opinion, the process of perception not only involved the movement of the eyes, but also the movement of our bodies in order to

observe every aspect of the object. With respect to this movement in the space, Schmarsow held that people in certain periods created unique connections between bodily experience and the external world, which reflects a *Weltanschauung*, a term shared by many *Kunstwissenschaftlers* in their speculations on problems of style.[34] By referring to psychology and physiology, art historians at the turn of the century tended to link varied perceptive modes with certain artistic styles in history.[35]

Although he also employed the psychological approach, Warburg didn't resort to the discourse of "pure vision", since the act of seeing in his view is always conditioned by circumstances. Here we see a bifurcation between *Kunstwissenschaft* and Warburg's *Kulturwissenschaft*. He intends, in the context of experience or cultural milieu, to determine the "factors conditioning the formation of style more thoroughly".[36]

Instead of focusing on the role of movement in the process of perception, Warburg was concerned with the movements of figures in images per se, although he referred to Robert Vischer in the notes of his dissertation.[37] In this regard, he is closer to Wundt, whose concept of expressive movement is reminiscent of his historical psychology of human expression, as mentioned above. Certainly, Warburg was inspired by Darwin's "*On the Expression of Mind*" and Piderit's "*Mimik und Physiognomik*," which he read during his stay in Florence, where he attended Schmarsow's seminar.[38] Yet we should notice that both Schmarsow and Warburg were readers of Wundt, and for Schmarsow, Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* had built a most important foundation for *Kunstwissenschaft*.[39] Though they seemingly chose different approaches to pursue the problems of style, the scholars, whether they worked in the realm of *Kunstwissenschaft* or left for *Kulturwissenschaft*, started from a similar psychophysiological point.[40]

### "Descent with Modification"

One of biology's most momentous impacts on *Kunstwissenschaftlers*, who wished to theorize art history and coin principles for it, was its evolution model. Wölfflin compared the evolution of architecture to that of organic life forms and mistakenly assumed that its direction was towards perfection.

However, he later acknowledged the divergent modes of imagination of different epochs and admitted that "it experiences all manner of breaks, constraints, and transformations in the actuality of lived history...particular developments merge into a long-term development..."[41] In other words, Wölfflin proposes a twofold model: "an internal development...occurs of its own accord within the perceptual apparatus" and "an external impulse that determines the transformation," both of which are actually at play.[42] It means that outside impulses or chance adaptations may lead to distinguished styles in art history. Lauren Golden has noticed a Darwinian account in Wölfflin's writing that "In the old form, the new is already contained just as, besides the withering leaves, the bud of the new already exists" is similar to Darwin's discussion of the growth of a tree, which uses the words such as "decayed," "fresh," "fossil state" and "ramifications". [43]No matter if Wölfflin had or had not referred directly to *The Origin of Species* when he wrote this passage, he seemingly composed it in a biological way of thinking.

In praising Burckhardt's study of the art of late antiquity, Riegl alike employed the metaphor of *Keim* (bud) to state that this *Kunsthistoriker* can "recognize the seeds and buds of new life even in works of very late antiquity among signs of death and decay".[44]Both Wölfflin and Riegl had implied, with their *Keim* metaphor, that the new style comes out of the old ones and the old survives in this way, which somewhat reminds us of Darwin's "descent with modification".[45]

In multiple places, Darwin mentioned the re-appearance or reversion of a character of certain species, which were possessed by its progenitors and had been latent in successive generations.[46] The certain appearance of a genus can be observed in a new species after generations of selection and modification. Elaborating a concept of periodicity, Wölfflin discovered classic and baroque in both modern and antique times, and Riegl identified the "baroque" qualities in Roman monuments.[47] It is the *Kunstwollen* that determines what kind of artistic variation would be adopted and would thus form a new style, whereas the others remain dormant and wait to be awoken by a future *Kunstwollen*.[48]

With the aim to establish a historical model for images and within the framework of evolutionary theory, Warburg also paid, even more, attention to the notion of survival, through which artists of the Quattrocento recognized the antique as a model.[49] The gestures in classical art were still able to arise a corresponding emotional response even in the attenuated form in which they had come down to later periods, and Warburg viewed the gestures or *pathosformeln* as diminished traces of the past. The survivals from the past are actively adapted to the present, which is precisely exemplified in Warburg's term "Auseinandersetzung" (dialectical engagement).[50] The word *Nachleben* was not exclusively occupied by Warburg but also mentioned by his contemporaries, such as Julius Schlosser, who used the English word "survival" instead of its German counterpart because it was originally a concept of Anglo-Saxon anthropology, being used in Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871).[51] Although this book cannot be guaranteed as a direct theoretical source for Warburg, its discussion of the science of culture and survival within culture should not escape our notice when discussing Warburg's *Kulturwissenschaft*. But as Gombrich has pointed out, Tylor devoted himself to the residues of a past phase, while Warburg was more concerned with "revivals."[52] In his speech for the CIHA in 1912, Warburg encouraged his colleagues to treat the ancient, medieval, and modern worlds as a coherent historical unity and called for building, in an evolutionary sense, the "Entwicklungs-Kategorien" [evolutionary categories] of art history.[53] And in his lecture on the serpent ritual ten years later, Warburg, mirroring the absence of the temporal dimension in anthropology, developed his anachronist historical model. When he recalled the trip to New Mexico, he practically fulfilled his wish of crossing the "borders" by establishing the correspondence between "primitive culture" and the classical tradition.

### Conclusion

Despite working under the title of *Kulturwissenschaft*, Warburg, in reality, was constantly concerned with the issues of art history. Even his last and least definable project, the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, attests to his endeavor to reformulate the problem of style.[54] He is dissatisfied with aestheticizing art

history and opposes "the autonomy of artistic developments and the unconnected spontaneity of artistic creation" placing himself, "against the overrating of purely formal criteria for the understanding of works of art."[55] As he wrote in a letter to Franz Boas about the program of his library, two key points on which Warburg insisted were the internal psychological problem and the historical context of image.[56] Warburg and his contemporary *Kunstwissenschaftlers* shared an interest in physiologically based psychology, but the historical context in the eyes of his colleagues is just one of the factors that bring about the diversity of styles. And by opening up to anthropology and focusing on the uniform intellectual capacity of mankind, they turned to primitive culture and the so-called minor arts to search for certain stereotypes. The taxonomic system and evolutionary theory in biology, furthermore, provided art history with the classifications of style and time model of development, which significantly overturned the traditional art historical narrative.

On the one hand, art historians borrowed a methodological basis from natural sciences, evolutionism, psychology, empathy theory, anthropology, and much else, yet intended to, on the other hand, distinguish themselves from the confines of other disciplines through the exploration of style. Warburg chose a different title for his work, but in many respects, he shared common currencies with those who studied in the name of *Kunstwissenschaft*. Their intellectual frameworks often shift without precise and settled boundaries. Perhaps what matters more are the problems they aimed to resolve rather than the frameworks assigned to their approaches.

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## Endnotes

1. I owe a special debt to the Getty Foundation for supporting this research during my stay at the Getty Institute, where I had an opportunity to receive valuable suggestions from helpful colleagues and scholars.

2. Rainer Donandt, "Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte und als Kulturwissenschaft," in *Metzler Lexicon Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. Ulrich Pfisterer (Stuttgart, Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2011), 250.

3. Ernst Gombrich, *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and in Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979), 53.

4. Bernd Roeck, "Aby Warburgs Seminarübungen über Jacob Burckhardt im Sommersemester 1927," *Idea. Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle* 10 (1991): 88-89. See also, Ernst Gombrich, "Unpublished Sources," in *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Bibliography* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986), 345.

5. Aby Warburg, "Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoja zu Ferrara," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band II (Leipzig, Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1932), 478; for English translation see "Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanois, Ferrara," in Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles, The Getty Research Institute, 1999), 563-592.

6. Edgar Wind, "Warburg's Concept," 34.

7. Aby Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 4.

8. Salvatore Settis, "Kunstgeschichte als vergleichende Kulturwissenschaft: Aby Warburg, die Pueblo-Indianer und das Nachleben der Antike," in *Künstlerischen Austausch/Artistic Exchange, Akten des* XXVIII. *Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte Berlin, 1992*, Band I, ed. Thomas Gaehtgens (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 145.

9. Marlite Halbertsma, "The Many Beginnings and the One End of World Art History in Germany 1900-1933," in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, eds. Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008), 92-93.

10. Adolf Bastian, review of *Völkerkunde*, by Oscar Peschel, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 6 (1874): 149.

11. See Andrew Zimmerman, "Anthropology and the Place of Knowledge in Imperial Berlin" (PhD diss., University of California, 1998), especially chapter III.

12. Klaus-Peter Köpping, *Adolf Bastian and the Psychic Unity of Mankind: The Foundations of Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005), 179-180.

13. Köpping, *Adolf Bastian*, 180; Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 89.

14. Ulrich Pfisterer, "Origins and Principles of World Art History-1900 (and 2000)," in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, eds. Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008), 73. Many scholars have mentioned that Warburg was a reader of Bastian, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 90; and David Freedberg, "Warburg's Mask: A Study in

Idolatry," in *Anthropologies of Art*, ed. Mariët Westermann (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute), 6.

15. Aby Warburg, *Images*, 1.

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# Shamanism, Christianity, and the Art of Migrating Hungarians

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**ABSTRACT**

The last chapter of the medieval Migration Period in Europe was the invasion of the Carpathian Basin by the Hungarian people at the end of the 9th century. Archaeologists recognized a highly characteristic artistic culture in the region typical for the 10th century. Traditional nationalistic research identified it with the autochthon culture of the ancient Hungarians, brought from Asia and given up in the 11th century during Christianization. Unquestionably, there were dramatic changes in the Carpathian Basin around 900. The emerging Slavic states of the Moravians and the duchy of Mosaburg, representing a typical Carolingian artistic culture of the 9th century, suddenly collapsed and gave way to the new artistic milieu associated with the Hungarians.

However, the origin of this new art is a complicated problem. There are no early signs of its presence in the Steppe and Ural region where the Hungarians came from. In reality, it was the result of the combination of earlier nomadic art, the influences of their new Byzantine neighbor, and artistic elements found in the region. It was created by cross-cultural connections in their new home, forming a transitional period that prepared the intensive Christianization after 1000. Thus, the last wave of early medieval migration not only changed the cultural landscape of Central Europe but it transformed the migrating people even more radically.

Hungarian people have been living in Central Europe for more than one thousand years.[1] However, despite this long history, we should not forget that this resulted from migration from the east during the 9th century. In fact, the wandering of the Hungarians (or Magyars) was the last phase of the medieval migration period, starting in the late 4th century. Hungarians' conquest of the Carpathian Basin around 895 resulted in dramatic political changes. Before, the western part of the region was ruled by the Carolingian Empire, while territories in the north belonged to the Moravian Principality. With the arrival of the Hungarians, all that changed radically. The Frankish rule was withdrawn from the west, and the early Moravian state collapsed in a few years. These early states produced high-quality art and architecture. The Moravians built small churches in great variety, and yielded rich jewelry, unmistakably Christian.[2] While the Moravians inhabited parts of the present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia territories, in the western parts of the Carpathian Basin, a dependency of the Carolingian Empire was created centered at Zalavár (Mosaburg). Excavations revealed the significance of this center in the 9th century, proven by a large basilica decorated with stained glass and stone carvings with interlacing motifs. Burials with rich jewelry attest to the high living standards of the local aristocracy.[3]

All these promising early results of Christianization and state formation of the local people disappeared suddenly when the nomadic Hungarians conquered the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9th century. The 19th-century Romanticism imagined how the humiliated local people greeted the arriving Hungarians.

In the painting of Mihály Munkácsy (1893), Duke Árpád, sitting on his white horse, is equipped with typical Indian Mughal weaponry from the 16th century. This painting is still kept in the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest.[4]

By the 20th century, our knowledge has been developed enormously, partially thank such archaeologist as Gyula László (1910-1998). He used authentic archaeological finds as well as ethnographic analogies for his reconstruction of the early Hungarians.[5] Contemporary or 19th-century examples taken from folk art of Hungarian peasants or the Mongols of the Far

East is methodologically problematic. However, many elements, especially the metalworks represented in his drawing are based on real findings from the 10th century.

These Hungarian metalworks can be easily identified based on their remarkably individual style.[6] For example, the hat was occasionally decorated with a metal top, made of gilded silver. The ornamental decoration applied on this object consists of a net of palmette leaves. These are arranged symmetrically, the ends of the lateral leaves are curved, the inner surface of the leaves are patterned with lines and dots, and usually parallel lines are chiseled at the edge of the leaves. There are two examples are known, a high-quality object from the Sub-Carpathian Beregszász (Beregovo in Ukraine)[7] and a less sophisticated work found quite recently in Central Hungary (Jászberény, Hungary).[8]



**Fig. 1.** Top of a hat from Beregszász (Budapest, Hungarian National Museum)

The early Hungarians were famous soldiers, and they used a new type of saber. Some of these weapons were decorated richly, such as the famous Hungarian saber kept in Vienna, in the Imperial Treasury (once it was part of the coronation regalia of the Holy Roman Emperors), or another one found in East Hungary (Geszteréd).[9] Both of them are decorated with golden mountings representing the same type of palmette leaves. Hungarians kept their belongings attached to their belt; thus, this was one of their most important objects. These belts were usually decorated with silver mountings. The number and quality of these gilded mountings might have expressed the rank of their owner.

From an art historical point of view, the most significant object was the sabretache. This small bag, containing fire-making tools and other essentials, was usually made of leather, and the cover was strengthened with metal mountings. These mountings themselves were often richly decorated, as we can see it in a piece discovered in the territory of present-day Budapest.[10] However, the most spectacular objects were the silver plates covering the sabretache. These objects, less than 15 cm high, still offered a relatively large surface for the goldsmith to prove his abilities. There are different types of compositions. In some cases, such as in the one found in Central Hungary (Dunavecse),[11] it seems like the mountings of the four corners and the central one were united into one common composition. The four corners as well as the center are covered by the usual symmetrical palmette leaves. Another type is less centrally organized but represents an endless net of palmette leaves and tendrils. It looks like a piece of textile, and we can only hypothetically assume that similar patterns were indeed used for clothing.[12] There are no two identical pieces among the preserved sabretache plates; it seems that all of them were produced with an individual pattern. The newest discovery, a sabretache found in Central Hungary some ten years ago (Bugyi-Felsővány) is again surprising: this is the only known example with a frame consisting of tendrils and half-palmette leaves.[13] Altogether there are 27 plates known so far. Their uneven distribution in the Carpathian Basin is one of the unanswered problems of the period.

**Fig. 2.** Sabretache mountings from Budapest-Farkasrét (Budapest, Hungarian National Museum)

Women were dressed equally luxuriously. They owned wonderful necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and their vestment was decorated with silver mountings. The most spectacular element of their jewelry were the disks attached to the end of their braided hair. There are two types, the openwork and the laminar. Many of the hair disks are decorated with the usual palmette motifs. However, in certain cases, animals were depicted in hair disks. One of the most famous representations among these is the hair disk from Rakamaz (East Hungary), depicting an eagle catching smaller birds.[14] Another interesting piece was found in the neighboring Ibrány, representing a lion.

The legs and the tail of the lion are remarkably transformed to leaves; thus the animal is gradually losing its figural characteristics and is being converted to an ornamental motif.[15]



**Fig. 3.** Hair disk from Ibrány (Nyíregyháza, Jósa András Múzeum)

All what we know about the art of the early Hungarians are the results of excavations. Metalworks were preserved relatively well; wooden objects and textile were not. In some cases, bone carvings survived and these attest that the typical Hungarian palmette decoration was not limited to metalworks but probably was used generally.[16] However, we have to be

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extremely cautious reconstructing the world of the early Hungarians consisting exclusively of palmettes, even if the variability of this type of decoration seems to be enormous.

This is an exceptional style unmistakably typical for the early Hungarians. There are not too many phases in European art history when so characteristically local styles were in use. Surprisingly, this style was never analyzed by art historians. As it was pointed out, Hungarian art historians started their national narrative with 1000, when the process of Christianization and state formation resulted the emergence of a European style in the Hungarian Kingdom. The late Ernő Marosi, once the leading authority in Hungarian art history, stated *expressis verbis*: "there is no modern art historical concept on the art of the migrating Hungarians. The revelatory artistic production of the exhibition on the early Hungarians in the National Museum (that was never presented in such a richness together) remained practically without interpretation regarding its art historical significance and position."[17]

Thus, our present view is based on the contributions of archaeologists. One of the directions most popular among archaeologists since the early 20th century is the hypotheses on the relationship between Hungarian and Islamic art. The first serious attempt was done by József Hampel in 1907.[18] A few decades later, in the 1930s Nándor Fettich deduced the palmette decoration of the sabretache plates from the Arabic ornaments.[19] More recently, Károly Mesterházy argued that the structure, form, and organization originates in the art of Abbasid Iraq, in its Samarra period (836-892).[20] A few years ago, in 2013 he analyzed some bell mountings and caftan decorations found in 10th-century Hungarian tombs and compared them to Islamic artefacts.[21] While the aniconic character of the early Hungarian art and some of the details indeed seem to be comparable to 9th-century Islamic artistic production, the connections were probably not direct. Also, from a historical point of view, Islam's influence seems unrealistic since early Hungarians had no intensive connection with the Islamic world.

There are no signs of Muslim converts among the Hungarians, whose religion was most probably a variant of pagan Shamanism.

Hungarians were migrating from the East, probably from the eastern side of the Ural. Obviously, archaeologists tried to find the objects' predecessors in the Carpathian Basin somewhere in the territory of modern Russia and Ukraine. A leading researcher collecting materials from these regions was István Fodor in the second half of the 20th century. More recently, Attila Türk and the Archaeological Institute of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University conducts promising research at sites near to the Ural. They collected finds from sites as Sineglazovo and Uelgi and argued convincingly that these are related to the early Hungarians.[22] However, the analogies they found, such as the mountings with rosette motif, albeit very similar to objects from the Carpathian Basin, do not belong to the high-quality production of the early Hungarian art. In other cases, the palmette is comparable but not identical. Of course, there is a big geographical and chronological distance and motifs might have been transformed migrating together with the Hungarians.

Nevertheless, despite all efforts, convincing analogies are very rare from the huge Russian territories. Exceptionally, sabretache plates were found; however, their palmette decoration differs significantly from the Hungarian type. An interesting example was found in a 10th-century Mari tomb (Mari people belong to the Finno-Ugric people, linguistically related to the Hungarians).[23] Unfortunately, the object has been lost. Nevertheless, what we can see in its picture, is quite far from the compositions so far presented from Hungary. The lions are more realistic and the palmette leaves lack the usual characteristics (lines and dots in the middle, parallel lines at the edges).

István Fodor, originally elaborating this research direction in the 1970s, made use of the monography of Boris Marshak, published on silverwork of Sogdian origin in 1971.[24] The Hungarian objects were compared to dishes belonging to the so-called School B. Indeed, there are some objects, decorated with palmette leaves, in which the lines and dots can be found. However, the lines on the edges are missing, combined with realistic animal representations. The types of objects are also different. It would be hard to argue that there is any connection between the Iranian goldsmith traditions and the metalworks produced by the early Hungarians, but no direct

relationship can be proven. Most probably, post-Sassanid Iranian art, including the workshop production of the Sogdians, was part of a larger artistic koine, to which other cultures, such as Arabic and Byzantine, also contributed.

István Fodor also interpreted the Hungarian ornamental decoration as an expression of their Shamanistic belief.[25] This theory was most elaborated by István Dienes.[26] He thought that the leaves are schematic trees, and thus symbolize the central element of Shamanism, the World Tree. According to scholars of religious and ethnographic studies, early Hungarians believed in the three layers of the world (the human world, the world of the gods, and the world of the evil spirits) that are connected by the World Tree. Shamans have the ability to move on the tree and thus collect information from the other worlds.

A key object in this respect can be the sabretache plate found in East Hungary, at Tiszabezdéd (now preserved in the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest).[27] Following the interpretation of István Fodor, this may be an excellent example of the religious syncretism of the early Hungarians.[28] The palmette leaves have been interpreted as symbolizing the World Tree of Shamanism, following the general pattern. However, there are additional, unusual elements in this plate. In the middle, there is a cross that has almost identically long arms (although the descending arm is somewhat longer but its length does not follow the pattern of the Latin cross). A cross in 10th-century Central Europe cannot refer to anything other than Christianity. Finally, there are animals in the corners. This is surprising because so far this is the only Hungarian sabretache plate that was decorated by figural motifs. The lower right corner is damaged, and the lower left corner motif seems unfinished. However, the animals of the upper corners are well elaborated. On the right, a winged lion can be seen. It has a strange body part on the top of its head. Thus it was once interpreted as a unicorn.[29] However, unicorns usually do not have wings and never have a lion's head. On the left, another mythological animal can be identified. It also has wings and the claws of a lion. Its tale is similar to that of a peacock. The animal represented with the tale of a peacock, a head of a dog, and the claw of a lion is the Persian

simurgh. I am not sure whether in the Hungarian plate the animal has a head of a dog or that of a lion, but this question does not seem to be crucial.



**Fig. 4.** Sabretache plate from Tiszabezdéd
(Budapest, Hungarian National Museum).

The simurgh or senmurv is an important element of Iranian mythology. The simurgh was able to purify the land and waters and bestow fertility. The mythical bird represented the union between the earth and the sky, serving as mediator and messenger. Thus, István Fodor argued that migrating Hungarians met with different cultures such as Christianity and Iranian Zoroastrianism and mixed them with their own Shamanistic believes.

In his way the sabretache of Tiszabezdéd can be the symbol of the cross-cultural experience of migrating people in history.

Simurghs, of course, were frequently represented in Persian art. It can be found in metalworks as well as in textiles. The Persians were famous of their silk production that was imported in all over Europe. However, simurghs can be found in Byzantine textiles, too. Moreover, the simurgh was represented in stone carving as well, as a large piece proves from the 10th century, kept in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul. This animal was also represented in the famous golden diadem, found in Preslav, former capital of the First Bulgarian Empire.[30] Among the enamel plaques of this diadem, another one depicts a winged lion, which by the way, has also a strange body part on the top of its head (although it points backward, not forward as the one in the Tiszabezdéd plate). All in all, the simurgh is not exclusively Iranian but it was favored by Byzantine artists, too.[31]



**Fig. 5.** Enamel plaques of a diadem from Preslav (photo author)

The cross, as we have seen, seems to belong to the group of Greek Crosses, which also points toward Byzantium. Even the palmette motif is an

essential part of Byzantine art. A bracelet, found in a 10th century Hungarian tomb in Tiszaeszlár-Bashalom in North-East Hungary, was long regarded as a Hungarian metalwork. However, its relation to Byzantine goldsmith work was realized, proven by a Byzantine chalice in the Treasury of San Marco collection in Venice. By now, the bracelet is regarded as an original piece from the Byzantine Empire; but it was so close to the taste of early Hungarians that they used it as their own production.[32] Wonderful, high-quality objects adorned with palmette decoration, originating from 10th-century Byzantium, were also found in Hungary, such as the silver situla from Beszterec in East Hungary.[33] Thus, it seems that the major components of the sabretache plate of Tiszabezdéd (the cross, the simurgh and the palmette leaves) came from Byzantium in a package.

This can be generalized to the entire early Hungarian style. Since we have not found clear evidence that Hungarians used similar objects before arriving to the Carpathian Basin, it is more probable that this artistic culture emerged only after the Hungarians arrived in the Carpathian Basin. This is the result of the combination of earlier nomadic art, the influences of their new Byzantine neighbor, and artistic elements found in the region. Objects from 10th-century Hungarian tombs prove that in certain cases Byzantine jewelry was preferred by Hungarians, such as the golden earrings found at Kecel.[34] Even cult objects, such as enkolpions from the Holy Land were found in early Hungarian cemeteries.[35]

To sum up, it seems that the 10th-century art of the Carpathian Basin was not the last flower of the Hungarians' previous nomadic culture, but it was created by cross-cultural connections in their new home. The 10th century formed a transitional period that prepared the intensive Christianization after 1000. Thus, the last wave of early medieval migration not only changed the cultural landscape of Central Europe, but it transformed the migrating people even more radically. Slowly changing taste and cultural attitudes, the migrating Hungarians, originally following Shamanistic beliefs under the influence of their new neighbors, turned towards the leading trend of European culture of the Middle Ages. Probably that's why Christianization and state formation, started around 1000 by the

first Hungarian king, (Saint) Stephen I, was so successful that it guaranteed the survival of this people for the following thousand years.[36]

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# From India to Southeast Asia: A Building Transcends an Ocean

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**ABSTRACT**

This essay concerns the spread of shrines dedicated to the memory of Shahul Hamid across South and Southeast Asia as a reflection of Tamil migration patterns to places such as Sri Lanka, Singapore, Penang and more. Blessings given at the shrine of Shah al-Hamid, a sixteenth-century Sufi saint whose teaching quarters and residence were in Nagore, Tamil Nadu, were associated with good health and safety in travel. Hindus, as well as Muslims, sought and still seek the saint's protection. This desire was transported to distant lands where the saint's devotees established new homes and shrines that commemorated Shah al-Hamid's karamat, his miracles, in the diaspora.

One normally thinks of transcending borders as part of a process of migration. But migration, in this case, the migration of Tamil workers to Southeast Asia from the late eighteenth century on, can generate another movement, one that they would consider primary, not secondary, that is, magically flying through the air. Tamil Muslim workers who migrated from Nagapattinam, in present-day Tamil Nadu some 325 kilometers from Chennai, brought with them deep devotion to the sixteenth-century Sufi saint, Shah al-Hamid, and constructed shrines dedicated to him, ones that replicate the form of the shrine in Nagore. So close are they in form to prominent parts of the Nagore shrine that they are easily recognized. Because the shrine is a *dargah*, and a saint – or anyone, for that matter – can only be buried in one place, Shah al-Hamid's *karamat* (miracles) are imagined to have flown, literally flown, to the various locations where there are shrines that function as Nagore dargahs, as they are called. The shrines, each of them believed to house the miracles of the saint.[1]

The Sufi, Shah al-Hamid,[2] traveled widely crossing the Arabian sea, the Red sea, and perhaps the Bay of Bengal,[3] suggesting why even today for some he is the saint of choice to be invoked before, while and after crossing the waters. Upon his return to the India he cured a Raja, a Hindu king ruling over parts of south India, and in thanks was presented with land in Nagore that became first his teaching headquarters and then a dargah. However, I recently was told that the shrine was built on land donated by the Hindu Chettiar community as gratitude for miraculous interventions during their migrating sea voyages.[4] The lore that has developed around Shah al-Hamid's performance of many miracles focusing travel, on water and his awesome curative powers has a highly hagiographic nature.

The dargah of Shah al-Hamid on the Tamil coast has attracted the attention of scholars due to its fusion of Muslim and Indic practices. Ritual includes not only the recitation of the Quran, the singing of qawwali – associated with Muslim traditions but also Indic ones such as seeping holy water with ritual herbs and tonsuring the head to commemorate life cycle observances. As noted, multiple dargahs to Shah al-Hamid, really to his miracles – karamat – are extremely rare in Islam and there has been

relatively little exploration of parallels in practice and appearance of this unusual phenomenon. Investigating this is a challenge due to a lack of archival documentation and changing norms of Islam throughout much of this region, but what we do learn provides insights into Tamil migration patterns across the Indian ocean.

The Nagore shrine is visited equally by Muslims and Hindus, who are seeking cures for ailments and safety in travel. He's particularly associated with saving ships. Those who wish to be healed or secure safe journeys offer votive plaques with an image of the afflicted body part or a ship, a car or even an airplane. In early-modern times those about to take a sea voyage would make an offering to the shrine and, when returning, gave a monetary tribute that was ten times the original amount.[5]



**Fig. 1.** Votive plaque of afflicted body parts to be donated to the Nagore Shrine of Shah al-Hamid. Tin, 11 x 6.5 cms. photo: 2007

Nagore is a site of pilgrimage as popular posters attest.[6] I met people who had come from Singapore, Kerala and Pondicherry all from families who

had originally migrated from the Tamil coast. Those from Southeast Asia not only visit but also endow the shrine. There are inscriptions indicating the shrine's restoration by Malaysians whose ancestors had migrated from the Tamil coast. Records indicate that Acehnese devotees donated money to the shrine, while in 1888, Tamils who migrated to Singapore raised a large sum of money to purchase a crystal chandelier for the Nagore shrine.[7] Today the Nagore dargah's popularity is seen in the numerous hotels that fill the town. Seven visits to Nagore are said to be equal to one to Mecca.

It is a large complex but its most notable feature are its multiple minarets. Three were given by prominent Muslim ship owners who were engaged Southeast Asian trade, while the tallest one was constructed by a Hindu raja.[8] These minarets are fundamental to the flag-raising ceremonies performed at the annual commemoration of Shah al-Hamid's death by both those in Nagore and those who migrated to the diaspora.[9]



**Fig. 2.** Dargah of Shah al-Hamid, 16th C. on, Nagore, Tamil Nadu, India. Photo: 2011

The favor that Shah al-Hamid found was so great that when Indian merchants who came largely from the Tamil coast migrated across the waters of the Indian Ocean and settled abroad in the new colonial colonies in South and Southeast Asia they then duplicated his dargah in multiple venues.[10] Although I have no date for the establishment of the shrine to Shah al-Hamid in Aceh, Indonesia, it was probably the first of these since Tamils from Nagore had been trading and migrating there long before Europeans exercised their interests in Southeast Asia. The Aceh shrine was probably founded by Tamil Muslims who dominated trade in Indian textiles, oils and salt for spices, betel nut, and more.[11] Marrying local wives, they established roots in Aceh and endowed religious structures such as mosques and shrines. I've been unable to ascertain if the Aceh shrine still exists but given the events of the last decade or so it's unlikely. The Dutch scholar Snouck Hurgronje, the first to study the shrine, provides no description. I've not found an image suggesting that it was undistinguished and probably lacked the minarets associated with the Nagore shrine and at least four other shrines in the diaspora. It likely resembled Ache's tiered mosques.[12]

Although visual proof is lacking for a link between the Nagore and Ache shrine, other evidence confirms their connection. Hurgronje's account indicates that in Aceh Shah al-Hamid's hagiography accorded with that in Nagore as was belief that devotion to the saint assured safety in travel.[13] The giving of talisman to the shrine in return for the fulfillment of wishes for good health also paralleled the practices at Nagore. In Aceh the well-being of children was stressed. If a child were ill a pure gold or silver plaque depicting the afflicted organ would be donated, and if the illness was extensive, a gold cord, as long as the child's height, was offered. Tamil traders then took them to Nagore, indicating these migrants kept in close touch with their roots.

In the early 19th century, a shrine dedicated to Shah al-Hamid's karamat was founded on Sri Lanka's east coast. It was built by Muhammad Tambi Lebbe, a merchant from Tamil Nadu, who had a vision of Shah al-Hamid instructing him to drink lime juice and seawater to cure his leprosy.[14] This dargah, today known as Beach Mosque, is popular among Sri Lankan Tamils. Like those in Nagore and Aceh is not only associated with

health but also safety in travel, for he is believed to magically plug leaks in ships while at sea. The complex, with two minarets inspired by those multiple towers at Nagore, is located at the ocean's edge. At each site the minarets' multiple stories are marked by protruding ribs. The shrine has been modernized and I had assumed this resulted from the 2004 tsunami but locals assured me that the complex received no damage, thanks to the saint's powers. The shrine includes an empty cenotaph dedicated to the Nagore saint's many miracles — a phenomenon common to Southeast Asian shrines. The flag-raising ceremony at the Sri Lankan shrine is coordinated with that at the Nagore shrine so the first flags are raised at precisely the same time.[15] While the flag raising ceremony parallels the one at Nagore, there is no indication that talisman are offered to the shrine. This part of Sri Lanka is heavily Muslim so the lack of Hindu devotees or Indic practices is not surprising.



**Fig. 3.** Shrine for Shah al–Hamid, today known as Beach Mosque, Kalmunaikkudy, eastern Sri Lanka photo: 2009

We have a more detailed idea of the history and development of the Penang shrine dedicated to the memory and miracles of Shah al-Hamid. Even before colonial intervention a Tamil saint was associated with clearing Penang's land for habitation while four others, two related to good health and healing and another two with safety in travel, were part of the island's pietistic landscape.[16] Tamil Muslims began to emigrate to George Town in large numbers. The British described them as "thrifty, industrious and enterprising; plucky mariners and expert traders,"[17] They desired both a permanent mosque, for only temporary structures for prayer existed at that point, and shrine for the memory of Shah al-Hamid. In a letter of August 1798, the East India Company issued a grant to Tamil Muslim merchants for the Nagore Durgha in Penang[18] Then, three years later on the second of November 1801 land was granted by the Lieutenant Governor of the East India Company for both the Nagore Dargah and the Kapitan Kling Mosque.[19] The dargah was then built by Nethersah Jemadar, a Tamil who also had bequeathed land and buildings known as an Ashurkhana for the ritual Muharram ceremonies in Penang. The Ashurkhana is largely ruined today but it was an important focus of the ritual life of Penang's Muslim community. Today Muharram is considered a Shia rite, however, in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century South Asia and the diaspora, Muharram was commemorated by Sunnis as well as Shias. In Penang Nethersah Jemadar's provision of funds for the Ashurkhana to accommodate all the needs of Muharram was for the well-being of a diasporic Sunni community.[20]

Nethersah Jemadar's dargah survives in considerably better condition than his Ashurkhana. The dargah is a long rectangular building set at the corner of two streets. The long side contains shops whose rental fees go to the maintenance of the shrine. Many of these shops are occupied by jewelers whose forefathers maintained links with Nagore and would travel between Nagore and Penang on business.[21] I met a couple who owned a jewelry shop near the George Town shrine whose forefathers had migrated from India. They had just returned from their annual pilgrimage from Nagore. The dargah's shorter side, located on the main street, is marked by three arched entrances but they are not the original design. An early photograph shows

that initially a flat lattice worked pediment was supported by two columns.[22] Each corner of the roof is marked by short, ribbed minarets echoing those larger ones at Nagore. The stepped minarets, heavy moldings and lattice work are said to be that of Tamil workmen and reflect a style then common in George Town. Those migrant laborers clearly had the Nagore shrine in their mind as they built in the new colony. For example, before George Town's famous Kapitan Kling mosque was rebuilt in the Indo-Saracenic style that we see today, it originally bore features similar to those of the nearby dargah.[23] The shrine today has two domes but at the time of its construction there was only one. About 1910 the shrine urgently needed structural repairs. At this same time a German architect, Henry Alfred Neubronner, was designing a cupula for the Kapitan Kling Mosque. As a trial for the mosque's dome, he added a second one over the shrine's entrance.[24] The arches at the entrance were probably added then as well.



**Fig. 4.** Dargah of Shah al-Hamid, George Town, Penang. Photo: 2012

After World War II the Tamil population of Penang decreased sizably thus investment at the shrine also diminished.[25] Processions associated with the flag raising ceremony eventually stopped, as I was told that getting permission was too difficult. Photographs of the original shrine during flag raising indicate that it resembled a sailing ship, apt for a saint associated with safety in travel. A photograph from 2013 indicates many fewer flags in place.[26] The shrine, which has always attracted Hindus and Muslims, these day is mostly a sanctuary for people who need a place to pray or rest.[27] During one visit I encountered a young Hindu woman who assured me that Shah al-Hamid would grant any request. She said this emphatically several times. While many Penang Muslims maintain their devotion to Shah al-Hamid, the officer who oversees the shrine expressed tension to me over his Sufic leanings and the pressure from the orthodox to reject the veneration of Sufi saints.[28]

Five more shrines were built along Malaysia's coasts.[29] Those at Alor Setar and Taiping have been transformed into mosques, although their original role as shrines to Shah al-Hamid is acknowledged. The other three at Ayer Panas, Endau and Kuala Terengganu, I've not yet been able to trace.[30] There was also a shrine in Rangoon which was destroyed in 2011 by government forces.[31] An old photo of it in the Nagore Dargah, Singapore indicates the Rangoon shrine too had minarets similar to those at other Shah al-Hamid shrines. While the history much less the appearance of these shrines remains murky, the Singapore one is better known.

By the early 1820s Singapore had a considerable Tamil population and a number had settled in what is now China Town. Published records indicate that in 1827 land at the corners of Telok Ayer and Boon Tat Streets was granted to a Tamil, Katter Pillar, for 99 years from October 1, 1827.[32] This was under the condition that the edifice was not constructed from wood or attap to help prevent fires.[33] It was built of brick between 1828 and 1830 by two brothers, Mohammed and Haji Mohideen, as a shrine to Shah al-Hamid's karamat. While today the shrine is inland thanks to land reclamation, however originally it sat on a sandy beach and would be the first structure seen by those disembarking from boats. While this much is documented

many believe that a makeshift shrine existed even before the British claimed the island. Over time the Dargah was governed by a series of trustees and in 1974 was deemed a national monument. It fell into a state of dilapidation. Then in the early 1990s it was boarded for repairs and officially reopened as Singapore's Nagore Dargah Indian Muslim Heritage Centre in 2011. Today, it is under the purview of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore.



**Fig. 5.** Nagore Dargah, Singapore, now known as the Nagore Dargah Indian Muslim Heritage Centre. Photo: 2018

Although it is commonly considered a replica of Shah al-Hamid's shrine in Nagore, Tamil Nadu, in fact, it's only the minarets that recall Nagore. The lower façade's appearance is closer to the original dargah in Penang built only 20 years earlier that had only a single dome. The Singapore building is, like its Penang counterpart, rectangular in format, but larger and more elegant in its detail. The three arches of the Singapore entrance are flanked by European style inspired columns showing the Tamil immigrants now close contact with their British colonizers. These Europeanizing elements have

been part of the façade since its inception, but over the years various restorations have changed details. The National Museum of Singapore and the Singapore National Archives have collections of old photographs of the shrine that I had planned to study to understand changes to the building but I was prevented from this work due to the Covid-19 epidemic.[34] Today the high quality stucco work on the entrance arch rendered as a centrally placed crescent moon and star subtly marks the Singapore dargah as a Muslim building. At each corner of the building is ribbed minaret, present since its founding, intended to evoke those taller ones in south India. The niches in these minarets were once filled with lamps to illuminate them at night during the multiday celebration commemorating the death of Shah al-Hamid. The longer side facing Boon Tat Street bears rounded arches, common to the colonial architecture of Penang and Singapore of this time. The colonial nature of the building, at the time of its construction cutting-edge, is revealed by fan windows with colored glass. Once across the street from the dargah there was a compound for cooking food and qawwals, musicians who play and sing in honor of the saint. An image in the National Museum of Singapore indicates that its entrance and corners were marked by ribbed minarets like those on the dargah.[35]

Some of the ritual practiced at other Shah al-Hamid shrines was observed here as well including processions and the flag raising ceremonies. Flags preserved in both the dargah and the Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore indicate they are extremely large.[36] They are raised at the same time as those in Nagore and Sri Lanka. And even flags can migrate for in the past flags raised at shrines in the diaspora would be sent to Nagore for the saint's blessing and then returned.[37]

Although the dargah is a Heritage Centre now and has lost its status and function as a shrine, its use was once more personal. Nineteenth and early twentieth century Tamils who had migrated were reluctant to return to India in part because of the sea journey and in part from lost revenue when shops were closed.[38] Asking for protection through Shah al-Hamid's intercession, the traders would stay in the Singapore Dargah for up to three days before any sea voyage. I haven't found any indication that the Singapore

dargah was associated with curative powers, although work I had planned before the pandemic in the National Archives might help. The archival documents I've seen don't suggest that many Hindus frequented the shrine, but the Hindu S.R. Nathan, President of Singapore from 1999 to 2011, found refuge there as child.[39] When I was invited to the Heritage Centre in 2018 to meet its supporters a number of Hindus were present. One of these men, a Chettiar whose grandparents had migrated in the early twentieth century, had a great interest in not only the Dargah of Shah al-Hamid but in other Muslim shrines still active in Singapore. He told me his grandfather and generations earlier always first visited Hindu temples and then spent the night before setting off for India in the Nagore shrine. Is he, like his emigree predecessors, a devotee of Shah al-Hamid or is he a Singapore history buff? I'm not sure.

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## Endnotes

1. I thank the many people who have helped me with this project and essay, especially the late Rick Asher who assisted me every step of the way.

2. For hagiographies see: Muhammad Yusuf Sahib, *Tazkirat-e-Aftab-e-Nagore* (Nagore: Dargarh Sharif, 1993); hereafter this work will be known as *Tazkirat*; Shaikh Hassan Sahib Qadhiri, *The Divine Light of Nagore* (Nagore: Habeeb and Fahira Publishers, 2007); M.A Hyder Ali and M.J. Ali Abu Thahir, *His Huliness Kadhhir Vali Redeemer of Faiths and Creeds, The Saint of Nagore* (Nellikuppam: Mumthaaj Publishers, 2008). This hagiography, the newest among them, plays down Shah al-Hamid's travels and contacts outside of India and focus on his Indian experiences. For example he talks with Mira Bai and has many cups of tea with Guru Nank; Scholarly works include Vasudha Narayanan, "Nagore: Dargah of Hazrat Shah al-Hamid," in *Dargahs, Abodes of the Saints*, ed. Mumtaz Currim and George Michell. (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2004),136-47; Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 91-94, 113, 115, 119, 1123-25, 230-35; S.A.A. Saheb, "A 'Festival of Flags': Hindu-Muslim Devotion and the Sacralising of Localism at the Shrine of Nagore-e-Sharif in Tamil Nadu," in *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotions in Sufi Cults*, ed. Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu (New York: Routledge, 1998), 55-76 and the following three essays by Catherine B. Asher, "Water: Its Meaning and Powers in the Indian Sufi Tradition," in *Water Histories of South Asia: The materiality of Liquesance*, ed. Sugata Ray and Venugopal Madddipati (London and New Delhi: Routledge, 2020), 159-184. "The Sufi Shrines of Shahul Hamid in India and Southeast Asia," *Artibus Asiae*, LXIX,2 (2009), 247-58; "Out of the Desert: Water Traditions in the South Asian Landscape," *Rivers of Paradise: Water in Islamic Art and Culture*, ed. Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 264-91. These sources contain basic information about the Nagore shrine in India.

3. Sahib, "A Festival of Flags," 59.

4. Subbiah Lakshman wrote this to me as if it were common knowledge in an email of March 2021.

5. Lore told to me at the Nagore shrine.

6. See: https://www.art365.in/islamic-art-prints-paintings.

7. Torsten Tschacher, "Witnessing Fun: Tamil Speaking Muslims and the Imagination of Ritual in Southeast Asia," *Ritual, Caste and Religion in Colonial South India*. eds. Michael Bergunder, Heiko Frese and Ulrike Schroder, (Halle: Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2010), 196.

8. Narayanan, "*Nagore*: Dargah of Hazrat Shahul Hamid," 145-46.

9. See Saheb, "A Festival of Flags," pp. 61-74 for a detailed discussion of flag raising at the dargah. In Urdu the death anniversary is known as the '*urs*, but in Tamil as the *kanduri*. For flag raising festivals at the Madurai temple see A.V. Jeyechandrun, *The Madurai Temple Complex* (Madurai: Mudarai Kamaraj University, 1985), pp. 210-12.

10. Those at Penang and Singapore still stand. For the Rangoon shrine, see: Tschacher, "Witnessing Fun," 196, 198, 202. I was told by Dennis McGilvrary it was destroyed by Islamicists, but the United States Department Reports claim it was the Myanmar government. http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2011/eap/192615.htm, accessed 5 June 2014. For the Sri Lankan shrine, see: http://jailani.org/mcgilvray.htm,( accessed 24 June 2014). This is an on-line version of: Dennis B. McGilvray, "Jailani: A Sufi Shrine in Sri Lanka," eds. Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation & Conflict* (Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004) 273-289. For the shrine at Aceh, Indonesia and more sites in Malaysia, see: Khoo Salman Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang: Patronage and Place Making Around the Kapitan Kling Mosque, 1786-*1957 (Penang: Areca Books, 2014), 70.

11. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 36-37.

12. For a surviving example of this mosque type see: https://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/133898?show=full (accessed 16 May 2022)

13. C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese*, 2 vols. trans. A.W.S. O'Sullivan (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1906), I:216-17.

14. McGilvray, "Jailani: A Sufi Shrine in Sri Lanka," accessed 5 June 2014.

15. MacGilvay, "Jailani: A Sufi Shrine in Sri Lanka."

16. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 39, 57, 58. 65-7.

17. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 11-12.

18. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 70.

19. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 59.

20. For a photo and plan of the Ashurkhana and images of Muharram, see: Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 186-87.

21.
Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 413.

22. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 69.

23. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 200-01.

24. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 293-94.

25. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 71.

26. For both images, see: Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 69.

27. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 14, 67-68; http://waliofallah.blogspot.com/2012/06/shrine-of-syed-shahul-hamid-george-town.html (accessed 21 April 2022)

28. In 2014 I interviewed a Shrine authority who during the interview was clearly troubled by Sufi belief. Also see http://waliofallah.blogspot.com/2012/06/shrine-of-syed-shahul-hamid-george-town.html (accessed 21 April 2022)

29. Nasution, *The Chulia in Penang*, 70.

30. Kuala Terengganu is particularly conservative in terms of Islam so it's unlikely that a Sufi shrine there still survives.

31. http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2011/eap/192615.htm (accessed 24 July 2013)

32. Vernon Cornelius-Takahama and Joanna Tan, "Nagore Durgha Shrine," Typed document preserved in Singapore National Archives. No number was included.
https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_536_2004-12-27.html (accessed 16 May 2022)

33. Cornelius-Takahama and Tan, "Nagore Durgah."
https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_536_2004-12-27.html (accessed 16 May 2022)

34. For some images see: https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1260343 (accessed 16 May 2022)

35. See the first photograph at: https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1260343 (accessed 16 May. 2022)

36. Rajesh Rai and A. Mani, ed., *Singapore Indian Heritage* (Singapore: Indian Heritage Centre, 2017), 263.

37. Told to me by Mr. Peer M. Akbur at Nagore Dargah, Singapore on 11 August 2018.

38. National Archives of Singapore, Oral Histories:
http://cord.nhb.gov.sg/cord/public/internetSearch/catalogueForm.jsp?command=loadUpdate&id=12515&xAccess=false&total=28&currentPageNo=3&startPageNo=1&startNoBatch=0&thesaurusFlag=on&searchType=0&startIndex=20&count=10&simpleSearch=nagore&B1=Search, (accessed 28 June 2007).

39. S.R. Nathan had run away from home twice as a child. That he was cared for by a poor Muslim named Kedar is well-known while Nathan's stay at the dargah was reported to me by Mr. Peer M. Akbur. A Tamil plaque at the shrine commemorates Nathan's stay there.

# Hanna Levy-Deinhard and the Theory of Pure Visibility

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**ABSTRACT**

With the rise of Nazism in Germany, Hanna Levy-Deinhard, a German historian of art of Jewish origin, seeks asylum in Paris in 1933, where she would study at the Sorbonne under the guidance of Charles Lallo and Henri Focillon. Her 1936 doctoral thesis, entitled Henri Wölfflin: sa théorie, ses prédécesseurs, deals critically with the Theory of Pure Visibility, analyzing authors such as Konrad Fiedler, Adolf von Hildebrand, and Heinrich Wölfflin. Hanna Levy-Deinhard will seek to demonstrate in France that Fiedler was too idealistic in his conclusions about the process of artistic creation; that Hildebrand does not sufficiently consider the artist's individuality in his theory, and that Wölfflin first problematically based on a racial principle the inequality of development of the arts, secondly establishes fundamental concepts of art history that are purely concepts of style, and not historical indeed, and finally neither considers the artist's individuality, constructing a nameless art history that is not defensible. Hanna Levy-Deinhard's thesis had some repercussions at the time and contributed to the discussion on French soil of this German school of thought about art.

Hanna Levy Deinhard (1912-1984), an art historian of Jewish and German origin, became known in Brazil for her articles on Brazilian colonial art, published in the Revista do Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, especially the one entitled *European Models in Colonial Painting* (1944). In the United States, where she also worked, her most influential work is the book *Meaning and Expression* (1970), which deals with the sociology of art. In the present paper, I will address a part of her doctoral thesis in philosophy, entitled *Henri Wölfflin: sa théorie, ses prédécesseurs,* defended at the Sorbonne and published in 1936. Hanna then signed with her maiden name, Levy, and had as a doctoral advisor the art historian Henri Focillon. She had started her doctorate in Munich but had to leave Germany due to the rise of Nazism. It is then a young Jewish art historian and refugee who will challenge, in her thesis, theories such as those of Fiedler, Hidelbrand, and Wölfflin, in order to, together with her friend and tutor Max Raphael, propose the establishment of the discipline of the sociology of art. Hanna Levy's thesis, probably due to the war and her status as an émigré, did not have wide repercussions. However, I consider her thesis a fundamental work for the understanding of Hanna Levy Deinhard's future research. For example, in the introduction to *Meaning and expression*, Deinhard makes the following claim:

> In other words: any theory that places Works of art outside history, be it about their origin or their effects, cannot explain the existence of the different arts, the immense diversity of Works of art, nor for the fact that these Works are evaluated differently at different times (Levy 1936, 1).

Her concern with the historicity of works of art forms the basis of the criticism she will address in her thesis on Fiedler, Hildebrand, and Wölfflin's theories. But this does not mean that she does not perceive the risks of a too-narrow reading of the works as an "illustration" of history, which is also made clear in the introduction to Meaning and Expression:

> If, however, artistic activity and the work of art are regarded solely as the expression and result of a unique

set of historical conditions, there is the risk of degrading the work of art to the status of a mere example of economic, religious, social, or political forces, in which case what is specifically artistic is overlooked or remains unexplained (Deinhard 1970, 1).

*A* milestone in the joint project of Levy and Raphael to establish the sociology of art on a Marxist basis was the publication, in 1933, of the work *Proudhon, Marx, Picasso. Trois études sur la sociologie de l'art,* by Raphael, a work mentioned by Hanna Levy in her thesis. Hanna Levy's thesis is, in my view, another milestone, as it seeks to prepare the ground for the sociology of art by questioning basic assumptions of European art historiography that, like Max Raphael, considers traditional and "bourgeois" (Modigliani 2008, 26). Although Hanna Levy is, as we shall see, quite harsh in her criticisms, it cannot be disregarded that both she and Max Raphael do not completely abandon ideas that can be found in the authors criticized. The sociology of art that both proposed in the 1930s does not dispense with the direct analysis of the works and the consideration of their formal qualities.

In my brief paper, I will stick to the criticisms made by Levy to Hildebrand, Wölfflin, and, above all, Fiedler, directly related to the theory of pure visibility.

Hanna Levy begins chapter IV of her thesis by presenting Fiedler's theory of art, primarily from the analysis of *Du jugement des oeuvres de l`art plastique* (1876). She recognizes that Fiedler seeks a new theory of art, but raises the following main question: "Did Fiedler really find an objective method that allows solving the problems of theory, history, or art criticism?" (Levy 1936, 123) The question raised by Levy denotes the concern that she and Max Raphael present with finding an "objective methodology" for the study of art, capable of explaining both the social dimension and the formal dimension of the works. Continuing her analysis, Levy states that Fiedler establishes his thinking about art from the theory of knowledge, and has a special interest in the "origin of artistic activity". However, Levy here already begins to see in Fiedler what she understands as a lack of concern with the historicity of this origin:

After acknowledging the merit of Fiedler's work, in comparison with those of other art historians previously published, she highlights that relying on the theory of knowledge makes him seek to answer a different set of questions than those faced by previous researchers (Levy 1936, 124).

Levy pays special attention to the way Fiedler explains the development of visual perception. For her, on this specific point, Fiedler makes mistakes for two reasons: "not establishing a definition of different processes: perception, representation and expression" and "excluding from artistic activity all issues related to the development of the artist's representation" (Levy 1936, 128). Specifically, concerning the process of expression, Levy points out that Fiedler doesn't explain how are developed other modes that appear with "different forms of expression", modes such as those exemplified by Levy, the scientific, the musical, the philosophical, etc. (Levy 1936, 131).

Levy proceeds with the development of her argument, reinforcing the criticism related to the role of history in Fiedler`s method. For her, first of all, Fiedler indicates that in a work of art form and content are identified. This identification, for Levy, necessarily means that Fiedler "denies all historical development, all evolution in general [...]. It seems that Fiedler was perfectly aware that his identification of form with content excludes all historical development" (Levy 1936, 131). This identification, for Levy, makes it impossible, in short, for the same content to acquire historically varied artistic forms. Of course, Hanna Levy here is still attached to form and content dualism, in any case, it is the resource she uses to try to map the ahistoricity of Fiedler's method.

Hanna Levy insists on the limitation of the artist`s role in Fiedler's theory: "Thus, for Fiedler, the only task that the artist can have, an absolutely autonomous task, is the realization of visibility" (Levy 1936, 132). In this observation, she is not alone. Many years later, Michael Podro would reformulate the comment, referring in broader terms to the dimension of human presence in Fiedler's texts:

> In the writings of Fiedler the image of human personality has become so limited, and so little detailed experience of works of art or anything else is called upon, that it is hard not to see him as the end of the tradition (Podro 1972, 120).

Hanna Levy, and like her Max Raphael, argued that art develops due to a complex intersection of different factors, individual, social, historical, material and psychological. Therefore, for Levy it is strangely enough to identify in Fiedler the indication of only one factor that generates artistic development: "Fiedler remains logical with himself in taking from his premises that the only stimulating factor in the development of art results from the differences in value between artists' talents" (Levy 1936, 133).

Even in the part of the thesis where she presents Fiedler's theory, as we can see, Levy already anticipates a large set of criticisms of his assumptions. The question of history, in all of them, is the one that gains more importance. This is how Levy states that Fiedler "is in any way opposed to any historical consideration that would attempt to 'explain' a work of art" (Levy 1936, 133), or even that "Fiedler's reality has no relation to concrete historical reality" (Levy 1936, 133)". From this she concludes that, for Fiedler, the "real existence of work of arts" seems to be a minor fact (Levy 1936, 134). The issue of access to works of art according to Fiedler's theory also interests Levy, and again we see her critical eye here: "Art, Fiedler explains to us, constitutes a kind of secret language accessible only to the initiated" (Levy 1936, 134). It is worth remembering at this point that for a long time Hanna Levy would address the issue of the relationship between lay people, amateurs, and art, has even developed a project on the subject and with it tried to obtain a Guggenheim fellowship in New York. Therefore, her concern with an idea of art open only to "initiates" appears already here.

Another text by Fiedler that Levy would comment on in her thesis is *Observations on the essence and history of architecture* since he wanted to see how the author proposed a practical application for his general theory. Based on these commented texts, she will elaborate the following summary of the main points of Fiedler's theory:

1. Art is a faculty of knowledge that apprehends the visible world by creating it. Thus, art has the same value as science.

2. The concrete existence of works of art has only relative importance concerning the artistic faculty (I open a parenthesis here to remind that Levy specifically criticizes the small role that material used for the creation of artistic forms seems to play in Fiedler's theory: " It is curious to note that Fiedler, even recognizing that matter constitutes the fundamental basis of all form, never considers matter as such, nor its relations with form" (p. 136)).

3. The work of art is, in fact, strictly individual and is addressed to a single individual, its author. Generally speaking, only artists can truly understand works of art.

4. The form of a work of art contains in itself its expression and its content.

5. Artistic creation is a unique and indivisible process.

6. The development of art is exclusively determined by the differentiation of talents.

7. When art flourishes, it is independent of concrete history. During the decadent periods, only the ideas of those times exert an influence on artistic production.

8. The history of styles is the history of forms (Levy 1936, 138-139).

Next, Hanna Levy dedicates herself to the critical part on Fiedler's theory, showing at the outset her concern to see if Fiedler has managed to develop a method that clarifies the origin of artistic activity and solves "essential problems of history, theory or of art criticism". It is in this part that she identifies an idealist bias in the author's theory (Levy 1936, 140), which would help to explain his little concern, in her view, with historical concreteness.

Hanna Levy unfolds her analysis when she indicates that Fiedler, when researching the act of knowledge, would have left out the study of the medium of knowledge, thus ignoring its character, which could only be "the result of a historical process" (Levy 1936, 142). For Levy, now considering the functioning of the visual perception process, Fiedler would also have little

information about its development: "Fiedler does not analyze or provide anything other than these two indications:

> 1. This process presupposes the existence of perception
> 2. This process is only possible under the condition that these perceptions disappear (Levy 1936, 143).

The next criticism she presents is that Fiedler, by eliminating "the concrete external world that is at the origin of the internal sense" (Levy 1936, 144), thus destroys the relationship between the sentient human body and the external world. In order not to remain only in abstractions, Hanna Levy proposes a more concrete example for her criticism: in his text on architecture, "he excludes from the process of artistic knowledge all internal equivalents of perceptions, Fiedler notably neglects the active role of the religious element without which we cannot fully grasp Gothic art". It follows that, once again, for Levy, Fiedler "denies all historical development" (Levy 1936, 144).

So many criticisms later, Levy returns to the question posed at the beginning of the chapter, namely, whether Fiedler finds the solution to the problem of the source of artistic activity and essential problems in the history, theory, and criticism of art, and then finally answers it:

> We can only answer this question in the negative. It would be false, however, to regard this lack as a particular weakness of Fiedler's. We will show, in the last part of this work, that his work reflects, in fact, perfectly the determined historical situation in which the artists and intellectuals of the bourgeoisie of his time found themselves (Levy 1936, 145).

It is important to emphasize that, if, on the one hand, Levy's intense criticism of Fiedler's theory seeks to pave the way for a new approach to art, on the other hand, more recent critics have had more generous readings of this theory. Salvini sees in Fiedler's theory the anticipation of a new [modernist] aesthetic by detecting "insufficiency of knowledge by the intellect" and by pointing to another type of artistic knowledge" (Salvini 1988,

17), Francisca Pérez Carreño seeks to demonstrate that for Fiedler, only in artistic creation "is a strictly visual or sensitive representation of the world possible" (Carreño 1991, 36), Christopher Wood recognizes the indebtedness of art theory to Fiedler (and Hildebrand):

> Fiedler and Hildebrand created a new language for analyzing form, so revealing the impoverishment of nineteenth-century historical scholarship. Without this language, art history remains stretched between the ingratiating narratives of the historians (Taine) and the pathos of the critical word-poets (Pater) (Wood 2019, 270).

Finally, Paul Wood, Charles Harrison, and Jaison Gaiger reinforce the importance of this theory for the avant-garde art of the early 20th century, especially that of Klee and Kandinsky:

> However, his insistence on art as an independent and legitimate form of inquiry, distinct from cognitive knowledge, whose activity does not take place in the head or even in the eyes alone but directly on the canvas or stone itself, parallels that search for a new artistic vocabulary which characterized innovative developments in the arts through into the early years of the next century (Wood, Harrison and Gaiger 1998, 685).

Some findings made by Levy would, however, also be taken up in a milder tone by later critics, as when Moshe Barasch, analyzing *Concerning the origin of artistic activity* (1887) states that

> Fiedler`s essay differs from all the others in that he did not focus on the nature and function of the articulately shaped work of art. He did not pay much attention to the product of artistic activity; he had little to say about the picture or the statue. Instead, he concentrated fully on the creative process (Barasch 1998, 128).

Adolf von Hildebrand also, as already indicated, deserves a chapter in Hanna Levy's thesis. The Hildebrand text she analyzes is *The problem of form in painting and sculpture* (1893). As she had done with Fiedler's theory, Levy points out that Hildebrand also "places the specifically artistic element in the object's relation to the act of seeing" (Levy 1936, 147). Levy focuses, among other points, on the two definitions of vision developed by Hildebrand, simultaneous vision (which apprehends the two dimensions) and successive vision (which apprehends the three dimensions). The two views, according to Hildebrand, are continually related. The object of perception, according to Hildebrand, read by Levy, has two qualities, namely, form-existence and form-effect.

As she had done with Fiedler's theory, Levy summarizes the main problems around which Hildebrand's theory revolves:

I. Relationship between space and object.

II. Role of the subject (artist) as a carrier of perceptions and representations

III. Role of Artistic Matter (Levy 1936, 161).

In Hildebrand's theory, Levy also notes that the problem of space predominates. Even so, he would have, in her view, a "unilateral way of posing problems", even when dealing with concrete art he would reach "a kind of formalism" (Levy 1936,167).

Such formalism is also characterized, in practice, by the almost total elimination of the artist in the configuration of the process of artistic creation: it is worth, in this sense, to read this excerpt from Levy, in which she discusses the relationship between the object of creation and the artist in Hildebrand's theory:

> If we now consider the object of representation as the bearer of conditions, determined qualities, etc., on the one hand, and the artist as a reasonable, sentimental, historical subject, etc., on the other hand, we find the following results: the object is absolutely fixed in one of its qualities, namely, as a support of space; artistic creation is reduced to a simple imaginary and formal activity (albeit incomplete) in which the artist, as a

> sensitive, social being, in short, as an individual, is almost entirely eliminated (Levy 1936, 170).

Taking the theory as a whole now, Levy points out, in Hildebrand's formalism, three gaps worthy of mention:

> 1. The actual relationship between the content and form of an object is not analyzed or re-explained by each object;
> 2. the subject (the artist) is in no way taken into account in his unique existence; then it follows that
> 3. the subject's relationship with the object is not controlled (Levy 1936, 171).

As she had done in her reading of Fiedler, Hanna Levy attacks in Hildebrand what she calls the "absolute character" conferred "on the pure representations of the object he abstracted in a non-dialectical manner" (Levy 1936, 172-173). She also attacks the absence, in theory, of a historical perspective, a constant in her criticisms, taking up the idea of eliminating the subject:

> We can see here again that Hildebrand neglects the historical character, which is a variable consequence of the object. He considers in the latter only the typical and not the individual, what is constant and not what moves. Hildebrand proceeds in the same way about the subject, which leads to his elimination (Levy 1936, 172-173).

The concern with the material that forms the work and with its conceptualization and analysis motivates another criticism of Levy, this time of the simplification, by Hildebrand in his theory, of the relationship between spirit and matter:

> Hildebrand reduces the relationship between spirit and matter, which is by nature profoundly dialectical and multiple, to a single constant relationship. Just as he had limited the possible relations between the two

dimensions and the third [...], so he takes into account only one attitude of the artist towards matter: overcoming matter by the spirit, forming the work of art as a spirit purified from all matter [...]. Hildebrand remains logical with himself. Had he not previously declared that artistic representation should develop independently of matter? (Levy 1936, 175).

For Hanna Levy, works of art are composed of artistic matter, which deserves specific analysis, as it attests to the concreteness of the work, opening the way to think about its historicity as well. But Hildebrand, insensitive to matter, presents, for Levy, a great gap in his theory:

> Not only does Hildebrand eliminate the reciprocal relationship of explanation between matter and spirit, but he also renounces considering the artistic matter in its own quality. Insofar as he does so, however, matter for him represents only an element to overcome (Levy 1936, 176).

Moreover, historicity will be for Hanna Levy an important factor in the comparison between Wölfflin, the central theme of her thesis, with his predecessors.  In this case, Levy will consider Wölfflin`s theory more promising than those of Fiedler, and those of Hildebrand:

> [...] The importance of Wölfflin's concepts concerning Fiedler's and Hildebrand's theories lies precisely, according to us, in the fact that Wölfflin tried to bridge the abyss that separates the theory of these two authors from historical reality. The principles of art established by the latter are, in fact, too abstract or too general to be able to explain the historical individuality of a work of art (Levy 1936, 180).

The more concrete character of Wölfflin's concepts, their greater potential for application also deserve praise from Hanna Levy, when contrasted with the characteristics of the theories of their predecessors:

The fundamental difference between Wölfflin's concepts, and Fiedler's intuitive views, Hildebrand's modes of perception and Burckhardt's style characteristics lies in the fact that Wölfflin makes his concepts an immanent and rational principle of the development of art. We can easily explain what leads Wölfflin to formulate this principle: on the one hand, this allows us to underline and accentuate the importance of the immanent development of art neglected by Burckhardt, on the other hand, it guarantees Fiedler's and Hildebrand`s purely abstract conceptions of visibility and modes of perception a certain relationship with the concrete data of the art history (Levy 1936, 180).

Having made these initial compliments, Hanna Levy goes on to criticize the Wolfflinian theory. Again, the non-adoption of a view of history as a dialectical process will be criticized by Levy:

Wölfflin does not conceive history as a dialectical process, that is, as a history made by man and within which the different cultural domains represent spiritual processes that, as such, possess and develop a certain value of their own, relative autonomy and their own conditions; it makes history autonomous and absolute. Wölfflin does not admit the intermediate links that would inevitably arise from a dialectical relationship; he forges absolute and abstract concepts from which he formulates criteria (Levy 1936, 187).

The result, in Levy's view, is that Wölfflin embraces an abstract notion of history (Levy 1936, 188). The fundamental concepts, equally abstract, would prove fragile due to the lack of support in the concrete historical reality. In Levy`s words,

To summarize: Wölfflin starts from abstract thinking to establish historical concepts; these pure abstractions lead him to an incomplete conception of the multiple reality of living development; starting from this

incomplete conception, which can only correspond to his abstract ideas, he returns there and establishes in this way the fundamental concepts (Levy 1936, 189-190).

Another item of criticism deserves special attention in Levy's arguments: Wölfflin's abstraction of cultural relations, which become subordinated to "national and racial criteria" (Levy 1936, 191). At this point, Hanna Levy takes the same position as Max Raphael, who also argued that art history could not be structured based on racial and national criteria. Levy footnotes the following observation about Wölfflin's adoption of racial criteria: Wolfflin "bases on the racial principle his explanation of the inequalities in the development of the various arts, as well as their changes in importance" (Levy 1936, 193, note 1). This is yet another point at which, should prevail, for Levy, an analysis criterion grounded in history, rather than a racial one.

From the beginning of her thesis, Hanna Levy rejects the possibility that Wölfflin's fundamental concepts are universal. The reason, as we can already imagine at this point, is its historical fragility:

> The fundamental concepts established by Wölfflin do not represent historical concepts for us, either in terms of style or art; for us, they are pure style concepts. Furthermore, its scope of application should be limited to classical and baroque art [...]. In any case, it seems necessary to designate them as concepts of style, and not as "true artistic principles (Levy 1936, 195).

Wölfflin, like some of his predecessors, would not allow space for the artist's individuality in his analyses either, according to Levy's point of view, another serious flaw in the theory:

> It is already apparent from these few indications that the individuality of the artist who decides both the choice of method and the means of presentation and expression is of paramount importance concerning the finished work. An "anonymous history of art", a "history

without names", as Wölfflin's historiographical point of view is sometimes called, is, therefore, for us, untenable (Levy 1936, 201).

Levy concludes her analysis of Wolfflin by identifying a deficient, idealistic view of history as a major problem with his theory (Levy 1936, 214). Such a lack would even have repercussions on the way he used philosophical and psychological concepts in his theory:

> We could also see that the philosophical and psychological concepts he uses are partly arbitrarily deformed, partly very imperfectly defined, precisely because of the fundamental lack of a satisfactory conception of history (Levy 1936, 207).

To conclude this paper, I would like to accompany Hanna Levy in the last chapter of her thesis, a sociological study. If her Marxist orientation of study was already perceptible in previous chapters, with the mentions of history, material, and dialectical dimensions, it is even more evident in this closing chapter. Levy believes that we can only understand the theoretical positions taken by Wölfflin and his predecessors by knowing the historical context of the period. When painting, the object of study of all the authors analyzed, came into contact with the bourgeoisie, it would have been "impregnated by the capitalist system, and their works increasingly assumed the character of a commodity" (Levy 1936, 224). Traditionalist artists, not wanting to bend to the changing tastes of the German bourgeoisie, leave Germany, as is the case with Marées and Hildebrand (Levy 1936, 226). Levy understands this change as an escape, also metaphorized in the principle of 'art for art's sake' adopted by them". Fiedler would then react, with his theory, to the principles of artistic production of these self-exiled artists. According to Levy, in short:

> Fiedler's work reflects exactly the artistic production of this group of artists [...]: the total liberation of art from society, therefore the rehabilitation of pure, eternal art, the rebirth of the real artistic problems, general and

constant. The fact that Fiedler stuck to pure theory is also explained by the state of artistic production of his time (Levy 1936, 227).

To escape from history is to escape the conflicts of capitalist development (Levy 1936, 227). Still according to Levy, "Fiedler tries to escape this development whose anarchic character he recognizes. He believes he can achieve this by rejecting the content of development, considering only the forms" (Levy 1936, 227). As for Wölfflin, whose theory Levy considers failed in its universalizing intent, the author has two possible justifications for this failure: personal incapacity or "general embarrassment of the bourgeois science of his time". Hanna opts for the second interpretation (Levy 1936, 230), which she formulates in the following terms:

> We emphasize how precious are the contributions brought by Wölfflin to the problem of the history of styles. Since, for all his farsightedness and profound erudition, Wölfflin failed to solve the problem, the reasons for this failure can only be sought in the very social order that determines the frameworks and methods of science (Levy 1936, 230).

Are there other 19th-century voices that could profitably be heard by art history, different from those of Wölfflin and his predecessors? Levy believes so, and points to the sketchy sociological methods found in the thought of Proudhon (as we have seen, taken up again by Max Raphael), Taine, and the Guyaus, among others.

I will end by noting that in recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the work of Hanna Levy Deinhard and Max Raphael. The sociology of art they proposed still deserves further study, since, as we have seen briefly here, it did not accept the strict formalism of pure visibility, but neither did it accept the norms of socialist realism as practiced under Stalin.

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# Religious Flows and Shaping Cultural Milieu in Central Asia: Artistic Expressions of Solar Cult (III–I Millennia BCE)

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## ABSTRACT

This paper[1] discusses the solar symbolism in Central Asian art, based on the concept of "religious semiosphere". It traces the oldest layers of a "religious semiosphere", or interconnected beliefs that existed in Central Asia during the III-I millennia BCE, through the way of their artistic representations and expressive symbolism. The aim is to analyze a symbolic representation of the solar cult and its co-existence with other religious beliefs, such as totemism and shamanism, and an evolution of the artistic forms of this representation.

Among the artifacts found in the region, the following types of iconographies are highlighted and discussed: the "sun-head" people, the sun-animals, the circle signs, and the solar symbolism among the Xiongnu/Hunnu. These iconographies refer to various forms of expressive symbolism - the rock art and material artifacts from the burial mounds and royal burials, including statuettes, silver and bronze standards, remnants of the horses. Following the analysis of the iconographies, the paper concludes that as one of the oldest beliefs, the solar cult survived the time and found itself either simultaneously or later in other religious symbolic representations of the sacred through signs, images, symbols.

**Introduction**

Throughout the end of the Bronze Age and during the Iron Age, various civilizations (Mohendjo Daro and Harappa, Ancient Chinese, Ancient Egyptian, Hittites, etc.) appeared, followed by a certain apotheosis or an "axial period" of human spiritual development happened around 500 BCE, between 800-200 BCE (Jaspers 2021 [1953]). The appearance of major spiritual searches within Chinese, Greek, Indian, Jewish, and Persian philosophical and religious traditions was paralleled with expanded geospatial social and political organizations both in the East and West (Greek, Han, Kushan, Macedonian, Maurya, Saka, Persian, Xiongnu/Hunnu, other empires). Various and plural forms of artistic expressions and styles could also be attributed to this time. On the vast Eurasian space, the zoomorphic/animal/Saka/Scythian style developed and flourished for almost a millennium.[2] Religious flows and exchanges had significantly shaped the cultural milieu of "pre-historic" and ancient Central Asia.

The periods preceding the "axial age" of human history, though are less known, are significant. They could shed light on the process of origin/development of religious beliefs, their symbolization, and a sacred and artistic representation.

In the "prehistory" of humankind when people depended on nature for their survival, the cosmos and nature dictated the rhythms of life and activities of social groups. These rhythms of regular changes repeating daily and seasonally again and again, for social groups provided predictability, stability, and regularity embedded in ritual. Therefore, the inseparability between a person and nature logically implied the deification of nature and space through certain rituals.

The daily movement of the celestial sphere's objects - the sun, the moon, stars, and planets – and their significance for the survival of social groups was equated with the regular rhythm of time and stability. Being endowed with an exceptional meaning, these celestial bodies, therefore, received their symbolic representation as sacred, benevolent, protective symbols in people's social and economic life.

One may assume the solar, lunar cults to be among those major beliefs that impacted people's religious systems. The paper's hypothesis is that irrespectively of its ancient "primordial" roots, the solar cult didn't disappear at later periods, rather it was modified, co-existed with other beliefs, and acquired a new meaning of the sacred. This new meaning could be found in solar symbolic representations "inscribed" along with symbols of other beliefs in artistic works. What were the symbols and forms of this survival – these are the questions will be discussed in this paper.

Therefore, the paper aims to trace the solar symbols in the artifacts relating to the religious symbolization in Central Asian art throughout III-I millennia BCE, and to discuss this continuity. In a broader sense, numerous artifacts, particularly related to the field of the sacred, could speak about the specificity of religious beliefs, and cross-religious and cross-cultural interactions in the region.

The research on artistic representation of the solar cult in ancient Central Asia, whether as such, or in relation to other beliefs, is still a rather underdeveloped theme. Broadly, the solar cult has been partially touched upon within the larger themes, particularly, relating to the rock art. The theme of the rock art of Central Asia, Siberia, Mongolia, northern Eurasia has been a focus of extensive research, the earliest of which was made as early as in the middle of XX century by A.P. Okladnikov, followed by his research school, who explored the rock art, deer stones of Siberia, Sayano-Altai, Trans-Baikal regions, Mongolia (Okladnikov 1954; same 1974; same 1981; same 1989; Okladnikov and Zaporozhskaya 1970; Okladnikov and Mazin 1976; Okladnikov and Mazin 1979). The scholar from Tuva M.H. Mannai-ool significantly contributed towards highlighting the traditional culture of the Tuvan people throughout the Saka/Scythian period (or so-called Uyuk culture), in which he discussed, particularly, such forms as deer stones, and legends of local and Siberian people relating to the cosmic universe (Mannai-ool 1970).

A. Rogozhinsky and V. Novozhenov are among the leading contemporary scholars on rock art in Central Asia, who found, and classified the existing and recently discovered artifacts and made their typology

(Rogozhinskiy 2009; same 2019; Rogozhinskii and Novozhenov 2018; Bedelbayeva, Novozhenov and Novozhenova 2015; Lapshina 2012, etc).

The solar cult has been generally discussed within another broader theme, i.e., of the Xiongnu/Hunnu and their steppe empire. For the last three decades there appeared special volumes summarizing and detailing the knowledge on the Xiougnu/Hunnu (Giscard 2013, Eregzen 2011, Xiongnu Archaeology 2011, Encyclopaedia Xiongnu 2013), deer stone culture (Turbat, Gantulga, others 2021), the ancient bronzes of Ordos region, north Eurasian steppe (Bunker 1997; Bunker 2002; Leus 2019, etc).

The research on specific monuments – *khereksur* mounds and deer stones – though not much extensive, is of the interest for the theme due to the fact, that these monuments, particularly those found in Tuva, Mongolia, could be viewed as the symbols of the sun reflecting its key feature – the movement (Kilunovskaya and Semenov 2019). The theme of the symbolism of the zoomorphic/animal/Saka/Scythian style that included the traits of various beliefs including the solar cult, recently became a subject of a focused research (Yerekesheva 2021).

Therefore, the special analysis on the symbolic representation of the solar cult in relation to the art of the region, is yet to be made. This article is an attempt to partially fill in this gap. The author understands certain limitations of this attempt. First, the need to stock and inventory most available artifacts requires extensive research and could be implemented within the larger research project. Second, there is a need to discuss in greater details the typology of the symbolical representation of the solar cult in general, and in Central Asia, in particular. In this paper, this typology is based on the artistic forms and traditions of the solar representation based on the available artifacts found in the region. Among them, I propose the following types: the "sun-head" people, the sun-animals, the circle signs, the solar cult among the Xiongnu/Hunnu. The iconography of the "sun-head" people refers to the rock art, of the sun-animals – to the rock art and material artifacts from the burial mounds and royal burials, whereas the circles' sign – mainly to the artifacts from burial mounds and royal burials.

Geographically Central Asia is understood here as a geographical-cultural rather than a geopolitical space. The space of the region follows the given natural geography and includes territories of modern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan (so called "Middle Asia"); Xingjian-Uighur Autonomous Region and Inner Mongolia of China; Northern Afghanistan; Mongolia; Southern Siberia; Northern parts of India and Pakistan.[3]

**Methodology**

The relations between culture and religion are perhaps one of the oldest and steady phenomena in the history and art of humankind. In the reciprocal process of their interplay, both culture and religion influence each other, interact, and create certain "*cultural-religious homeostasis*", similar to the biological field, as a process of maintaining an organism's stable internal environment by adapting it to external changes. Equally, both culture and religion undergo the process of adapting to each other, the net result of which is the creation of new patterns and forms of expressive symbolism. This flexibility creates, anticipates, or reflects an idea of the sacred and its various cultural patterns. At the same time, it allows this or that cultural patterns to be spread, advanced, and further expanded geographically and chronologically. (Yerekesheva 2023)

Specificity of the culture is that it operates on the symbolic level - 'a cultural life exists only in symbols ... cultural reality is in its essence symbolic reality' (Tillich 1958:10). Therefore, in religion as a part of culture (Parsons 1985), symbolic representation plays a significant role too. The religious element of "cultural-religious homeostasis" implies the general characteristics of the sacred; whereas different historical periods and geographical locations could reveal its various and plural manifestations. The multiplicity of the forms of the symbolic representations and their co-existence irrespectively of time is a phenomenon that in semiotics is known as *semiosphere*, a semiotic space (Lotman [1984] 2005:208).

According to this theory proposed by Yuri Lotman, "Since all levels of the semiosphere — from human personality to the individual text to the

global semiotic unity — are a seemingly inter-connected group of semiospheres, each of them is simultaneously both participant in the dialogue (as part of the semiosphere) and the space of dialogue (the semiosphere as a whole)" (Lotman [1984] 2005:225).

The semiosphere approach to culture and religion may imply that their respective various elements could be viewed as both participants of the dialogue and their space and environment at the same time. In other words, it could be proposed that in "religious semiosphere" various religious beliefs and traditions, as participants of the dialogue, could interact and influence each other either directly or indirectly - as an integral part of the religious and broader cultural environment and milieu, or as established traditional patterns and a subconscious echo of the past. Therefore, the indirect way of the influence presumes diachronic perspective or imprint caused by the most archaic and "primordial" religious beliefs on all those that emerged later.

Theoretically speaking, in this paper, I will make an attempt to trace the oldest layers of "religious semiosphere", or interconnected beliefs that existed in Central Asia during the III-I millennia BCE, through the way of their artistic representations and expressive symbolism. In doing this, I will focus on the solar cult (1) to show its symbolic representation and "survival" even in the later periods and its co-existence with other religious beliefs such as totemism and shamanism, and (2) to trace an evolution of the artistic forms of this representation.

### Solar Symbolism

The following typology of symbolical representation of the solar cult in the region will be discussed further: the "sun-head" people, the sun-animals, the circle signs, the solar cult among the Xiongnu/Hunnu.

### *The "Sun-Head" People*

Chronologically the first known representations of the solar symbolism and cosmogony could be attributed back to the Neolithic (c. VII millennium BCE) era, when the ancient rock art petroglyphs and signs dotted the landscapes throughout Eurasian continent. In later periods, during the Bronze Age and

Iron Age (III-I millennia BCE), solar symbolism could be found as a part of archaeological complexes, sculptural compositions, discovered on the territory of modern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia (Siberia, Altai, Tuva), in northwestern and northern China, Mongolia, northern Afghanistan, Turkey (Afghanistan 2007; L'Asie des steppes 2001). Among them are remarkable and in many ways unique examples - *khereksury* mounds, deer stones, ritual standards and objects (incense burners, sacrificial altars), artifacts of decorative and applied art and jewellery, in particular, made in the so-called animal/zoomorphic style also known as Saka/Scythian/Siberian (Yerekesheva 2021).

One of the oldest and most significant forms of ancient expressive symbolism is rock art (images and signs, petroglyphs), which is, perhaps, a universal expression of human creative spirit and a form of the deification of nature. Found almost in all continents, this type of creativity could be considered as typologically regular. The "stone books" (Okladnikov 1989:40) should be viewed as a part of a wider background and context that included certain sacred locations and acts of sacrifice and other rituals that took place in these special sanctuaries. From this perspective, rock art was not just an engraved image and sign, rather it was a representation of the belief systems of people, a "primordial" reflection of views, ideas, rituals. Rock drawings and inscriptions were carved on stones of various heights and lengths, which stretched for several meters or were part of rectangular or round areas, located in the mountains, in open spaces along the banks of rivers, or in forests and taiga. Wonderful examples of rock art are important artifacts and material evidence that help us to decipher the ideas, religious views and rituals of people of the distant past. (Yerekesheva 2023)

Among the various objects carved on the rocks (such as people, shaman masks, animals, religious rituals, hunting scenes, dances, erotic scenes, etc.), solar-lunar-astral (or celestial) symbolism stands out as one of the most archaic and perhaps basic ideas and religious beliefs of people. The images of heavenly symbols have their own stylistic specifics and depend on the region - Central Asia, Siberia, Mongolia, Western and Northern China.

The images of the sun are done in various forms and styles: (1) the sun as a part of larger compositions, which also include figures of people performing rituals and dances, and animal figures; (2) the sun, which is "carried" by animals (deer, elk, horses, bulls) on their horns; (3) so-called "sun heads", or people with sun instead of their heads. The images of the so-called "sun-heads", or people with the sun instead of a head are one of the most striking types of representation of the sun found in Central Asia. (Fig. 1) These various representations are associated with the rituals and religious beliefs of people, being an important source for understanding the religious life in ancient times.



**Fig. 1.** On the left: "Sun-Head People" in Tamgaly-Tas Site, Almaty Region, Kazakhstan. Source: After (Rogozhinskiy 2019). Photo courtesy: V.A. Novozhenov. On the right: "Sun-Head People" in Saimaluu-Tash Site, Kyrgyzstan. Source: After (Petrov 2011). Photo: Ushakov and Tenkova, www.photo.kg

The visualization and depiction of the sun in the form of "sun-head" people was most common in certain parts of Central Asia, within which, in turn, one can note various stylistic, iconographic traditions of depiction. Particularly, scholars distinguish 3 such iconographic styles: (1) southern (Saimaluu-Tash in Kyrgyzstan and Sakhaba in the Ferghana Valley); (2) northern (the place of Baikonur in the southwestern part of the steppe zone of the Kazakh Sary-arka region); and (3) along the corridor of the Chu-Ili Mountain range (Tamgaly-Tas in Almaty region, no earlier than XIV-XIII BCE), which could be the result of a syncretic mutual influence of the other two and

was rather specific and unique than universal, and widespread (Rogozhinskiy 2019).

Though there are other 8 places where carved figures of "sun-head" people are found on rocks, mainly in Kazakhstan (Karakyr, Akkainar, Kuljabasy, Baikonur and Eshkiolmes, Bayanzhurek) and Kyrgyzstan (Saimaluu-Tash, Chilisay and Ornok) (Rogozhinskiy 2009:60), however, images of "sun-head" people, reminiscent of images on Tamgaly-Tas, have not yet been found (Rogozhinskiy 2019), what makes this site a unique one.

In Kyrgyzstan there are other places and monuments with stone-inscribed petroglyphs found on an 80-kilometer stretch between Cholpon-Ata near Lake Issyk-Kul and Balykchy (II millennium BCE - VIII century CE), which can be called an open-air temple, a sanctuary where cults and religious rituals took place (Petroglyphs of Cholpon-Ata, n.d).

The "sun-head" people depicted on the rocks may reflect the original ideas about the importance of the sun for the survival of people, its worship, and related ceremonies and rituals. Accordingly, the figures of "sun-head" people (semi-anthropomorphic and semi-sun) can be considered as a symbol of the sun as an object of worship. According to some authors, the "sun-head" people could be intermediaries between the worlds of gods and people, i.e., shamans (Bedelbayeva, Novozhenov and Novozhenova 2015:71).

Therefore, these most ancient representations of the sun were associated with the solar cult. They also reveal the important role that some categories of people, perhaps, the shamans, played during the rites related to the sun-deification. It is possible that images of these people, or shamans, were inscribed on the stones to attribute their significance during the rituals that took place at these sacred places. One could conclude that deification of the sun (as well as later – of some categories of animals) was among the oldest (back to neolithic era) religious beliefs that had own symbolic representation. The symbolism of the sun as we trace in the rock art reveals the pristine clear natural forms and lines, geometrically circular in form and with depiction of sun rays. This "children-like" natural and primordial basic representation and image of the sun could also be attributed to those periods of humankind's development when its union with nature and cosmos was

perceived as a natural course of life, as life's regularity, harmony and, hence, beauty. This view survived the time and, as an echo of the past, found its way later in Greek philosophy, both in Pythagorean school and in the adoration of the "most harmonic" figure – a circle – by Plato. From the modern perspective, those were periods of the height and maximum power of ecological thinking and living.

Celestial objects, including the sun, embodied nature's might, regularities, order, balance, harmony, and became synonyms of power, eternity and stability. Their adoration and deification had been associated with rituals. Symbolic representation in creative expressionism of art was a part of this worship, and the keyway towards their appease. The rock art and some artifacts could give us a glimpse on what these rituals and religious life in general might looked like.

### The Animal-Sun

The images of the sun, moon, stars, and their inclusion in other scenes - worshipping and hunting - show the importance of solar, lunar and astral symbolism as part of the daily and religious life of people. The existence and survival of people depended on the environment in which animals played a significant role too. Thus, animals also acquired an important and sacred dimension and, in addition, were associated with the power of the sun and other elements of the cosmic universe. Solar-lunar-astral symbolic images carved on the rocks were intermingled with the images of numerous animals, usually elk and deer (as in Siberia and East Asia), or horse, bull, stag (in Central Asia), which were deified by local hunters as an object of worshipping, and as a representation of the sun.

Rock paintings of the IV-III millennia BCE in Siberia testify to the exceptionally high role of the elk as the sun, which passes through the sky and the universe from one end of the firmament to the other and then disappears into the waters of the underworld in order to reappear the next morning in the sky (Okladnikov 1989:46). According to the existing beliefs, this journey through the sky was made on special solar boats, where the sun was

symbolically depicted in the form of an elk or stag (sometimes they were accompanied by other figures of animals and shamans). [4]

The beliefs of the sun boats found in Siberia, Egypt could be paralleled with the ideas and respective images of the sun chariot in a later period, as in case of Trundholm sun chariot from Denmark (Trundholm). This could speak about typological regularity, though localized in various regions of the world based on local geography and cultural patterns.

The association of the sun with some animals may represent a certain stage in the religious beliefs of people of Central Asia, Siberia, the Amur region. For them their life and survival depended both on celestial objects, such as the sun, and on large and strong animals that lived in the mountains, steppes, rivers or taiga and forests. Thus, for different geographical areas, various animals, such as stag and elk, as well as horse and bull, played an important role similar to the sun and, accordingly, they acquired a sacred character. As a result, new forms of syncretic religious beliefs began to emerge in these regions, where these animals became associated with the sun.

For example, the Tungus people greatly revered the white or sacred stag *Amgun*, who was associated with the sun and was considered the guardian and protector of both animals and people. According to (Okladnikov and Mazin 1979:62-63), "it was not allowed to ride on it, only shrines were transported in its bags, it lived to a natural death ... If this stag disappeared, they did not look for it. Before and after migration, he was fumigated. In the caravan, he went first or second". L. Steinberg, for example, identifies the following categories of sacred stag among the Tungus - wild males, all males under the age of 1 year, then white stag, which everyone considered the real representatives of the sun on Earth (Cited in: Okladnikov and Mazin 1979:62-63). Interestingly, among the Orochs of Siberia, not only the sun, but also the stars, star constellations, planets, rainbows, dawns, and even the entire cosmic universe were depicted as a large eight-legged elk, uniting the three worlds - the upper one or the world (where good spirits live), the middle world (inhabited by people), and the underworld (evil, bad, or malignant spirits).

Stag, elk, horse, bull were revered as the personifications of the sun, so the rituals of sun worship were intertwined with the worship of a particular animal, whose zoomorphic images, it was believed, could protect from adversity and evil. Thus, consequently, religious beliefs became syncretic - the sun, the direct protector and object of worship, became less exposed and more abstract, while the figures of particular animal came to the fore to more profoundly acquire the role of the protector of people and social groups. In the field of religious beliefs, this transformation was associated with totemism, animism, zoomorphic cults, and shamanism.

The images of so-called stag-sun, elk-sun, horse-sun and bull-sun, i.e., animals depicted with elements of solar symbolism attributed to this process and are found across the Eurasian continent – in Siberia, Mongolia, northern China, Central Asia, Western Asia. (Fig. 2) This may indicate the typological regularities of the development of religious beliefs that underwent similar stages from solely solar worshipping towards further amalgamation with zoomorphic cults.



**Fig. 2.** On the left: Bronze Ceremonial Standard, Alacahöyük, Turkey, 2nd half of III millennium BCE. Source: The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara, Turkey. Photo: Bjørn C. Tørrissen, CC BY-SA 3.0, On the right: Sun on the "Horned" Horse, Saimaluu-Tash, Kyrgyszstan. Source: After (Petrov 2011). Photo: Ushakov and Tenkova

The bronze ceremonial standard from a royal burial place Alacahöyük discovered in the central part of modern Turkey (Fig. 2, left) show well the transformation of these religious ideas. This is an example of how the previous "pure" solar standards made in the round or square form, were subsequently combined into more syncretic images with the inclusion of a deer-sun, a bull-sun (Yerekesheva 2023).

In this unique standard, the sun is symbolically depicted twice: as a circle carried on the big horns of the bull (not depicted), and as the figures of a stag, accompanied by two bulls and posted inside the solar circle. The whole arrangement represents the local manifestation of the solar boats/sun chariots. The incorporation of the sun-animals in the solar deification highlights the transformation towards more syncretic beliefs, where the sun as an object of deification is still there. However, it shares the space with other elements of adoration as well, i.e., with sacred sun-animals.

The mentioned above typological regularities could be supported by the analogous depiction of some sun-animals such as deer/stag in other parts of the continent. In Siberia, Transbaikal, Tuva, Mongolia numerous engravings were found on so-called deer-stones of galloping deer with a sphere on their horns. According to (Okladnikov 1954:207-220) these animals are represented as if soaring through the sky with the characteristic symbols of the sun — disks. Okladnikov even coined a special term for them — the Deer/Stag-Golden Antlers — symbols of the sun. Similar findings were later found at Mount Xianglushan in northeastern China, where rock carvings of deer with a disc over their horns represented local versions of the deer-sun, "a zoomorphic deity or celestial companion of the sun god." (Zabiyako and Van Jiangling 2017:75).

Similar patterns of images of the solar disk carried on the horns of animals, particularly, "horned" horses, were found in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan too - in Saimaluu-Tash in Kyrgyzstan (Fig. 2, right), in Central and Eastern Kazakhstan.

In Central and Eastern Kazakhstan many burial mounds, rock art monuments, and petroglyphs were discovered, including images of horses

dating back to the first half — third quarter of the II millennium BCE (Bedelbayeva, Novozhenov and Novozhenova 2015:47).

On one of the vertical stone slabs found in Central Kazakhstan, of which most of them are turned to the east, there is a depiction of a horse with large backward-curved horns (Fig. 3, left). The horse is filled with dynamism and inner energy and is part of a large stone triptych. According to scholars, this image refers to the early nomadic period, when the "horned" horse was a symbol of the sun and sky, and the "simple" horse (without horns) was considered the main element of the economic life of the steppes of antiquity (Bedelbayeva, Novozhenov and Novozhenova 2015:49, 51).



**Fig. 3.** On the left: Image of a "horned" horse, Konyrzhon, Karkaraly district (Central Kazakhstan), first half - third quarter of the II millennium BCE. Source: Photo author and courtesy Victor A. Novozhenov. On the right: Smart Decoration of the "Horned" Horse from Berel-11 Burial Mound, Eastern Kazakhstan, Saka Period, IV-III BCE. Source: Photo and reconstruction Krym Altynbekov. Photo courtesy Napil Bazylkhan.

The image of the "horned" horse on a rock found in Central Kazakhstan corresponds to the remnants of horses found in the Berel-11 mound (Fig. 3, right) in the Kazakhstan Altai (Eastern Kazakhstan), in the Pazyryk mounds in the Russian Altai, and in the Chu-Ili ridge (Ankeldy site in the Zhambyl region of South Kazakhstan) (Bedelbayeva, Novozhenov and Novozhenova 2015:98-99).

All these symbols of the sun represented in the "horned" horse can be interpreted as a further development of the idea of the sun, but in a different subcultural and geographical context of Central Asia. It is possible to assume that the original image of the sun on the horns of a stag and an elk, widespread in Siberia, or of a bull and stag found in Anatolia (Turkey), was also a characteristic of the steppe zone of Central Asia, where this solar symbolism acquired local dimension. In other words, the same perception and representation of the sun associated with the elk and stags, animals with long and large horns, received its further transformation. As a result, the image of a horse — an animal without horns — got a new iconography, opening the way to a completely different figurative perception of a horse - as an animal with long horns on which the sun is rested. This representation was based on a similar idea and worship of the sun, to which the deifying of a certain animal was added through personifying it with the sun and attributing to it the qualities of a solar deity. Thus, in the steppe zone of Central Asia, the horse began to be considered a symbol of the sun, a sacred animal, whereas the features and stylistic forms associated with the traditions from other geographical spaces were inherited as a substantial part of its iconography. (Yerekesheva 2023)

As noted above, religious ideas implied a dual perception of the horse - on the one hand, as a deity and a sacred animal or a horse-sun. On the other hand, the horse, as an important element of economic life, was associated with a nomadic way of life, and therefore, as in the case of white one-year-old elks and stag from Siberia, it was considered an indispensable assistant.

In the Kazakh steppe environment, the sacralization of the horse had its own features: a young golden-red stallion and a white horse were considered sacred. It seems the colors were chosen to enhance the parallels with the sun, particularly the golden, red, orange colors that also implied an active energy and power.

The horse from the Berel-11 mound, with large, curved horns and a mask, covered by a bright blanket decorated with painted gold plates, buried together with the ruler or leader of local tribes is evidence to this. According to archaeologist Z. Samashev, who explored this mound, horned horse was

considered the personification of people's beliefs about the three worlds and resembled the horns of argali or mountain goats (Tayna 2019).

Mentioned above artifacts speak about a continuing and enduring tradition of religious beliefs associated with the high role of the deification of the sun, but in a more syncretic and complementary form. Within the framework of these belief systems, the sun was personified with a certain animal — in the case of the steppe zone of Central Asia, it was a horse.

### Circle Signs as Solar Symbols

The other way of how the sun was symbolized were the circle signs, spiral shapes and wavy lines that marked the bodies of animals. This representation, highly symbolic and laconic at the same time, is an important stage of solar symbolism and its further amalgamation with other symbols. At this stage, the sun was depicted more graphically and schematically rather than figuratively, in smaller rather than bigger sizes. Though as if shrunken, the symbols still reflected the might and power associated with the sun. The solar symbol endowed a particular animal with its sacredness, and as a special marker, it highlighted the animal's sacred and privileged status. Below are given some images of sun animals, on the body of which solar symbols are clearly shown in the form of two or three spherical circles as if nested in each other.

A wide geographical range of found artifacts - sculptures and figurines of animals with solar symbols on the body - should be noted. They were found in Alacahoyuk, Turkey (Fig. 4, left), Jetysu/Semirechye in Southern Kazakhstan (Fig. 4, middle), China (Fig. 4 right), Mongolia. This may indicate extensive migration flows and movements of various tribes across the Eurasian continent that took place over many centuries and millennia. At the same time, this could equally speak about typological patterns associated with the development of religious beliefs that experienced similar stages and acquired similar regularities.

**Fig. 4.** On the left: Bull Statuette, Alacahoyuk, Turkey,  Second Half of the III Millennium BCE. Source: After (MAC, The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, n.d.:66).
In the middle: Statuette of Bronze Bull, Central Asia, Semirechye, VI-III BCE. Cast, chasing. 4x2,8x5 cm. Inventory Number: CA-3185. Source: © The State Hermitage Museum, Russia. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin.
On the right: Statuette of "Golden Monster", Xi'an, Shaanxi History Museum, China, c. II BCE – I CE, Length: 11cm, Height: 11.5cm. Source: Shaanxi History Museum, China. Photo by Jesse, CC BY-SA 4.0

Chronologically, these representations were widely spread too – from the III millennium BCE (in Alacahoyuk) through the Saka period, VI-III (or VIII-VI) BCE (in Semirechye), to the Xiongnu/Hunnu period, II BCE-I CE (in Shaanxi, China). This range could speak about the steady and profound tradition of syncretic religious beliefs that for almost three millennia, survived the time and showed its vitality. By the I millennium CE the representation of the sun in its "pure" form was rather marginalized and became an integral part of other religious traditions (well traced in the Saka/Zoomorphic style).

*Solar Symbolism of the Xiongnu/Hunnu*

It was during the Xiognu/Hunnu period only that the solar representation in its "primordial" natural form continued showing its vitality. This could be attributed to the specificity of the religious beliefs of the Xiongnu/Hunnu tribes – for this first steppe empire the worship of the sun and moon was the official religion. As the daily religious ritual of Xiongnu emperor Shanyui

indicates, he "prostrated every morning before the rising of the sun and every evening before the rising of the moon." (Giscard 2001:149)

The above statuette of "Golden Monster" (Fig. 4 right) is a very representative one that could give a glimpse of these religious beliefs. In fact, this is a statuette of a golden elk, the animal widely spread in Siberia, Trans-Baikal region. This exquisite work relating to the Xiongnu/Hunnu period, depicts a sacred animal, an elk-sun, on the body of which multiple circles as solar symbols are spread all over. Magnificent horns/antlers follow the previous tradition when the sun was "carried" on the horns of the animals that represented or "substituted" the sun, as was in case of "the solar boat" tradition. The antlers are the masterpiece in themselves – several heads of gryphons carved there attribute to the zoomorphic cults and strengthen the feeling of the majestic character of this sun-elk. The gold material intensifies this attitude of sacredness as symbolizing the solar deity and particular animal as the representation of the sun and an object of deification. From religious beliefs perspective, solar cults and totemic worship, i.e., adoration of the sun, a deification of a particular elk-sun as an important totem are vividly presented and intertwined here.

The sun and moon (crescent) sheet decorations found on the covers of the coffins in Xiognu burial place in Gol Mod (Fig. 5 left), as well as in other mounds such as Egiin Gol in Mongolia are bright illustrations, indicating the deification ritual based on the natural rhythms of cyclic time.

Another artistic expression of the solar symbolism related to the Xiognu period, are the artifacts found few years ago in Ala-Tey 1 and Terezine burial mounds in Tuva (Russia). Among them are samples of the previously unknown belt openwork plaques "with an ornament in the form of six rays diverging from the center to a rectangular frame" (Fig. 5, middle) with total number exceeding 100 pieces (Leus 2019:54). Solar symbolism is presented here in a classic form of rays of the sun.

This type of plaques is paralleled with another piece found at the same Terezine site. The round shaped form of the bronze belt plaque (Fig. 5, right) is a direct reference to the solar symbolism. The symmetric composition of four paired heads of gryphons (that stylistically are almost

identical to the "golden monster" statuette discussed above) harmoniously structures the space of plaque making it almost weightless, light and transparent. This effect is reinforced with the refined depiction of the gryphons' heads what reveals the 9 hole-circles and produce an effect of the weightlessness, exquisiteness and subtlety. The idea that stylistically this piece relates to the Saka/Scythian zoomorphic art but with the elements of new cultural patterns (Leus 2019:60) is worth supporting.



**Fig. 5.** On the left: Gold Sheet Decoration in the Form of the Sun and the Moon. Gol Mod Necropolis, Khairkhan, Arkhangai Province, Mongolia, gold, II BCE - I CE. Tomb-75, d 3 cm (Sun); Tomb-20, length 5,6 cm (Moon). Source: Institute of Archaeology, Academy of Sciences of Mongolia. Photo author and courtesy Gelegdorj Eregzen. In the middle: Six-Ray Belt Plaque, Ala-Tey 1, Tuva, Russia. Bronze, II-I centuries BCE. Source: Photo author and courtesy by Pavel Leus. On the right: Belt Plaque from Terezine T/8, Tuva, Russia. Bronze, II-I centuries BCE. Source: Photo author and courtesy by Pavel Leus.

In the context of the current theme, it should be added that zoomorphic style itself embraces various religious traditions such as totemism, fetishism, shamanism, within which the solar deification indirectly finds its place too. Bearing in mind that "the territory of Tuva became the link between the regions of Inner Asia and the Sayan-Altai and was in the sphere of influence of the Xiongnu and their cultural and artistic traditions" (Leus 2019:62), it was not surprising that the solar deification by the Xiongnu had an impact on the expressive traditions that unified the solar and zoomorphic symbolism together.

**Conclusion**

In the proposed "religious semiosphere" approach various religious beliefs and traditions interact among themselves, both as participants of the dialogue and as an integral part of the religious and broader cultural environment and milieu. In this interaction, they influence each other either directly, or indirectly, through the symbols inherited from the past. As a result of this molding, new symbolic and cultural patterns emerge.

The solar cult symbolization supports this approach and reveals a certain evolution of the stylistic symbolic representation of the sun in the artifacts found in Central Asia.

The oldest of them, found in rock art provide a glimpse of how the deification of the sun might look like in the distant past, around IV-III millennia BCE. Stylistically these symbolic representations follow the ancient beliefs about the ecological unity of the people and nature and cosmos, and represent the sun in the "pure", pristine forms. At the same time, deification of the sun as seen in ancient "solar boats," also speaks about the increasing role of certain animals as symbolic substitution of the sun, as its representatives, for which they were deified too. This deification was a part, a sacred element of the rituals conducted by special people, the shamans.

Therefore, the animal-sun concept could be viewed as an artistic symbolic representation of the totemic beliefs, that could be generally traced in the various images of the animals in the art. Perhaps, one of the biggest such representations extended for almost I millennium BCE, is the zoomorphic style.

However, totemic beliefs and shamanism in general, were not free from the previous religious traditions - the solar deification. Though less exposed and indirectly, solar deification, however, still profoundly and continuously influenced other religious traditions. This could be viewed in the symbolic representation of the sun, among which are: the images of numerous animals-sun (when the sun was personified with a certain animal - in the case of the steppe zone of Central Asia, it was a horse) on rocks, as silver and bronze standards, burials of the horses with "horns", circles on the body of the "sacred" animals, and, as the highest octave of the solar

deification triumph, the realistic images of the sun and moon (crescent) and other artifacts of the Xiongnu/Hunnu.

Therefore, the "survival" of the solar cult, even in the later periods, its continuing and enduring legacy, co-existence with other religious beliefs such as totemism, shamanism, and evolution of the artistic forms of its symbolic representation (that lead to more sophisticated and new syncretic patterns) – all this supports the "religious semiosphere" concept and could be generally traced in the artifacts of various types. As a result, the art imbibed in itself and expressed highly dynamic and flourishing cross-religious and cross-cultural interactions in the region.

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### Endnotes

1. The article is based on the paper presented at the 35th CIHA World Congress on "Motion: Migrations", São Paulo, Brazil, 17-22 January 2022; Session 9 – Transcending Borders: Reshaping Cultures through Ideas and Images; and on the author's article "Solar signs and symbols in the art of ancient Central Asia" submitted to the "Atlas of the Symbols of the Turkic World" (forthcoming).
2. The lowest chronological period of the animal style could be referred to the IX BCE, based on the discoveries of the Arzhaan-1 and Arzhaan-2 royal mounds found in Tuva (Russia) in 1990s and 2002. K.V. Chugunov proposes the most possible dates of the Arzhaan-1 mound as between 807-772 BCE (Chugunov 2020:229-230), what significantly expands the previously adopted chronological frames of the animal style, i.e., V-II BCE. This also supports the ideas on the direction of its spread from the East towards West and South.
3. On detailed description of the space of Central Asia based in various definitions, including that of UNESCO, see (Yerekesheva 2013).
4. For the depiction of the sun boat on the rock at the Basynai river site in Eastern Siberia see: (Okladnikov and Mazin 1976:9).

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# The Role of Migration of Ideas, Practices, and People in the Coming of Concrete Art in Sao Paulo

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**ABSTRACT**

Concrete art appeared in Sao Paulo city at the beginning of the 1950s, with an exhibit that gathered a few visual artists. Later, the visual artists convened to the poets. This paper explores how the social environment of the city and Brazil shaped the coming of concretism and how these artists have created new social spaces. The method applied is the method of collective biography with the aid of the concepts of field of Pierre Bourdieu and the generation of Karl Mannheim.

**KEYWORDS**

Modern Art; Concrete Art; Brazilian Art; Collective Biography; Sociology of Art.

### Introduction

Concrete art avant-garde in the city of Sao Paulo was developed by fifteen poets and visual artists in the 1950s. Such art came into light in 1952 with the exhibit Rupture (Ruptura, originally), accompanied by the homonymous manifesto. It was grounded in geometric abstraction, which was new in Brazilian art.

This article is devoted to analyzing the role of migration of ideas, practices, and people in the coming of concrete art in Sao Paulo. That is to say, it explores how these elements have shaped and collaborated with the appearance of concretism. It focuses on the different places that the fifteen artists used to visit or have created.

The article derives from the author's master's dissertation[1], which was based on three theoretical and methodological tools. First, the collective biography method was developed by French historian Christophe Charle[2]. Then, the concept of the field according to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu[3]. Lastly, the concept of generation by Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim[4]. All three are explained below.

The structure of the text is as follows. The theoretical and methodological tools are explained in the first section. The characteristics of the avant-garde are developed in the second section. The third one explores the relations of concrete art, visual arts, and poetry to other languages, such as gardening and graphic design. The fourth one presents the collective biography that was obtained. The fifth one describes the difficulties and limitations of the method of collective biography. Lastly, the final remarks draw conclusions from the text and present some possible future research.

### Theoretical and methodological tools

The collective biography method, as Christophe Charle[5] puts it, is useful for extracting socially relevant pieces of information from defined populations. A biographic questionnaire is applied in order to describe the dynamics involved (political, social, etc.). It is a form of doing sociology of the past. Its use provides analysis of internal relations in a group. This method is generally

used to study numerous groups consisting of hundreds of people. However, in this case, the group consists of fifteen people. This small number brought about some difficulties that are discussed below.

The concept of the field from Pierre Bourdieu's[6] social theory helps specify the collective biography method, as sociology proposes using this concept in many fields. The field in question here is artistic. For Bourdieu, a field is a relatively autonomous space.

Another concept that brings more materiality to the method is the concept of generation, as Karl Mannheim[7] puts it. To the Hungarian sociologist, there are four notions of generation, which gradually narrow and are more concrete. The more abstract notion refers to generation localization, whose fundamentals rely only on chronological and biological factors. On the other pole, the concrete generation refers to a group of individuals with strong and narrow ties – all of whom know each other. In this case, the concrete group is the Rupture group, composed of 12 members, all of them visual artists. The poets had known the visual artists, but they formed another core, the Noigandres trio, which was composed by the brothers Haroldo de Campos and Augusto de Campos and Décio Pignatari. The Campos brothers and Pignatari gathered since their younghood.

### Characteristics

The main characteristics of this avant-garde are the following[8]. First, its aim was to exclude representation, i.e., not to represent known figures of the surrounding world. Instead, it wanted to replace representation with geometric abstraction, which, in the artists' opinion, was a way to represent ideas (geometric, mathematic, etc.) with colors, lines, and shapes. It is important to note that until then, in Brazilian art, geometric abstraction had only appeared in the foreground of paintings or in decorative arts.

Second, the concrete artists from Sao Paulo wanted to expel subjectivity from art. As the Rupture manifesto puts it, "(…) considering (art) a form of knowledge that is deductible from concepts, placing it above opinion (…)". The artists aimed to develop an objective art, in which there was a

hierarchy. First was form, the second was color, and the last was the background.

Another aspect of this movement was the lack of color tones. They preferably used industrial paints (however, many of their works have been done with tempera or oil paint). Industrial paints did not favor the creation of color tones, so they usually formed flat surfaces.

The movement wanted to develop an egalitarian art, i.e., they intended to create artworks that did not demand any prior knowledge of the spectators. Anyone could understand the pieces with no reference to pieces of information or references.

Lastly, the concretist movement of Sao Paulo was transnational because it had strong ties with artists and critics from other parts of the world, for instance, Argentinian painter and theoretician Tomás Maldonado, and Swiss artist Max Bill, among others.

### Concrete art and other languages

The concrete artists believed that their art should go beyond artworks like sculptures and paintings. They wanted art to be spread throughout the cities in posters, gardens, and shop windows, among others. That is why they have tried to mix concretism principles with graphic design, gardening, and preparation of stands for shop windows, not to mention others.

### Collective biography obtained

The collective biography obtained has shown that there were some important places where the visual artists and poets gathered. Also, these artists helped to create some important places for their socialization. Here, some of these places have been picked and are discussed briefly.

The most important art school for concrete artists was the Contemporary Art Institute (originally IAC, Instituto de Arte Contemporânea) of the Masp museum, which was recently founded in 1947. It was a school that followed the Institute of Design of Chicago model and focused on design. Alexandre Wollner, one of the concrete artists, attended the classes of this

school. He later went to study at the School of Ulm. After he came back to Brazil, he became a pioneering designer. It opened in 1951 and closed in 1953.

In Sao Paulo city, two schools offered courses to teach the pupils handcrafted occupations. They were Arts and Crafts Lyceum and Male Professional Institute. In the former, Rupture manifesto signers, Hermelindo Fiaminghi and Lothar Charoux took classes. Another signer of the manifesto, Luiz Sacilotto, took classes in the latter. The most important aspect of these artists studying at these schools is that it shows their social background, that is, a proletarian one.

The concrete artists also, of course, attended some artistic places in the city, such as museums. Most of the museums in the city were recently founded: Masp, the Modern Art Museum of Sao Paulo, and the Arts Section of the Public Municipal Library, which was founded in 1945 and is considered to be the first modern art museum in the city, as it had a collection of art and magazine books, paper art, and art reproductions. Masp was a crucial spot for these and other artists as it became possible for the to see old and new art, especially in many retrospective shows, such as Max Bill's one. The Modern Art Museum opened in 1948 and mainly focused on modern art. It is important to note that showing and collecting modern art at that time was a risky bet.

On the side of the places created by the concrete artists, the first one to mention is Unilabor, which was a furniture design studio founded by Geraldo de Barros and others in 1954. In furniture design, it is crystal clear the intent is to take advantage of some artistic principles to create day-to-day pieces. In them, it is noticeable the straight lines, the industrial materials, and the easiness of compounding different pieces of furniture. It closed in the following decade. Later, De Barros opened another furniture studio, now with a more for-profit perspective.

Waldemar Cordeiro, another manifesto signer and so-called leader of the Rupture group, owned a gardening studio. He also aimed to take advantage of artistic principles from constructivism and others to create modern gardens that showed shapes, textures, and colors. His enterprise was named Avantgarde Gardens and he designed about 200 projects.

**Difficulties and limitations of the method of collective biography**

The application of the method of collective biography have implied some difficulties and brought about some of its limitations. Basically, they refer to three aspects. First, the size of the population. Then, the primary sources. Lastly, teamwork.

The population studied was very small, only fifteen people. The method is usually deployed to study humongous populations. However, when studying art, defining a huge and coherent population is challenging because artists usually have strong particularities. That is why a small population was chosen. It was a way to deal with a well-defined group, which had straight ties from the inside and worked relatively together against other groups. According to Brazilian historian Flavio Heinz, there is a risk of overrepresentation in small populations, that is, when the number of individuals is small, it may distort reality by selecting not-so-relevant individuals[9]. However, the collective biography method may serve as a structure when the population is small, considering it provides pathways to collecting data and analyzing it.

Another difficulty that was faced referred to the primary sources. For instance, few interviews with concrete artists from Sao Paulo were available. Interviews with artists and other relevant individuals are important to provide insights, opinions, and pieces of information unavailable in texts. In the face of it, the author has tried, during his masters, to interview some of the living artists and other individuals, such as the first and most important collector of such art production, Adolpho Leirner[10]. Another missing material was the art dictionaries, which did not fully cover those artists. This aspect compromised the fulfillment of the spreadsheets with data on them, which were a starting point of the research.

The collective biography method is usually applied when there are teams involved in the research, as this method generally deals with huge amounts of people and data. Nevertheless, teamwork is quite uncommon in art studies in Brazil, so the application of such a method ends up being a solitary one. Another bad outcome is that the lonely work misses the scale

gains, as Flavio Heinz[11] puts it, considering that a team can improve the velocity of the activities involved.

### Final remarks

The concrete artists of Sao Paulo may be considered proletarians of art. That is, they were part of the petite bourgeoisie who made themselves artists, nevertheless the difficulties they had to face, as they could not live on their artworks.

This article has shown that flows of people, ideas, and practices have benefited the coming of concrete art in Sao Paulo. The burgeoning city, with ties to various regions of the world, favored the coming of this new art. Also, the coming of these concrete artists has created new flows, as they have started the establishment of the then-new abstract geometric art that opposed to both figurative and informal abstraction.

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# Traveling Families.
# An Approximation to Indian
# Matrimony in Lebrija (Sevilla)

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### ABSTRACT

Throughout history, migration processes have been experienced in different territories, being motivated by various reasons. In the relationship between Europe and America, the colonial period is a significant turning point that implements migratory flows between both worlds, favoring social and cultural encounters and exchanges, feedbacking the collective imaginary and the reality of both multiple views.

Marriage between Europeans and the American population was a significant practice that contributed to the co-existence and knowledge of both cultures. From a cultural perspective, the hybridization of these unions was conditioned by the establishment of families on both sides of the Atlantic, implying an adaptive process that influenced people's way of life and social practices.

This paper focuses on the role of migration in the formation of mixed families. It takes the analysis of the Indian marriage between José de Mora and Manuela de Mory, as a way to underscore vital patronage and religious sponsorship episodes, while paying special attention to the female figure.

### Introduction

The multiple reality that essentially meant for Europe and America, "discovering" — or rather, knowing and introducing in the collective imagination of both worlds the existence of one, for all, new territorial, social, political, and cultural dimension — marked a before and after in the conception of what was known until then.

In America, after the events of 1492, an important period began. It was called the colonial period. Its change processes were enormous and profound, although they hindered the survival of a series of cultural continuities in the Indies, as many others merged with European influences. Art was conceived as a result of cultural hybridization; the European matrix fused with aboriginal elements, giving rise to a symbiotic style with a strong personality.

An essential part of the artistic manifestations developed in this context is linked to the spread of the religious phenomenon during the 16th century. Through the missionary expansion in Mesoamerica, we witnessed the establishment of religious orders such as the Dominican, which founded conventual establishments that would act as a center, not only religious but also as cultural and economic catalysts. This is the case of the Mixtec Convent of Santo Domingo de Yanhuitlán.

This paper has its origin around the history of this center. Dealing with the cultural expressions generated by the encounter between two diametrically opposed universes — the Mexican and the Spanish — we will address a specific case of patronage and religious sponsorship of a family of merchants from Yanhuitlán, settled in Lebrija (Sevilla).

This activity has its turning point in the period following the return of the family to Sevilla, around 1757. From then on, the participation of marriage in the church of Lebrija, and, very significantly, the female intervention made this case paradigmatic in the cultural context of his time.

He was a native of Sevilla, and his wife was from Oaxaca. On both shores, they carried out intense participation in the ecclesiastical life of their respective towns, leading, individually and jointly, various foundations and pious works. They not only made possible the maintenance of the

communities and establishments to which they were spiritually united, but also promoted the execution of various artistic works that ennobled and defined these religious spaces iconographically and devotionally.

The analysis of this case allows paving the way for knowledge of the phenomenon of Indian patronage in the town of this first known incursion. Additionally, it allows the reflection on the particular issues leading to the development of this activity by the couple, through a series of episodes in which the female role is essential for its execution.

Studies on women in the arts and their active role throughout history constitute a prominent stream of studies that has exponentially developed in recent years.

Inscribed in this line of research from the outset and linked to the local perspective, we have also addressed in different publications the diverse role of women in artistic production and the collecting and patronage phenomenon. All these questions have, firstly, allowed us to grasp the existence of some women whose interventions were remarkable in the field, while making room for their personas and works through the reconstruction of their biography. Here, we highlight the character of María Manuela de Mori y Cosíos.

### Who was she?

A first approximation must refer to her life's chronology. In previous studies, the activity of MarÍa Manuela de Mori has been approached by academic publications directly referencing altarpieces. Therefore, they addressed neither her character nor her integral activity as a patron. She was thus cited as a promoter or co-promoter of works, being relegated to a secondary role with respect to the importance of artistic works and their creators' analysis.

On the other hand, we had other references about MarÍa Manuela de Mori, more information about her origin and part of her activity. However, there is the limitation of not systematically and precisely referring to the sources, which blocks the search and accurate identification of the documentation referred to in the summaries of the data provided.

From this base, our study performs a new reading and reinterpretation of the documentation in some of the bibliographic sources, bringing to light a series of notarial and ecclesiastical documents, which outline various issues of life and religious and cultural promotion carried out by this family.

Despite the location of varied documentation allowing to reconstruct some chapters of Marĺa Manuela's promotional activity, the circumstances inherent to the first years of her life and her American stage are unknown. The data collected do not allow us to elucidate the exact date of her birth.

In the diverse notarial documentation she produced during her life, she repeatedly stated her geographical origin and her closest family affiliation. By adoption from Lebrija, she came from Santo Domingo de Yanhuitlán, a Mixtec town located in the valley of the current state of Oaxaca, under the religious mandate of the Bishopric of Antequera. Her family's initial relationship with the Old World is also known. She was born from a marriage formed by a Spanish father, a Captain of the Spanish Militia Infantry, and a mother linked to the Indies, from the town of Teposcolula.

María Manuela's relationship with Spanish lands intensified as she married José de Mora y Romero, from Lebrija. He lived in America for more than twenty years, exercising commercial activity. Among the reasons for marriage, we can consider the economic ones, although in the case of the husband, given his status as a migrant, also those of social position.

We do not know if Manuela de Mori belonged to some Creole elite in her relationship with her maternal family. Her life trajectory and her documented activity give rise to this hypothesis, given her behavior, her determination and administrative skills, for the sake of her own and common property, we assume that one more probable training would also justify her activity for the arts.

If so, this social group was careful to express its power publicly. One way to materialize this was the patronage activity, primarily associated with the exercise of charity. Likewise, the realization of pious works for religious institutions, in which part of the fortune obtained was used, thus assuming the European tradition. Although among the motivations for carrying out this

activity would also be the spiritual one: donations not only as guarantors of their wealth but also of their piety, enabling them the obtention of graces for their devotion.

The role of women in patronage varies considerably depending on their marital status and depending on whether they own their capital (hereditary or not). Widows and single women in New Spain were a group with an important activity of religious patronage in both male and female institutions, some of them being wives or daughters of Spanish merchants. These notable cases have already been documented.

In the absence of a husband and without any offspring, María Manuela she took the reins of the foundations, continuing pious works and artistic sponsorship until her last wishes. This was carried out alone, with the most dignified autonomy, without requiring the intervention of men or other family members — except when distance forced her to grant some power. In the notarial documentation we find her unique signature in all types of deeds, as well as a series of restrictions and impositions that, depending on the case, condition from its foundations to the regulation of her inheritance.

She, like so many other women, constitutes the germ of the phenomenon of artistic matronage, the object of an arduous process of historical rereading in terms of gender to which we try to contribute with this research.

### The activity on patronage and religious sponsorship as a traveling family

Around 1757, the family transferred to Andalusian lands. The return journey is said to have taken place between October and December of that year. Until that date, it has been possible to document the activity of Mora y Mori in America. At the end of the year, the couple surely resided there, and María Manuela clarifies it in a document issued in the town of Lebrija years later.

A few months after his return, José signs a deed of obligation by means of which the couple begins their artistic promotion activities in the town. Although, these will not be their first sponsoring actions. During María Manuela's stay in the Indies, her husband carried out the aforementioned

foundation in Lebrija. Two more foundations followed this: at least one patronage of laymen or Legos in Yanguitlán by Manuela — which her husband initially managed; another foundation in Sanlúcar de Barrameda by José, in addition to some memories of masses founded in the establishments conventual nebricenses. The same line will continue throughout his life, including in his testamentary dispositions.

Among the reasons for settling in the land of Mora, there was the fact that José had already achieved the economic objectives of being head of the family through his activity as a merchant. This is probably related to the sale of grana cochineal or its dye, whose production and transaction established well-known ties between the Oaxacan population and merchants of Spanish origin. For Maria Manuela, this new situation must have meant a significant cultural shock at first, but what could have been a hostile place for a newcomer undoubtedly became a space where social and institutional relationships were frequent and fluid.

The year 1795 marks the end of Maria Manuela's life. Her death certificate indicates that in January she would be buried in the Parish Santa María de la Oliva. Although it does not contain the reasons for her death, which we understand was due to her advanced age, it offers us particular information about her last wishes.

The burial of the Indian, as indicated, would be "of all greatness", taking place "in her own grave at the foot of the Capilla del Sagrario" , which was arranged for this purpose by her husband, José de Mora, years before her death. In 1760, Cardinal Solís granted the burial vault right.

If we look at the dates of the pious works and artistic promotion carried out by María Manuela de Mori, it is possible to determine that she appears as the protagonist after the death of her husband in 1764. This is due to her new circumstance, widowhood, by which she acquired autonomy and legal capacity that allowed her to operate as an owner from now on. In this sense, as a woman, the religious and artistic promotion undertaken during the marriage places her in the background, since the husband appears as the only agent of the foundations.

Already residing in Lebrija, María Manuela founded a pious legacy in life, which she projected toward her homeland. Years later, specifically in 1762, José de Mora ordered the founding of three Lego Patronages, also in the Indies and in the name of his wife.

The year 1755 marks an important turning point in carrying out different works in religious establishments in the town of Lebrija, due to the material damage caused by the Lisbon earthquake. Among the buildings affected, there was the parish of Santa María de la Oliva.

Destined for its Sacramental Chapel, in 1758, the concert of a major altarpiece takes place between José de Mora and Matías José Navarro, head of a well-known sculpture and altarpiece workshop established in Lebrija. The signing would take place between the benefactor and the artist's brother, as well as the sculptor Juan Navarro, in November, determining the cost of the works at 15,000 reales de vellón. Likewise, the payer established a series of conditions that show their involvement with the iconographic line to be developed in the altarpiece.

The intervention of Mora in the chapel is not limited to paying for the erection of the altarpiece. It designates the chapel as a burial place for himself and his family. In March 1760, they would have obtained the concession of the aforementioned ecclesiastical authority and the parish's commitment.

José de Mora died in 1764, buried in the vault, dressed in Dominican habit. This issue, we think would come as a consequence of the intense activity of the order in the town of Yanhuitlán and the devotional relationship that the marriage would establish with the community during its Mexican stage. Manuela de Mori would also be buried there.

After her husband's death, the first actions for the support of the ecclesiastical institution that Maria Manuela carried out in her widowhood took place that same year, specifically in June.

Andrés Ceballos attested o the foundation of memory of masses, vigils, and funerals by the convent of San Francisco in Lebrija. As in the foundations analyzed, it was common to commend in prayers. After referring to the costs of the said foundation, the benefactor undertook to finance the gilding of the main altarpiece of the convent temple.

The second Franciscan convent in Lebrija, called Convent of Santa María de Jesús, was another establishment that benefited from Manuela de Mori. There, she allocated part of her money for artistic promotion. As in the previous case, we refer to the gold of its main altarpiece.

It was also in the year of 1764, after the death of her husband, when the payer suggested to the community the execution of the activity at her expense. The religious transfer of the offer to the Father Provincial by a letter was approved. The agreement was celebrated in July between the convent and Manuela de Mori, who, by writing, found a memory of masses, specifying that a series of honors should be celebrated annually, every March, in the date of José de Mora's death, in addition to many other masses in honor of the patron saint, with the exhibition of the Blessed Sacrament. At the same time, it was obliged to finance the gilding of the aforementioned piece of art.

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# Global Relationships: Five Nippo-Brazilian Artists

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**ABSTRACT**

The article researches five Nikkei or Nippo-Brazilian artists who are Japanese immigrants and their descendants. Displacement involves assimilation, adaptation, translation, and transcreation. The logic of circulation and encounter of cultures engenders hybridization and transculturality in the artworks producing other engagement forms and creative processes. The investigation involves pre-war immigrants Manabu Mabe (1924-1997), post-war immigrant Kazuo Wakabayashi (1931-2021), and three Brazilians with Japanese ancestry, born and raised in Brazil but chose other countries to live in: Erika Kaminishi (b.1979), Yukie Hori (b.1979), and Kenzi Shiokava (1938-2021). This research intends to examine the place of this migration process in the history of art.

People's migration constantly provokes assimilation, adaptation, translation, and transcreation. Transcreation is a concept developed by the Brazilian poet, academic, and Japanologist Haroldo de Campos (1929-2003), based on the thinking that translation is never the same as the original. Campos proposed an idea of translation mixed with creation, engendering the hybrid and new sign to the translation process, especially in poetry. According to Campos: "In a translation of this nature, not only the meaning is translated, but also the translation of *the sign itself*, that is, its physicality, its materiality itself (sound properties, of imagery visual, everything that forms, according to Charles Morris, the iconicity of the aesthetic sign, understood by an iconic signal, that is in some way similar to that which it denotes".[1] It is the creative translation, a form of aesthetic hybridism through appropriation and transformation engendering unknown signals in the sense that in the semiotics view, every sign is always bound to grow. Although the concept is related to the field of literature, especially poetry, it is possible to expand it to the creative process of Japanese-Brazilian artists, which, in a way, transits between the two cultures, establishing connections and some kind of translations.

Moreover, the circulation of people brings the constitution of a Third Space, Homi Bhabha's concept, which refers to the interstices between colliding cultures, including a forceful break and changes of art view perspectives, where hybridization occurs. The cultural anthropologist Néstor G. Canclini points out that hybridization: "is not a simple mixture of discrete, pure social structures or practices that existed separately and, when combined, generate new structures and new practices" but "it can happen in an unplanned way, or is the unexpected result of migratory processes [...]"[2], that is our case. It is relevant to know, according to Canclini, how the process of this hybridization occurs, and it is what we tried in the research of the five artists.

Every immigrant who came to Brazil would face a phase of destabilization, transition, and transformation, giving rise to new housing and other social and cultural habits. The official immigration started in 1908 when the vessel Kasato-maru brought 781 people to Brazil. They went to the countryside to work on coffee farms. However, the labor conditions of

Japanese immigrants were poor; it was not as they had expected. Although they intended to work temporarily in Brazil, get rich and return to Japan, this dream was impossible to accomplish for the majority of immigrants who ended up settling in Brazil. They and their descendants are called Nikkei[3] or Nippo-Brazilian. The transcreation occurred even in everyday cooking: the pickled vegetables such as cucumber, turnip, or eggplant that they used to eat had to be substituted by chayote or even watermelon's rind.

About Nikkei Artists, there are four groups: the pre-war, the post-war, and the recent immigrants, besides Brazilians with Japanese ancestry. This article selected the following artists to research: the pre-war immigrant Manabu Mabe (1924-1997), the post-war immigrant Kazuo Wakabayashi (1931-2021), and three Brazilians with Japanese ancestry, born and raised in Brazil but chose other countries to live: Erika Kaminishi (b.1979), Yukie Hori (b.1979), and Kenzi Shiokava (1938-2021). The relationalities engendered by mobility are significant aspects to analyze in these artists.

### Japanese immigrant artists: Manabu Mabe and Kazuo Wakabayashi

Manabu Mabe arrived in Brazil in 1934 at the age of 10 in the LaPlata-maru vessel and worked on a coffee farm. In Lins, Mabe had art lessons with the photographer Teisuke Kumasaka. Despite being the eldest son, who, according to Japanese tradition, should inherit his father's work and, therefore, the coffee plantation, he decided to sell the coffee farm in 1957, moved to the city and dedicating himself to art. Although being a huge risk to make a living in São Paulo city, at that time, the selection of his artworks for the *II and III International Biennial of São Paulo* (1951 and 1953) had already come to happen, which certainly must have been a great encouragement for him. Mabe's consecration came in 1959, when he won the Best National Painter Award at the *V International São Paulo Biennial.* Moreover, he won the Scholarship Award and Braun Award at the *Paris Youth Biennial* in the same year, and Mabe got a Special Room to show his works in the *VII International São Paulo Biennial* (1963).

**Fig. 1.** Manabu Mabe, *Sonho do meio-dia* (Midday dream), 1969, oil on canvas, 200x240cm. Photograph by Sergio Guerini. Mabe Family.

It is interesting to see the change in Mabe's painting style over the years: from figurative one (*Maternity,* 1952) to geometric abstractionism (*Coffee Harvest,* 1956) and informal abstractionism (*Victorious,* 1958), which he painted while he was thrilled with the goal scored by the Brazilian soccer player Pelé at the World Cup in Czechoslovakia. He says in his writing that he was tired of geometric paintings, and after a few tries, the brush handling became similar to *shodō* (Japanese calligraphy)[4]. That was one of his first informal abstractionist paintings. On the other hand, he was conscious of the Western artists' movement performed by Pollock or Franz Kline and the development of vanguard *shodō* (Zen'ei-sho) in Japan[5]. Mabe is one of the best-known national and international Nikkei artists, and Japanese critics

consider remarkable his blending of bright, tropical colors. A Japanese view of Mabe's art is predominant among Brazilian art critics, especially concerning the gesturing related to Japanese calligraphy. The characteristics of other people's cultures always seem to catch the eyes of specialists. Even so, it shows that Mabe possesses both, or rather, he represents the artist who is in the third space, the intermedial zone between Brazil and Japan.

Kazuo Wakabayashi was born in Kobe, Japan, in 1931, and at the age of 11, his father passed away. He was deprived of his house due to the American bombings at 12 and lived part of his adolescence in a small village community (*mura*), where the social laws and prejudice against fatherless boys were fierce. For instance, Wakabayashi was obliged to do funeral services that no one would like to do. Revolt against that Japanese social system was probably one of the reasons that made Wakabayashi leave Japan.

He began to study oil painting at 15 years old, and from 1947 to 1950, he attended the Niki Academy and the School of Fine Arts. After that, he worked at the Shinko Press while dedicating himself to the paintings. Working in the press gave him a critical way of viewing and acting in the world. In 1961, he emigrated to Brazil after having undergone solid artistic experiences in Japan: he was already a member of Babel, Seiki, and Delta Group.

Therefore, it did not take much time for Wakabayashi to have artistic recognition in the new country. Three years after arriving, he won the Great Gold Medal at *Salão Nacional de Arte Moderna* (National Modern Art Saloon). Seven years after, Wakabayashi won the Itamarati Acquisition Award at the *VIII International Biennial of São Paulo*. He held many shows in various countries all over the world.

In the 1980s, Wakabayashi began to use Japanese traditional Edo period woodblock prints *Ukiyo-e* images: samurai, geisha, kabuki actors, fans, toys, or kimono's flower patterns, presented in such a way that shows them only partially, covered by the large area of layers of thick paint. There are some similarities with the traditional Japanese Yamato-e paintings: the gold clouds hide some elements of the depiction. Such delicately textured space made by the plastic base and many levels of the acrylic painting was identified curiously as the cuneiform pattern by art critic Jaime Maurício[6].

Wakabayashi explains that he began to use Japanese images when he realized the importance of his identity when participating as a judge of other artworks. However, known as one of the Nikkei artists who did not have any difficulties selling his paintings, some people interpret this style as one of his commercial strategies, even though he rejected the idea of painting for profitable purposes.
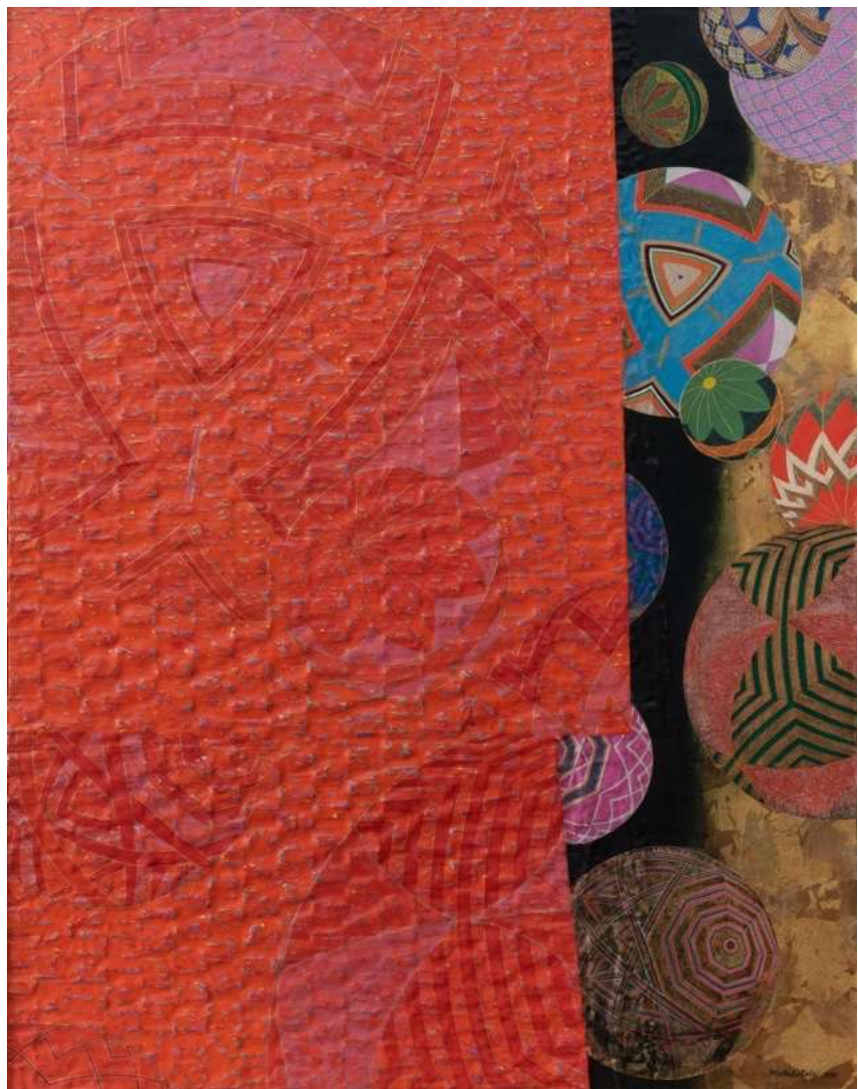


**Fig. 2.** Kazuo Wakabayashi, *Temari* (Japanese traditional ball), 2001, mixed media on canvas, 146x116cm. Photograph by Caio Tinoco. Wakabayashi family.

The sociologist Kusuk Yun (2018) analyzed the role of exoticism in Japanese, Korean and Chinese artists in 1445 articles in four international art magazines (Art in America, Artforum, Flash Art, Artpress) during the 40-year timeframe (1971-2010). Yun concluded that exoticism is an aesthetic criterion for these artists for the visibility on the international art scene.[7] He says that "peripheral artists often create and invent a kind of communication strategy designed specifically for the West's tastes [...]".[8] Moreover, the art historian Monica Juneja explains that "'traditional' concerns easily recognizable and consumable as authentic ethnic markers"[9].

However, from another point of view, the researcher Maria Fusako Tomimatsu[10] points out that this usage of Japanese elements was a signal of acceptance of Wakabayashi's own identity, which until that time would be associated with the worst and dark memories of his life: his father's death, the responsibility to be the older man of the family, the confrontation of the old village system, and the horrific scenes of the war. Independent of the process of the creation of Wakabayashi, the audience's concern may be associated with the aspect of the logic of art circulation indicated by Yun and Juneja.

There is another dialogue with Japanese characteristics in his thick layer of acrylic painting and delicate texture surface that is possible to recognize as an affluent artisan technique. Before Japan's westernization, there was no distinction between fine arts and crafts. *Kōgei* is a word that means crafts. There is no equivalence due to their particular and different historical contexts: *kōgei* is something so valued in Japan that they make tribute to selected artisans as Living Cultural Heritage.

The transcultural processes differ much in comparing the immigrants from the pre- and post-war periods. The former faced many difficulties due to their coffee plantation work background. The latter experienced the horrors of the war, leaving the country searching for freedom from the Japanese social system. Wakabayashi commented that the ingenuity presented in the pre-war Nikkei arts had been impossible for those who experienced the war.[11] However, we can verify that after some decades in Brazil, Wakabayashi had his colors influenced by the tropical atmosphere and the usage of the Japanese elements after living outside Japan.

### The Brazilian artists with Japanese ancestry: Érica Kaminishi, Yukie Hori, and Kenzi Shiokava

We studied Brazilians of Japanese ancestry living outside the country of birth. Érica Kaminishi (1979- ), of the third generation, lives in Paris; Yukie Hori (b.1979) and Kenzi Shiokava (1938-2021) of the second generation, the first residing in Tokyo, and Shiokava living in Los Angeles until last year.

Érica Kaminishi was born in Rondonópolis, Mato Grosso, in 1979, as the third generation Japanese-Brazilian. Kaminishi attended Fine Arts at the Paraná Arts College in Curitiba, Paraná State, and her life experience in Japan was double, totalizing almost ten years: first, three years as *dekasegi* (manual labor) when she was a teenager and worked at a telephone factory, and after, at the age of twenty-six, she attended a master's degree in Visual Arts and Cinema at Nihon University. In the interval period of two adjournments in Japan, Kaminishi went to England. She has worked as an artist in Japan, Brazil, and France. The artist has been living and working in Paris since 2011.

Her artworks make references to Japan. Some of them bring a critical view, reflecting the ambiguity of her identity and the prejudices she suffered in her experiences in Japan, whose map is a frequent image in her artworks as if territoriality and nationality are of greater importance to her. Japanese artist Hōitsu Sakai (1761-1829) of Rinpa School, who has delicate paintings with soft chromatic tonalities, is her favorite artist.[12]

The verbal language is also recurrent in her artwork, whether as interactive work or through poems of Portuguese poet Fernando de Pessoa (1888-1935), especially those that refer to identity. It is not easily visible; it even looks to be a pattern. We can perhaps associate this with the traditional Japanese conjunction of image and verbal code in art.

*Garden* (2011) is an interactive installation exhibited at Funarte, São Paulo, when she received the Funarte Contemporary Art Award. It evokes traditional Japanese rock and sand Zen Garden combined with graffiti as she transforms the stone for the public to write and draw on. The graffiti that is very present in São Paulo's urban scenes are not factual in Tokyo, where they are prohibited. In some ways, she deconstructs the sacredness of the

traditional Japanese cultural symbol. One more interactive artwork is *Mi Casa, Su casa* (2010), presented at *Aichi Triennale 2010*. Viewers can write a desire on each of the jigsaw puzzle pieces surrounding the map of Nagoya city. "The public is invited to fill in one white peace of the jigsaw-puzzle with their wishes in the tradition of *ema* 絵馬" (éricakaminishi).[13] *Ema*, literally horse pictures,[14] are small wooden planks commonly installed in Japanese Shinto sanctuaries, where worshipers write their wishes and thanks.



**Fig. 3.** Erica Kaminishi, *Cnidarian Poiesis 2, 2020, mixed midia, 30 x 30 x 4 cm (acrylic box).* Photography by Florian Formanek.

The *Prunusplastus* (2017/2018) is a mixed media installation with 3000 cherry blossom flowers hanging from the high ceiling of the Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, at the exhibition*Transpacific Borderlands: the art of Japanese Diaspora in Lima, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and São Paulo*, of which the author of the text was the curator of the last city.

Kaminishi shows the cherry blossom, the national symbol of Japan, using Chinese flowers, the image of ephemerality by artificial petals and all of them inserted in Petri dishes as if she was scientifically analyzing this Japanese stereotype. One can verify a subtle critique of the stereotyped and exotic Japanese symbol.

Her recent work, *Cnidarian Poiesis* (2018-2020), is a multicellular marine species representation made by overlapping layers of paper, with the poem of Fernando de Pessoa written on the surface. In the center, we can find a collage of a small Japanese map, which is possible to see in many other of her works. She selected the cnidarians due to their capacity to adapt to the shape according to the environment. Another reason is their power of regeneration. These characteristics of the mollusk are very close to those of people who lived through the pandemic isolation period caused by Covid 19.

Yukie Hori, was born in São Bernardo, São Paulo in 1979. After finishing her master's degree at São Paulo University in 2015, she went to Japan to try applying for a Ph.D. at Tokyo University of Fine Arts in 2016. Hori engaged in artists' residences in Mexico (2009), Ireland, Japan (both in 2010), and Australia (2011). The artist also participated in many international exhibitions and won prizes.

Photography is her main artwork, and various of the works she produced in Brazil paid homage to Japanese artists and used their traditional materials. *Cultivating Pines [For Tōhaku Hasegawa]* (2008-2014) from the *Dedications* series is a photography work printed on Japanese paper in the form of *emakimono*[15] (the illustrated handscroll) and dedicated to the famous Edo Period (1603-1868) artist Tōhaku Hasegawa (1539-1610) paintings. Placed in wooden boxes are the e*makimono,* exposed with an interval space between the two, and the *yohaku* (the void) is structural to her work, conceived as *Ma*[16] the intermedial space that emphasizes and gives life to the figures, considered the base of Japanese aesthetics.

By changing spaces, modifications appeared in her artworks theme. After going to Japan in 2016, she began to bring references to Brazilians like the famous Neo-concrete artist Hélio Oiticica. There were site-specific installations to create a new landscape and new relations between space,

artwork, audience, and life in Japanese cities, based on Oiticica's works: such as *Parangolés* and *Penetráveis [ou um Jardim para Hélio Oiticica]* (Penetrable [or a garden for Hélio Oiticica) (2016-2020), produced at *Art in Farm 2016*.

Other artworks, based on the exchange and dialogue between Brazil and Japan, one of which, entitled *Brazilian Reminiscences of Yukio Mishima*, are still in progress, which is the joint work with fellow photographer Nikkei, Aline Nakamura (b. 1982). Together they went to Lins in 2019. They took photographs of the Tarama Farm, where the famous writer Yukio Mishima stayed during his trip to São Paulo in 1952. In that artwork, we can see the juxtaposition of verbal codes – the writings of Mishima – and images of the abandoned house, the jaboticaba tree of the garden, and the fertile red land of the region.



**Fig. 4.** Yukie Hori, *Brazilian Reminiscences of Yukio Mishima,* 2019, Digital photography, printing (mineral pigment on paper), B5 format book, double-page. Photograph by artist.

Another work named *"At night I think about the day, by day I think about the night"* (2018- ), made with another fellow Brazilian photographer

Ines Bonduki (b. 1984), is also in progress and dialogical work between Brazil and Japan. While in Japan, Hori would take photos for part of the night. In Brazil, Bonduki would do the same during the corresponding period. Vertically arranged were all the photographs on eight scrolls printed in Japanese artisanal paper *washi* in exhibitions she did at Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro, in 2020. There is another version of the book.

Comparing two Nikkei Japanese descendant artists of the same age, Kaminishi, and Hori, we observe different Japanese cultural and aesthetic approaches. Kaminishi's principal theme is identity and has strong ties to her memories of Japan that can be correlated to the critical view of Japan, generally subtly and ambiguously. The artist does not fit either in counter-Orientalism, the active self-representation of the Orient in challenging Orientalist discourses, converting them into positive evaluations, or in self-Orientalism: "the wilful (re-)action of non-Western individuals and institutions to 'play the Other' – that is, to use Western portrayals of the non-West – to strategically gain recognition, and position themselves within the Western-dominated global economy, system and order".[17] She is in the position of the other Other, who is in the intermedial space, looking at the Orient not as foreign but neither as native. How to determine the place of the artist? One who neither belongs to Japan nor Brazil, but who from a different perspective correlates to both?

Differently from Kaminishi, Yukie Hori declares that she does not have any problem with identity. The artist does not feel like a foreigner in Japan or Brazil[18]. She refers to Japanese art in Brazil and Brazilian art in Japan, and there are dialogical pieces. She clarifies that "if I have something in common that unifies my work, it is the question of process and space"[19]. However, the space she bears in mind is the Other, referring to the place she lives, according to the artist, "to introduce the Other to the space." In her case, seeking the local of Other, where she has some approach, might be a recourse of authenticity to differentiate from local artists. Hori has recently engaged in interesting dialogical and transnational projects that overpass the duality between Japan and Brazil.

Artists of Japanese descent, born and raised in Brazil, generally study art there, such as Kaminishi and Hori, but it was not the case for Nikkei artist Kenzi Shiokava. Son of an immigrant father, he was born in a small agricultural town named Santa Cruz do Rio Pardo, São Paulo State, in 1928 and passed away last year (2021) in Los Angeles at the age of 93. Shiokava applied for medical school three times, but he failed on those occasions. Winning a free seat on military aircraft, he went to Los Angeles, USA, in 1964, where his older sister had been living, and, at that time, he knew what he wanted for his life: to be an artist.

The artist found wood his best material to work in the last years of his undergraduate studies when he began to collect discarded materials such as railroad ties, deactivated poles, and elements from destroyed buildings. The materials, gathered from downtown Los Angeles, were used to produce assemblages and totems.

The assemblages[20] known as the Los Angeles art style in the mid-1960s, were made by many artists, especially by influential African-Americans who were Shiokava's friends, such as John Outterbridge (1933-2020) and Noah Purifoy (1917-2004) who lived in his neighborhood. From different materials, such as stones, dried plants, broken toys, ceramic heads, anime heroes' helmets, Mickey Mouse, and daruma, was his assemblage produced.[21]

Shiokava developed artworks with a close relationship with nature which was associated with his work as a gardener in the house of Hollywood actor Marlon Brando for twenty years. We can associate his proximity to nature with Japanese culture, where animistic thinking still survives.

The sociologist Shoko Yoneyama[22] specifies that "the strong animistic underpinnings of the indigenous/folk Shinto belief system and Buddhism (...) have permeated everyday life perceptions of nature" in Japanese culture. The adaptation to nature or animistic thinking as an ensemble of complementary aspects between humans and nature is a possible understanding for the Japanese. Indeed, nowadays, in a global view, the nature-culture dichotomy demands rethinking and denotes the end of the episteme of the

Enlightenment that separated nature from culture, society, and human beings.

The artist declares himself proud of being Brazilian, but he asserts that his spirit is Japanese. Shiokava read Daisetsu Suzuki's books about Zen Buddhism, which "inspired him even as they seemed to confirm beliefs and sensibilities he already possessed".[23] In fact, some small works resemble the *ikebana*, the Japanese flower arrangement.



**Fig. 5.** Kenzi Shiokava, *Totems*. Dates, dimensions and materials varied. Exhibition Transpacific Borderlands (2017 - Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles). Photography by author.

The representative of Shiokava's totem works is *Marga Yuriko* (Warrior Poet,1991), dedicated to his sister Margarida Yuriko, who was a poet misunderstood by her family and society, for whom he had great respect and admiration. Another name given is *Mulher Cangaceira* (Cangaceira woman),

referring to the northeastern Brazilian legend of the 19th and mid-20 centuries.

Another artwork named *L.A. Kachina* shows Shiokava's attachment to the place he lived. Kachina is associated with the native American tribe and correlated to the cosmos life force, which surrounds the Hopis on either plane, living or dead, which dialogues with animistic thinking.

Shiokava was a very passionate man about life, nature, and art, but only recently has he been recognized. In the exhibition *Made in L.A. 2016* at the Hammer Museum, he received Mohn Public Recognition Award. He participated in *Transpacific Borderlands: the art of Japanese Diaspora in Lima, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and São Paulo*, Japanese American Museum (2017/2018), and 6th edition of *Ateliers de Rennes – Biennale d'art Contemporain, 2018.* Transcultural experiences cross and harmonize his art well three cultures: the Brazilian part, where he was born and raised; the Japanese one, the country of his ancestors; and, finally, the American aspect, where he lived for 57 years until his death.

### Final Considerations

Nippo-Brazilian or Nikkei arts we have analyzed show us the hybridity of themes, materials, techniques, and aesthetics of their countries of birth, their ancestors, and displacement. To semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), the process of self-generation and continuous growth of signs constitutes the genuine character of the signal or the semiosis. Therefore, this "sign" cultivated by Nikkei artists is affluent: associating and even merging different cultural elements, engendering the new original signs, the result of the interrelationship and transcreation occurring in in-between spaces named by Homi Bhabha as Third Space or *Ma* in Japanese culture.

This research tried to investigate how notions of place, in our case, Brazil, Japan, and other countries where the artists lived or are living, are associated with their artworks through negotiations of new relationalities. It was relevant to observe how the process of hybridization and transcreation occurred in their creative processes and their artworks, engendered by mobility and encounter with other cultures of their birthplace. We observed

that some concepts, for instance, Orientalism, do not fit the case of the artists we studied. According to Juneja, the "[...] transformative potential of circulation can show the way to rethinking existing frameworks" and "it becomes an important source of reflexibility for investigations through art history as a whole"[24].

This article hopes that Nikkei art can be recognized and valued worldwide, even in Japan, since they are considered neither Japanese nor Brazilian, marginalized, with little visibility, except for a few of them. Analyzing these artists made us think about: the challenge of overpassing the dualistic point of view – the dichotomy between the West and the Japan –, recognizing the plurality of artistic forms, the diversity of artistic productions, looking at processes arising through cultural encounters, reviewing other paradigms of transnational configurations, and claiming for a more inclusive history of art.

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**Artist's site**

Erica Kaminishi  https://www.ericakaminishi.com/

Yuki Hori https://www.yhdzn.com/yukiehori/web/index.html

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**Endnotes**
1. Haroldo de Campos, *Haroldo de Campos – Transcriação*, org. Marcelo Tapiá, and Thelma Médici Nóbrega (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2015), 5, own translation.
2. Néstor García Canclini, "Culturas híbridas y estrategias comunicacionales", *Estudios sobre las Culturas Contemporâneas*, Época II. vol.III. no.5, Colima, (June 1997):112, own translation.
3. The term Nikkei is very complex as it has different meanings depending on the point of view. In Japan, Nikkei encompasses Japanese and their descendants, but in Latin America, its connotation is limited to descendants only. Nonetheless, when we say Nikkei artists, it includes both.
4. Manabu Mabe, *Mabe - chove no cafezal: uma auto-biografia de Manabu Mabe* (São Paulo: Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 1994). No page numbers.
5. Shinji Tanaka, *História da arte nipo-brasileira* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 2019),192.
6. Jayme Maurício, "Apresentação," In *Wakabayashi,* Kazuo Wakabayashi, (São Paulo: Companhia Melhoramentos, 1992), 15.
7. Kusuk Yun, "The role of exoticism in international contemporary art in the era of globalization – an empirical study of international art magazines from 1971 to 2010," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros,* no.69 (April 2018): 362-388. http://old.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S0020-38742018000100362&lng=en&nrm=iso.
8. Yun, "The role of exoticism," 384.

9. Monica Juneja, "Global Art History and the 'Burden of Representation'," In *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture,* ed. Hans Belting et al. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 277.

10. Maria F. Tomimatsu, *Kazuo Wakabayashi: um artista imigrante* (São Paulo: Porto das idéias, 2017), 122.

11. Interview with the artist by the author, on September 3, 2013.

12. Interview with the artist by the author, on May 3, 2015.

13. Erica Kaminashi. "Mi Casa, Su Casa", Ericakaminishi. April 2,2022. https://www.ericakaminishi.com/gallery/mi-casa-su-casa/.

14. Ema 絵馬 (Picture + Horse) primarily offered horses to the divine as a sign of gratitude for fulfilling a wish.

15. *Emakimono* 絵巻物（絵= painting巻= scroll物=thing) is a Japanese illustrated horizontal narration handscroll, generally composed of text and image, produced mainly during the Kamakura periods (1185-1333). Read sitting on the tatami with the scroll placed on the floor or in hand. In both cases, the reader unwinds with one hand while rewinding it with the other hand, from right to left.

16. *Ma:* present in many Japanese cultural aspects (architecture, cinema, painting, way of speaking, and acting of Japanese people), considered in the author's book as a pre-signal, a possibility or potentiality that when manifested in the reign of existence, appears as void or intermedial space/ interval/ in between-space.

17. Koji Kobayashi, Steven J. Jackson, and Michael P. Sam, "Globalization, creative alliance and self-Orientalism: Negotiating Japanese identity within Asics global advertising production," *International Journal of Cultural Studies,* Vol. 22 1 (2019): 161, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1367877917733812.9.

18. Interview with the artist by the author, on December 19, 2014.

19. Assemblage is a French term introduced by Jean Dubuffet in 1953. For this practice: any material incorporated into the work, disparate objects brought together to produce a new set, in a creation that transcends the limits of painting and dialogues with sculpture.

20. *Daruma* is a doll sort without feet and hands. It represents the Bodhidharma, who meditated for nine years and reached enlightenment.

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# Ships, Heroes and New Frontiers, Myth of Travel and Migration

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**ABSTRACT**

All cultures are based on a few master narratives which merge into certain moral demands of societies, building the foundations of religious beliefs to make human coexistence work. They differ slightly in different cultures but they evolve along very similar golden threads. One of them seems to be the Quest for the Holy Grail, respectively the much older Quest for the Golden Fleece or Odysseus's Journey.

The ancient narrative of the Argonauts, with their most expeditious ship Argo, finds its equivalent in the Starship Enterprise and its fearless crew. The Compañeros at King Arthur's Round Table or even the Disciples gathering for the Last Supper strike the same transcultural collective memories as the intercultural assembly on Captain Kirk's bridge.

The Austrian artist Christian Ruschitzka envisions migrants fleeing from unbearable conditions across the mediterranean sea as the descendants of the Argonauts. The Swiss artist Milo Rau with his International Institute of Political Murder rehearsed and filmed *The New Gospel according to Matthew* with some rightful allusions to Pasolini in the European Cultural Capital Matera 2019. From the immediate vicinity, he chose his Jesus, a black activist from the tomato fields.

In my presentation, I question the differences between the travel images of modernity, the longevity of enduring myths which might define our transcultural affinities, and if emphatic artistic participation is ever possible.

**KEYWORDS**

Gospel; Argonauts; Myth; Golden Fleece; Star Trek.

Using the example of two European artists. I would like to raise two questions in my presentation. One is the longevity of enduring myths that might define our transcultural affinities, and the other is the difference between the travel images of modernity. And, of course, if emphatic artistic participation is ever possible and may result in high-quality art. I have witnessed the development of both works personally, which I find a very valuable potential.

Christian Ruschitzka, born 1962 in Styria and Milo Rau born 1977 in Bern, both come from very small stable, not to say rich countries in the European Union which had quite an impact on the events on our planet in history. Switzerland with its exceptional banking situation as well as the quite old and very direct, small-scale democracy, and Austria with its long imperial history, its colonial past, and the spawning of the most horrible dictator ever and two World Wars.

Both artists had a profound education in several fields with interesting teachers like Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Gironcoli and in sturdy handcraft like Filmmaking and Blacksmithing. See the biographical data on <u>Milo Rau</u>, <u>Christian Ruschitzka</u> websites.

Nowadays those two countries are confronted with increasing immigration and while both like to accept high-score scientists or overrated film stars they are not ready to just help people who are looking for asylum. We know that from the thirties, and we know that from the present. Although both their populations consist of a very mixed set of people.

What distinguishes Christian Ruschitzka's work is his deep understanding of materials and merging it into his artistic concepts.

His occupation with the surface, with the exterior of things, is an old one. His approach has always been concerned with the essence of things. He begins with the skinning and ends up with the coring. He pitchforks us with a surface that makes up an object and contrasts it with the condensed nucleus, respectively its volume. The discarded, abandoned usefulness of things is the starting point of his artistic investigations and his physical research journeys. Objects which do not have a purpose anymore are his targets, like a hunter who sets the prey and to complete his quest peels off the skin.

The required furniture of a simple room is measured, stripped of its paint, cut again into precisely measured pieces, and laid into an accurate cube without any gaps in between, the *Lodging Cube* (1998). And just like in a clean room you can put the chair on the table and the table on the bed.[1]

Preliminary to this work series was the exploration of the base for a sculpture. He deformed things into *Handluggage* (1992), milkcan, chair, table, wheelbarrow, bicycle just the things you need for travel. Here the base becomes the repository. The everyday items are safely stored and displaced at the same time and have an exactly fitting lid.[2]

Another of Ruschitzka's objects, the single parts of a chair also only laid together, is presented on its cast volume beneath. It might be a slight allusion to the oeuvre of Rachel Whiteread, who takes the volume of invisible space as the center of her work.[3]

I also have to mention his mechanical Landscapes because the movable or mobile intervention was the next step from his early compaction. For example in Switzerland, he let Laurel trees wave for you if you put money in the machine. Or in Iceland, he made one stroke with the oar on an ice floe to test the Butterfly effect.[4]

Or in his ‚My Private Ocean', 2008, where the water-filled plastic gloves seem to represent the backbone of a huge fish.[5]

One of his last pieces displayed in the Gallery Gougy/Vienna, in January 2022, fits the headline of this convention as well. A mountain in motion, everybody is entitled to have her own pet-mountain,[6] in times when mountains break down and glaciers disappear.

So the base layer of his artistic research is the external skin which defines the object and the inner volume, the appearance, and the content or sometimes not the content but the invisible volume.

When people started to drown in the Mediterranean Sea in increasing numbers and noble escape agents, Heroes like in Tibet or the DDR, became mere people smugglers, Ruschitzka was inevitably reminiscent of the Argonauts.

Even before the great refugee crisis in 2015 which of course was not such a sudden surprise as politics let us believe, Ruschitzka's thoughts

cruised around the Golden Fleece. The highly charged meaning and history of this ram's skin as a symbol of riches, beliefs, quests, and so forth is not only the idol of antique worship but strangely enough became the greatest honor for the defenders of the catholic world; The Order of the Golden Fleece and besides the lamb being conceivable as the resurrection of Christ, the knights of the order, not more than thirty are allowed, like to be seen as a sworn in Gang similar to King Arthur's round table.

But actually what intrigued Ruschitzka the most, was just what it was, the skin of an Aries. The most famous Aries in human history, Chrysomallos, could talk as well as fly. He carried two endangered kids, Hella and Phrixos from Europe to Asia.

Of course, the female Hella had to fall off into the sea thus creating the strait of Hellespont (the Dardanelles today). Phrixos was safely conveyed to the King of Kolchis, Aietes. To thank for his rescue poor Chrysomallos was sacrificed and his golden fur hung in a holy grove dedicated to Ares, the God of War. And there it became the object of desire and greed.

Jason the antique hero was granted his rightful legacy if he brought back the fleece. After a complicated and adventurous journey, he arrived in Kolchis where he fell in love with Medea. She helped him to gain all his aims and leave the area alive. After an even more dangerous adventures travel back. He betrayed Medea and all ended but not well.

Besides the world's most famous ram, there was the ship Argo which helped Jason to achieve his goals. The Argo was built from Aleppo Pines from Pelion and the bow from a prophesying oak of Dodona, Epirus the oldest Oracle in antique Greece. That's why the Argo could see and speak like Chrysomallos and warned Jason and his crew several times of catastrophes. She gave the whole bunch the Name, the Argonauts. And the power of such mystic Idols highly loaded with meaning can once again be seen in the felling of an oak by Christian fundamentalists at Epirus 392 ac..[7]

The antique sagas are endless stories of flight and seeking asylum, betrayal, slaughter, and even insidious assassination. Nevertheless, they shaped our Idea of Heroes since the beginning of storytelling.

And Ruschitzka works around the four most emblematic concepts of this old story, the hero, the flight, the ship as means of transport, and the Idol as the goal. By investigating some of these mythical journeys, he chose his materials carefully. He selected marble from specific areas in Austria and Switzerland which were created in the Tetris Primordial Sea at the equator, a plutonic rock migrating beneath the African continent towards the European plate. Just like the migrating flow of humans today, the marble took the same way millions of years ago. And it characterizes the noble antiquity, the cradle of our civilization. That's why Ludwig the XIV overdid it a bit in Versailles.

Like a ship in pieces, Ruschitzka will carve single parts out of the marble and uses them as the carrier for the skinned Argo. The processed surface is very soft like the foils, he used in his former peelings, but the actual material is hard.



**Fig. 1** Christian Ruschitzka, Argo, Gouache, 2019

On the southern coast of Sicily there exists a ship boneyard where hundreds of boats have to be stored to clear the ownership and to be destroyed afterwards. Those vessels have become only temporary memorials for the thousands of drowned refugees. Many of the boats are covered with lettering and signs, they speak like the Argo and were battered by storms like she was and had to overcome dangers like Scylla and Charybdis, Sea monsters Odysseus had to fight or the Plankten, moving rocks not even Zeus's pigeons would pass unharmed but cunning Jason did. But these ships here in the harbour of Pozzalo didn't make it, and neither did their passengers.



**Fig. 2.** Preparations for "Paradise in Transit", Pozzalo, 2019.

The lacquer of the boat, its outermost skin, refers to the current tragic reality directly back to the legendary events that had shaped our understanding of heroism for centuries but deny the honors to those who have to endure similar situations nowadays.

In his drawings, Ruschitzka develops his interest in the duality of Greek mythology and our reality and takes us on a journey in the footsteps of the mythology on which our culture is built. Like the Argonauts, the artist sets off into the unknown, embarking on a search for a contemporary 'Golden Fleece'.

His work is constantly and very much in progress, the headline title at the moment is „Paradise in Transit" and he will present several chapters of work cycles. Some titles are; The Peelings, The RAM'S Skin, and Horripilation. An interesting observation is that the Ram is not only the animal, it is also the acronym of Radar-Absorbant-Material, to make something invisible and Random-Access-Memory, the working memory of a computer.

So Ram's Skin denotes the skin of the Aries, the golden Fleece, the purpose of the Argonauts' travel.

And an artificial dermis that makes it invisible, the pipe dream of the boat fugitives.

And the user interface is imprinted with memory.

Many of the sketchers are quite sinister like the dead men in Kolchis who were buried sewn into leather skins hung in trees which Jason saw while arriving from the sea, thus referring to the makeshift body bags on the beaches of the Mediterranean nowadays. (The women of Kolchis were burned, and the ashes were scattered in the fields to fertilize the earth, which is quite a soothing thought.)

**Fig. 3.** Christian Ruschitzka, The Dead Man at Kolchis, Gouache, 2019

The chapter which occupies Ruschitzka at the moment the most is, what I call, horripilation or goosebumps. A phenomenon which accompanies humankind since the beginning and even the old heroes had to endure it, and he also sets the furry golden fleece in this context.

Those heroes did not want to bring a message, they were the message themselves. Their adventures are firmly anchored in our collective memory and Ruschitzka just wants us not to forget that their noble dangers and fights are no different from those of fugitives of today, and he determines the motive and the parallels as the starting point of his research trip. He circles the motifs of his studies to work out the essence of his materials. The finished cycle will be displayed in the holy halls of the present, the neoclassic Parliament in Vienna where the marble of decorative antiquity presenting our performance of democracy will meet the marble of the condensed splintered shipwrecks and with them the drowned dreams of a better life in a better world.

A bit different is the approach of Milo Rau with his *International Institute of Political Murder*. He works with the persons who brought the message, but it seems not so many can hear it, Jesus and his Disciples.[8]

But again there is the motif of a journey or more a quest with a leader and his companions sitting around a table like King Arthur or almost detained in orbit in which the ship must move like Starship Enterprise.

And that maybe is a similarity or the connecting metaphor between the two artists. They both take stories frozen in time and ever so valid throughout the ages. The acting characters become types who do not change and thus give people support, something one can rely on, like on the Enterprise in a cosmic pursuit that never finds the way home but goes through all kinds of human experiences and evolutions. Of course, I don't want to compare everything so boldly to Star Trek. It is not an Art piece, but it obviously shows how ideas transcend, change their appearance, and have a strong hold on us whatever disguise they may take.

That is what Milo Rau and Christian Ruschitzka show us, but in transforming the time capsule into the presence, the whole matter gets an intensive twist. Milo Rau is famous for acting out real events like the Congo Tribunal in which real participants re-enact court proceedings. It brings into focus one of the most horrible massacres and still ongoing bloodiest economic wars in human history under the confused participation of global economic interests in high-tech commodities, mainly gold, and coltan. And there we see another shift in history. Thanks to some presentations here at CIHA about silver mining and the migration of precious objects, I realized that gold took on a completely different meaning. It is not material for the most exquisite jewelry, religious veneration, or just money, but mainly a fabric for mobile phone and computer production, quite profane. And like it ever used to be it is still a reason for war.

Furthermore, I want to mention Rau's European Trilogy, Orest in Mossul, the New Gospel, and Antigone in the Amazon. You might know about the project on Amazon which had to be canceled and reorganized because of the pandemic and is surely of more concern here in Brasil.

The Golden Fleece is a master narrative that builds the base of a certain development of civilization, and so is the New Gospel. Orest and Antigone also deal with basic human needs and troubles but they are Theatre plays and not so internalized or common knowledge. I want to concentrate on the New Gospel performed in Matera in the very south of Italy.

Matera, which was once the poor house of Europe and still is in a region of Italy that doesn't bloom with riches, is today a beautifully picturesque little city that was the cultural capital of Europe 2019, half baroque and half medieval where Milo Rau lays the scene.

The region is agricultural, and rather poor and because of the location, refugees mainly from Africa are stranded there, not knowing where they are and without any perspective except working on the tomato fields of big industrialized landowners.



**Fig. 4.** Rehersal, Milo Rau's New Gospel, Matera 2019

Some of those outcasts, Rau took on as actors to re-enact Jesus' ordeal. And Jesus is Yvan Sagnet from Camerun who came to Italy for studying

engineering in Turin. Because he lost his scholarship, he went to Nardo to earn money on a local farm as a tomato picker. After five days he was so horrified with the working conditions that he started a riot and could actually achieve improvements so that the completely lawless state of the agricultural workers was at least put on some contractual basis with the local farmers. Milo Rau made use of this circumstance and casted him as Jesus.

Everything is intervened and woven together. Matera, the ex-poorhouse, the area where Pasolini and Mel Gibson filmed their legendary Gospels. Pasolini's Jesus Enrique Irazoqui gives Josef the Baptist, but also, or in another earlier version a High priest. Maia Morgenstern plays Maria like in Gibson's adaption. Some extras from Matera appeared already in Pasolini's Milestone. The actual activist Sagnet tries to fish for comrades in the existing slums around Matera and pursues a tangible campaign for more justice and dignity. And this activism is reflected in the images of the gospel that have been imprinted insight our scull caps for 2000 years.

Rau refers to the powerful role models but even more to the actual situation of the people, to the illegal agricultural workers and their 'revolt for dignity'. By swapping the images, by superimposing two transparent films, he gives each of them a more intense, more tangible actuality. And dignity is the keyword.

Both artists want to give the dignity which is so easily accepted by mythological rascals and humbly doubters back to real suffering human beings. They do not press the lachrymose but create something completely new through careful analysis and transformation. Milo Rau the fusion of fiction and documentary film by shaking and reversing the familiar and the traditional. Ruschitzka by exfoliating the outer visibility and driving out the heart of things ideally and physically, fragment and reassemble in the widest sculptural sense. They explore, expand, and trespass.

And here in this inserted snapshot, we have everything, the golden fleece in the mobile phone, the exploited worker on the cross, the mixture of enthusiasm and despair, the perfect overlaying of past and present.

**Fig. 5.** Rehersalbreak, Milo Rau's New Gospel, Matera 2019

The heroes from our sagas are also mainly fugitives who had to flee for various reasons, clad in golden fleece.

The concept of the companions who travel abroad and try to win the golden fleece which is thought to stand for freedom, security, wealth, and actually at the end of every journey knowledge. And that's the link connecting everything. Travel, sacrifice, and heroism resulted in enlightenment.

And we see of course similarities to important sagas and beliefs in the Eastern-centered world, but that would be another presentation.

I am very glad that I came across another piece of art during our visits to the Pinacoteca in Sao Paulo which very much catches the significance of the old myths and narratives. The work 'Travessia' by Leandro Lima. To me, it definitely depicts the Argo full of fleeing Heroes rowing into the presence.

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# Latin American-ness: Their Shared African and Black Diasporic Histories into Art

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**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this paper is to outline the influence of African heritage on Latin American Art. Latin American culture has been strongly influenced by African culture and traditions due to the encounter of Africans with the American continent during the colonial period; when slave trade displaced thousands of Africans from their original lands and forced them to work in the new world. This circumstance has contributed to the spread of African traditions and customs, and art, in various parts of Latin America. Understanding this cultural diversity is crucial to the multiplicity of Latino culture, as well as the forces behind the new ideas that are reshaping Latin American art.

Afro-Latin American artists work with their African roots to mesh elements of black consciousness, political activism, resistance, memory, and inequality into their work. Producing under the "umbrella" of African roots, they fight for the rights of black identity. The significance of the impact of African roots in Latin American Art and its hybridism needs to be investigated further. In order to understand Afro-Latin American Art, colonization and the theory of post-colonialism and global art must be deeply explored.

The aim of this paper is to outline the influence of African heritage on Latin American art. Latin American culture has been strongly influenced by African culture and traditions due to the encounter between the peoples of Africa and the Americas during the colonial period, when slave trade displaced thousands of Africans from original lands and forced them to work in the New World. Such historical circumstances contributed to the spread of African traditions, customs, religions, and art in various parts of Latin America. Due to the syncretism and the diversity of Latin America, a variety of African symbols, artifacts, objects, and traditions are found in contemporary artwork. Some traditions represented in the art reflect specific aspects of African heritage and culture. Religions such as Santeria, Abakuá, Arara, Palo, and Vodu in Cuba, Candomble, and Umbanda as well as Jurema in Brazil and Voodoo in Haiti celebrate African religious traditions from transcultural perspectives by combining them with Catholic and Indigenous beliefs. These creeds, which stem from the African diaspora, have been represented by contemporary Cuban Latin American artists such as Belkis Ayón, Lili Bernard, Maria Campos-Pons, and Harmonia Rosales. These women artists have incorporated elements of African religions, deities, gods, goddesses, dance, ritual symbols, images, and even colonial imaginaries in their oeuvre.

### Afro-Latin America

Latin America has the highest density of people of African descent outside Africa. The total population of Latin America is 652 million, of which around 150 million people are of African descent. In countries such as Brazil, 56 percent of the population is Black. During colonial times, people from the African continent were captured, enslaved, and brought in subhuman conditions aboard Spanish, French, and Portuguese ships to the Latin American colonies to work on the plantations, in the mines, or as domestic help. The colonies of Latin America brought the most number of slaves from Africa and continued to keep them in bondage for a long period of time. Today, the Afro-Latino population is extremely diverse and spread across several countries and regions and in both urban and rural areas; those along

the sea coasts have specific cultural, artistic, and religious manifestations. Contemporary Afro-Latino artists are interested in portraying these cultures, beliefs, ancestral history, rites, cults, and customs in their oeuvre using different media.

### Contemporary Afro-Cuban women artists

In Cuba, 62 percent of the population is Black; consequently, the country has an increased output of Black artistic production. "African elements in the development of Cuban culture have historically been manifested in the development of Cuban religions, in particular the Congolese and Bantu derived *Regla Conga* (*Palo Monte),* the Yoruba derived *Regla Ocha* (*Santeria*)*,* the Benin derived *Regla Arara* and *Vodoo,* and the *Sociedad Secreta Abukuá* whose origins are Old Calabar and southwestern Cameroon."[1]

The Cuban artist Belkis Ayón Manso (1967–1999) studied at San Alejandro Academy, Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana. She was a printmaker who specialized in collography[2]  and researched African and Afro-Cuban cultures and religions. Her work was inspired by the *Abakuá,* an Afro-Cuban secret society that was brought to Cuba in the 19th century by the enslaved Africans from southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon. The Abakuá Society was established in Cuba around 1836, and it has been active ever since in the cities of Havana, Matanzas, and Cárdenas and, strange as it may seem, nowhere else outside of Cuba"[3]. The practice of *Abakuá* is restricted to men. According to Orlando Hernandez, "It was probably in Cuba that Abakuá acquired its mutual aid and protection functions, which were also exercised by the *cabildos de nación* in response to the prevailing conditions of slavery."

Ayón used the Abakuás symbology in her painting *La Cena (Supper).* She created "a contemporary artistic version"[4] of the Abakuá Mythos. In this painting she portrayed the secret society Abakuá on the dinner table in the iconography of da Vinci's *Last Supper* using Africa elements reflected in Abakuá ceremonies[5]; for instance, the snake around the neck of the Abakuán princess Sikán[6] of the Efut in the center of the painting;[7] and the leopard skin. The figures are also portrayed blindfolded, which is used in the Abakuá

initiation ritual. Ayón used Catholic iconography from the New Testament and juxtaposed the image of Jesus against the Sikán image, while also replacing the male Abakuá figures who performed the Abukuán sacred ceremonies.



**Fig. 1.** Belkis Ayón Manso, *La Cena (The Supper)*, 1991, Colografía sobre papel 141×301,5 cm.

According to the Abakuán mythos, when Sikán went to the river to collect water with a vessel, she accidentally trapped a magic fish named Tanze, who is believed to bless prosperity upon those who collected it. The fish embodied the ancestor king Obón Tanze. Sikán could hear the fish's voice, and she was the first woman to know its secret; however, she shared it with her boyfriend, and in order to preserve the secret, she was sacrificed. According to Frank, "Like the princess, Ayón tests the limits of secrecy enshrouding the Abakuá, saturating her prints with graphic symbols and visual riddles — sacred fish, roosters, goats, medallions, and snakes. The foreboding presence of silence bleeds through Ayón's artistic style, in which

humans appear as flattened figures in greyscale hues, endowed with large, expressive eyes and no mouths."[8]

Ayón's portrayal of the Supper differs from the traditional *Last Supper* iconography as it comprises mostly women, with the exception of two men. The artist replaces da Vinci's central figure of Jesus Christ with the figure of a woman, reflecting the feminist struggle toward women's empowerment by placing them in societies led exclusively by men. According to Ivor L. Miller, "Nevertheless for many Abakuá members and their communities, Abakuá is a symbol of the Cuban nation itself, being founded much earlier than the nation (1902), and being a deep psychological marker for Cuban resistance to enslavement and subjugation."[9] This work embodies Ayon's interest in the ancient Afro-Cuban religion and its rituals, traditions, and identity as well as the feminism of the post-Cuban Revolution era.

Another important Cuban artist with African roots is Magdalena Campos Pons (1959). She is a multi-disciplinary artist of Nigerian and Chinese descent. Her great-grandfather was captured, enslaved, and brought to Matanzas to work in the plantations. Pons studied art at *Escuela Nacional de Arte* and *the Instituto Superior de Arte* in Cuba. In 1988 she went to the USA and studied at the Massachusetts College of Art. She worked with Cuban history, memory, religions, race, and gender. Her work makes references to slavery, slave trade during the sugarcane planting period, and Santeria rituals. Santeria is an Afro-Cuban religion developed in Cuba between the 16th and 19th centuries. It is derived from the Yoruba belief of Western Africa and Catholicism. Santeria believes in multiple deities; for instance, they believe in the Orisha, identified as Yoruba gods, as well as the Catholic saints.

Pons' installation *The Seven Powers Come by the Sea* (1992) is a direct reference to the period of slavery and the displacement of people from West Africa to work as slaves on the plantations in the Caribbean. The installation portrays seven wooden boards leaning against the wall, shaped like a ship's board; each of the boards has an Orisha, an African god: Ogum, Oxum, Iemanjá, Obatalá, Xangô, Oxóssi e Oyá. On the floor of the installation are photographs of the artist's ancestors, with the words "Let us never forget" ("Prohibido Olvidar"). The artist, by consciously using this phrase and making

references to the period of slavery, erects a memorial to all those people who were deprived of their freedom and were killed either during the sea voyage or as a consequence of the deplorable work and health conditions they were subjected to. Pons' placement of the photographs in the installation reflects the Santeria Cuban altar. She appropriated Santeria symbols in her work while simultaneously acknowledging her Cuban identity.

In her series *When I Am Not Here/Estoy Allá Untitled Blue* (1994) Pons' performance is documented using Polaroid photography. Pons painted her nude body in blue with white streaks, and she holds a wooden boat in her hands. Hanging from her neck, over her breast, are two baby bottles with milk, which drips onto the boat she holds. *When I Am Not Here* is an analogy to her own experience of not living in Cuba but the United States. It is also a reference to the Yoruba and Santeria religions and a representation of Yemanja deities. The blue color on Pons' body and the boat she holds are offerings to the Yemanja in Afro-Latin religions. It is also yet another reference to slavery, which brought millions of Africans aboard boats to the Americas. This boat represents an offering to the Oshun deities in the Santeria ritual.



**Fig. 2.** Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *When I Am Not Here/Estoy Allá / Untitled Blue* (1994), Polaroid photograph. Overall: 20 × 24 in. (50.8 × 61 cm). Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth.

According to González-Mandri, Pons'

> painted body symbolizes not only the Atlantic Ocean and the Atlantic Passage but also the Caribbean Sea and the Pre-Columbian cultures (the boat is canoe). This Polaroid reinforces the survival of African women living in the Caribbean despite their historic function as the bearers of future slaves and the nurturers of children not their own. In Cuban vocabulary, a criollera (one who takes care of children) is a black woman who nurses white children as her own. In this respect, black women become "mothers" of the Cuban nation. In most instances, because these women were separated from their offspring, they were seldom able to nurse their own. Slave women's bodies, because they were sold and raped by their masters, became vessels for public consumption rather than private bodies who could choose to reproduce and nurture children" (González-Mandri 2006: 12).[10]

Another photograph of the series *When I Am Not Here/Estoy Allá Untitled Blue* portrays Pons with her torso naked and her skin painted in yellow and blue. She holds a boat supported on top of wooden shelves with oranges. This photograph refers to the goddess Oshun of the river; in Nigeria, Oshun is the Yoruba goddess of fertility, sensuality, and prosperity. In the second photograph of the series, Pons is portrayed with her fingers full of honey taken from the boat she holds. Honey is also an offering to the deity in Santeria rituals. In this photograph, Pons shows her body as associated with the elements and the attributes of the Santeria deities. According to Pons,

> In that particular series, I was thinking mostly about translation and what I call negotiating distance—of all sorts, distance of time, space, geography—and cultural distance. (...) what was there before me, or what belonged to the ancestors, the people who came before me. How do they touch me now? (...) then I decided to do a piece that was a kind of a tautological idea, speaking to traverse, which means crossing. Cultural body of information and knowledge that let them be a community, keep together, to overcome all the horror and the humiliation of the process that was going on. They had something that was private, that only they know ... .[11]

...Pons, through her works, shows the horrors of slave trade; she also works with the diaspora and engages in the construction of an Afro-Cuban identity.

Another very important Cuban artist is Lili Bernard. She studied at Cornell University and received her master's degree from Otis College of Art and Design. Bernard explored the legacy of colonization, race and gender, trauma, and sexism, incorporating Santeria symbolism inherited from the Yoruba in her oeuvre. She foregrounds the visibility of Blacks, who, for centuries, were not represented in European paintings. Bernard's series *Antebellum Appropriations* reports the stories of slavery and Black Cuban revolts in classic paintings, such as *Liberty Guiding the People* by Delacroix[12], which she reconfigures as telling the story of Carlota Lucumí.



**Fig. 3.** Lili Bernard, *Carlota Leading the People (after Eugene Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People, 1830)*. Oil on Canvas, 72″x60″, 2011.

In the painting *Carlota Leading the People, 2011* (based on Eugene Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People, 1830*), the Liberty allegory is replaced with the Carlota character in yellow clothes. Carlota was a Yoruba slave who led a revolt against slavery on the Triunvirato farm, Matanzas, Cuba, in 1843. According to Cuban history, Carlota fought to the death and was then drawn and quartered; little is known about her life, and what historians know are from the testimonies given by the slaves after the revolt. According to Bernard, horses, as portrayed in the background of the painting, "they dragged and quartered her to death." [13]

Carlota is portrayed as bare-chested, wearing a yellow dress and carrying a rifle and a machete covered in blood, marching at the head of the battalion over white corpses. Bernard wanted to show that Black women played an important role in leading slave revolts during the colonial period. Another interesting point in Bernard's work is the reinterpretation of classical artworks into Afro-Cuban people's narratives. Some characters have the names of Santeria Orisha deities, such as Babalu Aye, Eleguá, Yansa, and Oxóssi. The drums in Bernard's paintings highlight the sounds of battle; drums were also used in Cuban sacred rituals. "The need to preserve their traditions in a cultural environment led the enslaved in Cuba to fuse their customs with aspects of Catholicism, especially from the year 1515." [14]

Black characters were inserted in the work *Carlota Leading the People*, with references to Cuban history and slave revolts. Carlota and Firmina were two women who led the slave rebellion. Firmina is portrayed in a blue dress with a thin white border, and her breasts are exposed. Blue and white are the colors that represent the Yemanja, the spirit of water and fertility. Next to Firmina, a Black man is portrayed as kneeling at Carlota's feet. He has a halo over his head on which is written the name 'Sao Lazaro/Babalu-Aye.' It is a reference to the Cuban saint San Lazaro represented in Santeria as Orisha Babalu-Aye. In order to practice the religions in secret, the Afro-Cubans chose a Catholic saint, San Lazaro, who most represents the African god of cure. Babalu Aye, known among the Catholic saints as San Lazaro, is one of the most popular Cuban saints; thousands of devotees are brought to Cuba,

attracted to his miracles. In Santeria, San Lazaro is portrayed as the poor Lazarus of the Bible, with sores and dogs.

The other prominent Orisha that Bernard makes reference to in this painting is Eleguá. The deity Eleguá, "depicted as half-black, half-red,"[15] is represented as a child or an old man. The Bernard painting portrays him as a Black child with a vest, a red hat, and a drum. Elegua was represented in the place of the children in the painting by Delacroix, with weapons in his hands and the drum hanging from his body. Dressed in red clothes, with his name written on his halo, Eleguá is represented on Carlota's right. In Santeria, Elegua is the protector of Yoruba deities and is celebrated in Cuba. He is the messenger between humans and deities and one of the most important Orishas. Elegua is perceived as an impish boy trickster.

Toward the left of the painting, a young and robust man wearing a hat and holding a drum in his hand represents Orisha Oshosi. He is associated with the forest spirit. Behind Carlota is another woman in red clothes with a raised sword and a halo on which is written 'Oya Yansa.' The orisha Yansa is a warrior who fights the strongest battles. The red and black colors are associated with Yansa. In the legend, she is also represented as a buffalo, which is painted on the right of the painting, next to Elegua. The Yansa legend tells the history of Ogun and the Yansa deity. One day, Ogun went hunting and saw a buffalo. Just as he was preparing to kill the buffalo, he saw it turn into a beautiful woman, Yansa. After a few moments, Yansa took off the buffalo's fur, horns, and skin; she hid the buffalo skin and horns in an anthill in the forest. Ogun saw all this. He approached Yansa and asked her to marry him, but she refused him. So when Yansa left, Ogun hid her buffalo skin and horns. Yansa came back, looking for her things; she asked Ogun whether he knew where they were, but he denied. Now left without the buffalo skin and horns, Yansa agreed to marry Ogun. She went to live in his house with his other wives, and they had nine children together. One day, one of Ogun's wives, who was jealous of the beautiful Yansa, got Ogun drunk and found out that Yansa was a Buffalo. The wives repudiated Yansa and told her they knew she was an animal and that her horns were hidden in Ogun's barn. One day, when the wives left the house, Yansa went to the barn, where she found the

skin and horns. Immediately she put them on and transformed into a buffalo. When the other wives came back, Yansa killed them all. She returned to the forest and left her horns with her children; she would know if they needed her help.

In the background of her painting, Bernard portrays a Ceiba tree. "In Cuba, as well as in parts of Africa, Asia, and other parts of Latin America, the Ceiba tree is considered to be a sacred tree."[16] The sacred Ceiba tree with flowers is used in Santeria rituals. Bernard notes that her work "exposes the post-colonial paradigm of suffering and resilience, through a collision of cruelty against compassion."[17] She adds, "Since my artwork is heavily codified with Afro-Cuban religious iconography and folklore, I infuse my paintings, sculptures, photography and video art with images of the Ceiba tree and her flowers."

With reference to *Carlota Leading the People,* Bernard comments on what's missing in art history:

> They're very beautiful, very serene, but what's omitted from that narrative is the institution that sustained that life, which is slavery (...) Even if they were in Europe, the Kings and Queens were still being sustained by the slavery that was going on in the New World. (...) I thought that by appropriating these European paintings into slave stories, I was kind of owning the story and positioning myself, or positioning the story of my ancestors into the halls of art history.[18]

Yet, another important artist who worked with Afro-religious symbolism is Harmonia Rosales (1984). She was born in Chicago to Cuban parents and studied at Glenville State College. Throughout the course of her career, she attended to issues of women's empowerment and Black culture. In her paintings, Rosales seeks to ensure visibility to Black women characters who were made invisible throughout the artistic classical tradition. Her work *The Birth of Oshun* is inspired by classical art, especially *The Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli (1485), which portrays a nude White woman on top of a shell, hiding her private parts and breast with her hands. In the Rosales painting the White characters are replaced by the figures of Yoruba deities;

Venus is replaced by "Oshun," a Black woman worshiped in Afro-Latin American religions. Oshun "is an Orixa that reigns over fresh waters, her name comes from the river Oshun in Nigeria. She is the goddess of divinity, femininity, fertility, beauty and love."[19]



**Fig. 4.** Harmonia Rosales, *Birth of Oshun*, 2017, Oil on Linen, 55"x 67". Private Collection.

In Rosales' work, Oshun is depicted as an elegant African woman adorned with gold. Rosales remarks on the representation of the Black woman in reinterpretations of classical paintings: "traditionally, we see Venus as this beautiful woman with flowing hair. My hair never flowed, so I'm wondering why this is supposed to be a painting of the most beautiful woman in the world."[20] For centuries, artists as well as the history of art have neglected the representation of Blacks and the studies of African cultures.

According to Walter D. Mignolo, this erasure and dispossession of Blacks is the consequence of "An aesthetic hierarchy (art, literature, theater, opera) that through respective institutions (museums, school of beaux arts, opera houses, glossy paper magazines with splendid reproductions of paintings) manages the senses and shapes sensibilities by establishing norms of the beautiful and the sublime, of what art is and what it is not, what shall be included and what shall be excluded, what shall be awarded and what shall be ignored."[21] The European institutions defined and set the standards for art based on their own tastes and judgments; the beautiful and the ugly were already established as categories by ignoring the cultures outside European aesthetic standards.

The central figure in Rosales' painting is of Oshun in a shell on the sea. She is surrounded by Black angels. The two angels on her left are floating amidst peacock feathers in the air, while the female angel wears a blue dress, representing Yemanja. The blue dress is inspired by Renaissance clothes; the waist and the left sleeve of the dress are adorned with cowrie shells, which are part of Afro-Latin cults. The angel holds a golden textile blanket, one of the goddess's colors. Some parts of Venus' skin are covered with flecks of gold. The peacock feathers represent Oshun. In Santeria mythology, the Orisha must obey Olodumare. One day, the Orixa rebelled against Olodumare, who decided to punish them. He stopped sending rain to earth so that the earth would dry up. The Orishas tried to get to him, but they were unable to travel. So Oshun asked if she could try it; the Orishas mocked her, but Oshun turned into a peacock and traveled to Olodumare's home. During her journey, the sun burned her feathers, and her head turned into that of a vulture. When she arrived, Olodumare saw all her burned feathers, and he put Oshun inside his home, gave her water and food, and asked her why she had done it. She responded that it was to save humanity. Olodumare, impressed by her bravery, told her that he will send rain to earth; thus, the vulture became the messenger of the Olodumare house.

In another painting *Yemaja Meets Erinle*, Rosales shows a naked Black woman, Yemanja, coming out of the water and hugging a man, Erinle, who is covered with a golden cloth and holding a harpoon with a fish. Yemaja is a

Yoruba deity and a tributary of the river Oshun. Erinle is the son of Aina, an orixa hunter, fisherman, and medicine man. In the story, Yemanja was living alone at sea, when one day as she was swimming, she saw a very handsome, strong man, Erinle, who was fishing. While he was focused on his work, he was surprised by a mermaid who told him that she was the queen of the sea where he was fishing. Yemanja told Erinle she was lonely, and he offered to keep her company.

In her painting, Rosales depicts Erinle as a strong young fisherman, sitting with one of his feet on a stone and the other in the water; his gaze is on Yemanja, the queen of the sea, and she has her arms around Erinle's neck. A glossy superimposition on her hips and thighs suggests the scales of the mermaid. The couple gazes at each other with a loving look. Rosales, in her paintings, rescues the Cuban Santeria culture and religion, opening up spaces for the representation and empowerment of Afro-Latin American people and their voices, primarily those of women.

In summary, contemporary Afro-Latin American artists work with their African roots, Afro-Latina religions, and diasporic identities to integrate elements of Black consciousness, activism, resistance, memory, and inequality into their work. The significance of the impact of African roots and religions on Latin American art and its hybridism is very important to sustain the memory and the relationship between Africa and Latin America. Understanding Afro-Cuban art and cultural diversity is crucial to truly grasp the multiplicity of Latino culture and the forces behind the new ideas reshaping Latin American art. The aforementioned Cuban artists have contributed immensely to contemporary Cuban art, and their work highlight their relationship with Afro-Cuban religions, their symbols, and cultures. These artists are of paramount importance in the struggle for the visibility of Blacks and their recognition in contemporary art spaces. The importance of studying Afro-Cuban art, as mentioned by Madaglena Campos Pons, is *to not forget* the past, the Afro-Black presence in Latin America, and all its enormous contribution to the Americas.

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## Endnotes

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