INDIGENOUS RELIGION(S)

Local Grounds, Global Networks

Siv Ellen Kraft, Bjørn Ola Tafjord,
Arkotong Longkumer, Gregory D. Alles
and Greg Johnson

ROUTLEDGE

INDIGENOUS RELIGION(S)

What counts as 'indigenous religion' in today's world? Who claims this category? What are the processes through which local entities become recognisable as 'religious' and 'indigenous'? How is all of this connected to struggles for power, rights and sovereignty?

This book sheds light on the contemporary lives of indigenous religion(s), through case studies from Sápmi, Nagaland, Talamanca, Hawai'i and Gujarat, and through a shared focus on translations, performances, mediation and sovereignty. It builds on long-term case-studies and on the collaborative comparison of a long-term project, including shared fieldwork. At the centre of its concerns are translations between a globalising discourse (indigenous religion in the singular) and distinct local traditions (indigenous religions in the plural).

With contributions from leading scholars in the field, this book is a must read for students and researchers in indigenous religions, including those in related fields such as religious studies and social anthropology.

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Tromsø, 11 January 2020
Siv Ellen Kraft and Bjørn Ola Tafjord

FIGURE 0.1 World map labelled with fieldwork sites.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is about contemporary articulations of indigenous religion(s). Building on long-term case studies, it foregrounds collaboration and comparison. Our aim has been to chart a path that yields something more and different than is possible through solitary research pursuits. Sustained group-level engagement, from project conception to the writing of this book, has been the *modus operandi*. We hope to have contributed to knowledge at the intersection of religious studies and indigenous studies. More specifically we hope to have shed light on the contemporary lives of indigenous religion(s), as people around the world have increasingly come to invoke such bodies on local and global scales. By examining translations between what we have perceived as a globalising discourse (which is what we mean by indigenous religion in the singular) and distinct local traditions (which is what we mean by indigenous religions in plural), we have tried to provide insights into complex manifestations, identifications, and comparisons of peoples and practices at the conjunction of indigeneity and religion.

The title of our book is the same as the name of the five-year project that it is based on: Indigenous Religion(s): Local Grounds, Global Networks – INREL for short. The bottom-up design of the project has harnessed our collaborative approach, analytical commitments, and comparative framework, and, not least, arranged our itinerary. Fieldwork, both individual and collective, in several parts of the world has led us to our provisional findings.

Underlying the project were the following questions: In what ways do discourses about indigenous religion (in the singular) impact articulations of indigenous religions (in the plural) and vice versa? Who speaks about indigenous religion, when, where, to whom, for which reasons, on which scales, and with what consequences? How are indigenous and religious registers – acts, words, gestures, material objects, or assemblages that somehow index indigeneity and

religion – means through which people recognise each other, form alliances, and distinguish themselves from others?

The field – our contribution

Our book builds on and differs from previous contributions to the study of indigenous religions in several ways, whether these contributions have come from anthropology, indigenous studies, or religious studies.[1] Here is how we position it.

First, it expands the authors' decades-long ethnographic case studies – in Costa Rica, Gujarat, Hawai'i, Nagaland, and Norway – through shared questions and carefully contextualised comparisons based on our sustained collaboration over five years, including joint visits to each other's field sites. Although there are several examples of collaborative ethnographic projects in anthropology (e.g. Marcus 1995; Falzon 2009), this approach is new in the study of indigenous religions by scholars of religion.

Second, the close and continuous collaboration has enabled us to address articulations of indigenous religions – that is, translations of practices, objects, and subjects into recognisable registers of indigeneity and religion – not only in the limited contexts of a case study, as previously done perhaps most convincingly by Tisa Wenger in *We Have a Religion* (2009), but on multiple scales across local grounds and global networks. In this way, we expand a perspective first partially opened by Paul C. Johnson in the seminal essay Migrating Bodies, Circulating Signs (2002), where he shows how indigenising, place-making, and community are achieved through religious claims made, sometimes across large distances, about people's belonging to specific localities. Yet, perhaps more than anyone else from outside our team, James Clifford has inspired us with his approach in *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century* (2013). He sheds light on how different local manifestations of indigeneity are entangled in contemporary and historical exchanges between diverse enactors of indigeneity in international networks. Our book might well be read as a response to Clifford's call for research into the conspicuous roles of religious articulations in what he describes as ongoing processes of 'becoming indigenous'.[2]

Third, in this book we explore how articulations of indigenous religions arise and come to be recognised in different contexts, but we do not promote a particular definition of indigenous religions, as James L. Cox does, for example, in *From Primitive to Indigenous* (2007), a volume that still stands as the single most important contribution to critical theorising about the field.[3] Instead, we keep open what an indigenous religion may be. Our case studies include the Bahá'í Faith, Baptist Christianity, Hinduism, and New-Age inspired practices, along with adaptations of traditional practices. Thereby, we challenge both authenticity discourses and biased ideas about a class of religions with exclusive members typically encountered in textbooks reflecting the world religions paradigm.[4]

Fourth, this book does not presume that indigenous religions necessarily have common characteristics. In this respect, it goes against both widespread popular ideas and common scholarly perspectives. Part of what we do in our project is to examine translations, performances, mediations, and comparisons that ascribe to indigenous practices attributes that are often understood as typical of indigenous religions, like animism, holism, shamanism, and sacred environmentalism.

Fifth, for its empirical explorations of a globalising indigenous peoples' movement, this book takes as a grounded but heuristic point of departure the category of 'indigenous peoples' as it has been practised over the past four decades in international relations sanctioned by the United Nations and other international institutions. 'Indigenous peoples' is today a widely recognised legal and political status, anchored in and authorised by documents such as The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) from 2007 and the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 from 1989. Although often contested and lacking clear-cut boundaries, this status is not equally available to anyone, nor does it always entail power to effect change in policy and political representation. Recognition as indigenous, in this sense, rests on articulations of historical experiences with colonialism, assimilation policies, and loss of territory and sovereignty. Furthermore, it implies claims about a continued relationship to homelands and ancestral traditions, and distinction vis-à-vis other groups of people – colonisers and their descendants in particular, but also immigrants of other kinds.[5] However, we do not operate with a strict or shared definition of 'indigenous peoples' neither in our encounters with actors who articulate identities and indigeneities in different ways in our local research sites, nor in our own analyses.[6]

Sixth, our attention centres on how and why different actors make claims about their own and others' indigeneity and religion, and the subsequent handling of such claims. Our book is thus also about politics and struggles for power, rights, and sovereignty, for particular identities and differentiations of 'We versus Others' and 'sacred versus secular', and for being heard and understood by others.[7]

Seventh, our case studies are not distributed in a pattern that represents the regions typically addressed in either indigenous studies or religious studies. Sápmi, Nagaland, Talamanca, Hawai'i, and Gujarat make up an unorthodox collection of places. Together and individually our cases challenge what one may think of as distinct Western biases in both academic fields: the predominance of studies and scholars from former British settler colonies (North America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa) in indigenous studies, and the predominance of scholars from Europe and North America studying the old heartlands of what they like to call 'world religions' or 'major traditions' (the Middle East, Southern Europe, and East, South, and Southeast Asia) in religious studies. We engage spaces, communities, and modes of relating that – if at all noticed – are often considered marginal, atypical, and either too explicitly religious for indigenous studies or too explicitly political for religious studies.

Eighth, we acknowledge that, as all authors do, we contribute to the formation and reification of the field that we study, in our cases through our direct and indirect engagements with indigenous and religious persons, and communities and their practices. In return, we are influenced by the ways in which the people with whom we work accommodate researchers and research in their lives. We argue that these engagements and entanglements enhance our academic credibility and our analytical sensitivity and sharpness, because they bring us into closer contact with the perspectives of the people whose practices we study. We thus disagree with scholars in religious studies who argue that detachment and distance from the people with whom we work are preconditions for sound scholarship. Involvement need not turn into activism on behalf of one indigenous or religious party in opposition to other parties, nor to political or religious mediation between such parties. But we would maintain that it does generate critical edges and exchanges that are far more informed, nuanced, and serious than those which are constructed theoretically from afar. The complexities that become apparent only through closeness and commitment tend to trigger deeper self-reflexivity, which may, if not mitigate, at least make us recognise how far-reaching 'siding effects' (Tafjord 2016a) haunt all scholarship on indigeneity and religion. Even if our individual positions and practices with regard to involvement and activism vary considerably, we all see ourselves and each other as working within a common framework of the critical study of religion.[8]

Methodological design

The INREL project began in 2014. It arose from sustained conversations over several years between Siv Ellen Kraft and Bjørn Ola Tafjord (both at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, in Tromsø). Kraft came from studies of contemporary spiritualities, had long experience with analyses of diverse media discourses, was new to the world of fieldwork, and was increasingly interested in globalising discourses on 'indigenous spirituality' among the Sámi. Tafjord was trained in anthropological approaches to the study of religions and had worked with Bribris in Talamanca (Costa Rica) since the time of his dissertation. He foregrounded Talamancan particularities and was troubled by stereotypical academic uses of concepts like 'indigenous people' and 'indigenous religion'. A productive friction emerged in their conversations as a result of the juxtaposition of their different approaches and orientations, the different regions in which they work, and their continued efforts to make sense of and take seriously each other's observations and ideas.

From their interaction Kraft and Tafjord learnt three lessons that they tried to build into the INREL project. The first was the fruitfulness of friction – and thus the worth of bringing together scholars with diverse backgrounds, working on different but comparable traditions.[9] Friction only emerges when there are strong points of connection between differently positioned or, rather, differently moving actors. In the case of INREL, a common interest in studying how

divergent issues become articulated and recognised as religions and indigeneities has made us appreciate critical interaction with each other. The second lesson was the value of committed collaboration over time, which makes it possible to move beyond polite conversation and actually learn from encounters, both between ourselves as scholars and with people in our field sites. The third lesson concerned the need to take comparison seriously. In order to understand more of local as well as globalising developments and their limits, some kind of cumulative and comparative approach was necessary.

An important step took place during a workshop at Sommarøy, a small island outside of Tromsø, in March 2014, when the three other co-authors joined the conversation: Arkotong Longkumer (University of Edinburgh), Greg Johnson (then University of Colorado, Boulder, now University of California, Santa Barbara), and Gregory D. Alles (McDaniel College). Later, two leading Africanists, Afe Adogame and Rosalind I. J. Hackett, joined the INREL team, thereby extending our regional and comparative reach. All of us agreed that 'the entire world' was beyond the reach of any project and that including too many members would create logistical challenges: there are limits to working constructively together as a group, not just in terms of the possibilities of mutual interaction but also in terms of financial cost and environmental impact.

A major grant from the Research Council of Norway secured funds for continued collaboration as well as for two of the four INREL Ph.D. positions.[10] For Kraft and Tafjord in particular, the research undertaken by the Ph.D. students, who are all based in Tromsø, has further expanded the exposure to indigenous religion-making and religious indigenous-making around the world: through Liudmila Nikanorova's research in the Sakha Republic in Siberia (Nikanorova 2019); through May-Lisbeth Brew's research with Mapuches in Argentina, Chile, and Europe; through Helen Jennings' research with members of indigenous peoples on the west coast of Canada; and through Aheli Moitra's research in Nagaland in Northeast India.

Collaborative comparison

As a team we have engaged in familiar academic activities, such as sessions at conferences, paper presentations during workshops, Ph.D. courses, guest-researcher visits, and publications (e.g. Johnson and Kraft 2017; Alles and Tafjord 2017; Tafjord and Alles 2018a; Hackett 2017).[11] In addition, we have invested time and effort in experiments along the lines of what Marcel Detienne (2008) calls constructive comparison. For a "comparativist to become plural", he says:

> it is necessary to form a microgroup of ethnologists and historians who are colleagues or even accomplices and who are prepared to think aloud, together. A regular meeting place is more important than a big research grant, for in that shared space, a comparativist can acquire the competence of a historico-anthropological micro-community. The project may begin

> with no more than two members, the one a historian and the other an anthropologist, just so long as each partakes of the intellectual curiosity and competence of the other.
>
> *(Detienne 2008: 24)*

In our case a large grant proved helpful, as it made possible the single most important part of our project: visiting each other's fieldwork sites as a group. We visited Sápmi in April 2016; Nagaland in December 2016; Talamanca in January 2018; and Hawai'i in July 2018. In the interest of maximising our global reach, we opted to visit India only once: Nagaland in the Northeast, where we knew contacts with Sápmi already existed, rather than Gujarat in the west. Unfortunately, a planned trip to Nigeria had to be cancelled for economic reasons.[12]

The group visits followed a basic formula. Each visit lasted about one week. 'Host-scholars' were in charge of the local organisation: Kraft for Sápmi; Longkumer for Nagaland; Tafjord for Talamanca; and Johnson for Hawai'i. Prior to the visit they circulated relevant research materials, prepped the group on local protocol, developed itineraries, and organised engagements with local communities, institutions, and individuals. Once we were on the ground, we sandwiched in small internal workshops along the way, allowing time for conversations, reflections, and questions both about everything we were experiencing in each place and about how this was stimulating the larger research project.

Each visit also was stamped by the distinctive relationship of the host-scholar to the particular community. The first visit was to northern Sápmi, the Sámi homeland, which extends over a large geographical area and four nation-states (Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia). Of all the members of the INREL team, Siv Ellen Kraft is the only one who lives and works permanently in her fieldwork site, in Sápmi on the Norwegian side. She has learnt from Sámi people and media across the region. As a result, the first site visit became a tour of multiple hyper-modern Sámi institutions, including the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Guovdageaidnu, the Sámi Parliament in Norway and NRK-Sápmi (the Sámi branch of Norwegian public broadcasting), both located in Kárášjohka, and several museums.

Among the lessons we learnt, and integrated into the travel schedule for later visits, was that long car rides, hikes, sightseeing, and meals can be highly productive in terms of 'group thinking'. This has proved to be the case for all our trips. Overall, we have spent more of our time together on the move than in typical academic settings, like conference rooms. While written back home, our chapters have in important ways been shaped by this movement: visiting protest sites, participating in performances and festivals, being invited into private homes, learning about local protocol and translation practices, and discussing issues of land and sovereignty.

The second group visit was to Nagaland in Northeast India. Arkotong Longkumer took us to the area where he grew up but no longer lives permanently and introduced us to research sites and communities with which he is connected

through family, friends, upbringing, and academic commitments. His intimate familiarity on both micro and macro levels with the people, cultures, languages, places, histories, and politics of Nagaland, in which he participates but which he also observes from afar as a scholar in Edinburgh, enhanced the richness of our visit. While lavish Christmas decorations in all the villages made it unmistakable that Nagaland today is a Christian land, the impressive celebratory performances of Naga traditions at the Hornbill Festival made it equally evident that this is tribal land.

Our third visit was to the territory of the Bribri in Talamanca, on the border between Costa Rica and Panama. Bjørn Ola Tafjord brought us to the village of Sibudi and introduced us to the family with whom he has collaborated over the past 20 years. They organised a hammock sleep-over and an encounter with local Bahá'ís. In another valley of this territory, where rough rivers, rugged mountains, and rain forest make travel adventurous, we visited a women's cooperative that was taking control and advantage of the growing tourism. Everywhere, the people we met made us aware of the contestations surrounding infrastructural development, 'progress', and resistance to the state and capitalist intrusions. Linguistically, Talamanca differs from our other field sites in one significant way: in the other sites we visited we could communicate in English with most people, although multiple languages were in use around us, but in Talamanca we had to go through a different colonial language, Spanish. This barrier heightened our awareness of the many other practices and layers of translation on which our work depends, and of the linguistic and conceptual requirements, challenges, and limitations of our approaches.

Our fourth visit was to the Big Island of Hawai'i, where Greg Johnson has conducted fieldwork since the mid-1990s. More than for any of our other visits, this last one was centred on indigenous resistance, in a strongly religious key. Protests against a Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT), the largest telescope in the Northern hermisphere, started in October 2014. This was planned to be built on Mauna Kea, a dormant volcano and the highest point of Hawai'i's Big Island, which is considered by many Hawaiians to be sacred. Greg Johnson introduced us to several of the *kia'i* (protectors), some of whom are also spiritual leaders. Billy Freitas performed a ceremony for us at two *ahu*, altars for offerings, made with dark volcanic rocks, that remind and enable local people to exercise their traditions and duties. Pua Case hosted us at the Hawaiian Cultural Center of Hāmākua and gave us a tour of the exhibit that Greg Johnson writes about in his chapter.

In Hawai'i, our entourage was at its largest. Throughout the INREL project we had reflected repeatedly on how we were making connections, not just studying connections already made by others. That INREL had become a temporary node in the networks of globalising indigeneity, an increasingly trafficked intersection and an increasingly collaborative intervention contributing to the spreading as well as the scrutinising of new ideas about indigenous religion, was truly tangible in Hawai'i.

The aim of the project was never to become experts in each other's distinctive fields but directly and intimately to expose ourselves to comparative material and to "seriously engage the empirical-discursive stuff of one another's data" (Johnson 2015). What this has 'done to us', individually and as a group, has been one of our continuous topics of conversation. What, precisely, did the group visits to our fieldwork sites add to our project? What did they teach us that meetings in conference rooms could not? Trying to answer these questions has been helpful as a collective exercise in reflexivity. Some of us will return to them in our chapters. For now, the following broader points can be made.

First and foremost, grounded experience matters. We shared information about our different 'research areas' at the beginning of this project, but these places and communities became much more real to us as a result of our visits, and the visits triggered comparative reflections more effectively. Overall, the group visits have added to a grounded sense of specific-other-places that are currently connected through the grouping 'indigenous'. This is not only the case with people but also for landscapes and the lives they enable. Driving from Tromsø to Guovdageaidnu and Kárášjohka gave a sense of the vastness of the subarctic tundra, in ways that reading about it could not have achieved. Travelling in Nagaland and Talamanca revealed to us the potential for sovereignty through stubborn mastering of homelands with steep mountains and dense jungles. Flying to, and being in, Hawai'i made us feel how islandness and the enormous expanse of the Pacific Ocean influence most aspects of life there. Each in its own way, all four sites sit on porous state borders, distant from state centres, not only geographically but also culturally and socially. Going there together was crucial for understanding the weight of this.

Second, these forms of exposure have provided us with a more textured comparative backdrop to the work we do in our local fieldwork contexts – in different but related ways. Some of our blind spots as ethnographers are related to matters of personal background, training, and experience, including measures that are taken for granted and upheld within regionally defined research milieus. Group visits carry the potential for destabilising some of these. In his "Theses on Comparison" Bruce Lincoln notes that the only check on the tendency for the researcher's 'world' to become "the implicit point of reference against which other data are measured" is collegial criticism (2018: 25).[13] Collegial criticism is normally centred on outcomes in the form of research results: presentations, drafts, or publications. Despite their usefulness, these forms of result-oriented exposures are unlikely to catch blind spots during fieldwork – what was left unnoticed, what the fieldworker and ethnographer did not see or see as important. Our visits to each other's fieldwork sites enabled collegial criticism on the ground.

Comparison has worked as a sensitising and chastening device vis-à-vis our individual approaches to our fieldwork sites (see Detienne 2008) and as a generative device for our group thinking. It has also been basic to our theoretical ambitions. To quote Lincoln's "Theses on Comparison" again, we agree that

"all generalization depends on comparison", the only alternatives being "a) a discourse whose generalizations remain intuitive, unreflective, and commonsensical, i.e., without basis, rigor, or merit; and b) a parochialism that dares speak nothing beyond the petty and the particular" (Lincoln 2018: 25). Lincoln and others have warned against 'strong' comparison, along universal or essentialist lines. Taking our cue from such efforts to rehabilitate the comparative enterprise, we have opted for 'weak' (Lincoln 2018) or 'light' comparison (e.g. Gordon 2013), for few and contextually rich examples or case studies, and for keeping our questions as empirical as possible.

Orienting themes and theoretical approach

At the start of the project, we settled on four themes that we believed, and still believe, are key to the issues we are studying: translation, performance, media and technologies, and sovereignty. These themes have framed and oriented our work. We have looked for them in our respective case studies, and discussed and compared them as a group, particularly during the group visits. This approach has enabled common routes of enquiry and comparative measures along the way, while leaving room both for our differences as scholars and the differences in our fields. The following conceptualisations and questions have served as guidelines.

Translation indicates a shifting of something from one code, container, scale, or site to another, something which happens in all human communication.[14] We have been especially interested in translations that involve articulations of indigeneity and religion.[15] Translations can be linguistic, cultural, and physical. They imply comparison, exchange, and replacement, and they involve two or more contexts. Translations are creative and productive enterprises which always result in some degree of transformation of that which gets 'carried across'. In the process, something gets added and something gets lost. On each side of the shift, there is always something that escapes and exceeds the translation, something that is not carried across but that nevertheless affects and is affected by the operation, including things and effects that are not grasped by all the participants.[16] Translations are often pedagogical, political, and analytical, and tuned towards particular audiences (see the chapters by Alles, Johnson, and Tafjord). They may be innovative and unorthodox, or conventional and naturalised. The more standardised a translation becomes, the harder it gets to notice, as it can be taken for granted by the translator, the audience, or both. A common characteristic of the translations we study is that they are informed, either directly or indirectly, by asymmetrical power relations with historical roots in colonialisms.

These are some of the questions that have concerned us: How do people translate 'indigeneity' and 'religion' into their own terms and onto their own bodies and practices? How do translations of certain communities and practices into indigenous peoples and indigenous religions generate recognition (*between* people, and *of* certain people and practices)? How do such translations enable comparisons and result in concrete identifications and distinctions (versions of

'We versus Others', 'sacred versus secular')? What does this do for the particular people and to the particular practices that are translated? What does it do for other people and to other practices (scholars and scholarship included)? Why do some people contest such translations? What are the vocabularies (cf. Kraft *et al.* 2014; Johnson and Kraft 2017) and the gestural (Gill 2018) and sartorial (Alles, Chapter 4) repertoires that circulate locally and globally and function as indexes or trademarks of indigeneity and indigenous religion(s) in and across different contexts?

By ***performance*** we mean bounded acts, intended for an audience, and theatrical in the sense of being conscious and reflected (Graham and Penny 2014; Huarcaya 2015). Performances can be huge and high key, like the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland and Adivasi Day celebrations in Gujarat (see Longkumer in press, 2016; Alles, Chapter 4); small and low key, like Billy's ceremony for our group; formal and scripted, like the welcome ceremonies during the Standing Rock protests (discussed in Kraft, Chapter 2) or informal and improvised, like some of the Sámi–Bribri encounters discussed in Tafjord's chapter. We have been interested in performance as identity claims and sovereignty statements, but also as sites of learning and becoming, and we have overall been concerned with the role of religion in performative modes. To what extent (if at all) are performances used for the (re)-making of ancestral ceremonies and beliefs? To what extent (if at all) are performances filtered through the prisms of indigenous religion (in the singular), and how are we to understand their new life on contemporary grounds – as heritage, religion, culture, mixtures of the three, or something else entirely?

Media and media technologies constitute both the foundations for the emergences, connections, and circuits that we are studying and some of the important instruments by which we study them. In *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Anderson highlighted the role of print media and expanded literacy among the European bourgeoisie in the creation of national identities and nationalism. A similar but perhaps even more vigorous case can be made for the emergence of both global indigeneity and the conceptualisation of various beliefs and practices as indigenous religion(s). Print and literacy remain important, but the range of media technologies is today much broader, incorporating speech and images (moving and static) as well as the printed word. Institutions like the *Morung Express* (in Nagaland) and *NRK Sápmi* (a Sámi broadcasting platform); the emergence of indigenous films and documentaries; the proliferation of mobile phones; the rise of the Internet and then of Web 2.0 with platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube[17] have all contributed to the creation and maintenance of the connections, both real and imagined, that constitute emerging global indigeneities. They provide means by which people who embrace an indigenous identity find partners and collaborators free from geographical limitations (although often bound by linguistic abilities). They provide vehicles for the preservation and creation of collective memories. They provide means for organising collective actions, such as at Mauna Kea, Standing Rock, and the World Adivasi Day celebrations in Gujarat, and disseminating information about

them. They also provide platforms for the global transformation and creation of indigenous religion(s), their beliefs, and their practices.

One should not, of course, overlook other uses of media and media technologies, for example, uses whose result, intended or not, is to oppose and destroy indigenous religion(s). For our purposes, however, these topics provide rich opportunities for the study of globalising indigeneities and indigenous religion(s). While none of the chapters in this book does media-studies per se, the specifics of local media-scapes have been basic to the work that all of us have done, not the least because we, too, are tied into the various networks that these media create.

Sovereignty is a self-identifying marker of resilience, often informed by the language of 'rights', and in some cases the expression of primordial identities. What interests us is how sovereignty means different things to different indigenous peoples. Some see it in terms of autonomy, others in terms of 'self-determination' (following the UNDRIP). For instance, some highlight a more macro-type of territorial independence from existing nation-states; others are concerned more with micro-local sovereignties – such as autonomy over state development and sovereignty over food, representation, education, and language, while some want the preservation of customary law. For others sovereignty may not necessarily be central; all they want is a recognition of their identity at a local, national and global context. Moreover, even within indigenous communities, sovereignty may end up denying the rights of others within. In Nagaland, for example, sovereignty over customary law denies women ownership to land and political representation and, where clan and village jurisdiction is primarily controlled by men, inhibits broader participation in the 'Naga nation'.[18] Therefore, the larger goals of sovereignty – envisaged in different scales – must be viewed in a spectrum of possibilities, becomings, disenfranchisement, and power. How do sovereignties, coupled with religion, tradition, and customary law, produce political capital at the local and national level? How do these instances in turn resonate with international organisations (like the U.N.) and larger transnational indigenous communities through common narratives of marginalisation, alienation from land and resources, and over cultural and customary rights?

Scales, scaling, and scalability

All of us relate to our fields as multi-sited and multi-scalar, and all of us have explored scalar dynamics that arise in and from them. 'Scale' may refer to relative size (small–large), spatial reach (local–global), or social impact (private–public).[19] Media-technologies are scalar in reach, from the highly local (e.g. local newspapers) to the potentially global (e.g. the Internet, Web 2.0), and from the private to the public (e.g. social media messages to public or commercial broadcasting). Performances can similarly be small scale and intimate (like the Hawaiian ceremonies that we were invited to take part in) or large scale and public (like the Hornbill Festival that we visited as a group in Nagaland). They can juxtapose different scales, as with the usage of family terms ('our brothers and sisters') in

references to (indigenous) people elsewhere, at a distance. They can also be tuned towards near and distant audiences, take place in real time and be reproduced, and address audiences that are more or less real or imagined.

Our project has been particularly concerned with *scalar shifts*, especially of the kind that Marilyn Strathern has denoted "magnification" as distinct from "domaining" (Strathern 2004: xiv–xvii): shifts of magnitude, as for instance when people move from the local to the global and make claims on the level of an up-scaled 'we'. What are the terms, things, and practices used to articulate such shifts? How do they travel, and how far have they reached? What is the role of religion in such processes? Johnson and Kraft (2018) in a study of the Standing Rock protests found scalar translations to be key to formations of global identity claims, and they found religion to be the key registers of such articulations. Locally specific objects and actions in this context gained relevance outside their site-specific locations and contexts, as belonging to a broader indigenous 'we' and 'our'. Globalising idioms were similarly anchored in the local 'we', as with the key slogan "water is life/water is sacred", related to a particular river and the threat of a particular pipeline, and simultaneously, to water in general and life as such. Through these processes, what J.Z. Smith has famously theorised as the order of othering is shifted. The 'near-other' is basic to religious generativity, Smith claimed (2004). The 'near-other' plays the role of antagonist and catalyst, based on the friction attendant to identity enunciation in contrastive encounters. For contemporary indigeneity at Standing Rock, a different scale and order of othering was at play:

> The "other" here is not defined only by geographical boundaries and proximities, but also by perceived epistemological, moral, and lifeway similarities, which conduce to political allegiances. Incipient globalizing indigeneities recast the boundary scale, framing colonial nation-states *tout court* and the extractive industries they foster as a threat to all indigenous peoples and, ultimately, to the fate of the Earth itself. This maximally scaled-up framework of othering correlates with an equally scaled-up indigenous identity formation: a "distant-self". In segmentary fashion, as threats and alliances are up-scaled, so too are the core markers of identity – ethnonyms, forms of myth-making, and ritual actions, for example. In this scaled-up frame, "religion" takes on a central role for formal reasons, not least its plasticity, its capacity to trigger, cultivate and communicate pathos, and its claims to ultimacy. Distant indigenous others may thus come to see each other as related "selves" through performative modes of religious expression vis-à-vis entities fashioned as maximal others.
>
> *(Johnson and Kraft 2018: 505–506)*

However, on local, national, regional, and even continental levels, 'indigenous' and its various cognates and translations continue to signal specific territorial and communal belongings, in contrast to people or religions 'from elsewhere'. For

example, Bribris consider themselves indigenous to Talamanca, to Costa Rica, to Central America, and to the Americas at large. Rathvas consider themselves indigenous to the area where they predominate (the 'Rathvistar'), an area where they were quite possibly the first inhabitants; they now also increasingly see themselves, as part of the larger *adivasi* community, as descendants of the first inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent.

In addition to these shifts of magnification, our project has involved the kinds of shifts that Strathern calls 'domaining' a shift from one domain to another (e.g. politics to economics, cultural heritage to religion). One important shift of this kind involves 'indigenous' and its various contextually contingent cognates and translations, in which linguistic and cultural scales and scalings intersect. 'Indigenous' is not the primary generic category or scale of identification for people in any of the regions that we study. In most local uses of the hegemonic (post)colonial languages which are vital parts of our cases and contexts, other categories are given preference. Bribris variously speak about themselves as *ditsöwö* (Br.), *skowak* (Br.), *indios* (Sp.), and *indígenas* (Sp.) in addition to or alongside 'indigenous'. Although some Rathvas appeal to the U.N. International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, they do not ordinarily utilise the English 'indigenous' but terms belonging to several other discourses: 'tribal' (a legacy of British colonialism); 'Scheduled Tribe' (the legal language of the Indian state); and *adivasi*, a designation, a century old at most, that many prefer. In Nagaland 'tribal' is used, along with 'indigenous'; in Hawai'i 'native', and in Sápmi '*urfolk*'. Locally, regionally, and often also nationally, these are the main categories employed to generalise about and accommodate more specific identities and communities, like Ao, Bribri, Hawaiian, Rathva, or Sámi. In most of our cases, the category 'indigenous' appears to serve as a *tertium comparationis* primarily for comparisons and engagement with others beyond the regional and national contexts, as a tool for comparisons on a higher – sometimes global – scale.

A second shift of domaining is implicated in what we have called 'religionising' and at times 'indigenous religionising'. Inasmuch as 'religion' derives from the European context, its use, too, intersects with spatial scales and scalings. Thus, some of the Bribri have come to identify some of their practices as indigenous religion. By contrast, some of the Rathva have insisted that 'religious' beliefs – or more properly, *dharmik* beliefs – are private, and they have come to identify practices that in the past might have been considered *dharmik* as *adivasi* culture (*saṃskṛti*). In fact, our own theoretical scaling and scalar shifts – between indigenous religions (in plural) and indigenous religion (in the singular) – are also an example of both magnification and domaining, one which we perform heuristically in our collaborative attempts to address complex relations in and between local grounds and global networks.

The chapters

We develop the themes and their multi-scalar dimensions in five individual chapters, each focused on our own areas of research.

Bjørn Ola Tafjord's chapter examines encounters and situations that reveal how articulations of indigeneities and indigenous religions are simultaneously pedagogical, political, and analytical, and how they are both the means and results of translations and comparisons. It describes episodes from his work in Talamanca (Costa Rica) and Tromsø (Norway and Sápmi) that have been educative because they have challenged naturalised expectations of indigeneities and indigenous religions, and highlighted particularities in the constitutions of such statuses or entities. The workshops of the INREL project have disclosed even more about how indigeneities and indigenous religions are performed or projected in divergent ways by diverse actors in different contexts, and thus added to this critical learning. By paying careful attention to the equivocations that translations and comparisons of indigeneities and indigenous religions necessarily involve, we might gain better understandings of the particularities they comprise and produce, and the pedagogical, political, and analytical possibilities they engender.

Siv Ellen Kraft's chapter explores the shift to 'indigeneity' and 'indigenous religion' among the Sámi, through a focus on Sámi activism at Alta (1979–1981, concerning a proposed power plant) and Standing Rock (2016–2017, concerning a proposed pipeline). It is based on a combination of multi-sited fieldwork, interviews, and textual sources, and proceeds along the lines of 'light comparison' (Felski and Friedman 2013), inspired partly by the comparative logic of indigeneity and indigenous religion. Kraft's comparison is 'light' in the sense of few cases, contextually rich descriptions, and a primarily inductive and explorative approach. While partial, limited, and centred on a few of the thousands of people involved in the protests this design provides windows into the broader stories to which the cases belong, across the 50-year timeline that separates them, and in different parts of an increasingly connected indigenous geography. It enables a comparative approach to indigenous religion as it has emerged and developed in Sámi contexts, across time, and the ways in which contexts shape performances and translations.

Arkotong Longkumer's chapter examines the way sovereignty is played out in the Naga areas, with their rich stories about land, their struggle to survive the effects of colonisation, and the hegemonic encroachment of the Indian state through militarisation. He highlights several stories that he encounters, particularly in trying to understand what he calls 'sovereignty in motion'. In the diverse social settings where identity and a sense of belonging bring forth the complex algorithm of movement and mediation through narratives of land, prayer, prophecy, networks, friendship, and travel, he takes note of the astute ways in which sovereignty as practice inhabits the daily struggle of indigenous peoples and the way they work through the 'sentient landscape'. Sovereignty then moves away from political slogans of territorial boundaries but takes on a more fluid notion of becoming that is about sharing a 'common world' not only with ancestors, spirits, and deities, but with the larger global indigenous peoples' movement.

Gregory D. Alles' chapter concentrates on the translation – the transformation in performance – of the U.N.'s International Day of the World's Indigenous

Peoples (9th August) into World Adivasi Day (*Vishwa Adivasi Divas* or *Din*) in Gujarat, specifically in the town of Chhotaudepur in eastern central Gujarat. Although an imagined global *adivasi* ('indigenous') community is integral to this celebration, its principal effect is to address more local issues of contested identity, particularly for (relatively) young, literate males, and in Chhotaudepur for males of the dominant *adivasi* community, known as Rathvas. While not concerned with sovereignty in the narrowest sense of the word, these issues largely arise as a result of external state action: the refusal of the central government to acknowledge *adivasis* as indigenous when ratifying UNDRIP, recent attempts by the state government to appropriate celebrations of World Adivasi Day for partisan purposes, and ongoing legal challenges to the status of Rathvas as constituting a 'Scheduled Tribe'. To address these issues, fractures within the community have required not indigenous religionising but a deliberate 'de-religionising' of *adivasi* religious traditions in order to operationalise them.

Greg Johnson's chapter turns to engaged indigeneity in Hawai'i. 'Engaged indigeneity' is framing language meant to encourage insights about indigenous representation, especially with reference to questions that drill down to explore the specific ways religion is articulated in the unfolding present. In order to explore a concrete instance of engaged indigeneity, this chapter is devoted to an analysis of *Kūkulu: Pillars of Mauna a Wākea*, an exhibit at the Hawaiian Cultural Center of Hāmākua about the protests over the prospective Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on Mauna Kea, which took place during the summer of 2015. Rising to 13,800 feet, Mauna Kea is the highest point in the Pacific Ocean and a mountain regarded as sacred by many Hawaiians. It is also the site of 13 existing telescopes and the proposed site for another extremely large telescope, which has provoked a sustained, vigorous, and religiously generative response from many Native Hawaiians, including through legal channels, art and music production, direct action protests, and museum commemoration, as in the case of the Kūkulu exhibit engaged in this chapter. After an analysis of Kūkulu that unfolds by means of invoking and testing core INREL concepts and categories, the chapter turns to the Mauna Kea protests of 2019–2020 as a means to see how the themes and objects of Kūkulu came back to life in this movement of unprecedented scale and reach in Hawai'i and what this dynamic tells us about the vitality of indigenous tradition(s).

Finally, the concluding chapter returns to some of the questions that we have presented in this introduction and reflects upon some of the overarching findings of the INREL project.

Notes

1 For a recently published broad collection of key essays, see the four volumes of *Indigenous Religions* (2018) edited by Graham Harvey and Amy Whitehead for Routledge.
2 Anna L. Tsing (2009) has issued a similar call for research into the role of religions in the globalising indigenous peoples' movement. Other helpful texts include Marisol de la Cadena's *Earth Beings* (2015), which we discovered early in the project, and the work of David Chidester (1996, 2012, 2014). The present book also builds on perspectives

developed in previous publications of the INREL project, most substantially the *Handbook of Indigenous Religion(s)* (2017), edited by Greg Johnson and Siv Ellen Kraft, and special sections of the journals *Religious Studies and Theology* (2017) and *Numen* (2018), edited by Gregory D. Alles and Bjørn Ola Tafjord.

3 This includes clearing the field of ungrounded theological presumptions rooted in colonial and romantic imaginations of primitive people and primitive religion.

4 Here we add to the methodological challenges put forth in the ground-breaking anthologies *Beyond Primitivism* (2004) edited by Jacob Olupona; *Critical Reflections on Indigenous Religions* (2013) edited by James L. Cox; *Religious Categories and the Construction of the Indigenous* (2016) edited by Christopher Hartney and Daniel Tower; and our own *Handbook of Indigenous Religion(s)* (2017) edited by Greg Johnson and Siv Ellen Kraft. For regional reflections of some of these ideas, see Phom (2015), Kamei (2006), Longchar (2000), and Kuokkanen (2019).

5 Increasingly, in various contexts today, for example in India, such claims resonate also with nationalist discourses over inclusion and exclusion based on land and identity (Longkumer 2017b; Longkumer in press; Anderson and Longkumer 2018; cf. Tafjord 2018). For a historical and theoretical critique, see Kuper (2003) and the debate it triggered, e.g., the essays in Gerharz, Uddin, and Chakkarath (2018), which are generally critical of a 'saltwater theory' of indigeneity.

6 For critiques of and alternatives to the categorical identification of indigenous religions with indigenous peoples, see Johnson (2002); Tafjord (2013, 2017); Tafjord and Alles (2018b).

7 These issues have been highlighted previous by numerous scholars, for example Marisol de la Cadena (2015), Greg Johnson (2019), Ronald Niezen (2000), and Tisa Wenger (2009).

8 In religious studies, Graham Harvey (2003) and Greg Johnson (2014) are among the scholars who have published interesting methodological reflections about how they interact with their hosts, friends, and collaborators in the field. In indigenous studies, close engagement with the researched community is seen as an ethical and methodological obligation, as underscored by, for example, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Jelena Porsanger (2004).

9 For interesting reflections on frictions, also between scholars and their scholarship, on local grounds as well as through globalising networks, see Tsing (2005, 2015).

10 The other two Ph.D. positions in the project are financed by UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

11 This includes the IAHR Congress (Erfurt 2015), EASR annual meetings (Helsinki 2016; Bern 2018; Tartu 2019), NAISA 2017, and a roundtable (AAR [Boston 2017]). Additionally, we organised Ph.D. courses at UiT focusing on our key concepts. Throughout the project-period, several of the team members have visited Tromsø, including a three-month research stay by Arkotong Longkumer and a one-month stay by Gregory D. Alles, all of which also contributed to keeping our conversation flowing.

12 By participating in our field visits and other events, however, Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Afe Adogame have expanded our scope and enriched our conversations in important ways.

13 For us as scholars doing fieldwork, another important check comes from the people with whom we work.

14 For different approaches to translation, see for example Severi and Hanks (2015) and Venuti (2012).

15 On translations of indigeneities and religions, see for example Tsing (2009), Clifford (2013), Tafjord (2016a, 2016b), and Alles (2017).

16 For critical discussions of such processes, see de la Cadena (2015, 2018) and Blaser and de la Cadena (2017, 2018).

17 'Web 2.0' names a second stage of development of the Internet, characterised especially by the growth of social media, and the change from static web pages to dynamic or user-generated content.

18 Two Naga women at the forefront of this debate are Monalisa Changkija and Dolly Kikon: https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/nagaland-violence-kohima-protest-against-women-reservation-4511227/; http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=features.Spotlight_On_Women.What_kind_of_Nagaland_are_we_moving_towards_By_Dolly_Kikon

19 Miller *et al.* (2016) defines scale as 'the spatial reach of actions'. For discussions of scale, see also Xiang (2013), Lähdesmäki (2019), Tsing (2005, 2015), Tafjord (2016a), and Blaser and de la Cadena (2017, 2018).

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1

TRANSLATING INDIGENEITIES

Educative encounters in Talamanca, Tromsø, and elsewhere

Bjørn Ola Tafjord

"To me, this is not religion. It is more like a juridical system". Heidi Mayorga Escalante took me aside and lowered her voice. Heidi is the Bribri lawyer and activist who in January 2018 guided our group of researchers at the National Museum of Costa Rica. We had just entered a room where 'INDIGENOUS RELIGION' was written with bold and large letters on one wall, and 'THE CATHOLIC CHURCH' with equally bold and large letters on the opposite wall. Glass boxes with select objects, accompanied by snippets of text, representing indigenous religion and Catholicism respectively, stood on each side of the room, creating a neat symmetry, gesturing a comparison. Heidi was referring to the assemblage of objects and texts that articulated, exhibited, and explained an indigenous religion.

In her view, these objects and the practices and specialists mentioned in the texts did not constitute a religion. The museum had got it wrong. When I asked her to lead us here, both as an expert and as a representative of a community who sees itself as the proper owner of many of the objects kept in the museum, I had told her that we were particularly interested in indigenous religions, that this is what our joint research project focuses on. Was she indirectly saying that we were wrong too? She confessed, quietly, that she had read up on the topic in preparation for our visit. She said she had learnt a lot from doing that, and thanked me for the invitation that had incited her to do so, but she could not agree with how all these authors – anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, and sociologists – present her community and culture as pervaded by an indigenous religion.[1]

With that said, she turned her attention back to the group and clearly asserted that the objects in the glass boxes and the practices they have been part of are very indigenous and priceless to the indigenous communities. Unfortunately, she added, many items like these now dwell in faraway museums and illegal private collections, instead of in the indigenous communities where they belong. She was making these authoritative claims both as a Bribri and as a scholar of law. Her eyes

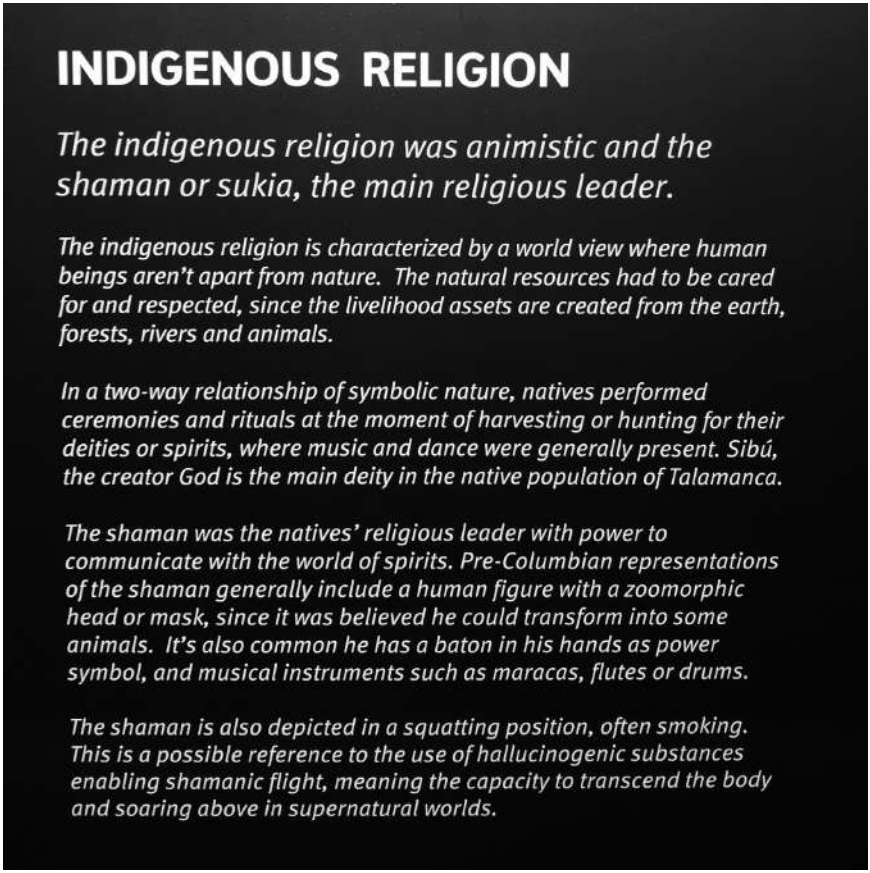
(a)

FIGURE 1.1–1.3 The exhibition of indigenous and Catholic religion, side by side, in the National Museum of Costa Rica. The text on the wall describes the indigenous religion very much in line with old theoretical presumptions about animism and shamanism.

sought Arkotong Longkumer, who nodded in approval. She had been very pleased to learn that he is indigenous too, and of a tiger clan, like herself. Greg Johnson gently offered to put her in contact with people in Hawai'i and Colorado who have experiences with repatriation processes. We then moved to the next room.

That afternoon we went on to visit the Pre-Columbian Gold Museum and dine at a touristy restaurant, while Heidi continued to tell us about the situations for indigenous peoples in her country. She spoke especially about Talamanca, the territory she grew up in and where most of her relatives live. We were all set to travel there in a few days. Heidi told us about things we would see, hear, and otherwise sense in Talamanca, as opposed to here, in the capital San José. She was alerting us to differences and particularities, including divergent conceptions of indigeneity and religion. What she shared with us, and her presence alongside her Chilean husband and their young son, complicated and disturbed the stories that the museums and other powerful actors in this city otherwise convey – stories that tend to relegate the indigenous population to a bygone time and to marginal spaces, and that religionise, primitivise, homogenise, and other them.

Heidi's interventions made it evident that we are partaking in multiple and sometimes contradictory didactic exchanges: with indigenous experts, with other academics, with each other, with communities, with places, with institutions,



(b)

(c)

FIGURE 1.1–1.3 (Continued)

with objects and exhibitions, and with words and stories. Translations and comparisons are at the heart of all these interactions, suggesting certain identities and relationships, or unsettling them. They are at once pedagogical, political, and analytical.

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Over many years, as I have been travelling between Talamanca in the south of Costa Rica and Tromsø in the north of Norway, I have learnt how conceptions of indigeneity and indigenous religions differ in these two places. I have also learnt how helpful it is for the detection of such differences to work in more than one place where articulations of indigeneities and indigenous religions abound. In Talamanca, I do research with Bribris who teach me about their history and society, including their indigeneities and religions. In Tromsø, I teach religious studies in an environment where Sámis in particular, but also members of other indigenous peoples, have a strong presence. On a few occasions, I have organised or co-organised workshops that have brought together representatives of indigenous peoples and researchers from Costa Rica, Norway, and other places. Lately, I have also had the privilege to visit indigenous communities in Nagaland and Hawai'i together with colleagues in the collaborative research project Indigenous Religion(s): Local Grounds, Global Networks (INREL).[2]

This chapter focuses on encounters that have revealed to me and to other participants in them how there are different notions of indigeneity and indigenous religions circulating. These encounters also illustrate how efforts are made to translate and compare distinct people and practices, through recognisable gestures and common concepts such as indigeneity and indigenous religion, in order to suggest similarities or stress specialness.[3] Based on what I have learnt from these encounters, I argue that it is enlightening to think of indigeneity and indigenous religion as methods. Indigeneity and indigenous religion are conceptual tools with which people do things. They are employed to make understandable, to make relevant, and to shed a sharper light on who some people are in relation to other people, and what some practices are in relation to other practices. In other words, they are used at once pedagogically, politically, and analytically. This is done both by scholars and others.[4]

My approach brings to the fore operations and processes similar to the ones that the anthropologists Mario Blaser and Marisol de la Cadena (2017, 2018) call 'commoning', which imply translating someone or something into a subject or entity that is recognisable to more parties, a process which also entails the outlining of a shared domain, and a scaling of the thereby constituted community. This, Blaser and de la Cadena argue, should ideally be done through 'controlled equivocations', a concept of translation they borrow from fellow anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2004), in order not to lose sight of and rule out the 'uncommons', divergent subjects or entities involved in the translation but familiar to only some of the parties.[5]

In the encounters that I describe in this chapter, if we apply this perspective, we witness how indigeneities and indigenous religions become actualised

in acts of commoning, or through translations of 'uncommon' identities and practices, which also emerge and are affected in the encounters, but whose properties and worlds exceed that which is carried across in the translations (cf. de la Cadena 2015, 2018). In some of the encounters we also witness how indigeneity or indigenous religion is contested through acts of uncommoning, and alternative commoning, like Heidi's "this is not religion" but "more like a juridical system". Indigeneity and indigenous religion can thus be grasped and ungrasped as subjects or entities, as shared domains, and as scaled communities, in addition to being methods. And they can be seen as methods of their own making, since long found in an arsenal available to non-academic and academic actors alike. Examples provided in this chapter, and in the other chapters of this book, show that non-academic actors – especially but not only those who somehow self-identify as indigenous – often make strong and highly conscious efforts to control the equivocations that their own and others' pedagogical, political, and analytical translations necessarily bring about.

In what follows, I will describe some of the events that have made me aware of these issues. Through descriptions of episodes, some from moments when I did not recognise that I was doing fieldwork, others from moments when I did not realise that I was doing more than fieldwork, I try to highlight complexities, reflexivities, frictions, and fusions that characterise and challenge exchanges in our field of study. Of this book's orienting themes, translation and comparison are most salient in this chapter, although it also addresses performances, media and technologies, and sovereignty.

Encountering Talamanca

When I first went to Talamanca, on the border between Costa Rica and Panama, almost 20 years ago, my ambition was to study the roles of religions among the Bribri, a people who self-identify also as *ditsöwö* and *skowak* (in Bribri), as *indios* and *indígenas* (in Spanish), and as indigenous (in English).[6] To my surprise, most residents in Barrio Escalante, the neighbourhood where I ended up staying, claimed that the Bahá'í Faith was their *religión indígena* or indigenous religion. It is a religion for *indígenas* all over the world, they explained. Many added that, in the future, because of their spirituality and experience with suffering, the *indígenas* will illuminate all of humankind.[7]

The elders in Barrio Escalante had become Bahá'í in the 1960s. Nicaraguan and North American 'pioneers' (Bahá'ís insist they have no missionaries) then came to Talamanca to introduce this religion that had begun as a Shia Islamic millenarian movement in Persia and the Ottoman Empire in the mid-19th century.[8] Although all Bribri Bahá'ís also recognised it as an exogenous and new religion, most of those who I spoke with presented it as another version of their *tradiciones indígenas* (Sp. 'indigenous traditions'). According to Bribri history, Sibö – the *akeköl* (Br.) or progenitor and guardian of the Bribri, and the protagonist in the creation of the world in which we live – taught the very first generation of Bribris, who were also the very first human beings, all they needed to

know.[9] Applying the basic Bahá'í (and Islamic) doctrine about successive messengers from one God, residents of Barrio Escalante avowed that Sibö was the very first of the messengers from God, while Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was the latest. Their Bahá'í Faith, many told me, was not only compatible with their indigenous traditions but also reinstalling and reinforcing them.

Nevertheless, on most occasions, Bribris would stress that their indigenous traditions should not be mistaken for a religion. Christian Bribris, who are the majority in other parts of Talamanca, have also taken this stance. To Bribri youngsters, and to me, the elders have repeatedly explained how religions are important but limited and largely optional sets of teachings and practices, whereas the indigenous traditions are fundamental since they pertain to everything and are impossible to opt out of for Bribris. Confidently they have declared that the Bribri never had a religion before they began to adopt and adapt Bahá'í or Christian teachings and practices that foreigners brought to Talamanca two generations ago. Before this, they did not need religion, they assert, because the ancestors knew and lived in accordance with 'the law of Sibö' or 'the law of God' (for a fuller account, cf. Tafjord 2004, 2006).

Bribris consistently present themselves as a sovereign people with a sovereign territory. From their perspective, the Costa Rican state, like the Spaniards before it, is an intruder. At the same time, they do have a strong identity as Costa Ricans, but as the original citizens of this land. They see themselves as continuing a five-centuries-long resistance. Their history and the enduring conflicts with colonisers constitute an axis that strongly contributes to shaping their perceptions of themselves. It forges a dichotomy between an unremittingly autonomous 'We' and a continuously threatening 'Other' – *ditsöwö*, *skowak*, *indios* or *indígenas* versus *sìkuapa* (Br.) or *blancos* (Sp.).

The concepts that Bribris use to identify and classify themselves imply different scales. They denote what we might think of as particular indigeneities within or across other indigeneities. *Ditsöwö* (Br. literally 'seed') refers to their internal matrilineal kinship structure and the distribution of *clanes* (Sp. 'clans') and their lands, a relational and geographical order that also includes the Cabécar, with whom the Bribri share many traditions, institutions, and bordering territories (cf. Bozzoli 1979). *Skowak*, *indio*, and *indígena* are statuses that Bribris attribute to a much broader set of peoples, like the eight officially recognised *pueblos indígenas* or indigenous peoples in Costa Rica (Bribri, Brunca, Cabécar, Chorotega, Huetár, Maleku, Ngäbe, and Teribe), and comparable peoples elsewhere in the Americas, and sometimes even – although only as *indígenas*, not as *skowak* or *indios* – comparable peoples globally (Tafjord 2016b).

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According to Bribri history, that is, history told authoritatively by Bribris, Talamanca has never been conquered by outsiders. But there have been many struggles, including periods of widespread violence and warfare. Foreigners have persistently tried to take control over the territory and the people and extract

their resources. The Bribris have always resisted and, in the end, expelled the intruders. Historical enquiries by academics largely confirm this narrative.

Spaniards first arrived in 1502, but they never got a lasting foothold in Talamanca (Solórzano 2013; cf. Boza 2014). Franciscan missionaries operated in the area during most of the 17th century, but were driven out in 1709, when Pabru Presbere, who has become a heroic symbol of Talamancan autonomy, led military forces against all colonial installations. The violence unleashed in confrontations between Spaniards and Talamancans was often fierce. The indigenous resistance, aided by the rugged terrain and the climate, and the territory's peripheral location in the colonial geopolitical ordering of the new world, made Talamanca a refuge for diverse people running away from persecution in surrounding regions, but this also created conflicts between indigenous groups. Catholic clergy did not return to Talamanca till the 1880s, when a period with sporadic missionary incursions began (Drüg 1995). This represented and coincided with state initiatives to take control of the region. The first decades of the 20th century witnessed a violent, government sanctioned, occupation of the Talamanca valley by the United Fruit Company, which made the majority of Bribris retreat temporarily up into the higher mountains.[10] Today Bribris recount how the *useköl*, who in the academic literature is often translated as 'the highest religious authority' of the Talamancans (Bozzoli 2006), evicted the banana company by sending floods to destroy its plantations, houses, bridges, and railways. Bribris had barely begun to resettle in the valley in the early 1960s when Mennonite, Catholic, and Bahá'í envoys arrived and settled in different locations where they founded new religious congregations (Drüg 1995; Rojas 2009; Tafjord 2004).

In the 1970s, the current Costa Rican system of indigenous territories or reserves was established, alongside the system of national parks, which put severe restrictions on lands used by indigenous communities. With the *Ley Indígena* or Indigenous Act, the state created a legal framework which continues to regulate what it means to be *indígena* and what the properties of the indigenous communities are in the eyes of the Republic.[11] At about the same time, the first schools in Talamanca were opened by the Catholic missionaries (Drüg 1995). Costa Rica is a confessional Catholic state, and this has been reflected in most of its institutions as they have entered Talamanca. In the 1980s, the national oil company, RECOPE, was met with strong protests when it drilled exploratory wells in Talamanca (Borge and Villalobos 1994). The 1990s saw an influx of NGOs and development projects (Borge and Castillo 1997). In 1993, Costa Rica ratified the ILO Convention 169, which represented an international recognition of indigenous communities and their rights, but the story in Talamanca is that this hardly changed anything in practice.

I have been back in Talamanca several times after the initial fieldwork in 2000 and 2001.[12] What began as an ethnographic exploration of a particular moment has become a longitudinal study of recent history. Over the years, I have heard numerous accounts about illegal mining and looting of graves and other sites which Bribris often call *sitios sagrados* (Sp. 'sacred sites'). They have fought

this for centuries and continue today. Drug trafficking is a new and growing problem, which has made Bribris permit the establishment of a local police force, and thereby another powerful state presence. Since the turn of the millennium, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and churchgoers have multiplied, some led by Talamancan pastors, but all with strong links to foreign missionaries and international Christian networks (cf. Rojas 2009). Trade and the monetary economy grow rapidly, while subsistence farming dwindles. Tourism is emerging as an alternative livelihood, generating new incitement and demand for performances of indigenous culture, including indigenous religion (cf. Tafjord 2016a). Several new public health care centres and schools have been built in recent years, and various universities now offer courses and study programmes in or nearby Talamanca. Less than two decades ago, it took a whole day to travel from Barrio Escalante to the nearest public phone in Suretka and back, while today, almost everyone has a mobile phone, many with access to the Internet.

Bribris have become ever more entangled in networks and exchanges generated by colonialism, the state, capitalism, and globalisation, not least through resistance against such structures and much of what they bring about. Yet Bribris have also embraced much of the connectedness, the new technologies, and many of the opportunities that have come along with this. They have responded to the intrusion of state institutions by seizing maximum control of their functions in their territory and Bribrifying them. For example, Bribri leaders have demanded that Bribri language and *cultura indígena* (Sp. 'indigenous culture') be compulsory subjects in local schools, and they have secured the privilege to appoint the teachers in these subjects (cf. Borge 2012). In recent years, such achievements have involved collaboration with academics, rights activists, and representatives of other indigenous peoples both nationally and internationally.

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Based on my observations over many years, I think it is safe to say that a reappraisal and revitalisation of indigenous traditions is ongoing in Talamanca, shaped in part by the new system of education; an increasing commodification of Bribri culture; new approaches to health care; and widespread access to new technologies and media, especially the Internet – all sites where Talamancan practices and situations are translated and compared to practices and situations of indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world. Nowadays many young Bribris speak about their traditions with palpable pride. They talk defiantly about protecting their culture and territory, like their ancestors have done before them. But they do so in a different register than most elders. The geographical and intercultural range of the youngsters' perspectives and references is generally broader. Their talk frequently taps into wider discourses on indigenous peoples, driven by indigenous people and allies, nationally and internationally. It thrives on congratulatory comparisons of how ecological, natural, brave, resistant, knowledgeable, and wise all indigenous peoples are, and on uneasy comparisons of the oppression and the threats that their communities and practices continue to face.

In other words, the youth engages indigeneity in a wider, more-than-local, and more-than-Bribri sense. Their activism is welcomed by many elders, who say this gives hope for the future, but who also keep underscoring the particularity of Bribri lifeways (cf. Tafjord 2016a).

Some of these elders are school teachers of *cultura indígena*. In February 2015, in Suretka, the main village in Talamanca Bribri, the anthropologist Carlos Borge and I co-organised a consultation with around 30 such teachers, to discuss the relations between indigenous traditions and exogenous religions.[13] In addition to the Bahá'ís who are found mainly in and around Barrio Escalante, there are Catholics who are spread all across the territory, who might be the majority, but who do not participate much in public rituals, and the equally widespread *evangélicos* (Sp.) or Protestants of diverse stripes, including Pentecostals, among whom one finds the most eager church builders and churchgoers. There are also Seventh Day Adventists and a few Jehovah's Witnesses in Talamanca today. Tensions exist between these different religious communities, and between those who participate in or sympathise with any of them and those who do not. Religions and their roles in society are rarely discussed across families and congregations. It is a topic that is avoided, because it is a source of division. Some of the teachers voiced concerns about parents who wanted to keep their children away from the classes of *cultura indígena* based on the idea that parts of what was taught – like histories about Sibö, or explanations of the practices of the *awapa* (Br. usually translated by Bribris as *médicos indígenas*, or 'indigenous medical doctors') – were devilish things. These parents understood their religion and certain indigenous traditions as conflicting. They echoed a dogmatic opposition promulgated by foreign missionaries. This comparison between religion and indigenous traditions was rejected as nonsensical by a series of speakers at our meeting. But subtle differences were noticeable also among the teachers, as the group comprised adherents of various religions. Some mostly kept quiet. Yet, when we were closing with a round of final words from everyone, the refrain was appreciation for the chance to come together to talk about this difficult and important but often evaded issue, and to learn about the experiences and positions of colleagues.

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When in Talamanca, I have always been based either with Elías Escalante and his family, in Barrio Escalante and Sibudi, or down by the coast, usually in Puerto Viejo, from where I have made successive excursions to different parts of the indigenous territories. Elías and his family have been my teachers, collaborators, and friends ever since my first visit. They have generously shared their home and daily life with me and showed me how things are done in their community, including how to go about studying issues that affect and belong to them and their neighbours.[14]

In 2001, for almost four months, I went several nights a week to visit Elías' parents, Florinda Escalante and Rosendo Jackson. The latter, then in his 80s, was one of the most learned elders in and around Barrio Escalante. He took me

on as a pupil. He had trained several anthropologists before me.[15] His agenda was that I would record, learn, and later share his teachings of *la historia y la ciencia indígena* (Sp.), by which he meant Bribri history and science as this is institutionalised by persons like himself, who in their youth have undergone many years of training to become authorised specialists in these matters. His pedagogy built on how his own teachers had trained him, although he had clearly adapted it for students like me, who could never become a professional in any Bribri discipline, and who was there only long enough to get an introduction to some of the basics. The drill was for him to recite or sing first in what he said is the original language, that is, the language of things in their true form, and the language that Sibö taught to the first Bribri specialists whom he trained in the beginning of this world. Then Rosendo recounted quickly in ordinary Bribri what he had just sung. Next, he recounted it again in Spanish, now addressing me much more directly. Finally, he switched to an analytical mode, which is to say he deployed a second set of – or second-order – categories, often words and phrases from the vocabulary of anthropology, to shed more light on and explain for me the implications of what he had just narrated. Altogether there were four steps. Four rounds of translation. Now and then, when Rosendo hesitated, or when she thought something needed a bit more explication (or a better translation), Florinda's discreet voice would emanate from the kitchen, aiding him along. He started with the histories of the worlds before this world. He insisted I had to learn about them before he could move on to teach me about the history and order of the world we now live in.[16] Processes of ordering are at the heart of the histories. They are all about trial and failure, or systematic explorations of possibilities until finding well-functioning solutions, which then become prescribed as the 'law of Sibö'.

Whereas Rosendo systematically lectured me, Elías has been my supervisor, guide, and co-researcher, often travelling with me to visit and interview people not only in Talamanca but also in other parts of Costa Rica and Panama.[17] He has showed me how to approach people and delicate issues in contexts that he knows intimately.[18] Our conversations have always involved sharing analyses of unfolding events. Thus Elías, too, translates for me, and with me. Moreover, he helps in translating me and what I do to his community.[19] Over the years, through our collaboration and friendship, more people have become connected and committed to each other. My family have come along to Talamanca on several occasions, and lately I have been allowed to bring entrusted colleagues. Elías has been central every time someone from Talamanca has travelled to Tromsø, even if he himself has not yet been able to come. All these dimensions and outcomes of our relationship have brought about new learning, new perspectives, and new translations.

Encounters with indigeneities and indigenous religions in Tromsø

A job in the Department of Religious Studies at what is now called UiT The Arctic University of Norway made me move to Tromsø in January 2007. The

first Talamancan friend who came to see me there was Heidi.[20] She was in Oslo visiting a cousin, so I invited her up north for a couple of days. I took her to the university museum and showed her the exhibitions of Sámi culture and history, and in the evening I made a point of watching the Sámi news on TV. As she did not seem particularly interested in either activity, it began to dawn on me that I was showcasing a local indigeneity, as if saying "Look, there is an indigenous people here, too! This is especially interesting for you!" When we addressed this issue directly, it became evident that she saw things differently. To her, there were no *skowak*, *indios*, or *indígenas* in Tromsø, except maybe if somebody had migrated here from somewhere in America. Back then, her notion of who indigenous referred to did not go beyond a continental scale (cf. Tafjord 2016b), it did not include people original to other continents, at least not until I unwittingly began to talk her into expanding it.

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'Indigenous Religions' was the name of the first undergraduate course I initiated in Tromsø. I began my lectures by reflecting on lessons I had learnt from Bribris. I told the class that Bribris are proud of never having been conquered, that they rarely compare themselves to peoples outside America, and that they often insist on never having had an indigenous religion, or some of them say that the Bahá'í Faith is their indigenous religion. I also proposed that instead of presuming that Talamanca is a holistic society pervaded by an indigenous religion, it is more pertinent to see it as a society which has been differentiated in ways which are unfamiliar and therefore hard to recognise for outsiders. I told the students how the idea of religion and a corresponding social domain have in fact been introduced in Talamanca by missionaries and state agents, including academics, and how such outsiders are the ones who have imagined an indigenous religion infiltrated through all sectors of Talamancan society. Moreover, I questioned the idea that Bribris live closer to nature than many rural Norwegians and whether Bribris have a more religious relationship to nature. My aim was to present some of the Talamancan particularity and complexity to the students, and, in doing so, challenge stereotypical and exotifying ideas about indigenous peoples and indigenous religions.

I had not spoken long before a student declared that much of what I said was wrong. Although he had never been to Talamanca and never met a Bribri person, he claimed to know how Bribris understood things better than I did because he, unlike me, was Sámi and thereby indigenous like them. Another student who also self-identified as indigenous, but from a different part of the world, agreed, and so did the non-indigenous postgraduate student who was assigned as my teaching assistant. They alleged I was undermining the common cause of indigenous peoples by questioning their defining characteristics.

In this classroom encounter, my attempt to deconstruct what I thought were theoretical presumptions hindering more nuanced understandings of indigenous people and their religions fell short. My reflections on what I had learnt from Bribris did not convince these students, and they became even more provoked

when I tried to explain how the presumptions that I criticised have their origins in colonialist theories about primitive people and primitive religions (cf. Geertz 2004; Cox 2007; Chidester 2014). In their view, I attacked historical and social facts, not theoretical presumptions. These students identified themselves and other indigenous people with the qualities that I had questioned. They saw them as resources personally, communally, and politically, while mourning how colonialism in the recent past had deprived their ancestors of these cultural riches. If anything represented a continuation of a colonial approach now, to these students, it was my questioning of what they experienced as commonalities of indigenous people.

To me, this was a perplexing experience, which, in hindsight, has proven one of the most sobering lessons in my academic life. In Talamanca, I had been learning about indigeneity and religion from Bribris, as a humble student, never contradicting the perspectives of my hosts and teachers. In Tromsø, I was talking about indigeneity and religion from a privileged position, as the teacher of a diverse group of students, inadvertently disputing what some of them understood as essential features not only of their own local identity and family history but also of the global family of indigenous peoples that they identified or sympathised with. In order to translate insights from Talamanca contextually, respectfully, and convincingly in my teaching, I had to learn more about indigeneity and religion in Tromsø, too.

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Located in the Norwegian part of Sápmi, or the Sámi territory, the University of Tromsø or UiT has been a key institution for Sámi revitalisation and indigenous peoples' politicking. The concept *urfolk* (No.) is central here. It is the official Norwegian translation of 'indigenous peoples' and rose to prominence from the late 1970s onwards, when Sámi political movements grew stronger through struggles against the Norwegian state (cf. Kraft, Chapter 2 about the Alta-conflict), after decades of suppressive assimilation policies which had resulted in widespread Sámi language loss and renouncing or silencing of Sámi identities (Minde 2003). The new identification as an *urfolk* or an indigenous people was spurred on especially by Sámi participation in an emerging international indigenous peoples' movement (Minde 1996, 2008).

In recent years, local Sámi movements and international indigenous peoples' movements have only continued to increase in cultural and political force and interconnectedness (cf. Kraft, Chapter 2; Falch & Selle 2018; Grini 2016). In Tromsø and Northern Norway, the conceptualisation of the Sámi alongside many other people around the world as *urfolk* has become the hegemonic discourse, to such a degree that here it is common to translate the English adjective 'indigenous' into *urfolk* more or less unconditionally: indigenous issues becomes *urfolkssaker*; indigenous languages becomes *urfolksspråk*; indigenous art becomes *urfolkskunst*; and indigenous religions becomes *urfolksreligioner*. In doing this, activists and academics in Tromsø often forget that the word 'indigenous' may

be used in various other ways. For example, it can be used in a contextually contingent sense and merely mean that something or someone pertains to a particular place and a particular community, in opposition to anything or anyone exogenous or foreign, regardless of whether that community is recognised politically or legally as an indigenous people by international institutions or members of an international indigenous peoples' movement.[21]

In Northern Sámi, the main Sámi language spoken in the northernmost parts of Norway, Finland, and Sweden, *álgoálbmot* and *eamiálbmot* are the standardised translations of *urfolk* and indigenous peoples. However, in and around Tromsø, like in most other coastal areas, Norwegian is the dominant language also for most Sámis. The linguistic variation is considerable. In addition to the national languages of the nation states that Sápmi is part of, Finnish (Finland), Norwegian (Norway), Russian (Russia), and Swedish (Sweden), there are at least nine official Sámi languages, which are not mutually comprehensible. Livelihood, material culture, and religion are other fields of significant internal difference, not only today but also historically (cf. Rydving 1995, 2010). Heterogeneity, internal strife, and tensions characterise all Sámi communities, and Sámi society at large – like any other vital society. Yet, over the past century, Sámi unity has been emphasised by Sámi leaders whenever they have been dealing with the Norwegian state. They have also persistently underscored their unity across the borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. On top of this, pan-Sámi peoplehood has been cultivated in relations with other indigenous peoples and international institutions like the United Nations. In other words, it is especially when engaging in state and foreign affairs that Sámi leaders have been careful to present themselves as representing one people, and, increasingly during the last half century, a people of a special kind, very particular in its own right but also a local variant of a global generic: an indigenous people, *urfolk*, *álgoálbmot*, or *eamiálbmot*.

Today, new generations of Sámis assert their identities through these naturalised concepts. In Sápmi, especially on the Norwegian side, several institutions have been built to provide material, intellectual, and political support and authority to the revitalisation of Sámi languages, identities, and traditions. The most notable are the Sámi Parliament, the Sámi Museum, and the public broadcaster NRK Sápmi with their headquarters in Kárášjohka, and the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Guovdageaidnu, but there are also numerous local museums and cultural institutions in other communities across Sápmi. Art and artists have played prominent parts in all these institutions and, more generally, been the avant-garde in the contemporary renaissance of Sámi identity and indigeneity. Music, fine art, poetry, handicraft, literature, theatre, film, fashion, and festivals are at once prestigious and popular media for diverse expressions of Sáminess and indigenousness. Public schools and health care services now have special programmes for Sámi pupils and patients. Tourism, too, has become a serious venue for performances of Sámi and indigenous culture for community members as well as visitors.

Since Norway ratified the International Labour Organisation's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO169) in 1990, being *urfolk* has also become a legal issue.[22] Sámi actors have had important roles in what is now the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and in the making of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, formal global platforms for the forging of political alliances and for claiming of difference.[23] Both the Norwegian state and Sámi leaders have been eager to work with and through the United Nations, and to collaborate in the continued development of international networks and frameworks.

At UiT, the largest public university in Northern Norway, various research projects and study programmes focus on issues concerning Sámis in particular and *urfolk* in general. It is part of the official strategy of UiT to do research, teaching, and outreach that shed light on the situations of indigenous peoples locally and globally. The Centre for Sami Studies coordinates many of the efforts in this regard, among them a master's programme in indigenous studies, taught in English by faculty from various departments.[24] This programme recruits students from different parts of the world, and applicants who are classified as *urfolk* or indigenous get priority. The compulsory courses introduce the students to general characteristics and rights of indigenous peoples, and it is largely through these lenses that they then study particular cases. For their dissertation, the indigenous students are advised to do research in their home communities. The scholarship that has allowed students from places like Bangladesh, Brazil, and Ghana to come and take the programme is turned into a loan if they do not return home after they graduate. The idea is that they shall become resources in their communities. A recent celebrated case is a former alumni's founding of a centre for indigenous studies at Dilla University in Ethiopia.[25] Other UiT initiatives that have had an impact on understandings of indigeneity elsewhere include programmes for capacity building among Mayan *indígenas* in Guatemala and among the San people in Botswana and Namibia. Through these programmes, UiT produces and exports a particular perspective on indigenous peoples.

Nonetheless, UiT hosts a range of perspectives, and lively debates about the interface of indigenous peoples' politicking and academia. Like at many other universities, there are tensions between those who want to decolonise academia by replacing what they see as Western approaches with indigenous methodologies; those who are sympathetic to changes that can bring about a greater diversity of perspectives (myself included) but reluctant to go along with the inverted dichotomies (like Western versus indigenous) that some activist scholars now endorse; and those who are sceptical or downright opposed to this challenging of established academic procedures and privileges.

The diversity of perspectives notwithstanding, most scholars in Tromsø, like most scholars elsewhere, teach students that indigenous peoples have an indigenous religion or an indigenous spirituality. They simply take this for granted. They do it although they know that most Sámis, like most Scandinavians, are Lutheran Christians, some of them very liberal and some of them very conservative.[26] An idea about the presence of an indigenous religion or spirituality

that pervades both their Christianity and their daily lives is widespread in both scholarly and Sámi communities. From the 17th century onwards, Lutheran missionaries and other state agents attacked what they saw as Sámi superstition and idolatry. Later, scholars have reconceived many of the persecuted Sámi practices and objects as elements of an indigenous religion, and studied how they were abandoned or changed over the centuries in encounters with Christianity (e.g. Rydving 1995, 2010).

Recent years have witnessed an upsurge in public articulations and performances of Sámi indigenous religion in the form of shamanism and animism, partly influenced by New Age and paganisms (cf. Fonneland 2017; Kraft, Fonneland, and Lewis 2015; Kraft 2015), and in the form of Christian Indigenous theology, mostly but not only under the auspices of the Church of Norway (for example the Sámi liturgies and theologies of Bierna Bientie and Tore Johnsen).[27] Those who spearhead these movements draw on their personal experiences, and often their family history. Missionary accounts and historical scholarship about the Sámi are common sources for them. In addition, they share an interest in anthropology and ecology, especially in ideas about nature religion and natural religion. Many have been students in religious studies or theology programmes. Inter-indigenous encounters, comparisons, and exchanges, especially with Native Americans, also inspire them (cf. Kraft, Chapter 2). With their ideas and practices, the shamans and the Indigenous theologians have created new alliances in and beyond Sámi communities, but also new tensions as they provoke both conservative Christians concerned with doctrine and scholars concerned with authenticity.

Many of these tensions, and most of the public discourses on religion and indigeneity in the Norwegian part of Sápmi, are either absorbed or disregarded and thereby largely neutralised by the Church of Norway. This dominant religious actor has a near naturalised (and therefore not always noticed) position in a national society whose public domain is often imagined as one of the most secular in the world.[28] The Church of Norway includes a broad spectre of Sámi voices. Despite its history as a major state enforcer, responsible for rigorous missionising in Sápmi, it has managed to rebrand itself as a defender of Sámi interests in relation to the state and, partly through the World Council of Churches, as a promoter of the rights of indigenous peoples internationally, even as it continues to engage in missionising all across the world. Today it occupies the lion's share of the religious sphere in Sápmi. Beyond its domain, religion or religiosity has seldom been articulated in broad public discussions of Sámi issues, or in the functioning of other Sámi institutions. However, this might be changing now with the growth of Sámi shamanism (Fonneland 2017) and new forms of environmental activism (Kraft, Chapter 2).

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The practices and politics of indigeneity hinged on religion in Sápmi are varied and complex. This is the case in Talamanca, too, but in other ways. Not only are the ideas and practices that get articulated as religion very different in these

two contexts. The social domaining of religion, and its relating to indigeneities, are also done differently.

Yet, there are also some striking similarities. In neither place is religion normally foregrounded in public performances of indigeneity which aim at uniting the entire indigenous community. Whenever a religious actor takes the liberty to speak as if on behalf of the indigenous community at large, it is disliked but generally ignored by those who do not adhere to her or his congregation. In practice, religion does not serve to keep any of these indigenous communities together, nor to mark their boundaries, because they are both too heterogeneous in this respect. The cross-fertilisation of indigeneity and religion in Sápmi and Talamanca alike seems to have taken place mainly in small-scale and medium-scale domains, typically within the family and the religious congregations.

However, in the broadest and most public community settings in both Sápmi and Talamanca, there is sometimes talk of *åndelighet* (No.) and *espiritualidad* (Sp.), or spirituality, as a hallmark of indigeneity. This may function, internally in the communities and in encounters with outsiders, as something akin to what Siv Ellen Kraft (2017) has construed as a 'diplomatic language' of indigeneity, in the sense that it enables everyone to come together without necessarily agreeing about the specific content of that which they gather around. As long as they are open to different interpretations, religionists need not see it as an expression of a *different* religion, whereas secularists need not see it as religion or religionish at all.

Exchanges in inter-indigenous encounters, whether face to face, as long range interaction through social media, or via engagement in international indigenous peoples' politics, might represent expanding spaces and inducements for articulations of indigenous practices as spirituality or religion. So might an increasing exposure to academic theories about indigenous peoples and their indigenous religions, partly through growing participation in public educational systems – or through contact with researchers who conceptualise indigenous religions.[29] Sometimes those who do religionise or spiritualise Sámi or Bribri practices might do it strategically since, according to several international legal conventions, religion releases special rights for that and those who are recognised as such. But these translations may also put the relevant practices in a vulnerable position because they invite attacks from missionaries and others who wish to replace indigenous religions, either with what they think of as better religions, or with what they imagine as more rational practices.[30]

Talamancans in Tromsø

In May 2018, more than ten years after her first visit, Heidi came for a second two-day visit to Tromsø, this time formally invited by our research group to give a talk about indigenous rights in Costa Rica in theory and practice. She had become the first female lawyer from Talamanca just a few months earlier, and now she had won a scholarship and was spending two months in Bilbao,

Spain, taking a course on indigenous peoples' rights at the University of Deusto. This time Heidi came to Tromsø with a different view, formed by her studies and the networks she had become involved in while studying.[31] She has become an ardent defender of indigenous peoples' rights – of the rights of Bribris and other Costa Rican *indígenas* in particular, but also of the rights of indigenous peoples globally. Since her first visit, her idea of who indigenous peoples are had expanded, to resonate with *urfolk* in Tromsø.

In her talk, Heidi explained that although the Costa Rican state has ratified and routinely expresses support of international legislation on the rights of indigenous peoples, in practice, its institutions do not live up to their obligation to respect the indigenous cultures. She gave examples of the consequences of this neglect – in education, child protection, the judiciary, housing programmes, and land tenure. She stressed that indigenous history, traditions, and spirituality are regularly rejected by state officials and leaders of missionising religions.[32] To characterise the attacks on traditional Bribri practices, she used the word *satanización* (Sp.). She related how Bribris have learnt from their elders that Sibö dwells in a world above our world, and Sula in a world beneath ours, and how this knowledge regulates Bribri society in fundamental ways (cf. Bozzoli 1979). Those who denounce these ideas target in particular the *awapa* (Br. pl.), whom Heidi translated as *médicos indígenas* ('indigenous physicians'), and especially the ritual acts and songs which complement their prescription, production, and application of pharmaceuticals. According to Heidi, these dismissals of indigenous knowledge and spirituality represent violations of the rights of an indigenous people to practice and preserve their culture.

With reference to legal frameworks sanctioned by the United Nations, and idioms common in the discourses of this organisation, like the notion that spirituality is a core element of indigenous cultures (cf. Kraft 2017), Heidi translated concrete practices and experiences from her community. She made them comparable to – and thus recognisable and relevant for – experiences that colleagues and students in Tromsø had from the communities they belong to or work with. In this way she educated the audience about the situation in Talamanca and Costa Rica, a country which continues to use its international image as democratic, peaceful, ecological, and socially conscious to dodge negative publicity about its negligence of indigenous communities.[33] From Bilbao and Tromsø, Heidi continued to Geneva, where she spent a month contributing to and learning more about the workings of the United Nations. Her internship there culminated in the opportunity to give a formal critical response in public to the Costa Rican government's presentation of its annual report to the international community about the situation for 'its' indigenous peoples.

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Three years earlier, in October 2015, I had the honour of bringing the distinguished Bribri leaders Alejandro Swaby and Justo Avelino Torres Layan to Sápmi, along with the Costa Rican anthropologists Carlos Borge and Sandra Esquivel,

for a seminar on the situation of indigenous peoples in Costa Rica and a conversation about indigenous methodologies at UiT.[34] After these events in Tromsø, we drove to Guovdageaidnu and Kárášjohka, two Sámi majority communities on the tundra which host key institutions like the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, the Sámi Parliament in Norway (Figure 1.4), the headquarters of the Sámi division of NRK (the public Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation), and several Sámi museums.[35] The encounters that took place in these communities and institutions encouraged comparisons and required translations. Indigeneity was the main premise for the comparisons, a *tertium comparationis*, largely predetermined through the agenda and the appointments that I had made in advance. Spanish and English served as linguistic middle grounds, between Bribri on one side and Sámi and Norwegian on the other side, with me often given the role as translator although aided by everyone involved, turning the translating into a collaborative effort. I had previously visited these places and institutions (except NRK) with Monica Grini, a historian of Sámi art and nation building, when she was doing research there (cf. Grini 2016). She accompanied us on this tour as well, sharing her knowledge and introducing us to people.

Alejandro Swaby, now in his 80s, has been a prominent political leader and intellectual all his adult life: in the Talamanca Bribri community where he grew up as a member of the prestigious clan of his mother; in the coastal community of African descendants which he belongs to via his father's family; and in national and international movements and organisations of *pueblos indígenas* or indigenous peoples. He comes from, and now heads, a family of leaders.[36] From childhood his education was both internal, with some of the most learned elders in the Bribri community, and external, as he was sent to Limón (the main town on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica) to attend school. He speaks perfect Bribri,

FIGURE 1.4 The Sámi Parliament in Kárášjohka.

Source: Illustratedjc, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Spanish, and English, and he is very well versed in Bribri, African, and European cultural and intellectual traditions. He has served as the president and advisor of the Asociación de Desarrollo Integral del Territorio Indígena Talamanca Bribri (ADITIBRI), which is the official internal government of his indigenous territory; as the mayor of the larger Talamanca county, which also comprises the coastal communities of African descendants and a mix of migrants and settlers from elsewhere; as the head of the Mesa Nacional Indígena de Costa Rica, which he co-founded as a political working group for leaders from different communities of *indígenas* in the country; and as the president of the Consejo Indígena de Centroamérica (CICA), a regional forum for collaboration between organisations of *indígenas*, and a node in the networks of a larger international movement of indigenous peoples. He has travelled widely and met leaders of indigenous communities from different parts of the world. Among Talamancans, his international experience is unique. Upon arrival in Tromsø, he told us how he had befriended Sámi leaders, in particular the South Sámi Leif Dunfjeld, at international meetings in the 1980s.

Alejandro's skills as an advocate and diplomat of indigeneity were evident to everyone who met him here in 2015. In his public talks, and in the conversations we had with representatives of Sámi institutions, he addressed a series of emblematic topics in international discourses about indigenous peoples: care for and harmony with nature; traditional knowledge and spirituality; resistance against colonialism, extractivism, and capitalism; and stubborn survival thanks to the ancestors' astuteness in the face of extreme violence and exploitation. The way he voiced these topics, including asking how they play out in Sápmi, put emphasis on local particularities. But, in order to make the local particularities mutually comprehensible, he and the Sámi conversation partners articulated or translated them with a vocabulary or into a language that has been developed and become customary in international relations between indigenous peoples. They built bridges for comparisons and means for identification with each other, using a common repertoire of idioms and tropes. Alejandro and the internationally experienced Sámi leaders did this with ease and elegance. The occasions for such diplomacy were the formal highlights of the tour for Alejandro.[37]

Alejandro and Justo Avelino Torres Layan refer to each other as *akëkëpa* (Br. 'respected elder'), a gesture of reciprocal reverence. Justo Avelino is in his 30s and, despite his young age, one of the most respected *awapa* among the Bribri. He comes from a prestigious *ditsö* or clan, and a family of eminent community leaders. He studied with one of the most renowned *awapa* of the former generation. Justo is also *ökö̈m* (Br.), which means he is trained and called on to perform Bribri funeral rituals. For these offices, he has several young apprentices. He also works as a teacher of *cultura indígena* in primary schools. Thus he is continuously passing on knowledge to youngsters who seek him out in the hope of one day becoming specialists themselves; to all the children who have to take classes of *cultura indígena* at school; and to anyone who comes to him for consultation, medical treatment, or funeral services. In the Bribri community, he is a guardian,

practitioner, disseminator, and enforcer of traditional knowledge and practices and their value. In the growing national movement of young indigenous activists, people look to him for guidance and inspiration. In Costa Rica he is very well connected, through both the most traditional and the newest and most mediatised social networks. Like most Bribris of his generation, while he is concerned with practising and revitalising traditional Talamancan ways of relating, he also uses the latest technology – his laptop and smart phone – to participate in broader networks where relating of indigenous issues, in wider senses, takes place.

This was Justo's first international trip. In the presentations he gave, and in conversations with the people we met in Sápmi, he focused even more than Alejandro on Talamancan particularities. His primary concern was to share the basic ideas of what he called the Bribri *cosmovisión* (Sp. 'worldview'). He used the blackboard to draw a cone shaped and vertically multi-layered model of the world for us, indicating the locations of and relations between the living spaces or homes or houses of Sibö, Sula, and us humans. He spoke slowly using colloquial words in Spanish, including concepts that frequently circulate in social media and academia to characterise different aspects of indigenous lives and worlds, like *la espiritualidad indígena* (Sp. 'the indigenous spirituality') and *la cosmovisión indígena* (Sp. 'the indigenous worldview'), but he also introduced key concepts in Bribri, like *Sulakáska* (the house of Sula, in a world beneath our world) and *siwá* (history, knowledge, breath), and in between this he sang short stanzas in the ritual language, which is said to contain the original knowledge in its original form (cf. Bozzoli 1979; Cervantes 2003). I remember thinking that this must be how he does it when he introduces the school children to these ideas. When I asked him about it afterwards he laughed in a friendly manner and said "Yes!" He added that, since he has much more time with the children, he tells them more of the many *historias* (Sp. 'histories') which are among the main vehicles of this *conocimiento* (Sp. 'knowledge') and *cosmovisión*. The time restraint made it necessary to be more abstract and general with us. The children get a more grounded and thorough introduction. His vast pedagogical experience – with his own masters, with his own apprentices, with the school children, with his patients, with his community, with members of other communities of *indígenas* in Costa Rica, with missionaries and religious leaders who have criticised him and the *awapa* in general, and with researchers who had come to talk to and learn from him – had prepared him to translate his basic ideas to us in this straightforward yet particular way.

Justo was very interested in Sámi histories and practices. He noted how they were so different and yet in some aspects similar to Bribri histories and practices. He listened attentively to everything that was said about Sámi traditions during the trip, especially when somebody Sámi was speaking. Afterwards, each time I have met him in Talamanca, I have been stunned by the details he recounts. The encounter that seems to have made the strongest impression on him was with Mai Britt Utsi, then dean of the Sámi University of Applied Sciences. The

generous way in which she received us, first at the university together with its former rector Jan Henry Keskitalo, and then in her private home, together with her husband Nils Thomas Utsi and their family, was, to Justo, a true echo of Bribri values and the epitome of indigenous ideals more generally. When he speaks about his memories from Sápmi, he highlights Mai Britt's sharing of histories, knowledge, food, time, and friendship, and her dignified embodiment of her culture. The climax of the encounter for Justo was when she performed a yoik (a traditional Sámi vocal art) for us, whereupon he, encouraged by all of us, reciprocated with some carefully selected melodious strophes from the Bribri repertoire of histories in their original language. In this exchange, my translating became redundant. It was neither the words nor their content that were the main things exchanged or translated and compared. It was the acts and arts, including their aesthetics and honours. This generated the most profound recognition.

Justo remembers Mai Britt as *la hermana* (Sp. 'the sister'). Kinship terms – sister, brother, cousin – were used during our tour by both the Bribris and Sámis to refer to members of the other group. Such extensions of kinship are quite common in inter-indigenous encounters. It is a way of reaching out to each other, saying that we are of the same kind, we share something essential, we are comparable, we are kin. Greg Johnson and Siv Ellen Kraft (2018; cf. Kraft, Chapter 2, and Johnson, Chapter 5) have theorised that a notion of 'distant selves' enables enactments and sentiments of a global indigenous community. I would like to add that extensions of kinship often seem key to how experiences of shared identity through indigeneity come about in cross-cultural encounters. The translating of the other into family affords an upscaling and enlargement of one's intimate community. It may be one of the basic gestures that make global indigeneity imaginable and tangible. Of course, it results in relative relatives. Yet, the kinship designations function as more than metaphors. They create or confirm close bonds. They forge or maintain commitment to alliances. Taking serious such extensions of kinship, which typically occur as a result of travel or cross-territorial connecting, and considering them in light of the theory of James L. Cox (2007, 2016) who suggests that the defining ingredients of indigenous religions are kinship and territory, offers an interesting perspective: while territory is difficult and often impossible to enlarge, easily overpopulated and drained, and frequently threatened by colonisers and usurpers, kinship is always a matter of degrees and flexible. The family never gets full. Insofar as practices of territoriality and kinship define indigeneity and indigenous religions, the latter is definitely the most scalable.

As part of their profession, the Costa Rican anthropologists did also master an international language of comparative culture and indigeneity. Carlos Borge has done anthropological work in Talamanca since the 1980s and is probably the non-indigenous scholar who knows most about this region's recent history and social life. He and Sandra Esquivel have worked closely together for over 20 years, running a small consultancy firm, often doing impact evaluations in territories of *indígenas* in Costa Rica and elsewhere in Central America. During

their visit to Sápmi they were, as always, enthusiastic. In line with the anthropological ethos and habit, they kept asking kind and curious questions, and they liberally shared their instantaneous comparative analyses of Bribri and Sámi practices, as well as comparisons of Bribri or Sámi practices with the practices of other indigenous communities that they knew. In short, they offered us their service as cultural translators and commentators. They did what anthropologists do – not unlike what everyone in the INREL group would do in different but comparable situations later.

We who toured Sápmi together spoke Spanish among ourselves, except for Alejandro and Sandra who spoke English with Monica. Even if Alejandro and Sandra spoke English very well, in our encounters with Sámi persons, our conversations predominantly took place in, and between, Spanish and Norwegian, since Justo and Carlos do not speak English, and most of the Sámi persons said they were more comfortable speaking Norwegian. As our exchanges progressed, it became increasingly clear to me that I was constantly translating translations: pedagogical, political, and analytical expositions of ideas that had sources elsewhere but became formed here and now, in these encounters. If much of what was said was already second-order talk, then my translations of it were third-order.

During our long drives, I told the visitors about the history of religions in Sápmi, and we talked about the history of religions in Talamanca. We compared Sámi and Bribri practices and how they have been targeted by Christian missionaries and by state agents more generally. All the same, and even though I tried to bring it to the table a couple of times when I thought it opportune, religion did not become a topic in the conversations between Alejandro and Justo and the Sámi persons who interacted with us. In these at once diplomatic, pedagogic, and friendly encounters, religion was not employed as a method for relating and comparing. It was not addressed, neither as a historical exogenous force nor as an internal aspect of the respective indigenous societies. On the contrary, there seemed to be a silent agreement between the two parties to avoid this topic, and to speak – and thereby relate and compare – through other concepts, themes, or registers. Put differently, religion was not articulated or performed as part of the indigeneities that met and shared, despite my attempts to inject it. Although the recurring references to 'spirituality' can easily be read as articulations of indigenous religions, this requires an additional act of translation, one that was not played out in the exchanges themselves.

When we, at the end of the trip, sat down together and reflected on what we had learnt, the Costa Ricans all emphasised how impressed they were by the particularity and strength of Sámi claims of indigeneity and by the strong presence of a political discourse on the rights of indigenous peoples worldwide. Everyone was intrigued by the wealth, resources, and modernity of the Sámi institutions. The two Talamancans admitted, discreetly, that they had the impression that these institutions are so incorporated in the Norwegian state that they have little proper autonomy. For example, they were surprised to find out that the Sámi Parliament cannot issue laws. The anthropologists described how they had seen a pervading modernity and even postmodernity in the Sámi lifeways

and institutions. As examples they remarked that Sámi and Norwegian private houses seemed similar, and that the architecture of the new Sámi institutional buildings was definitely untraditional. They interpreted this as symptoms of loss of original culture.

All four visitors acknowledged how little they had known about Sápmi upon arrival. The things I had told them in preparation for their visit, and in earlier attempts to position myself, had generated only a vague awareness for Justo, Carlos, and Sandra. Alejandro knew a bit more from his previous encounters with Sámi leaders. Now they all emphasised how much they had learnt over the past week. Recurrently, in conversations with each other, Bribris, Sámis, and anthropologists had commented on the striking similarities between the histories and situations of the indigenous communities in Costa Rica and Scandinavia. Now our four guests did this again. However, the Bribris and the Sámis we had met had spoken much more about particularities than about similarities. Now Alejandro and Justo underscored the enormous differences once again – among them the long Sámi history of relatively peaceful co-living with Norwegians, Swedes, and Finns versus the genocide that followed the abrupt arrival of the Spaniards in Central America and the violence that still haunts the *indígenas* of this region.

INREL in Talamanca

In January 2018, the INREL research group went to Talamanca. At first, the idea of taking a group there had made me nervous. Who was I to do this? I have always felt partly like an intruder in Talamanca. Politely but clearly, Bribris have let me know that I have no rights there. The longstanding friendships and the certainty that my regular visits have been seen as gestures of loyalty and respect did not keep me from doubting the appropriateness of me bringing along several other researchers. But Elías had calmed me. On several occasions, he had hosted groups of students from the University of Costa Rica, brought by another old friend of his, a professor of geography. In fact, Elías had recently expanded his family's house to be better prepared to receive visiting groups. He was curious about my colleagues and wanted to meet them. This was an opportunity for him and his family as well, so we organised a two-day visit to their place in Sibudi.

It had rained heavily for days and the rivers were swelled as we headed up into the Talamanca valley, first by car from Cahuita to Suretka, then by boat up the River Telire to Sepecue, and finally by bus to Sibudi. With rubber boots, rain coats, and backpacks we followed the flooded trail leading to Yari and Elías' house, set in between cocoa and banana plantations, and surrounded by a bountiful kitchen garden, 200 or 300 metres from the gravel road and the electricity lines. They gave us a hearty welcome, warm drinks, and food, before we hung our hammocks and rested for a while.

In the afternoon, Elías took us first to the house of Lorena and Misael, his brother, to say hello but also to invite us to chat with them as they are among the most engaged members and leaders of the Bahá'í Faith in the local community.

He introduced us as university professors investigating religions among *indígenas* all across the world, in India, Hawai'i, Nigeria, Norway, and the USA, and asked Misael and his son to tell us about the Bahá'í Faith and its relations to indigenous traditions. As usual, they spoke Bribri to each other and Spanish to us. Elías translated from Bribri to Spanish for us whenever he found it timely. I had the task of translating into English for my colleagues. I found myself doing both linguistic and cultural translation simultaneously, in real time, and it was hard. People often spoke several long sentences before they gave me a chance to translate, so many details escaped me and got lost even before translation. Of course, as he showed us around, Elías, too, was doing cultural translation for us, and so were Misael and his son who now began to explain, for our benefit, what they saw as the basic relations and similarities between the Bahá'í Faith and their indigenous traditions. It became a very pedagogical situation, but complicated and bent by my translations of their translations.

They told us about the messengers of God, Bahá'u'lláh and Sibö, the latest and the first; he who instigated the Bahá'í Faith and a new global era; and he who came specifically to the first generation of the Bribri. Essentially, their messages were the same, they explained, but Bahá'u'lláh's message was more advanced than that of Sibö because mankind with time has become more mature and ready to understand more of God's will. Misael went on to emphasise how the Bahá'í Faith teaches that cultures should be appreciated, and that one must take care of that which is valuable in a culture. Therefore, he concluded, the Bahá'í Faith reinforces and renews cultures, both the Bribri culture and other *culturas indígenas*. The rest of the family expressed their consent.

They were not just comparing but translating basic indigenous traditions (the story about how Sibö taught the first Bribris all they needed to know) into the basics of the Bahá'í Faith (the story about Bahá'u'lláh being the latest in a series of messengers from God). It was interesting to hear Misael do this again. Like much of what Elías told the group during the two days we spent with him, these were thoughts that I had not heard expressed this plainly and pedagogically in many years. It reminded me of how I was received and what I was told during my first two stays there. Of course, all these ideas had been commented on and alluded to frequently in conversations over the years, but, presumably because people knew I already knew about them, they had not reverted to presenting them in this simplified way again until now, when they were not so much speaking to me as to the colleagues that I had brought along.

Afterwards, we continued down the road to look at the Bahá'í centre with its meeting house, kindergarten, communal kitchen, and new office for a small development project that some of the Bahá'ís are running, all set in an attractive, fenced garden.[38] Soon, Ronny Sánchez turned up. For about a decade, he has been a prominent Bahá'í leader not just in Talamanca but also nationally and internationally. I had run into him two weeks earlier, told him about the group that was coming, and asked him to share some of his experiences and visions with us. Since it started to rain again, he invited us into the new office to sit

around a large table, creating a rather formal setting for our conversation. He, too, explained to us how the Bahá'í Faith is an indigenous religion – the religion of indigenous peoples all across the world – and how it promises that indigenous peoples will enlighten the rest of the world. He also asked for questions from us. Again someone wanted to know whether the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith did somehow come into conflict with Bribri customs. No, said Ronny categorically. Like Misael before him, he claimed that, quite the contrary, the religion reinforces the values of the culture because it teaches people to emphasise the positive parts of their traditions and to abandon negative practices.

While doing my best to translate Ronny's explications and my colleagues' courteous questions, it struck me how I knew that, behind what was said here, things were far more complex on both sides of the table. While Ronny, like everyone at Misael's, was eloquently offering the visitors the basic teachings, more a doctrinal map than an accurate description of the rugged terrain of life, my colleagues were asking polite questions that elegantly masked several of their theoretical and political concerns. The new vantage point that my mediating role in this conversation created made me draw on insights accumulated through my long engagement in both communities – with Bahá'ís in Barrio Escalante and Bribris in Talamanca more broadly, and with the INREL group and academia more generally – to realise that, as both parties were doing their best to approach each other in a friendly and instructive way, they systematically left out intricacies that might have made them come across as complicated or critical. This made me think about how Bribris must have done the same to me on numerous occasions and how I must have done it to them. Anyway, now was not the moment for me to interrupt, neither with critical meta-reflections on past interaction, nor with comments that could have changed the impressions that were being given and taken as we were speaking. Yet, as I was translating, I caught myself inserting additional details, or slightly twisting the words of the other speakers, in intuitive efforts to contextualise and thus try to bring more nuance to the discussion, enhance mutual understanding, and, undeniably, prove my own points. All the same, while indigeneity and religion served as conceptual middle ground or meeting points in our dialogue, nobody delved deep into what we meant by these terms or into how complex the practices and relations that they point to are from both Bribri and academic points of view. We spoke as if these issues were easy and transparent.

The following morning we were supposed to see the pastor of the Pentecostal church in Sibudi, but rain restricted our movement, so we waited and chatted with Elías. Greg Alles interviewed him about whether and how Bribris celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on 9th August, like he had done with Heidi in San José a few days earlier, taking notes and showing great interest in all the details that Elías could supply. By the time the rain ceased, the pastor was off to his farm to harvest bananas. It was his bi-weekly delivery day. Securing an income trumps conversation with scholars of religion, even for pastors. Instead, Elías took us to his own farm and told us about the basics

of Bribri livelihood. He explained how the monetary economy has transformed both agricultural and sociocultural practices, and created widespread dependence on tiny and unstable revenues from monocrops, primarily bananas and plantains. The traders pay less for fruit farmed in the traditional ecological way than for the neater looking products grown with agrochemicals. Deforestation, erosion, pollution, less subsistence farming, less communal work, less sharing, more poverty, and more reliance on products, actors, and forces from outside Talamanca are only some of the results. Rapid population growth puts additional pressure on the limited land. All this affects social dynamics and structures, including gender roles, kinship relations, and generational differences, and ultimately ideas and practices of Bribriness, indigeneity, and religion.

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After spending the next day in Puerto Viejo, on the coast, discussing ideas for the present book, we went for a second excursion to the Bribri territory, this time to Shuabb with Alejandro Swaby. From Bratsi, two canoes took us up the River Yorkín, the practically unpatrolled border between Costa Rica and Panama.

The place where Alejandro was taking us, the compound of the Asociación Comunitaria de Ecoturismo y Agricultura Orgánica de Talamanca (ACEATA), has been set up for educational, economical, and political purposes (Figure 1.5). A group of women from the local community has founded it as a cooperative, to educate each other, their families, and neighbours, and to receive students and

FIGURE 1.5 The compound of the Asociación Comunitaria de Ecoturismo y Agricultura Orgánica de Talamanca (ACEATA) in Shuabb.

tourists from the outside; to teach and appreciate traditional knowledge and traditional practices; and, at the same time, take control and advantage of research and tourism to help each other gain much needed extra income. The year before, Alejandro had brought me and my family to introduce us to this place, its people, and the beauties and hardships of life there. This is the community that he is originally from, the place of his *ditsöwö* or clan, the location and the kinship relation that define his indigeneity within the larger Bribri indigeneity.[39] Now I had asked him if he would accompany our group of researchers, help us learn more about community projects, and coordinate a visit so that we could support the efforts of the women in Shuabb. Upon arrival, they served us refreshing drinks and delicious food in their big kitchen. When we had eaten and rested for a while, Maribel Iglesias, the current president of the cooperative, gave us a presentation of the history and aims of the cooperative and a tour of the compound which includes a large sleeping house, bathrooms, a system for purifying water (installed some years ago by students from the University of Michigan), and an experimental garden of herbs and vegetables. Afterwards, as conversations continued, she and Alejandro told us bits of local history and shared some of their hopes for the future of this place: that more people like us should come and visit them, stay over, learn about their culture, and contribute not only economically but also to the preservation and development of local knowledge and practices in respectful dialogue with scientific knowledge and practices. Before we left, another member came by to show and sell us her traditional artwork.

Back in Bratsi, after a swift ride down the rapids of the Yorkín, Alejandro invited us to make a stop at another women's cooperative, this one organised by single mothers to support each other and their children. Many women have important positions in their families and in the larger Bribri society, as owners of land, as respected leaders, and, in the younger generation, as professionals. However, the increasing influence of socio-economic structures and dynamics from surrounding societies, especially a combination of monetary economy and machismo, has put numerous Bribri women and children in more dependent and vulnerable situations. The resourceful members of the cooperative in Bratsi were making and selling chocolate, cakes, and other local delicacies. They offered us their tasty products and told us about their struggles. Here, in the lower parts of the territory, on its frontier, influences from outside are stronger and changes have happened faster than further up in the valley and the mountains.

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The INREL fellows helped turn or return my attention to issues in Talamanca that they noticed with fresh eyes and considerable experience from studies of indigeneities and religions elsewhere. Their remarks on sovereignty particularly prompted me to think more about Bribri postures, practices, and environments that had impressed me deeply when I first arrived there, but that I had begun to take for granted. My colleagues' interest in the multiple natural and man-made boundaries – the rivers, the rough roads, the electricity lines, the national border, the mountains, the forest, the settlement patterns, the different languages, and

more – as parts of the Talamancan technologies of sovereignty, reminded me of how basic this is for an understanding of the history and the contemporary political situation.[40] Likewise, their interest in gender roles reminded me of how powerful the matrilineal kinship system is in almost all domains of Bribri society, even if it is constantly challenged in multiple ways, including by patriarchal religions and male dominated politics.

Observing how my colleagues met and were met by persons and places that I have known for years, and having the role of mediator and translator, has made me reflect on my own history of relating and learning in Talamanca. It has made me more aware of the particularity of my relationships, and how they have developed over time, but also of their trivial commonality – both in terms of how foreigners are generally treated in Talamanca and in terms of how researchers generally act in the field. By bringing a collective of scholars, it became clearer to both me and my Bribri collaborators that I represent more than myself – that I am an actor in and of a particular international academic community, a world into which Bribris get dragged partly because of me, where some of their ideas and practices are translated into indigeneity and religion, compared to such things elsewhere, and scrutinised for other purposes than their own.

The net of relations and commitments obviously increased with the introduction of my colleagues to Talamanca. When I was back in March 2019, Elías immediately mentioned everyone by name and asked how they were doing. So did Heidi and Alejandro and several others. They also asked me what we were doing with all the information we had requested.

INREL in Sápmi, Nagaland, and Hawai'i

The INREL project has, over five years, regularly brought together the authors of the present book in what have certainly been educative encounters with indigeneities. On our first field site workshop, in Sápmi, in April 2016, we followed roughly the same route that Alejandro, Justo, Carlos, Sandra, Monica, and I had taken half a year earlier, but, interestingly, we got quite different receptions at the Sámi institutions in Guovdageaidnu and Kárášjohka. We were met with more reservation. Was it because we were a uniform party of non-indigenous scholars on an overt mission to study indigenous religion? In September 2017, I did a similar tour with Geyner Blanco, a Maleku leader and the first Costa Rican government advisor on indigenous affairs, and William Vega, a Costa Rican human rights lawyer, whom I had invited to Tromsø for a workshop about consultations with indigenous peoples,[41] and, in March 2018, Siv Ellen and I took Arkotong, since he had been unable to attend the first INREL workshop (cf. Longkumer, Chapter 3). On these two later occasions, we again got more intimate and hearty treatment. Going with someone who gets recognised as indigenous – Alejandro, Justo, Geyner, or Arkotong – makes a difference. Maybe it also mattered that we asked much less about religion during these other visits?

In Nagaland, in December 2016, for our second field site workshop, Arkotong introduced us to members of a local intelligentsia and an indigeneity marked

by statehood, territoriality, a fight for sovereignty, Christianity, kinship, languages, cuisine, and emblematic artefacts (shawls, spears, knifes, and necklaces) that were presented as 'from the past'. The evidence of educative efforts were everywhere: in the staged performances of 'past times' and 'past practices' at the Hornbill Festival in Kohima, attended by government officials and other dignitaries, tourists from near and afar, and locals of all ages (cf. Longkumer 2015, 2016); in the research and outreach activities of the Kohima Institute, including the annual Hutton lecture, this year given by Siv Ellen on the situation at Standing Rock; in the museological exhibitions of huge log drums and *morung*s (traditional houses of learning) at central locations in each Naga village; in the churches that loom large in the landscape, many of them with schools and missionary stations in their compounds; in sculptural woodcarvings that, according to the artist and villagers, awakened old spirits (cf. Longkumer 2018); in the various monuments commemorating heroes of the sovereignty struggles; and in an impressive flora of road signs with Christian proverbs, not to forget the massive Christmas decorations that made it impossible to ignore that, to many of its inhabitants, this is a promised land religiously as well as politically. The aesthetics of all these public educational endeavours addressed and made tactile a tension between old times and new times, old religion and new religion, coloniality and sovereignty, violence and community. But what were the loci of indigenous religion here? Was it the things that were treated as 'from the past'? Was it Baptist Christianity? I went home thinking it had to be both, plus the relations between them, including the tensions. Or, perhaps especially the tensions?

Of course, Arkotong's mediation, his pedagogical translations of all these multifaceted translations, was crucial in order for us to grasp a little bit more than just the immediate surface of things. He also took us beyond the public square and into the private spheres of some of his relatives and friends, where we were shown tremendous hospitality and where we got small but closer glimpses of how life can unfold in different parts of Nagaland, experiences that made our learning more personal and emotional. By taking us home to where he had grown up, he, whom we already knew as the ultra-cosmopolitan critical scholar from the University of Edinburgh, illustrated, *in propria persona*, the immense scale that indigeneity can take in one individual. He exposed how local grounds are made up of multiple smaller units – villages, clans, neighbours, friends, families, households, and individuals (cf. Alles, Chapter 4) – but also how globality may be conveyed in one person.

The final field site workshop of INREL, organised by Greg Johnson on Hawai'i in July 2018, half a year after our visit in Talamanca, centred on a Hawaiian protest and revitalisation movement spurred by the planned construction of a gigantic astronomical telescope on Mauna Kea, the tallest mountain in the Pacific Ocean. We quickly learnt that the main leaders of this movement are teachers and scholars. They inspire and educate young people, some of whom, when the conflict has escalated, have risen to the occasion and become leaders themselves. The exhibition in the Hawaiian Cultural Center of Hāmākua (cf. Johnson, Chapter 5), where we had some of our workshop meetings, was all about

educating the public, including us, about Hawaiian traditions and responsibilities. Facebook – or 'Sacred Facebook' as one of the movement leaders named it – was another important tool for outreach and learning for this community of 'protectors of the Mauna'. Facebook enabled educative exchanges with the larger Hawaiian community, with Native Americans from continental United States, and with actors in international indigenous peoples' movements elsewhere. The museum, Facebook, and the mountain where the most direct protest actions have taken place have become spaces for developing and sharing narratives that differ from the official ones promulgated by the state, spaces where indigeneity and claims of sacredness are articulated in opposition to state perspectives and practices – and, indeed, in opposition to some international scientific perspectives and practices. In and from these spaces, people are taught to see behind and beyond colonial structures, and to start imagining how a sovereign Hawai'i could be rebuilt after more than a hundred years of American dominance.

The Mauna Kea conflict involves scholars on both sides: astronomers and physicists versus indigenous educators and historians, all of them allied with colleagues around the world. Becoming involved temporarily in one of these alliances, via Greg Johnson, was a reminder of how crucial it is to manoeuvre empathetically as a scholar in order to maximise learning and earn the trust that enables more nuanced insights and analyses, and of how inevitable it is that we become personally entangled in the projects of people with whom we work over many years. As in all the previous workshops, it was conspicuous how the relations and the focus of the scholar organising the visit steered us. While we concentrated our attention on a movement which, besides being deeply rooted in Hawaiian traditions, was clearly inspired by New Age, signs of Christianity, churches for example, could be seen everywhere along the roads around the island, but, during the entire week, we never interacted with anything that had the slightest Christian flavour. We spent our time with one distinctive religious movement within a larger and largely Christian indigenous community.

Something similar happened during our workshop in Talamanca. We did not visit any of the churches or talk to any of the Christian leaders there either, even if they represent a large religious majority. Some of us talked about Talamancan Christianities, in particular during our drives, commenting on different churches as we passed them, but in the process of writing this book, I have discovered that some of my colleagues, especially those who rode mostly in our second car, went home with the impression that most Bribris are Bahá'í.

Critical reflections on encounters with indigenous religions

Partial views are all we get, but we can work hard to expand our outlook. Our entry to a new space and how we later move in the terrain, conceptually as well as physically, is decisive for what we learn and what we as scholars end up producing based on the encounters we take part in. The episodes described in this chapter have all altered how I move in Talamanca, Tromsø, and elsewhere. The INREL

project has broadened my conceptual and geographical horizons, encouraged me to extend my research far beyond Talamanca proper, and prompted me to rethink much of what I have done previously in Talamanca and Tromsø. It has made me ask new questions, use new methods, and theorise differently.

'Indigenous religion(s)' has been the conceptual baseline of INREL, and served both as a theoretical starting point and an empirical end. It has been at once a method and a predetermined finding of our joint endeavours. We have, through the commoning that we have performed (cf. Blaser and de la Cadena 2017, 2018), pedagogically, politically, and analytically, contributed to constituting a subject or an entity, a domain, and a scale of vast complexity and scope that have actualised indigenous religion(s) in the different contexts where we have worked. However, the concept was not invented with INREL. There were subjects or entities, domains, and scales, not to forget methods, of indigenous religion (in the singular) and indigenous religions (in the plural) circulating in both academic (cf. Chidester 2014; Cox 2007; Geertz 2004; Gill 2018) and non-academic worlds long before our project was conceived. The co-constituting of indigenous religions that we have been involved in has happened in encounters with different actors who articulate and actualise indigenous religions, who common or uncommon them, in divergent ways.

The uncommoning of indigenous religions has been a longstanding concern of mine (cf. Tafjord 2013, 2016b, 2017), and this has become both more difficult and easier through INREL.[42] It has become more difficult because the title of the project, its method, its subject, its conversations, its publications, and most of its other output encourage our collaborators and audiences to associate anyone and anything we address with indigenous religion(s). INREL more than suggests that Talamancans have an indigenous religion, since Talamanca is included as one of the sites we study, and if people do not take a closer look at what we write, they will probably not think that we are talking about the Bahá'í Faith. Yet, those who do take a closer look might become puzzled by some Bribris' clear articulation of the Bahá'í Faith as their indigenous religion, and by other INREL examples which question received academic wisdom of what an indigenous religion may be. The INREL project has generated several surprises of this and other kinds, and thus made it easier for all its collaborators to uncommon indigenous religion(s).

Nevertheless, as scholarship hits the ground and affects people's politics, unintended 'siding effects' are hard to control (Tafjord 2016b). While we waited for the boats on the river bank in Bratsi, and the rest of the INREL group was busy with other discussions, Alejandro Swaby told me he had read the essay that I had written and sent him some time ago, titled "How Talking about Indigenous Religion May Change Things: An Example from Talamanca" (Tafjord 2016a). He said I had gotten it all right, except one important issue: those who talk about an indigenous religion among the Bribri are wrong. He asserted that such a thing had never existed here and that these ideas were the result of misunderstandings and a lack of proper knowledge of the indigenous histories and practices.

Gently but firmly he indicated that I, too, was wrong, since I, in my essay, do not univocally endorse the position of the elders, like himself, who refute the translation of traditional Bribri knowledge and practices into 'indigenous religion'. In it, I also acknowledge how a younger generation of Bribri university students, politicians, educators, and tourist guides have begun to perform this translation in encounters and in tune with scholars, lawyers, doctors, journalists, environmentalists, tourists, and missionaries from outside. As the boats arrived and Alejandro invited us aboard, I could not help but feel ambivalent, again, about having brought a whole group of foreign scholars to look for indigenous religion in his community.

For me, all the encounters I describe in this chapter have had extraordinary educative effects. By sharing them I hope to contribute to an accumulation of examples that teach us more about how translations and comparisons are pedagogical, political, and analytical moves that everyone makes – moves that must be made to manifest indigeneity and indigenous religions, whether as commons or uncommons, either on local grounds or through globalising networks. The particularities with which such translations and comparisons are done, and the particularities that such translations and comparisons produce, vary immensely. It is critical to keep in mind that they can always be translated and compared differently.

Notes

1 Thanks to everyone who has taught me things that now resound in this chapter. The support from Elías Escalante, Alejandro Swaby, Heidi Mayorga, Justo Avelino Torres Layan, and their families and communities in Talamanca has been invaluable. Carlos Borge and Sandra Esquivel have also helped and encouraged me continuously in Costa Rica. Monica Grini and Siv Ellen Kraft have been vital in Tromsø over many years. Collaborations and conversations with Arkotong Longkumer, Greg Alles, Rosalind Hackett, Greg Johnson, Afe Adogame, May-Lisbeth Brew, Liudmila Nikanorova, Helen Jennings, Aheli Moitra, and other INREL associates have expanded my horizons and improved this chapter. In addition to the generous resources granted by UiT The Arctic University of Norway and the Research Council of Norway, this chapter owes credit to Leipzig University's Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies and the project "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities", and to the Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters and the project "The Body in Translation".

2 For a general presentation of INREL, see this book's Introduction.

3 About encounters as generators of creativity, see Gill (2018) and Clifford (2013).

4 As methods, indigeneity and indigenous religion can of course be used in other ways, too, for example aesthetically, economically, or theologically. Cf. Tafjord (2018a).

5 For another perspective on translation as a basic move that everyone makes and the work it does, see Hanks and Severi (2014).

6 Between 1993 and 1999 I lived in Costa Rica periodically, in total for about three years, but I had never been to Talamanca before the autumn of the year 2000, when I went there hoping to do fieldwork for my dissertation. The decision to go to Talamanca was largely triggered by disbelief in a myth I had met while attending high school in Ciudad Quesada, a settler town in the northern part of the country. Our teachers in history and social sciences told us that there had never been many indigenous peoples in Costa Rica

and that presently there were none. By teaching us this, they were reproducing a national myth that has been hegemonic in public discourses about Costa Rica for more than a century (Díaz-Azofeifa 2012; Soto 2008). It was books written by the anthropologists María Eugenia Bozzoli (1979) and Marcos Guevara (1993) that first made me aware of the Bribri in Talamanca, and it was the anthropologist Carlos Borge who first brought me there and introduced me to his collaborators and friends, most importantly the community leader Rosendo Jackson and his son Elías Escalante.

7 This claim was often made with reference to a letter, originally titled "Message to the Indian and Eskimo Bahá'ís of the Western Hemisphere", written (in 1969, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada) by Amatu'l-Bahá (or Rúhíyyih Khánum, or Mary Maxwell), a prominent Bahá'í leader. See https://bahai-library.com/khanum_message_indian_eskimo, last accessed 30 October 2018. A Spanish translation of this letter circulated in Barrio Escalante.

8 On the history of the Bahá'í Faith, see for example Warburg (2006).

9 For different versions of this history (Bribris insist that it is history, not a myth or a legend), see for example Bozzoli (1979) and Jara and García (1997).

10 With the United Fruit Company came also the first Protestant churches (Baptists and Adventists), but they catered primarily to the African-American workers (Bourgois 1994).

11 The Costa Rican Indigenous Act is available online through the Sistema Costarricense de Información Jurídica of the Procuraduría General de la República, see www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=38110&nValor3=66993&strTipM=TC

12 I did fieldwork in Talamanca in 2000, 2001, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

13 Thanks to Yorleny Blanco, Alejandro Rodríguez, and Alejandro Swaby for supporting and thus making possible this consultation.

14 This is how I primarily understand 'indigenous methodologies': as local protocols for research, usually taught to the researcher by the people with whom the researcher collaborates. Books and articles written by academics who are indigenous to communities elsewhere can of course inspire and create more critical reflection about such protocols and learning processes (for example, for me, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* [1999] has been formative), but they can never replace what the researcher must learn from the people with whom (s)he actually studies.

15 In our conversations he would sometimes mention Adolfo Constenla, Alvaro Dobles, Carlos Borge, and Laura Cervantes.

16 For some of these histories, see Bozzoli (1979) and Jara and García (1997).

17 We have been to Isla Chira on the west coast of Costa Rica to interview the first Bahá'í pioneer who came to Talamanca, and we have been to Soloy in Panama to meet with Bahá'ís among the Ngäbe (see Tafjord 2004).

18 Elías has, for example, taught me how to wait properly, which is crucial in Talamanca. For a description and methodological reflections on this, see Tafjord (2018b).

19 This includes texts. In 2007 and 2009, when I returned with translations of parts of my dissertation (what I had learnt mainly in Spanish had been written about in Norwegian and now I had translated most of my text back into Spanish), Elías was instrumental in deciding the procedure for sharing and discussing these with individuals and the community. See Tafjord (2007).

20 Elías is her maternal uncle.

21 For several alternative uses of indigeneity, see Canessa (2018). For several alternative uses of indigenous religion, see Tafjord (2017).

22 By law, Sámis have become distinguished from other Norwegians both as a different people and as a different kind of people. Since 1998, they are also distinguished from "national minorities" in Norway: Forest Finns, Jews, Kvens, Roma, and Romani (see www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/urfolk-og-minoriteter/nasjonale-minoriteter/id1404/). Sámi politicians have insisted that they, as an *urfolk* or an indigenous people, should have

a different status and other rights than the national minorities. These distinctions also influence research (cf. Niemi 2002; Niemi and Semb 2009).

23 See, for example, the outcome document from the Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference organised in Alta in 2013, for the United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in New York in 2014: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/wc/AdoptedAlta_outcomedoc_EN.pdf (accessed 1 November 2019).

24 See https://en.uit.no/om/enhet/omoss?p_dimension_id=88182 and https://uit.no/utdanning/program?p_document_id=270446 (accessed 1 November 2019). I have supervised three master's dissertations in this programme and contributed with single lectures to the methodology course. About ten students enrolled in this programme have taken my graduate course called "Anthropological Approaches in the Study of Religions".

25 See https://uit.no/om/enhet/aktuelt/nyhet?p_document_id=573781&p_dimension_id=88182 (accessed 1 June 2019), and more recently https://uit.no/om/enhet/aktuelt/nyhet?p_document_id=629948&p_dimension_id=88182 (accessed 13 June 2019)

26 About 71% of Norwegian citizens are members of the Church of Norway (see https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/bakgrunn/om-kirkestatistikk/medlemsstatistikk/).

27 The annual festival Isogaisa is perhaps the largest public venue for Sámi shamanism today, see http://isogaisa.org/en/. For information about Sámi issues in the Church of Norway, see https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/Sámisk-kirkeliv/.

28 The purported secular public domain of Norway is extended over Sámi territories as well, at least institutionally, for example in the field of law (cf. Årsheim 2018). Nonetheless, as far as I know, secularism and secularity in Sápmi are topics that have not yet been studied properly.

29 INREL has necessarily promoted the idea that indigenous peoples have indigenous religions, even if some of us are troubled by this (cf. Tafjord 2013). In anthropology, the so-called ontological turn (cf. Holbraad and Pedersen 2017) has made theories about animism fashionable again and brought new attention to indigenous peoples' knowledges and practices, often in ways that spiritualise or religionise them.

30 Nowadays Bribris are much more exposed to aggressive missionising than Sámis. Talamanca attracts Christian missionaries from multiple churches and movements, many of them with substantial backing from abroad.

31 In the years between her two visits to Tromsø, we have met several times in Costa Rica, usually in San José where her home functions almost like an embassy for Bribris in the capital city. There she has been a major encourager of the emerging indigenous student movement. Her international horizon, network, and the topics she is interested in have also widened because of her Chilean husband who is a historian and environmentalist. San José is a hub for international NGOs of different kinds and hosts institutions like the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

32 She and her family in Talamanca are Bahá'ís.

33 On Costa Rica's international image, see for example Boukhris (2012).

34 This was made possible with funds from the Norwegian Latin America Research Network.

35 For more about these institutions, see their webpages: https://samas.no/en, https://www.sametinget.no/Om-Sametinget/About-the-Sami-Parliament, www.nrk.no/sapmi/om/1._about-nrk-sapmi-1.11296850, https://rdm.no/english/ (accessed 24 October, 2019).

36 His son, Guillermo Rodríguez, also has a lifelong career as a leader in Talamanca Bribri and in movements and organisations of *indígenas* in Costa Rica and internationally. In 2017, he became the first Bribri to graduate from law school, and, in 2018, he was appointed ambassador to Bolivia by the Costa Rican government as the hitherto only *indígena* to ever hold such a post on behalf of this country. In Talamanca, this appointment raised hopes of increased international collaboration between *indígenas*.

37 When we visited the Sámi Parliament, we all regretted that its elected members were not there to personally receive the greeting Alejandro had prepared for them. But Alejandro expressed his sympathy with the need for indigenous politicians to be travelling, both to

engage in the activities of their own communities, and to negotiate with allies as well as adversaries at home and abroad.

38 This development project has organised courses in 'moral leadership'. It has also distributed small solar panels to households without electricity.

39 For more about the *ditsöwö*, see Bozzoli (1979) and Jara and García (1997).

40 A point previously made by Borge and Villalobos (1994) and Borge and Castillo (1997).

41 For information about the government mechanism for consultations with indigenous peoples in Costa Rica that Geyner and William were setting up, see www.consultaindigena.go.cr/ (accessed 2 November 2019).

42 The most fruitful scholarly contributions to the uncommoning of indigenous religions are, in my opinion, Johnson (2002) and de la Cadena (2018).

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2

INDIGENOUS RELIGION(S) – IN THE MAKING AND ON THE MOVE

Sámi activism from Alta to Standing Rock

Siv Ellen Kraft

"We are protectors, not protesters", Mykay gently corrected Greg Johnson and myself during our first meeting. He and Greg were acquainted from Hawai'i, his homeland and Greg's fieldwork area. Like thousands of others, mostly Native Americans, but including groups from large parts of the world, Mykay had come to stand with the Lakota against the 'Black Snake', the Dakota Access Pipeline. So had three Sámi women, it turned out, and a team from NRK-Sápmi.[1] "This is indigenous people uniting", one of the Sámi women declared during their welcome ceremony that same day. It would have been hard to disagree. 'Global indigeneity' is key to the vocabularies of the INREL project, but it had so far existed on an abstract level of discourses and networks, at least for me. Here it seemed, very literally, to have come to life, conveyed by hundreds of indigenous flags and the consistent use of 'we' on banners, and in explicitly religious terms, manifested in the ceremonial infrastructure of the camps, the constant chanting, burning of sage and drumming, and the references on banners and sign-posts: "This is ceremony, act accordingly", "Water is Sacred, Water is Life". We were clearly on Lakota land, for a local cause, but one with potential for upscaling, along the lines of religious registers.[2]

I remember another impression from the day of our arrival: that of oddly familiar scenes, reminiscent of pictures I had seen from the Alta-conflict in Sápmi. Back home, I have since heard of similar associations. Journalist and former Alta-activist Anders Heger noted in the wake of a visit that walking through the messy mixture of "tipies, wigwams, pickups, camping wagons and small, modern tents", he would not even have to close his eyes "for the pictures to blend in with *lávvus*,[3] the smell of reindeer skin and mountain grass, and a flaming northern light above the Finnmark tundra 36 years ago" (Heger, *Klassekampen*, 28.10.16, my translation). Former Sámi Parliament President Aili Keskitalo declared that Standing Rock "is our common cause. It has become

symbolic, one may rightly say that this is the world's Alta-case" (NRK Nyheter 07.11.16, my translation).

I somehow discovered Alta at Standing Rock, based on a combination of distance and familiarity, and the mainly intuitive act of comparison through which they appeared. An attempt to follow up on these experiences and the questions they triggered, this chapter moves between Sápmi (the Sámi territories) and Dakota, and between the early and the current phase of international indigenous organisation and identity building, through a focus on Sámi activism at Alta (1979–81), at Standing Rock (2016–17), and back in Sápmi in the form of solidarity actions. I thereby hope to shed light on the emergence of indigeneity and indigenous religion(s) in Sámi contexts and on some of the dynamics involved. The timeline allows for a sense of developments across time and the work-in-progress nature of indigeneity and indigenous religion(s), in relation to consciousness raising, revival and refusal over this period. The geographical divide invites reflections on scales, encounters, and domains of usage and relevance. Based on this design and the overarching objective, the following questions have guided my work. First are articulations of indigeneity, religion and combinations of the two: the extent to which they are used (or not), where and in which contexts (or not at all), why (or why not) and with what results (if any). Second, and related to the generative dimension of protests: what is the role of encounters for processes of indigenisation and religion-making, and of the liminal spaces that frame and foster them?

I have proceeded along the lines of 'light comparison' (Gordon 2013), inspired by my mainly intuitive recognitions at Standing Rock and by the comparative logics of indigeneity and indigenous religion. My comparison is 'light' in the sense of focusing on a few cases, but with contextually rich descriptions, and a primarily inductive and explorative approach. I have worked with comparanda that were already connected, prior to my juxtaposition of them, and have followed connections, alongside making my own comparisons. While partial, limited and centred on a few of the thousands of people involved in the protests this design may, or so I hope, provide a window into the broader stories to which the cases belong, and some of the dynamics through which they have developed, including the role and logics of emic comparison. Indigeneity is a manifestly comparative phenomenon (Johnson and Kraft 2017: 3). "To be indigenous is to compare" (Johnson and Kraft 2017: 13), across scales and relative to context. It implies recognition of that which 'we' have in common, which makes us a 'we' and distinct from others (Johnson and Kraft 2018a).

A few words on my choice of cases: Alta is so far the largest Sámi protest and was followed by major changes in the relationship between the Sámi and the Norwegian state. The 'indigenous turn' started prior to Alta but was for the following decade framed by this particular protest. Standing Rock is an obvious choice right now, as the most global protest of recent times, one in which many Sámi were involved, and one that shares important features with the Alta-case. Both were large, non-violent, protracted, encampment-based, and anchored in

the protection of particular rivers. Both staged media-events in the presence of massive police-forces, and both were talked about as points of no return, as historic and as destined to bring about radical change.

Methods and sources have been shaped by the timeline and geographies. I have visited the area of the camps in Alta and have talked to a number of the activists – many briefly, some more extensively.[4] Standing Rock unfolded in my 'real time', and in a media-scape that has dramatically changed the premises of refusals[5] and the potential for studying them. I visited Standing Rock in September 2016 and followed it from afar on a more or less daily basis to the forced closing of the camps in February 2017.[6] Back in Tromsø, where I live and work, I have met with Standing Rock activists in diverse contexts and capacities, including solidarity events, public lectures (by myself and others), a public seminar at Sámi House in Oslo, student supervision,[7] and more and less formal interviews.

I will start with contextual matters concerning Sápmi and the Sámi, and then move from Alta to Standing Rock, to Standing Rock in Sápmi, including a brief discussion of a recent protest; the Ellos Deatnu-movement in Finnmark county, inspired by both of these protests, and like both of them involving a river. Finally, I will briefly gather and compare key aspects pertaining to the protest-format and encounters, in regard to indigeneity and religion-making.

Contextual matters

Sápmi extends across four nation states, encompassing northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 Sámi live in this large area, the majority in Sápmi on the Norwegian side (around 50,000–65,000), which constitutes my main focus in this chapter.

Colonisation has been dated to the 16th century, by what was at that point the Danish-Norwegian and Swedish kingdoms (Sundström 2016: 212). Christianity was introduced during medieval times and gradually became the dominant religion from the late 17th century, in the wake of systematic missionary projects, targeting ritual experts (*noaidi*, today often translated as shamans) and their drums particularly. From the 19th century, various assimilation projects were initiated, with the school system (including residential schools) as the main tool (Minde 2005). Sámi languages in many places disappeared almost completely, alongside a decrease in the number of self-identified Sámi, particularly in the coastal areas.

'Norwegianization' was dismantled as a political programme in the wake of World War II (Selle *et al*. 2015: 55) but was replaced by "passive Norwegianization" (Thuen 1980: 15), based partly on the institutionalisation of the welfare state system and partly on stigma connected to Sámi ways of life and being (ibid.: 54–60). The 1970s have become known as the 'Sámi spring', based on increased consciousness-raising and emergent resistance, much of which unfolded within the frames of the Alta-conflict. The dam was built, but the loss of the river was followed by a new phase of governmental relations between the Sámi and the

Norwegian state (Bjerkli and Selle 2003: 21), involving major shifts, politically, institutionally and culturally.[8]

The early 1960s saw the first examples of an international orientation,[9] but "the idea that the Sámi was an indigenous people, in the modern legal sense, was quite foreign to both the Nordic governments and to the great majority of Sámi until the Alta-case" (Minde 2003a:106, my translation) and became widespread only from the late 1970s (minde 2003a: 99). Fifteen Sámi delegates attended the founding conference of The World Council of Indigenous People (WCIP) in Port Alberni, British Colombia, in 1975. Among these were the artists Hans Ragnar Mathisen and Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, both of whom took part in its 'cultural programme' (Valkeapää as its first 'co-ordinator of culture') and both of whom contributed to expanding indigenous networks through this venue, through their art and personal travels, and through the organisation of festivals back home, in Sápmi. Valkeapää was the key figure behind the festival, Davvi Šuvva, in 1979, staged near Karesuando, in a Swedish and Norwegian border-area, as a week-long, camp-based event, and possibly the first ever (pan)-indigenous festival (Angell 2009).[10] Davvi Šuvva gathered an estimated 3000 people from the broader Sámi region, along with Native Americans, First Nations, Inuit, South American groups, and representatives of the Kurds, and has been referred to as a catalyst for "a wider community of Sámi to begin to consider themselves part of a global indigenous community" (Angell 2009: 7).

I have asked some of the frontline activists about indigenous influences prior to the Alta-conflict. Jorunn Eikjok, from Vadsø, met Native American activists during a world youth festival in East Berlin in 1973, some of whom had recently fought at Wounded Knee (interview with Jorunn Eikjok, Oslo, 23.11.2018). In 1977 she attended a WCIP conference in Kiruna, and in 1979 she witnessed the introduction of Home Rule in Kalaallit Nunaat, amid rising tensions over the fate of the Alta-Kautokeino river. It convinced her that change is possible and further sparked her anger over conditions in Sápmi: "To me the Alta-development was a continuation of the awful colonial history that had lasted 400 years. I experienced what was happening in Alta as a knife to the throat concerning the existence of the Sámi as a people" (Eikjok 2019: 1–2; my translation).

Today a scholar of law and a famous artist and activist, Ánde Somby was another young Sámi at the frontline of the protests. Asked (by me) about indigenous influences prior to the conflict, his first mention was the American Indian Movement as an inspiration for *ČSV*, a concept born during a meeting in Sirma in 1972, and related to Sámi who were politically and culturally radical, and confrontational towards Norwegian society (see Guttormsen 2000). In the wake of the Wounded Knee Massacre (also in 1972), journalists asked whether the Sámi had anything corresponding to the Native American warriors. The answer was *ČSV*: Sámi force, "peaceful with teeth" (interview with Ánde Somby, Tromsø, 31.08.18, my translation), referred to by some newspapers as 'Lapp power'. An example of early lines of influence, this story also indicates a new direction of comparative logics, born out of the international indigenous movement and the

recently established and still new category of 'indigenous people', and spread through encounters, newsmedia coverage and protest literature. The protesters were inspired by the Gandhi campaigns during the 1930s and Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights movement during the 1950s and '60s (Parmann 1980: 173), and by books like Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969) about Red Power in the USA and Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970) (Minde 2005: 17).

Ellos Johka – La elva leve – let the river live

The Alta-case involved government plans to dam the Alta-Kautokeino river for hydroelectric power, based on a claimed need to modernise the region. Sámi organisations succeeded in stopping a first proposal (in 1968) which would have put the Sámi village Mazi under water. Nationwide protests began with revised plans of 1978, and involved an estimated 20,000 Sámi and Norwegians and a wide range of protest-forms, including civil disobedience. Between 5000 and 10,000 visited one of two camps established near the construction site (Detsika and Stilla).

The protesters comprised a coalition of more or less independent groups, with The People's Action against Development of the Alta-Kautokeino river as

FIGURE 2.1 The main slogan of the Alta-movement 'La elva leve (let the river live)' written in snow. From the left, Åge Gaup, Marry A. Somby and Josef Halse.

Source: Niillas A. Somby, used with the permission of Ánde Somby.

the most embracive and in charge of the camps (Heitmann 1984: 115). Having started as a Sámi case in Mazi, the shift to Alta (an ethnically mixed and more Norwegianised area) opened up the case in different directions. Alta remained a Sámi case, related to the protection of reindeer grazing land and calving in the area, but became an indigenous case, related to international legislation. It was from the start an environmentalist case, concerned with saving one of the most untouched areas of European wilderness, and for many locals it was about salmon-fishing primarily, in what was also one of Europe's richest salmon-rivers. The conflict is retrospectively described as one of the most extensive, bitter and dramatic in Norwegian history.[11] Finnmark county was split in two over the issue, and in complicated ways, crossing ethnic and party lines, friends and families.

Sources of local tension included a large influx of sympathisers from the broader region, the rest of Norway, and to some extent from abroad, bringing ways of thinking and acting that to many locals were new and (negatively) associated with hippies and radicals (Heitmann 1984). Environmentalism was among the dubious imports, and civil disobedience was regularly framed as attacks on democracy (Parmann 1980: 186). The Sámi dimension was, as such, a source of tension. Some of the non-Sámi locals were less than happy with supporting what was also a Sámi issue, and some Sámi were intimidated by the focus on Sámi-ness.

The camps were dominated by Norwegians, while many of the key actions were dominated by Sámi and aimed for national and international audiences. Media coverage was extensive and ranged from local media focus on the river and fishing primarily, to a focus on the Sámi and to some extent on the indigenous angle in national media (Bjerkli and Selle 2003: 21). The international dimension supported the Sámi more exclusively, by way of support-declarations and media interest. Both the indigenous movement and Sámi activists used the opportunity to shame the Norwegian government, by referencing a lack of ability to live up to standards that they supported outside of Norway (Hjorthol 2006: 82).

Detsika was a combination of political think tank, cultural workshop and training camp, comprised of protesters from the south (approx. 37 percent),[12] the overall region (approx. 45 percent) and foreign visitors (approx. 18 percent). A local Alta-*væring* recalls a strong sense of "protest-enthusiasm" (No. *aksjonsglede*) among the activists, many of whom were students and environmentalists (telephone-interview 24.05.18). Friends of mine from Kautokeino and Tromsø remember a festival-like event, exciting encounters, concerts with famous artists like the Cree-musician Buffy Saint-Marie, and set late in an unusually warm summer. A 'Detsika Songbook' resonates with the Northern Norwegian ballad tradition. Yoik was a staple from the start, at the camps and as a part of direct actions. A yoik-song won the Melodi Grand Prix Norway in 1980, at that time an annual media-event of nation-wide proportions. Titled *Sámiid Ædnan* (Sámi earth/ground) and dedicated to the protesters, its lyrics refer to yoik as "more

powerful than explosives".[13] Minutes from camp-meetings feature respect for Sámi traditional knowledge and lectures on such knowledge (Mikkelsen 1971, 1980: 97; Hjorthol 2006: 39).

Detsika was dominated by (non-Sámi) Norwegians, but the fact that they were allies, and mostly not local, may have contributed to safe-zones for new and old articulations of Sámi-ness. Contrasting a position of near invisibility in Alta, the protests placed Sámi-ness first, and as a positive resource. Asked to comment on Sámi-Norwegian relations at the camps, compared to everyday life in Alta, a local Alta-*væring* reasoned along these lines (telephone-interview 24.05.18). Norwegians from the south came with little knowledge of the Sámi, often combined with romantic stereotypes. Mostly clueless of the subtle rules governing Sámi-Norwegian relationships, they would ask questions not normally asked either due to established patterns of silence or because the matter would be obvious and taken for granted. As an example, she used Sámi practices of not emptying warm coffee grounds, explained with reference to this being harmful to nature. Her point was not that Sámis cynically deceived their gullible visitors from the south, merely that they engaged dynamically with the resources at hand, and chose positive solutions when possible, in this case by way of adding an environmental dimension to everyday practices (telephone-interview 24.05.18).

The choice of Oslo for key direct actions contributed to national and international upscaling, while securing proximity to news-channels and politicians. First among such actions was an occupy-event and hunger strike from 8th to 15th October 1979 by Sámi Action Group, a small group of young activists, most of them from Finnmark and some of them with experience from indigenous activism in Greenland, Canada and Alaska.[14] The hunger strike was inspired by a group of Kurds whom Niillas Somby had met at the Davvi Šuvva festival earlier that summer. His brother Ánde was initially sceptical and voted against the hunger strike strategy during a meeting in Oslo, as did the majority of the Sámi gathered. Trust in the Norwegian government was not at its best, Ánde recalls. He feared that they simply would not care: "If you're going to stage dive, then you need to know that people will catch you" (interview with Ánde Somby, Tromsø, 31.08.18). Jorunn Eikjok recalls a brief Action Group talk in the wake of the meeting, in which they decided to go ahead with the plans. And she remembers feeling calm and completely convinced, based on her activist background, by built up anger, and a spiritual experience (No. *åndelig opplevelse*). During a car-ride with Niillas a great, strong light appeared to her, convincing her that this would work out (interview with Jorunn Eikjok, Oslo, 23.11.2018). "You will see me on TV 3 or 4 days from now", she told her parents as they left Tana for the 1820 km drive to Oslo. On approaching Oslo at 5 in the morning she felt confident and safe, thinking to herself of people in the capital that "here you are sleeping. In 2 days you will all know of the Sámi, and it's going to change Norway" (interview with Jorunn Eikjok, Oslo, 23.11.2018, my translation).

Jorunn was fine, it turned out, and people in Oslo did care. Both Jorunn and Ánde describe the response as overwhelming. People were sympathetic to their

cause and eager to learn about this case and the Sámi more generally: "It was almost as if you could hear people's brains 'sparkle'" (No. *knitre*) (Interview with Jorunn Eikjok, Oslo, 23.11.18). What they witnessed – live and on TV – was a *lávvu*, a Sámi flag, yoik, Sámi dressed in *gákti* (traditional clothing) and banners: "We are hunger-striking", "Let the river live"; all of this in front of the Norwegian Parliament, the centre of state politics (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). The hunger strikers stayed for a week, for a performance that differed sharply from established patterns of interaction. Unlike many indigenous peoples elsewhere, the Sámi lack a warrior tradition.[15] Myths and legends tell of smart manoeuvres and the ability to hide and disappear on the tundra. Colonial stories tell of shame, silence, and secrecy, of avoiding confrontations and hiding practices and symbols associated with Sámi-ness (Eidheim 1987). The hunger strike was neither silent nor submissive. This was an *in your face*-form of action, non-violent but with teeth, as in a combination of *ČSV*, Gandhian ideas, and Native American strategies.

Adding to dramatic actions was an extensive information-flow at the site, through posters, flyers, speeches and stands. Jorunn was in charge of the daily reading of telegrams for the people gathered: "At first they came from Norway, then from the Nordic countries, and then they started coming from across the whole world; so this made indigenous people around the world conscious of this" (interview with Jorunn Eikjok, Oslo, 23.11.2018, my translation). Meanwhile,

FIGURE 2.2 Sámi Action Group and supporters in front of the Norwegian Parliament, October 8th, 1979.

Source: Bernt Eide/Samfoto/NTB scanpix.

FIGURE 2.3 Jorunn Eikjok reads telegrams. Left: Synnøve Persen and Ánte Gaup. Right: Mikkel Gaup. Holding the microphone: Niillas Somby.

Source: Bernt Eide/Samfoto/NTB scanpix.

some 100,000 copies of the recently launched journal *Charta 79* (Figure 2.4). *Tidsskrift for Urfolksspørsmål* (Journal of Indigenous Issues) were sold on the streets of Oslo, much to the surprise of the Action Group members responsible for it (interview with Ánde Somby, Tromsø 23.11.2018). The journal offered articles about the Alta-conflict, alongside information on indigenous struggles around the world, and including a 'Solemn declaration' issued at the first meeting of the World Council of Indigenous People, in 1975, in the name of what was at this point a new 'we'.

Back in Sápmi, the most dramatic event was the clearance of the Stilla camp on 14th January 1981, with some 600 police officers (one tenth of the Norwegian police force at the time) shipped from the south to remove around 1000 frostbitten activists, chained to each other and to the construction site. Many Sámi and Norwegians will at some point have seen images from this event. NRK featured the slogan "We were here first" written in the snow in front of a snow-barricade. At the frontline were Sámi activists dressed in *gákti*, holding Sámi flags, and yoiking. Behind them chains were cut and activists were carried away, one by one (Hjorthol 2006). It was a dark and cold day, Ánde Somby later noted (1999). Newspapers talked of D-day. Locals in Alta remember a war-like situation, with hundreds of policemen marching. Older people were reminded of World War II. The colonial imaginary is striking retrospectively.

FIGURE 2.4 Front page of *Charta 79*, featuring Nils-Aslak Valkeapää at the Davvi Šuvva festival, 1979.

During a public seminar at Sámi House in Oslo, November 2018, three of the key Alta-activists talked about their experiences, in a conversation led by Ánde Somby (seminar, Sámi house in Oslo, 23.11.2018). Jorunn Eikjok spoke of confidence gained in indigenous contact zones; of transitional moments during encounters in Oslo; and of thrills, inspiration and spiritual confirmation. Rávdná

Anti, one of the camp-leaders at Detsika, focused on learning to speak up, on solidarity and community building, on life-long connections, and on events that have stayed with her and still – 39 years later – made her voice break and her eyes teary. On arriving at the first day of the hunger strike, she said, "I saw Jorunn, Synnøve, Niillas. And I was so happy. The place swarmed with people. And I thought 'damn (No. *faen*), we are winning this case'. It was the greatest pleasure of my life, seeing them there" (seminar, Oslo, 23.11.2018, my translation). Ragnhild Nystad, then head of the Sámi Union in Oslo, described a dramatic period and emotional turmoil; her fear for the lives of the hunger strikers; the thrill of victories along the way, including support from local Norwegians; and the birth of a life-long commitment to *be* Sámi, openly and with pride. "We lost the case", she ended:

> The dam was built. But we also won. . . . Norwegian public opinion discovered us, and then politicians followed. And what we won most of all – all those Sámi who sow *gákti* now, and who are more Sámi than me (laughs), and demand the right to be Sámi. We won with the Sámi awakening.
>
> *(seminar, Oslo, Ragnhild Nystad 23.11.2018, my translation)*

The audience included peers of the panel and members of a younger generation of Sámi activists, including the Standing Rock activists Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska and her husband Beaska Niillas, seated in the front row.

Religion – at home and away, deterrents and incentives

Asked to comment on religion during the protests, Jorunn described spiritual experiences as common in her family and among the Sámi more generally, but limited to Sámi contexts: "It has been denied, and we haven't dared to show it in Norwegian settings . . .; probably some kind of collective traumatising in the wake of missionising, that have stuck for generations" (interview with Jorunn Eikjok, Oslo 23.11.18, my translation). Indigenous contexts were different, at least for her. Jorunn recalls from the WCIP conference in Kiruna in 1977 that:

> We were inspired to be Sámi. It was wonderful to be valued as we were, . . . and to be a part of this community, and of ceremonies that indigenous peoples from North America had, and which we were completely in tune with. . . . They didn't have to explain to us, we simply understood. . . . And it inspired, you know, the spirituality (No. *spiritualiteten*) that we carried. As I explained to you, this . . . has been denied, and we haven't dared to display it in Norwegian contexts.
>
> *(interview with Jorunn Eikjok, Oslo 23.11.18, my translation)*

A scrap-book entrance written in the context of her encounter with Wounded Knee activists in 1973 reflects such inspiration and the understandings it inspired,

along with emergent notions of environmental destruction as connected and encompassing:

> The land is our mother, and from her comes life: life that is food we eat, water we drink, the earth we walk on, and the beauty we see. To give this life, the land must be respected and cared for. If it is exploited to greed and dollars it will die.
>
> *(written in English, cited in Minde 2000: 36)*

Back in Sápmi in 1978, Jorunn worked for a while at the ethnographic department of Tromsø Museum. While there, she used the Museum's resources to explore international developments and Sámi history. Her research did not include the (pre-Christian) Sámi religion, she told me. Related to her solid grounding in local spiritual traditions perhaps, Jorunn did not see the need for studies of the ancient past, at least not then and there, faced with a political conflict.

Yet, some Sámi were interested. Dikka Storm, conservator at Tromsø Museum, remembers an increasing interest in (pre-Christian) Sámi religion and mythology during the Alta-conflict, so much so that they put together a list of suggested readings (interview with Dikka Storm, Tromsø 11.09.18, my translation).[16] Among the visitors were young Sámi artists like Nils-Aslak Valkeapää and Hans Ragnar Mathisen (interview with Dikka Storm, Tromsø 11.09.18, my translation), both of whom from this period used elements from Sámi religion in their art and in indigenous contact zones. Early examples of such usage include the previously mentioned 'Solemn Declaration', issued in the wake of the WCIP conference in Port Alberni, 1975. Addressed to 'all nations' on behalf of a collective 'we', the declaration juxtaposes mythological elements from different indigenous traditions, including the Sámi concept of 'sons of the sun' (Keviselie 1986). As WCIP's first cultural co-ordinator, Valkeapää must have been involved in the writing of the declaration. A decade later, *The Sun, My Father* (*Beaivi, áhčážan*, 1988), for which he received the Nordic Council Literature Prize in 1988, helped reclaim and revitalise the 'sons of the sun' for Sámi audiences.

The re-claiming of Sámi (pre-Christian) religion may have started in contact zones like the WCIP in Port Alberni, in what was at this point a new assembly, in search of a united front. Home grounds came with other contexts, incentives and encounters. I have found no sacred claims among the slogans, banners, programmes, buttons, songs and meeting minutes stored in the Alta-case archives, or in media coverage from the period. Nor have I found drums or other references to the pre-Christian Sámi religion, or the emergent registers of indigenous religion(s), articulated at the WCIP conference in Alberni a few years earlier. None of the activists whom I have spoken to recall anything along religious lines, and some of them speak of the lack of spirituality as a weakness of the movement. There were examples of Christian solidarity sermons and of supportive statements on the part of priests and bishops, but mainly from the south.

A group of Sámi women who occupied the Prime Minister's office turned to the Pope for support, rather than to the State Church in their own country.[17] Hunger strikes mimic sacrificial rituals, in this case reflecting the existential scope of the threat as "a knife to the throat of Sámi culture" (in Jorunn's phrasing), but they were not talked about in religious registers. Back-stage spiritual experiences (like Jorunn's light vision) remained private.

At least three elements can shed light on the absence of religious registers. First is the predominantly national context of the Alta-conflict, involving Sámi against the Norwegian state. Yoik and *gákti* were already established markers of Sámi-ness and were thus available options for framing the protest. Second is the lack of established religious symbols of Sámi-ness, due partly to existing practices of hiding religion in inter-ethnic contexts and partly due to the position of Christianity as the dominant religion among both Sámi and Norwegians, and thus lacking distinguishing potential. Third is the highly secular orientation of Norwegian politics, with little room and allowance for religious claims. In summary, there was little to gain from using religious registers and it was risky to do so.

Let me add a final story. Niillas Somby was one of the founders of the Sámi Action Group and one of the hunger strikers in 1979. In the wake of a Supreme Court decision in favour of the plant, he was found guilty of a failed attempt to blow up a bridge and placed in custody on charges of fire placement, with a penalty time-frame of 21 years. After time spent in jail and in hospital (he lost one arm and an eye in the explosion), he managed to escape to Canada. His brother Ánde recalls an intricate plan, involving an after-dark escape, a change of cars and dying his hair along the way, high heels to fit the description in a 'borrowed' passport, gloves to cover the lost arm, and a first-class ticket to Vancouver. In Vancouver he was received by members of a First Nation people that Ánde had met during a yoik-tour earlier that year. Niillas ended up staying three years there, before being caught and brought back home (interview with Ánde Somby, Tromsø 31.08.2018).

At an art-seminar in Tromsø on 27th January 2017, Niillas told the story of the failed explosion, his injuries, and his time on the run. He described it as the best years of his life and as a time of learning and remembering. From 'the Indians' (No. *indianerne)*, he received his spiritual education (No. *åndelige utdanning).* He realised that spirituality was what was lacking during the Alta-case and what was needed for the Sámi to survive. "Politicians dare not speak about rights to our own spirituality", he claimed. The Christians – although often equipped with a conscience – misdirected it:

> It is the earth that is our shrine (No.; *helligdom*) . . . Indigenous spirituality means to take care of each other, of animals, of everything that exists . . . the colonists used Christianity to colonise us. We must use our own spirituality to decolonise the system
>
> *(art-seminar, Tromsø, 27th January 2017, my translation)*

His choice of terminology resonates with an established distinction between 'Sámi spirituality' and 'Sámi (or indigenous) religion' (sometimes also referred to as pre-Christian Sámi religion or indigenous religion). The latter refers to the past. The former speaks to the here and now, and its anchorage in ancestral traditions.

After the seminar we talked about his stay in Canada, and I asked him to elaborate on his understanding of spirituality. He told me about an incident during his childhood that convinced him of the spiritual powers of his grandfather, and he spoke of other truths passed on to him. What he learnt in Canada resonated with these partly forgotten memories, as truths he once knew and therefore could recognise. Similar truths were articulated in the speech "To the Norwegian State Government Court", during his trial on 27th April 1985. Niillas stated that he did not expect to be treated fairly, since this legal system differs from that of his people's traditions. He referenced the brothers and sisters who had for tens of thousands of years lived on this land and utilised spiritual registers that he had encountered during his stay among First Nations as well as an environmental paradigm that had emerged at the time of Alta, but was not used to frame this protest:

> We have not left any wounds on the earth our mother. You are about to lead the earth to destruction. The earth is not only our mother. You are ripping the hair of mother when you are cleaning the woods of trees. You are sucking up mother's flesh when you are digging your cruel mines. Your hunger for land seems to be endless. . . . Your passage through time and history is not long. Even so, you have managed to convince us all that if you get to move on unhampered, you will kill all life, including yourself.
>
> *(Johansen and Kjeldsen 2005, my translation)*[18]

From Alta to Standing Rock

Standing Rock engaged a new generation of Sámi activists, born in the wake of the Alta-protests, four decades of institution building on the part of the indigenous movement, and the establishment of indigeneity and indigenous religion (Clifford 2013: 15; Niezen 2012: 131). Their indigenous world is more established and accessible than that of their predecessors, through digital media and an expanded number of contact zones and networks. NRK Sápmi circulates indigenous news on a daily basis, and most Sámi have access to a continuous flow of Internet-based information and options for connectivity.

Standing Rock is one of many protests that have circulated through Sámi channels, but by far the most attended to,[19] for several reasons. First is the proximity to this particular part of the world, through a combination of linguistic access (most Sámi speak English), established Sámi diaspora societies in the USA, and exposure to Native Americans through popular culture. Second is the availability of media-technological facilities and competences among organisers

and the Sámi. The water protectors facilitated global communication, through the establishment of an efficient and elaborate mediascape; social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter; content sites like YouTube and Flickr; and professional newsfeeds offering short films, edited videos, blogs, and 'breaking news' reporting live from the action.[20] The Sámi are to a large extent *on* these sites and platforms, and could thus follow them in real time and participate from afar.[21]

Third is the global framing.[22] Asked why he decided to travel to Standing Rock, one of the Sámi protectors told me during our conversation that it is "the most global indigenous protest ever". He simply had to be there, to support and to learn. Sámi President Keskitalo's reference to Standing Rock as 'the world's Alta-case' points in similar directions, as do my, and Greg's, first impressions (Figure 2.5).

Keskitalo's formulation captures the upscaling involved from Alta to Standing Rock. I was initially struck by similarities between their key slogans: *Water is life* (among 'Water Protectors' at Standing Rock) and *Let the river live* (among 'River Savers' in Alta). Both refer to specific rivers and use a language of protection, but their translational potential differs, along with different potential for upscaling and different links to religious registers. *Let the river live* refers literally to a particular river, of interest primarily to locals. *Water is life* refers to *a* river *and* water in general, and thus to the foundations of life, to all people, everywhere. Notions of environmentalism reinforced their respective potential for upscaling. The Alta-case took place in the wake of a paradigm shift, from one in which environmental issues were seen primarily as local concerns to current notions of interconnections and co-dependencies (Hironaka 2014: 24),[23] but it was dealt with in the former primarily. Alta was not about Mother Earth. It was

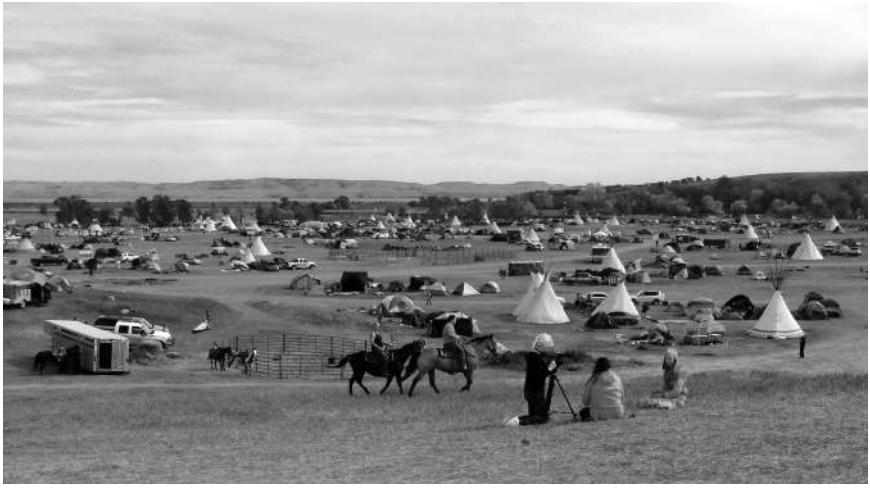

FIGURE 2.5 Oceti Sakowin camp.

Source: Greg Johnson.

talked about in the local registers of fishing culture, outdoor-life (No. *friluftsliv)*, and reindeer-husbandry primarily. Indigenous people were allies but were not included among the victims of this particular case. The scales were predominantly those of the local-national, not that of the local-global axis of Standing Rock.

The ritual system of Native Americans is superior to ours, Ánde noted in one of our conversations about Standing Rock and the Alta-conflict. He was referring to public settings and what has traditionally been a lack of space for collective ritual performance among the Sámi. In contrast, Standing Rock could draw upon precedence from pan-Indian traditions, like with the Ghost Dance and Peyote religion from the 1880s, and a political context with allowance for religious registers. Novel to Standing Rock was the consistent use of a global frame, articulated through religious registers. Religion was the main language of camp rituals and direct action performances, on the ground and online, and expressed through a selection of key terms: water is sacred, water is life, Mother Earth, prayer and ceremony.[24] Prayer and ceremony were, at least by the autumn of 2016, established as key forms, enforced by all the leading groups at the camps, and a more or less obligatory part of performances and representations. They were articulated as rituals in the narrow sense of the term (chanting, water ceremonies, sweat-lodges etc.), and in the wide sense of the term (to frame specific actions or even camp-life as such). Action guidelines asked people to 'go in ceremony', 'act in ceremony', and 'be in ceremony', in order words, to take on a persona of perpetual sanctity. 'The sacred' spoke to this same effect. To articulate something as sacred is to make a claim for its position as inviolable and to frame opposition as sacrilege. Claims are claims, and accordingly open to contestation, but in this case were supported by discourses on environmentalism and continued colonialism, and in the presence of worldwide audiences, based on a mediascape that the protectors created, controlled and made skillful use of. Numerous YouTube videos feature tanks against prayer, uniforms against regalia, weapons against flowers, marching against dancing. As Ghandian-style dramas, these performances demonstrated a moral high ground to the activists themselves and their audiences, and as part of a history of abuse, now with Mother Earth among the victims of continued colonialism. As sacred claims, they performed the absoluteness of demands. As scripted performances they helped channel and amplify emotions, and thus to support the non-violent strategy of elders and organisers.

Sámi at Standing Rock

The Main Circle constituted the nerve centre of the camps. The central sacred fire was situated here, along with a sound system; an information board; and tables for people to eat, socialise, listen to music, and take part in various mid-scale ceremonial activity. Welcome ceremonies were the most clearly structured of the rituals taking place during our stay. Newcomers would start by anchoring

their indigeneity in a specific home ground, often through a sentence in their native language. Next, they addressed the Lakota and the Sioux tribe leadership, expressed gratefulness for being welcomed and declarations of solidarity with the cause. Then a performance was offered, through established vocabularies of indigeneity on the level of words (Mother Earth, Water is Life etc.) and on the level of aesthetic forms (e.g. drums, dancing, chanting, storytelling, traditional clothing). The 'we' was consistently articulated as kinship (uncles and aunties, sisters and brothers) and was extended in time and space (to ancestors, homelands and Mother Earth). Finally, there was a clear division between elders[25] (those holding particular authority) and everybody else, among whom informality was expected, through sharing and co-operation – in short, through building a community.

On 30th September, 2016, three Sámi women were welcomed at this site: Sofia Jannok (from Sápmi on the Swedish side), Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska[26] (from Sápmi on the Norwegian side), and her sister Inger Biret Gaup, the first two of whom are famous musicians. Introduced by an enthusiastic Master of Ceremony as "our indigenous sisters from the Arctic", the Sámi entered the circle in their *gákti* for a 30-minute performance, shaped by a protocol that they clearly knew and understood. Having first thanked the hosts, expressed support for the case and offered greetings from their people, Jannok invited Dave Archambault, the then Chairman of Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, to sit on a reindeer-skin from Sápmi. Seated on this iconic item of north-Sámi material culture he was offered a selection of gifts, collectively expressive of the cause (a bottle of water from the Arctic) and their identity (a reindeer-hide pouch, a sewing bag and a wooden cup). "We are one", Jannok concluded the gift-giving, then down-scaling to the level of Sámi identity, "We hear you, we see you. . . . The fight you have is the fight we have". The gifts were followed by Sara Marielle's "We Speak Earth" yoik (*Gulahallat Eatnamiin*), which she performed to the beat of Sámi (shaman) drums, in this context described as the heartbeat of Mother Earth.

Pictures from the welcome ceremony were shared widely online, along with short films from direct action the following day. They feature the Sámi dressed in *gákti*, with their fists held high, and banners stating that "Water is Sacred" and "Sámi Stand with Standing Rock". Some ten months later, I came across a filmed version of the entire ceremony, posted to the 1473 members of the Facebook group "North American Sámi Searvi". An example of shifting scales and of the intricate circuits of contemporary indigeneity, we have in this case a cyberspace diaspora, witnessing performances anchored in their distant homelands, on stages closer to their diaspora-setting, yet belonging to a different indigenous community. In the words of one of the group members: "It brought tears. *Giitu* (Sámi for 'thank you') for all who helped bring this gift to those who could not be there at the time".[27] Back in Sápmi, Sámis had real-time access to these same stages, through these same media.

Having been welcomed at the camp, the Sámi articulated their traditions through established protocol: a Sámi flag by their *lávvu*, reindeer skin for

sleeping, and *gákti*. Unlike the more casual dressing of most of the activists outside of ceremonies, the Sámi dressed traditionally at all times. Their knowledge of traditional dress also proved useful in other ways. A YouTube video from the local casino, a few miles from the camp area, shows their return in December 2016, together with a Native American friend from the September camp. Posted on Jannok's (public) Facebook page under the headline "Sápmi back at Standing Rock", the video introduces an expanded group of Sámi visitors: Sara Marielle and her husband Beaska Niillas, their two children and grandmother, along with Inger Biret Gaup and five other Sámi, including one of my master students and her boyfriend. "This is not cold to us", Sara Marielle responded to a comment on the weather. As northern Sámi they are used to the cold and competent in dressing for it, and this was a competence they wanted to share. Having noted during their first visit the loss of traditional Lakota knowledge in regard to winter clothing, due to the colonial context and the forced end of buffalo-hunting, they hoped to help reclaim indigenous competences in new forms, by way of Sámi traditional knowledge and based on imported reindeer hide from nearby areas in First Nation Canada.[28]

A mixture of highly practical and highly symbolic exchanges was, at least for this Sámi group, characteristic of the Standing Rock experience. Winter clothing belonged to the former, as did the timing of the visit; Beaska Niillas later told me that they wanted to add hope at a time of increased challenges at the camps. One particular prophecy was an example of the latter. Prophecies have in the Native American context been a key form of symbolic exchanges. At Standing Rock a particular prophecy dominated, connected to the identification of the pipeline with 'the Black Snake'. Jannok refers briefly to the Black Snake in a documentary about her life and career,[29] and Sara Marielle and her sister both refer to it in a NRK Sápmi interview prior to their visit (Pulk and Rasmus 2016). A 30-minute radio interview with Inger Biret Gaup offers a more elaborate version:

> The reason why all these tribes have come to Standing Rock now is a prophecy by spiritual leaders in many of these tribes seven generations ago. . . . Those who saw this, saw that in seven generations there will be a case that will gather people around the world in a joint fight against a black snake. They obviously did not know what a pipeline was, so they said what they saw; a black snake. And they also saw that all the four colours of the medicine wheel would be gathered and support this case. And the four colours are red, which represents themselves, that is native Indians, and then yellow, which is the Asian indigenous peoples, and then black, the African indigenous peoples, and then there is white. And for a long time, they thought that was the white man, but right away when they saw us, and saw that we are actually white; we are – as far as I know – the only indigenous people that is white. They said "then that explains it, you are the white in the circle". So, they had in a sense been waiting for us, and that is why they want us to return, since it can only be solved when all the

> colours are gathered. The prophecy says that one will then manage to stop the snake.
>
> *(my translation from Norwegian)*[30]

Prophesies invite sense-making and sign-searching, as plots waiting for players to be identified and contexts to be translated. In the heat of the conflict, they added hope and promise, yet depending on the ability of the good side to rise, unite, and stick to the path laid out for them. What was until recently a local prophecy was in this context upscaled to the level of global indigeneity and threats to Mother Earth, and in ways that allowed for the maintenance of distinctions, in this case articulated as colours.

The Sámi has thus come full circle, compared to early encounters with the indigenous movement. During the first meeting of the WCIP (in 1975) their white-ness was a matter of concern. A famous story tells of attempts to convince sceptics by way of speeches and arguments, followed by a spontaneous yoik by Nils-Aslak Valkeapää which immediately settled the case and closed the argument (Valkeapää 1983; Minde 2003b: 85). At Standing Rock, and in the frames of prophecy, the Sámi were not only recognisably indigenous, but needed for the circle of indigeneity to be complete.

There were other Sámi visits over the course of the period and with different examples of scalar translations. I learnt of one of them, the 'World Drum Project', during the autumn of 2018.[31] Born from a vision by a Sámi shaman (Kyrre Franck) and brought to life by a Sámi drum-maker (Birger Mikkelsen), the World Drum left Sápmi in 2006 and has since then been on the move, around the world, for an environmental mission intended to go on indefinitely, or as long as needed. More than 800 locations had been visited when I met its key organiser (Morten Wolf Storeide) in October 2016, along planned and unplanned routes, including diplomatic negotiations in the wake of an attached feather and a subsequent arrest by the United States Department of Homeland Security, on charges of crossing an international border with restricted objects. During the autumn of 2016, Kyrre and Morten Wolf Storeide set up a visit to Standing Rock. A blog post shares the following description of the drum's experiences at the camp:

> Throughout the Water Ceremony, water songs were shared and the World Drum was played. Additionally, the refrain "Water is Life", "Mni Wiconi" was called out in many different languages and chanted by everyone in that language. A gentleman who had been at the fire circle the evening before announced that the Drum had been around the world 10 times. Many hands played the Drum that morning as the sun rose over Standing Rock, reflected in the water.
>
> *(Linda Daniels www.theworlddrumproject.com)*

The World Drum travels light, with little luggage in the form of background information, including the contested position of the shaman movement that gave birth to her. What the Sámi shamans regard as a revival of their ancestral

traditions are in the Sámi core areas (in Finnmark) often regarded as new and neo, and accordingly fake and false. On her own, the World Drum could blend in with established registers, on par with the drums of the Sámi musicians. What remained was the drum as a marker of Sámi-ness and indigeneity, anchored in Sámi traditions from the Arctic, recognisable according to the vocabularies of indigenous religion(s).

Standing Rock in Sápmi

Solidarity events were organised across Sápmi and in a variety of forms, ranging from concerts, to marches, rituals and sit-ins, and often involving both Sámi representatives and environmental organisations. I attended one of the first to take place in Tromsø, co-hosted by the Shaman Association and the environmentalist organisation Nature and Youth,[32] a first time for these organisations to join hands according to their respective leaders. It was located on a beach and included a water ceremony designed for the occasion, performed by one female and one male Sámi shaman. The entire session was filmed and uploaded as a YouTube video statement of solidarity with Standing Rock.[33]

Adding to solidarity events were various support actions, from 'knitting for Standing Rock' (organised by a shaman), to statements by the Sámi Parliament and Sámi Church Council, extensive information-spread through Facebook and Instagram, and work on bank investments. A small group of Sámi activists was vital to a disclosure of Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) investments among Norwegian banks, which resulted in the withdrawal from the project by some of them, including The Norwegian Bank (DNB), and with repercussions beyond Norway, through similar actions directed to other banks, particularly in the USA. NRK Sápmi followed this from the start and was in 2017 awarded the journalist prize of Finnmark county for their work on DNB's involvement in DAPL (Larsson 2017).

Visits by Standing Rock allies constitute a third category of links and connectivity. Several allies attended events in Sápmi during and in the wake of the protest. The (Sámi) festival *Riddu Riđđu* organised a Standing Rock seminar with the Lakota activist HolyElk Lafferty among the participants (in 2017). The prestigious Nobel Peace Prize Award (in Oslo) gathered several Standing Rock leaders for a session on indigenous peoples in 2016,[34] and various seminars discussed Standing Rock related issues. Many of them were covered by national and local media, and travelled extensively online.

Sara Marielle's "We Speak Earth" preceeded Standing Rock[35] but was granted new meanings in this setting, as a combination of the Standing Rock anthem and the protest song for Mother Earth. I heard it live on three profiled public occasions: at Standing Rock, at the opening ceremony of Tråante 2017,[36] and at my university's 50th anniversary celebration (in 2018). A YouTube version features Sara Marielle performing the yoik, along with a description of what it means to 'speak earth'. There is also a Facebook page devoted to the project, set up for

"people wanting to help build pressure towards the politicians negotiating our future, due to climate change and global warming", and allowing for the posting of ideas and films of oneself performing the yoik (NRK, Verstad and Novikova 2017). Inger Biret Gaup offered examples of more explicitly religious articulations: "Every time anyone yoiks this yoik, the power of the resistance at Standing Rock increases! So don't be shy, learn the song, sing it again and again. You will release enormous powers, powers necessary to stop the atrocities against the Indians in North Dakota".[37]

Norwegian newsmedia helped circulate Standing Rock-registers and consistently abstained from critical comments. Religio-political mixtures are usually targeted in Norwegian newsmedia (see Døving and Kraft 2013). This came with versions of 'ceremony' and 'prayer' that make little sense from the perspective of Christian notions of 'religion' with which journalists are most familiar. Alternatively, the combination of a seemingly harmless religious vocabulary, an honourable cause (environmentalism), and a vulnerable agent (indigenous people) may have exempted the case from criticism.

Ellos Deatnu – let the Tana River live

At least one new movement can be linked to Standing Rock (and Alta); the *Ellos Deatnu*-movement, concerning fishing rights in the Tana River in Finnmark and involving Sámi on both sides of the border between Norway and Finland. During the spring of 2017 activists set up a camp on a small, uninhabited island and announced a moratorium, in effect a refusal as theorised by the Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson (2014). Newly installed fishing regulations are invalid, the moratorium declared, since they were enforced against the will of local communities, without consultation.[38] The crew has worked actively to foster support and networks, through Facebook and social media, local meetings, festivals and concerts.[39] An online moratorium office[40] has been set up as an "advisory service for self-determination", and assistance in establishing moratoria.

Leading figures of the protest, Áslat Holmberg and Beaska Niillas, visited Standing Rock in December 2016.[41] Beaska has, in media interviews, spoken of important support from Black Snake activists, including help with spreading news (NRK, Larsen 2017a), and has (like Keskitalo) referred to Standing Rock as "the World's Alta case" (*Dagsavisen* 9.12.2016). Among the videos posted on their Facebook site are several examples of Standing Rock references, through logos on clothes and posters focusing on related issues[42] and through the juxtaposition of slogans, like with the closing reference of a YouTube presentation to "Ellos Deatnu, Mni Wiconi, ČSV", linking these movements in their local terms.[43] Other juxtapositions have come from outside. One Facebook link features the Sámi musician Mari Boine with a new and expanded version of the Alta-slogan: "*Ellos Sápmi, Ellos Deatnu*" (Let Sápmi live, let Deatnu live, my translation from Sámi).[44] Similar play on the slogan appeared during the prime-time TV-show *Stjernekamp* in 2018 (Ultimate Entertainer), featuring the Tana woman Ella

Marie Hætta Isaksen, and Sámi members of the audience holding banners with the inscription "*La Ella Marie leve*" (let Ella Marie live, my translation from Norwegian). Since the autumn of 2018, the organisers have used "*Ellos Deatnu*" interchangeably with the upscaled (and *Mni Wiconi*-like) "*Ellos Eallin*" (long live life, my translation from Sámi).

Ellos Deatnu shares the indigenous and de-colonial frames of Standing Rock. Religion is no longer absent (like at Alta), but low key compared to Standing Rock, as with the "Water is life"-related "Let life live". Implicit references to a "sacred fire" is another example. Beaska Niillas speaks in videos of extinguishing the fire before closing the camp for the season, thus echoing the more violent closing of the camps at Standing Rock, and the use of camp-fires for ceremonial openings and closures. Fire was used for heating, light and cooking at Detsika four decades earlier, but I have not heard of symbolic usage, or the keeping of a particular fire burning. References to 'spirits' is a third example. In a video statement connected to the 'the last fire' and the closing of the camp, Beaska thanks "The Island, all the people and the spirits helping us" (@ellosdeatnu, 25th August 2017).[45]

While there is mostly subtle usage of religious registers there is more explicit and elaborate usage on the part of indigenous visitors, inserted on local Facebook pages and thereby religionising them from outside, as with a visit by Cree Nation activists in September 2018, posted on Ellos Deatnu's homepage and featuring in several of my Facebook connections including organisations like Greenpeace and Idle No More Sápmi, the personal pages of many of my Sámi Facebook-friends, and Native American protest sites.

Concluding comments

I initially understood 'the world's Alta-case' in the sense of the 'indigenous people uniting'; this was like Alta only bigger. Back home, and in the contexts of Alta-activists and their stories, the taken for grantedness of Keskitalo's reference emerged as key. No longer 'white Indians' (see endnote 7), suspect in regard to claims for indigeneity (as at WCIP 1975), or new and unsettled in this role (as at Alta), the 'world's Alta-case' implies the taken for granted position of the Sámi as indigenous. Temporal and geographical scaling meets grand comparison in this case. Distant selves are compared to the Sámi, with Alta as the standard by which to measure Standing Rock and the current state of global indigeneity.

Looking back (in June 2019), both movements' ability to centre and focalise seems key: Alta united the Sámi, Standing Rock helped unite indigenous peoples. Camps came with facilities for home-making and community building, alongside incentives for the sharing and comparing of knowledge and practices. The sewing lessons of Sámi activists emerged from altertness to needs on the grounds and attention to what they could do and contribute. The identification of the Sámi as the missing colour in the medicine wheel speaks to sense-making in extraordinary contexts, conducive of the liminal or liminoid (Turner 1974),

and it speaks to expanding horizons of the thinkable, the possible and the doable. Jorunn's conviction that "Norway will change" echo activist claims for the world at Standing Rock, including the ubiquitous sense of history making that Greg and I experienced while there, on the ground.

Although still modest compared to Native American standards, the indigenous turn among the Sámi has expanded the domain of religion, and in at least three ways. Articulations of local spiritual traditions is one. Jorunn felt encouraged to talk in these terms during encounters with Native Americans, at a time when Sámi spirituality was limited to private contexts and associated with shame. Niillas reclaimed his grandfather's spirituality in the company of First Nations. Indigenous encounters came with safe-spaces and incentives for doing so, outside the established restrictions of life back home and in the context of a new and supportive 'we'.

Second is the reclaiming of what is currently known as Sámi religion, Sámi shamanism or Sámi indigenous religion, often with space for the inclusion of the (local) spiritual traditions referred to previously. Artists were encouraged to search for mythological equivalences to the indigenous traditions they encountered during the 1970s, and to display and perform such traditions. Since then, a Sámi shaman movement has appeared, alongside a heritage version of Sámi shamanism (Kraft 2016), corresponding and comparable to similar developments among other indigenous peoples, in the wake of similar processes of reclaiming and revitalisation.

Third is the increasing circulation of indigenous religion. There was not yet a standardised vocabulary of indigenous religion at the time of Alta. There was one at Standing Rock. The result of such standardisation is not same-ness and flattening, at least for the material I have presented. Rather, this language of nativeness (to use a term suggested by Clifford 2013) is among Sámis used in up-scaled encounters primarily, and in performative settings first and foremost. We are dealing, moreover, with at least three different scales.[46] One involves the local-global/micro-macro. One involves the public-private spectrum, and one involves validation – from the potentially primitivistic associations of local religious traditions to the positive associations of indigenous religion.

That said, 'returns' from outside may leave lasting traces. Indigenous religion exists above the level of (vernacular) first order concepts, as a second order abstraction, used to interpret and organise local terms, as for example with translations from the Sámi goddess Máttaráhkká to Mother Earth. Although still recognisably Sámi, Máttaráhkká becomes something more and different through this process, and such surplus is likely to stick to current understandings and usage.

What I have described is not a linear development from secularity (at the time of Alta) to religion (at the time of Standing Rock), but the emergence of a discourse, alongside examples of how it is used; *then* and *there, here* and *now.* Activist usage has been more common outside of than in Sápmi. *Here and now*, Sámi activism is still primarily secular. Yet, there have been sacred claims on protest stages in recent years, in response to increasing threats to the Sámi core

areas, and in two forms, both of which can be related to indigenous religion. One concerns a political turn of Sámi shamanism; the other involves a religious turn among some of the reindeer-herders. An ongoing case in Hattfjelldal, in the South Sámi area, involves shamans, local reindeer herders, Friends of the Earth Norway and Sámi Parliament representatives, united in the defence of a sacred mountain against a planned power plant. In January 2019, Arctic Shaman Circle organised a welcome ceremony at a climate festival in Oslo, in conjunction with its launching as Europe's capital of environmentalism this year. Two months later, a Maori member of Arctic Shaman Circle attended the General Assembly of the United Nations, for a session on indigenous peoples and climate change, and for group meetings dedicated to a Rights of Mother Earth project. Like for the World Drum at Standing Rock, Sámi shamans are in these contexts able and allowed to act in the name of indigenous religion. Established in this position, they can offer ritual competences that have so far been lacking among Sámi activists, but that activists have encountered elsewhere, in indigenous worlds outside Sápmi. Back in Finnmark, Sámi reindeer herders have during the spring of 2019 used sacred claims to fight windmill-plans,[47] and for an ongoing conflict in Kvalfjord municipality it has been suggested that a fjord should be granted consultation rights.[48] Local traditions are basic to these claims, but within the frames of indigenous religion.

Neither completely fixed nor completely open, indigenous religion(s) has shifted and evolved over the time-span of this chapter. Most noticeable is a shift in environmental paradigms and a related potential for the up-scaling of cases and causes. The Solemn Declaration of WCIP 1975 speaks of land-grabbing and of subsequent destruction of indigenous life-ways, but not of threats to the whole world. The potential for up-scaling is key to contemporary indigenous protests. It is in the Sámi case linked to an increasing intertwinement of discourses on sovereignty and sustainability, and to new and positive concepts of indigenous peoples as protectors of Mother Earth.

Notes

1 NRK is an acronym for Norwegian Broadcasting. NRK Sápmi is a Sámi run division of NRK.

2 Thanks to the following scholars for reading drafts and/or sharing knowledge on issues discussed in this chapter: Jorunn Eikjok, Ánde Somby, Nils Oskal, Beaska Niillas, Dikka Storm, Marit Anne Hauan, Tuula Sharma Vassvik, members of the INREL-team and the INREL-research group in Tromsø, and members of the research group "Narrating the Postcolonial North: Travel, Writing, Performance" (Alta).

3 Sámi tents.

4 My sources for the Alta-case also involve newsmedia coverage, and the archives of Folkeaksjonen mot utbygging av Alta-Kautokeino vassdraget (The People's Action against Development of the Alta-Kautokeino river) at Alta Museum. As for previous research, there is an extensive body on the aftermath of the Alta-case, but surprisingly little – and for the most part by journalists rather than by scholars – focusing on the protests and the activists. For academic contributions see Jensen (2015), Minde (1982), Somby (1999), and Solbakk (2010).

5 On the role of social media and cyberspace for indigenous protest-movements, see Hanna *et al.* 2016. On "refusals", see Simpson (2014). For a recent study of performances during indigenous activism, see Huarcaya (2015).
6 Greg Johnson and I have collaborated closely for this case, including joint fieldwork at Standing Rock (together in late September/early October; Johnson again in mid-November) and the creation of a news- and social media material archive. Joint publications on the Standing Rock protest include Johnson and Kraft (2017, 2018a, 2018b).
7 One of my master-students spent a month at Standing Rock and completed a thesis based on her stay at the camps and interviews with people that were there, in November 2019, see Vassvik (2019).
8 Among these were a Sámi Rights Committee and a Sámi Culture Committee in October 1980, the opening of the Sámi Parliament in 1989, a Sámi paragraph in the Norwegian constitution in 1988, and the signing of ILO-Convention 169 in 1990, in the wake of active participation of Sámi delegates in the process leading up to the establishment of the Convention (Bjerkli and Selle 2003: 22).
9 One example is an editorial article titled "The Sámi are the Indians of Sweden" in *Samefolket* (The Sámi People) (Minde 2003a: 106).
10 *Davvi Šuvva* means "Northern winds" in Sámi. It was followed by "Indigenous Days '84" in Tromsø, organised by Mathisen (Keviselie, not dated), the Nanna-festival (during the 1980s) and *Riddu Riđđu* (from the 1990s).
11 See, http://meahcci.info/altakraft-n.htm; for another example, see Nilsen (2019).
12 These percentages were made by the camp-organisers. Most of the "foreign visitors" appear to have been from Sweden and Finland, along with enviro-activists from elsewhere in Europe. Press release dated 23.07.1979, Alta Archives.
13 Yoik had remained a live tradition, but used mainly in private settings (Graff 2016; Eidheim 1987). It was, from the 1960s, gradually removed from a category of heathen noise to the genre of folk music (Larsen 2009: 52), and during the Alta-protest moved from local, to national and even international stages.
14 What has become known as the occupation of then Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland's office by 13 Sámi women (in 1981) belongs to the same series of images that were later to become emblematic. The backdrop was a new and longer-lasting hunger strike, involving near relatives of some of the women, who feared for their lives. After declaring that they would not leave until construction work halted, the women were removed by the police after 18 hours (Manndal 2011).
15 In the words of Nils-Aslak Valkeapää: "Our culture knows of no phenomenon such as 'war' . . . does not even recognize 'war' as a possibility" (1983), 1971:1).
16 Professor Ørnulv Vorren lectured on such issues at Tromsø Museum from at least the mid-1970s, for small groups of (mostly Sámi) students (Dikka Storm 11.09.18).
17 There is a letter to Pope John Paul II in the archives in Alta, dated 10th February 1981, signed Ellen Marie Gaup, Samisk kvinnegruppe (Sámi women's group). Written in the context of a second hunger strike, the letter ends with a plea for the pope to intervene. Alta Museum privatarkiv nr.1, serie P, arkivstykke 49.
18 My translation from a collection of speeches printed in Johansen and Kjeldsen 2005. The speech is also printed (and accessed here) from a database established by the same scholars, connected to the book: http://virksommeord.uib.no/taler.
19 The protest started in April 2016, with one tipi and a small group of local protesters. By the end of the summer between 5000 and 7000 people had joined the camps, by November as many as 10,000.
20 On indigenous media networks, see Alia (2010).
21 *Stand with*-performances by indigenous groups (including Sámi) emerged into a social media ritual system of its own: often a banner stating that this particular group "stands with Standing Rock", along with traditional costumes and performances, usually in the form of dance, drumming or singing.
22 The closure of the case in Alta was followed by institution building along political and legal lines, centred on the Sámi Parliament and the U.N. There were few protests

between the mid-1980s and the first part of the 21st century. There are currently several, most of them framed as enviro-activism and fuelled by what has been referred to as an increasingly glaring paradox: with increasing rights and revitalisation on the one hand and increasing threats towards the traditional Sámi settlement areas and professions on the other, in the form of mining, windmill parks and power plants. Two seminars in Tromsø during "Sámi week" 2019, discussed this paradox.

23 A United Nations Conference in Stockholm in 1972 has been described as the foundation of this shift (Hironaka 2014: 24).

24 For a more detailed discussion, see Johnson and Kraft (2018a, 2017).

25 I have not come across family metaphors or references to "elders" in material relating to the Alta-case.

26 Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska (1983–) is a critically acclaimed yoiker, known for her role in the band Adjágas and more recently in the band Arvvas. Sofia Jannok (1982–), from Sápmi on the Swedish side, is a widely known artist, singer and song-writer.

27 The Facebook post was later uploaded as a YouTube video, titled "Sámi Ceremony at Standing Rock".

28 This included a sewing course, centred on how to make *skaller* (*gállohat* in North Sámi), traditional Sámi shoes for usage in the winter.

29 See *Världens Sofia Jannok*, a Swedish documentary series in three parts covering her life and career (www.svtplay.se/varldens-sofia-jannok).

30 Radio Isogaisa Episode 2, http://isogaisa.org/radio-isogaisa/. The episode is dedicated to Gaup and Beaska's visit to Standing Rock.

31 Interview with Kyrre Frank, Tromsø 28.08.18, and Morten Wolf Storeide, Finnskogen 8.09.18.

32 The event took place on 17th September 2016.

33 Solidarity events in Tromsø include a concert (organised by Synnøve Angell), various solidarity events in the town centre during fall 2016, filmed YouTube dedications, lectures and film-screenings. The Sámi professor of Law, Øyvind Ravna, gave several public lectures, based on a research stay in Midwestern United States and visits to Standing Rock. Many of the activists met again on 8th October 2018, for a screening of the Standing Rock documentary *Eagle and Condor*, with the Mohawk film-maker Paulette Moore present through Skype, thanking people for their support, answering questions, and sharing the idea behind the launch; that of a simultaneous screening across parts of the indigenous world, to celebrate what has among Native Americans become an Indigenous day-replacement of Columbus Day. I co-organised this event with Ellen Marie Jensen.

34 This included a section on indigenous peoples' rights within the context of social justice and environmental protection, and included Standing Rock activists, among them established leaders like Chief Arvol Looking Horse and two women who emerged as leaders during the the protests: HolyElk Lafferty and Donna Brave Bull Allard (NRK Sápmi, Larsen 2017a). See www.nobelpeaceprize.org/Nobel-Peace-Prize-Forum/2017-Nobel-Peace-Prize-Forum-Oslo (accessed November 2018).

35 Beaska and Jannok performed the yoik at the climate summit in Paris, 2015.

36 Tråante 2017 comprised of a one-week celebration marking the century that has passed since the first congress the Sámi people. Sara Marielle's yoik was presented on at least three occasions: the opening ceremony at the main square in Trondheim on 6th February (the Sámi national day), a seminar in the Methodist Church on that same day, and following the debate "From Alta via Fosen to Standing Rock" (*Fra Alta via Fosen til Standing Rock)*.

37 www.facebook.com/Isogaisa-298385773536313/?fref=nf (uploaded 14th November 2016. 533 views).

38 The camp was closed ahead of the winter season in 2017, and again in 2018, and is to be opened again during summer seasons as long as needed.

39 Seven hundred people gathered for a concert on a riverbank in Tana (a village of 500 people), on 25th July 2017.

40 http://moratoriadoaimmahat.org/en/moratorium-office/
41 The friendships and networks established through this and other trips can and are being maintained. On returning from a one-month trip to Turtle Island on 17th May 2019, visiting Native American allies, including friends from Standing Rock, Beaska Niillas noted on his Facebook page: "A long journey this time and we learned a lot. Teachings that also will help us back in Sápmi. Found too many new relatives to tag all of you".
42 For instance, a poster featuring the Skábmagovat Film Festival (posted 16th November) connects Standing Rock and Ellos Deatnu, along with a statement of solidarity in English, Sámi and Finnish: "We stand in solidarity with Standing Rock and Ellos Deatnu! . . . Ellos Deatnu! Mni Wiconi! Water is life!"
43 Posted 11 March 2017, https://youtube/HBObcQnncf8 (no longer available/accessible on this link).
44 Her greeting was made on receiving the honorary award of *Spillemannsprisen*, commonly regarded as the most important music prize in Norway.
45 A similar message was presented for the closure of the camp in 2018, along with expressions of gratefulness to the support of indigenous brothers and sisters, and solidarity with ongoing activism in Sápmi and beyond.
46 Scale is commonly defined in terms of *relative size* (small-large) and *spatial reach* (local-global/private-public), see for instance Miller *et al*. (2016), Xiang (2013), and Lähdesmäki (2019). Scales can also be thought of in terms of spectra, as for instance from the highly private and intimate to the highly public and openly accessible, or in regard to value and authenticity (from good to bad religion, and false to authentic religion) (e.g. Miller *et al* 2016).
47 I first learnt of this through the Sámi newspaper *Ságat*, in a feature by the journalist Rita Heitman, titled "Ikke vindkraft på hellige fjell" (no wind-power on sacred mountains), (*Ságat* 5th April, 2019). Her Sámi informant was the reindeer herder and head of the local *siida* Thoralf Henriksen. The *siida* (home or community of reindeer herders) is called Leavvajoga ja Rásttigáisá sámesiida. For a follow-up in the newspaper *Ságat*, including an interview with Andreas Stångberg, in charge of cultural memories for the Sámi Parliament, see "*Må prioritere konkrete saker*" (must prioritise concrete cases), *Sagat* no. 68, 8th April 2019. For similar coverage referring explicitly to mountains in the area, see "*Et hellig fjell og kinesere kan avgjøre ordførervalget*" (A sacred mountain and the Chinese may decide the governor election (NRK Sápmi, www.nrk.no/sapmi/et-hellig-fjell-og-kinesere-kan-avgjore-ordforervalget-1.14698262), and "*Kampen om reinens rike*" (The struggle over the world of the reindeer), first published in *Natur & Miljø* no.1, 2019, in digital version on 23.08.2019, by Tor Bjarne Christensen.
48 Solveig Joks, a researcher at Sámi Allaskuvla (Sámi University of Applied Sciences, in Kautokeino), published a letter to the editor of the regional newspaper *Nordlys,* on 26th February 2019 titled "*Har regjeringen spurt Riehpovuotna/Repparfjorden og Gumppenjunni/Ulveryggen om lov?*" (my translation: Has the government asked Riehpovuotna/Repparfjorden and Gumppenjunni/Ulveryggen for permission?).

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3

INDIGENOUS FUTURES

The practice of sovereignty in Nagaland and other places

Arkotong Longkumer

Introduction

Sovereignty: people, freedom; land; place-making; authority; God; obedience; unity; surrender; suffering; sacrifice; prayer; prophecy; encounters; becoming; futures.

These words appear in the lexicon of my thinking about sovereignty. They cut through the encounters and stories I have gathered through the warp and weft of the Naga national fabric, and through encounters in the global ecumene.[1]

The year is 2005. After an exhausting time at a pilgrimage site in the south of Assam, Cachar district, bordering the state of Manipur, along with friends, we drive eastwards towards Manipur and reach a town called Jiribam. Part of the intention of entering this town – the features of the place now hazy in my memory – was to find our way to a Rongmei Naga village called Langkao, the birthplace of the famous Naga prophetess, Rani Gaidinliu. Perhaps due to the fresh mountain air of the pilgrimage site, the intermingling of people and the sharing of food, the heady concoction of alcohol and hashish, we were blissfully unaware of the geo-political situation awaiting us in Jiribam. Following local protocol of making our travel journey known to a Naga nationalist group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Khaplang (NSCN-K), since it controls much of the countryside of Jiribam, we found ourselves in a tangle with the town commander, a self-styled regional 'big man'.

Unable to accept our reasons for journeying to Langkao, we were branded as 'spies' of their rival group, the NSCN-Isak/Muivah (IM), blindfolded, and taken to their camp for interrogation. Once our blindfolds were removed, we noticed we were in a different locality – several huts, a fishing pond, and men with wireless radio receivers, busy exchanging words, perhaps trying to corroborate our story of being innocent researchers, in the wrong place at the wrong time? During the hour-long interrogation, I sensed that they were partly roughing us up to

demonstrate a certain disdain for us 'bourgeoisie', far removed from the struggle for Naga independence that these young men were committed to. They kept asking me, "Do you know anything at all about the Naga national struggle?" Or, "What would you know about our sacrifice?" Indeed, what would I know of their experiences or their feelings towards 'Naga sovereignty'? At that time the concept sounded far removed, the idea too entangled with our treatment from these 'nationalists' we had encountered. I kept wondering if all of this was worth fighting for, given that any outsider is a threat to their very existence. When all was settled – that we were indeed innocent researchers on a mission – our foes turned friends, just like that! A dog was killed in our honour for feasting, and a chaplain appeared to preach to us about Naga nationalism, asking us time and again to pray for them. Our possessions were returned – a quick glance at my wallet necessitated a comment from the chaplain: 'We are not thieves you know, we are national workers'. I noticed that a 500-rupee note was missing but restrained myself from making any accusations. Leaving the place, I thought that at least now I had contributed something to their cause!

Although I was quick to judge my fellow Nagas in their quest for nationhood, my view tainted by my then-recent experience that touched on the dark side of nationalism, I was also reminded of the many stories I had heard since childhood – stories of bravery, sacrifices, and togetherness. Seeking to move beyond these general sentiments of Naga nationalism, I decided to embark on a different journey, one in which I wanted to hear those untold stories, those moments that brought to life a thinking and feeling about sovereignty. These encounters were mostly spontaneous, unplanned, but unravelled before me. I seemed to be in the right place at the right time. My experience in Jiribam sharpened my understanding of Naga nationalism in ways that I could not have imagined over the subsequent years.

After a gap of almost ten years, in 2014, in a chance encounter I met two men from a prayer centre called Sumi Alakishi Kighinimi (a Christian Sumi Peace Prayer Cell; hereafter SAK). The story goes something like this: I was having lunch with a friend of a friend in Dimapur about my research into Naga sovereignty. He invited me to meet some people he was meeting later in the afternoon who might enlighten me. I met the two men from SAK and we exchanged phone numbers. Usually I follow up on these leads, but on this occasion, they initiated contact. In a week's time, they invited me to their centre, in Ghatashi, a Sumi Naga village in the district of Zunheboto, a few hours drive north from Kohima, the capital of Nagaland. Uncertain of what to expect, or why I was even being entertained, I stepped out of the car into the bright morning sun to be welcomed by a group of men and women – prayer warriors – in their finest clothes, with tea and biscuits laid before us in anticipation of our visit. With these words, I was welcomed:

> This is a prophecy that is not a few days old. It has been said. Praise the Lord. That's why the people are ready and waiting here. This is a fulfillment. I

> will send a person from foreign lands to come and interview – though a name was not shared – and that person will interview and ask you about the beginning of our prayer centre.

The prophecy of my coming to a prayer centre, a national prayer centre for the Nagas, discloses another logic of thinking about sovereignty. Do I share in some essence of sovereignty, like many of my interlocutors do, distributed across time and space? Can my involvement be a way to translate their world of prophecy into a language of policy and political theory? I start with these moments to explore the complex nature of time, of sovereignty, and what they mean to the Naga nation. From being roughed up and coming face to face with the realities of the Jiribam nationalists, to being welcomed, because my presence was prophesised in Ghatashi – these are indeed unnerving events that will make any person think. On both occasions 'being in time' mattered to the unfolding of events.

First, this chapter explores three vignettes that give flesh to practices of sovereignty – through visions and landscapes, place-making, and a national prayer centre. In all three examples I examine how sovereignty is envisaged in a sentient landscape, where national futures are powerfully evoked and experienced. I use the idea of the 'common world' of cosmopolitics to suggest that a practice of sovereignty occurs amongst different actors – people, landscape, materialities, deities – that is always in the process of becoming. Second, I turn my focus to the global situation to try and disentangle the complex web of encounters and shared experiences amongst different indigenous communities through transnational travel.

Through the five-year project, Indigenous Religion(s): Global Networks, Local Grounds (INREL), I began to look comparatively at other research sites as I examined a key question: How does sovereignty relate to notions of belonging? In order to answer this question, I develop this idea of *sovereignty in motion*, both in terms of our physical exposure to different research sites, but also how it materialises and expresses itself in diverse locations. By understanding sovereignty in motion, my research context was also enriched. It allowed me to appreciate the way sovereignty is about becoming, rather than capitulation to fixity. Conceptually, it may be attractive to be drawn by certain ideas of sovereignty – such as territorial independence, neat national boundaries, common language, culture, and religion – but sovereignty as practice and as becoming allows alternative practices of time, not simply reducible to the clock and the calendar, but to think of multiple temporalities at once and how these multiple temporalities contribute to the realisation of sovereignty. Here, I am reminded of the eloquent words of Joao Biehl and Peter Locke in their edited volume, *Unfinished: The Anthropology of Becoming*:

> Becoming occupies its own kind of temporality that unfolds in the present: a dynamic interpenetration of past and future, actual and virtual. Distinct from potentiality and not reducible to causality or outcomes, becoming is

> characterized by the indeterminacies that keep history open, and it allows us to see what happens in the meantimes of human struggle and daily life. *(2017: 6)*

Paying attention to our interlocutors and their shifting practices, and the multiple forms these experiences take, becoming is about how these storied histories persist, folded into sensibilities, perceptions, encounters, and dwelling. I use research sites such as Sápmi (Norway), Talamanca (Costa Rica), and Hawai'i (USA) to give flesh to these global encounters, keeping in mind the way locally inflected cultural aspirations are articulated in the language of indigeneities. Paying attention to global networks of becoming, I look at how the 'local' in its freighted nature of place-making collides with and complements the 'common world' of indigeneity through the interaction of humans and non-humans. I pay attention to their capacity to elicit *indigenous futures* as a way of being in the world. By *indigenous futures* I look at the productive ways people orientate their lives across time and space, rooted in the materialities and the sentient ecologies of everyday life. It attempts to understand the role of the future in their temporal sense of anticipation, risk, prophecy, and knowledge. After all, national futures are crucial to many indigenous peoples. And in this chapter I show the relationship between collective pasts and their anticipated futures as they converge into perpetual becoming (Bryant and Knight 2019; Bear 2016; Munn 1992).

Indigenous timescapes

This chapter begins by advancing notions of how indigenous timescapes provide a cosmopolitics or a 'common world' (Latour 2004), where humans and non-humans participate in ways that might appear odd in historical narratives. This is a challenge that the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty proposes, in his now classic examination of the historical difference between Europe and the Global South. In *Provincializing Europe* (2000), Chakrabarty argues that subaltern narratives remain partially unrepresented within the academic discipline of history. Part of the lack is due to the elision of non-human actors in the making of subaltern history beyond the purely 'social'. Chakrabarty urges us, first, to reconsider the "secular conceptions" (2000: 15) of the social and political. Not only do humans exist in a "single and secular historical time that envelops other kinds of time", but drawing on a South Asian example, historical time itself is not integral, he says, to the fashioning of events (Chakrabarty 2000:108). Rather, it is important to pay heed to heterogeneities without seeking to reduce narratives to an overarching principle "that speaks for an already given whole" (Chakrabarty 2000: 108). There is no universal history, or a pre-arranged set of criterion that speaks to a particular model. Divergences, critique, and nuance must be taken account of in order to speak for different pasts, presents, and futures. Second, Chakrabarty asks us to question the premise that the "human is ontologically singular, that gods and spirits are in the end 'social facts'" (2000: 16). Suspending this

judgement is crucial, argues Chakrabarty, because human entanglement with gods and spirits is pervasive throughout history (2000: 16). Indeed, and importantly, he makes the point that one must not simply relegate gods and spirits to beliefs, but, rather, considers how they affect social practice as historical cause (2000: 105).

The intervention by Chakrabarty with regard to privileging 'subaltern pasts' and the cosmopolitics that Bruno Latour speaks about are similarly constituted: both attempt to democratise politics and the social sciences through the inclusion of non-human actors (see also Viveiros de Castro 1998; Stengers 2005; de la Cadena 2015). This approach takes seriously subaltern narratives as a way of understanding indigenous sovereignties that may not always accord with established historical paradigms. If time is differently conceived by indigenous peoples across the world as they inhabit, imagine, perform, and believe in their right to sovereignty, so "[t]ime, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" (Bakhtin 1981: 84–85). In other words, the experiences of 'time space' (or chronotope) through bodies that live in the moments of history inhabit the temporal and spatial matrix that "becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Bakhtin 1981: 84–85). This means that simply viewing sovereignty as a lofty concern to do with political theory, and economic nationalism, takes away its potency, especially as it criss-crosses time and space, and muffles those very voices, the narratives of people. Michel de Certeau elegantly evokes what I mean by this juxtaposition: "What the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (1984: 129). In other words, rather than abstract principles concerning what sovereignty implies, this chapter seeks to bring to light sovereignty as a part of "the world as it is known to those who dwell therein" (Ingold 1993: 156). Stories preserve the workings of groups. Rather than simply theorising and explaining, this paper elaborates on the nature and practice of sovereignty.

Political and historical rhythms

According to the political scientist James C. Scott (2009), this upland region, stretching from South/Southeast Asia and the Himalayan region (called Zomia) is the world's largest remaining non-state space. Comprising roughly 80 million in population, Zomia has actively resisted incorporation into the classical lowland state, the colonial state, and the independent nation-states that have emerged after World War II (Myint-U 2011). This resistance has given rise to secessionist movements, indigenous rights struggles, millenarian uprisings, and armed insurrection against the post-independent states. The Nagas are an important example of the struggle for indigenous peoples' rights to sovereignty in the Zomia region.

Described as being located at the 'periphery of the periphery on the road to nowhere' (Verghese 1997), the Nagas live between the lower ranges of the Eastern Himalayas in the borderlands of Northeast India and Northwest Myanmar, and

speak a variety of Tibeto-Burman languages. Approximately 2 million Nagas live in India, and 100,000 in Western Myanmar. The first written proclamation of Naga sovereignty came in 1919; this was then encapsulated in 1929 in the work of the British Simon Commission and used thereafter in proclamations for self-determination:

> We pray that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights against all encroachments . . . that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people [i.e. India] who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we are never subjected; but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times.
>
> *(Alemchiba 1970: 164)*

The Naga historical movement is thus seven decades old. When India gained independence on 15th August 1947, the Nagas of India requested that they be left alone, outside of the Indian union. Led by the President of the Naga National Council (NNC) and their leader, A.Z Phizo, they met the two prominent Indian representatives, M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, regarding the future of the Nagas outside the Indian union. The former, Gandhi, said that the Nagas were free to choose their destiny, according to NNC accounts, while the latter, Nehru, was adamant that the Nagas were a part of the union. This caused a stalemate, which led to the Nagas declaring their independence on the 14th August 1947, a day prior to Indian independence. In a massive show of strength, the Nagas conducted a plebiscite on the 16th May 1951, which reported that 99% voted in favour of Naga independence. This plebiscite was held in the context where independence and the negotiations surrounding it were not supported and recognised by the Indian state. The intransigence of both parties further aggravated the situation, resulting in the mass mobilisation of Indian security forces and apparatuses since the 1950s, and the beginning of armed skirmishes that remain a reality till today.

Since then the Nagas and the Indian state have been in conflict over the nature of Naga independence, leading eventually to a cease-fire between the two main parties – the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim – Isak/Muivah (NSCN-IM) faction in August 1997. The Naga national movement over the seven decades has fractured into several groups – nine in total, though the NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K remain the two most powerful groups – due to different regional and personality clashes. However, the overall ideology of Naga sovereignty has been maintained amongst the different Naga factions. The Naga movement is thus one of the longest freedom struggles in modern political history. This is how a renowned human rights activist encapsulates the movement:

> The Naga history is soaked with blood and tears, pain and sorrow, wounds and scars. Our fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters have paid the price! Haven't we all heard – stories of villages burnt down to ashes, parents

> with children driven to jungles, men tortured and put to death, women molested and raped. Many orphans and widows left behind to a life of struggle.
>
> *(Aier 2011: 36)*

The Naga conflict remains unresolved. The nine Naga factions claim to represent the 'authentic' rights of the Naga people; further, the Nagas live in four separate Indian states and in Western Myanmar, thus complicating the kind of sovereign settlement that is possible beyond these arbitrary nation-state boundaries; a situation not uncommon amongst other indigenous peoples (Jung 2008; Muehlebach 2001; Shaw 2008). Focusing on timelines, political events, and issues pertaining to governance limits an exegesis of the nature of sovereignty, particularly as it is thought of and felt. Sovereignty as an exercise lived out through human pain, emotion, sorrow, and promise, wrinkled through time, is what undoes the power of state-making and questions the very nature of the temporal, and historically constituted, nation-state. I turn now to stories that make this thinking about sovereignty habitable.

Time and flesh

Vignette 1: visions and landscape

On a hot summer's day in Dimapur, a dusty urban town in the state of Nagaland, I drive towards the border with Assam to a place called Universal Prayer Centre.[2] At this Christian retreat centre built by a wealthy Naga family just inside the border with Assam, I meet several of the members as we discuss visions, prophecy, and how these connect with national life. As we are finishing our conversation, an elderly man in his 70s enters the room with a walking stick, sits down, and speaks about the importance of prayer to the national struggle. There is a sparkle in his eyes that shows wisdom, knowledge, and experience cultivated over many years. He invites me back to his room in the prayer centre to continue our conversation.

There is a rickety old bed, a couple of chairs, and a wardrobe that has aged considerably, visibly eaten by termites. The mud floor has a jute sack that is used as a mat for his dog. He shows me his jaw, now wrecked with old injuries.

> When I was captured by the Indian army in the early 1960s for being a part of the NNC, I was jailed for 37 days. They crushed my face severely with their boots that now I find it hard to open my mouth properly.
>
> *(Chungshi, interview, Karbi Anglong, October 2014)*

He told me that he was the commandant of an NNC battalion; he had been called upon to join the NNC due to his training in the Assam police. "There was news", he says, "that our people were being killed and tortured and Naga villages were being burnt" (interview, Karbi Anglong, October 2014). He begins to tell

me about his time in the battalion, recalling how a woman from Kohima came to Mokokchung (a town in central Nagaland) and challenged the youth to join the NNC. He remembers the time in the 'jungle' and the constant movement of the cadres, due to the pressure from the Indian military. Some people died, according to Chungshi, due to malnutrition, dysentery, and malaria because they did not have proper medicine in the jungle camps. But, he takes time to emphasise, the struggle for sovereignty relied on God's guidance.

Not only is Chungshi a NNC stalwart, but he is also an *arasentzur* (Ao. diviner).[3] As a young boy he could heal, had visions that were fulfilled, and also had the power of foresight. He narrates to me the daily routine in these NNC jungle camps:

> Every time we moved, we would pray and read the Bible. Because I had the gift of vision (as an *arasentzur*), I would sometimes say, "We shouldn't go as it is 12 noon; if we do, we will be attacked by the Indian military". Signs were also clearly shown to me. One time, despite my warnings, the NNC battalion decided to proceed to attack an Indian army camp. We encountered three events along the way – we came across a landslide; rain, wind and sun occurred at the same time; and finally we saw a tiger attack a wild pig, but it left without eating the flesh or drinking the blood. These were bad omens and I persuaded the battalion to turn back. Thus we were saved. God is faithful to us.
>
> *(interview, Karbi Anglong, October 2014)*

Chungshi's experience of these events displays an ability to apply the knowledge and skills that he has inherited through his role as an *arasentzur*, but also his ability to merge that into his Christian identity. Sensing the way the landscape, nature, and animals move around him provides signs, imprinted also in dreams and visions, and demonstrates the way people and landscape are mutually constituted elements of what it means to be 'of the land'. When I asked him why he came to the prayer centre, he spoke of his sin, the atrocities he committed unknowingly on innocent Naga villagers, the killing of Indian soldiers, and his desire to possess land belonging to his ancestors. This desire, he says to me, haunts him even today because when "God is alive, you cannot claim that it's your land. I still see in a vision the lay of the land – 6 by 3 feet – and I am frightened" (interview, Karbi Anglong, October 2014). Land – as a gift from God and the ancestors – is what Chungshi fought for all these years, even without mentioning the word 'sovereignty'. And now, in his old age, this is how he spends his time, in penance, in prayer, for the nation.

> God has forgiven me [for the sins described above] but there is still dirt in me and that's why I entered the prayer centre and I said to God whatever the Naga people have done, please show it [to] me and I will pray for them. From midnight till 6am, I pray for the Naga nation and for the world. If you pray everyday then that's good. If you pray for your clan, family or

> tribe then that's not enough; it's only skimming the surface. [This is what God says]: "Once you pray for the whole world then you will understand me in more depth. And I will bless you". So that's why I first of all ask for forgiveness and then I pray for the nations of the world.
>
> *(interview, Karbi Anglong, October 2014)*

Vignette 2: place-making

From afar the NNC Transit Peace Camp in Kohima village looks like a military enclosure (Figure 3.1). Upon entering, time stands still. There is a gate and a check post manned by a guard, and inside the premises are living quarters for the NNC cadres who signed the Shillong Accord in 1975.[4]

Most of the cadres are now old but still don their military fatigues and wear their medals with pride. We are taken around by the Speaker of the NNC, who shows us the camp and introduces us to the NNC chaplain, who is also wearing a camouflage army jacket. As we sit around the large conference desk for a chat over tea and biscuits, the chaplain says "thanks to God for the 3 of you here" – referring to our guide (the NNC Speaker), a friend, and me. He continues, "I had a vision before the 3 of you came here. I made this drawing, which I'm giving to you" (Figure 3.2).

> In this drawing, it shows the personification of death, symbolised by a human face as the heart, who is filled with rage and will come and bring

FIGURE 3.1 Naga National Council (NNC) Transit Peace Camp, Kohima.

Source: Michael Heneise, used with permission.

FIGURE 3.2 Drawing provided by the chaplain, NNC camp, Kohima.

Source: Michael Heneise, used with permission.

bloodshed to Kohima. The angel is turning away because of his displeasure towards man. We have to cleanse ourselves and find our true national future; once we have achieved that, then, death will pass. I was also given a Bible verse for you, read Isaiah 40: 31.

(interview, Kohima, 5.9.14)

The NNC Speaker reaches out for a Bible near the desk and reads it: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint".

This meeting with the chaplain was rather downbeat given its focus on his vision of the need for the Naga nation to be pure and cleansed if the goal of nationhood is to be fully realised (*also* Longkumer 2018). But there was also hope in the Bible passage that the speaker read – a hope that depends on the renewal of the human spirit towards God.

We move through the camp and are introduced to another NNC activist and the media officer and archivist, Akok. Sitting on woven bamboo seats, in the damp sitting room, with only a faint light passing through the tiny window, Akok tells me of his ordeals in the Naga army in the 1950s and '60s. Despite the death of many of his friends due to lack of food and disease, like many of the NNC cadres who survived the brutal conditions of the jungle, he emphasises that the "only strength we had was our faith in God" (interview, Kohima, 5.9.14). Even though the numbers were depleted and energy sapped, they would go hunting for wild pigs, deer, and even monkeys, and Akok says, it was as if the sound of their guns were muffled through the thicket of the forest and the density of the air. "Imagine if the Indian army heard the gunshots", remarked Akok. "These small acts were due to God's hand. We would eat these animals and regain our strength to fight for our nation" (interview, Kohima, 5.9.14). The NNC were guided by Christian chaplains, who were also visionaries and dream interpreters.

> Dream interpreters played a very important role in our movements in the jungle. "Let's move from this place, I've had a bad dream", and we would be saved. For instance, we would establish a new camp without food, but that's fine, as long as we pray before we establish our camp. But sometimes someone would have a bad dream, and in the dream *satan* would be chasing the person. So one of the interpreters would say, "let's leave immediately". Then, we would find another camp. And then, we would hear that our previous camp was surrounded by the Indian forces. But it was empty, and we were saved, thanks be to God!
>
> *(Akok, interview, Kohima, 5.9.14)*

Around the year 1952, during a meeting in the Wokha area of the NNC, instead of calling it the 'Naga hills', they decided to refer to it as 'Nagaland'. "As an NNC youth activist, we wanted to legitimise the idea of 'Nagaland'":

> We [the NNC youth] would write a letter and on the envelope we would write 'Ms Imtila Naga', and underneath that 'Nagaland' and would post it into the post office without a stamp.
>
> *(Akok, interview, Kohima, 5.9.14)*

Akok told me that without a stamp, they knew that it would not get anywhere, but they continued the practice of naming 'Nagaland' – to bring it into being. On one occasion, Akok recalls that he was posting a letter with 'Nagaland' on it and was caught by the postmaster – a non-Naga Bengali man – who asked him to read the address to him. Akok politely read 'Nagaland'. The postmaster questioned Akok and emphasised that 'Nagaland' did not exist and that these letters were a nuisance because they were clogging up the post box and also wasting his time. "Who told you to say 'Nagaland'", asked the postmaster. Akok replied, "the NNC":

> The letters didn't go anywhere. We knew that they wouldn't get anywhere but we were hopeful that the letters would be delivered to the people it was addressed to with 'Nagaland' written on it. We were following Phizo's idea of 'Nagaland' that he envisioned as a 'country'. This was a time when statehood was not even discussed and people had no idea about 'statehood'. At that time, Phizo would write 'Nagaland' in all his letters and even Nehru did not object to it. So it happened like that.
>
> *(interview, Kohima, 5.9.14)*

The incredulity of the postmaster is not surprising; he could not recognise 'Nagaland' as a legitimate place that could be fixed. For him, the address did not exist. Yet, in the minds of the NNC youth and the cadres, 'Nagaland' was not an exercise in their imagination, but a place brought forth through writing, the letters becoming an important part of a process of place-making. Later, I would learn of the Federal Government of Nagaland's own attempt at making place (Figures 3.3 and 3.4).

Vignette 3: national prayer centre

Driving southeast towards the Manipur border there is a little known village, Kütsapomi, in the Phek district of Nagaland. It is a small village and one of the last villages to accept Christianity in a predominantly Christian state. Although Christianity arrived in Kütsapomi in 1948, the spread was slow. Even up to the 1990s, when Christianity had entrenched itself fully in many parts of Nagaland, in Kütsapomi village only 30% of the population was Christian. In 1991, something dramatic happened that saw an increase in Christian numbers. It was down to one man and the Shisa Hoho, a national prayer house (Figure 3.5).

Chosayi Lohe, the main figure behind the Shisa Hoho, is a shy 61-year-old man, and very much a 'village man'. He would not even have ventured out of his village to do God's work, he tells me, until God made it rain relentlessly for two months. Once he left the village gate, it stopped raining. He was still reluctant, and his tussle with God continued. One day God told him to cease working in the fields and to work for God instead. But as a farmer, with a family that depended on the harvest from the fields, he was hesitant. "How can I feed my

FIGURE 3.3 NNC stamps of Nagaland.

Source: Naga Archive & Research Centre, used with permission.

family if I don't work", Chosayi replied to God's interdict. Desperate to continue ploughing the fields, he took his spade and went to his agricultural field. When he reached it, the field was covered in earthworms. No one could work. Partly amazed by this occurrence but also filled with doubt about God's command,

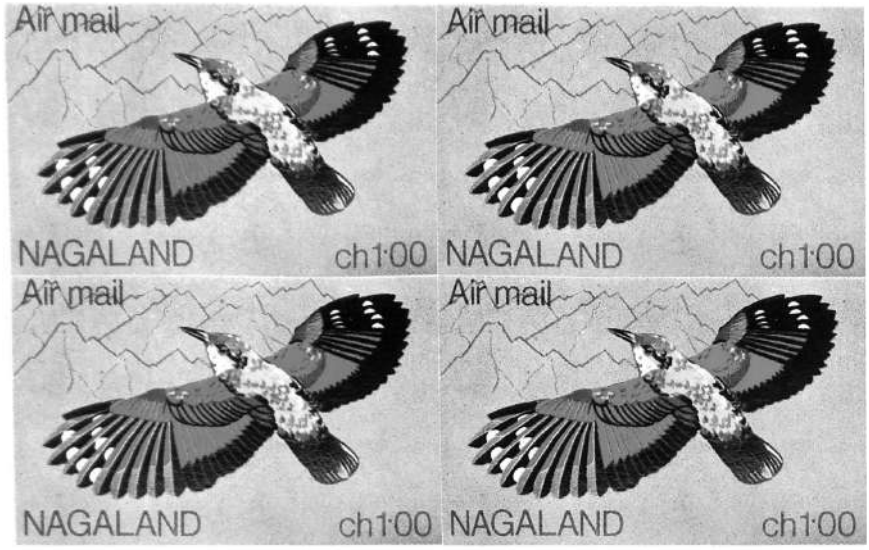

FIGURE 3.4 NNC stamps of Nagaland.

Source: Naga Archive & Research Centre, used with permission.

he went back to the village to continue his daily chores. Upon picking up his children's clothes to wash, lice gathered and multiplied all over them. He managed to boil some water quickly and put the clothes in hot water to kill off the lice. Chosayi was tired and angry at these occurrences. God then spoke to him, and he tells me that the memory of it is as clear as day: "If you don't obey my

FIGURE 3.5 Naga Shisha Hoho Monolith, Kütsapomi.

Source: Arkotong Longkumer.

commands, these things will keep happening". There and then he surrendered to God. Until today he remains faithful to God, he tells me. Unable to read and write, Chosayi hears God's words in dreams and through speaking in tongues in prayer, sometimes undecipherable even to himself. But with time the meaning becomes clear. Through these media, God communicates with him (interview, Kütsapomi, 24.4.15).

'Shisa' means 'doing in obedience', while 'Hoho' is a word representing an organisation. No one can trace the word – Shisa – to any of the tribal tongues spoken in Nagaland, and some of the villagers think it is 'in spiritual tongue'. Chosayi is also unsure of its origin – but affirms the villagers' interpretation. The main task of Shisa Hoho, he tells me, is to pray for Naga sovereignty. According to Chosayi he had a vision in 1990 that the Naga plebiscite of 1951 was the beginning of Naga nationalism and will be the end – "the first mandate shall be the last".[5] In fact, according to the history of the village, the unity of the Nagas relates directly to the village unity. The first act of unity was in 1962. An NNC military camp was set up called 'Happy Camp' in Kütsapomi.

The 9th Tatar Hoho (or Assembly) was held in March–April 1964 at Happy Camp to deliberate on whether the NNC, on behalf of the Nagas, should sign a bilateral ceasefire with the Government of India (the first Indo-Naga ceasefire was subsequently signed in September 1964). As a celebration of this moment, Kütsapomi offered 44 caskets of paddy, mithuns, and pigs to the meeting of nearly 700 delegates ranging from both the Naga military and civil society. After almost three decades, and a series of factional conflicts and fragments amongst the Nagas themselves, Chosayi remembers God's voice again: "Unless Nagas come together, there will be no sovereignty". But Chosayi was unsure how to put this into practice. God then instructed him to go to the various nationalist leaders and "say to the leaders that they must stop killing each other". Sitting in front of the Naga Shisa Hoho flag whose colours and patterns he saw in a vision, closely resembling the Naga national flag, he tells me that the main prophecy of the Shisa Hoho is for Naga unity. He explains:

> Whenever I meet any group, God reveals the same message. You have to come together. There's only one sovereignty, and there can't be more than one. Only after you come together, God will elect a leader.
>
> *(interview, Kütsapomi, 24.4.15)*

Although Chosayi had no background in dealing with nationalist leaders, God directed him to speak. Some believed, while others doubted Chosayi's intentions. Violence continued amongst the various factions, but eventually they realised the futility of it and people started to believe in Chosayi. Chosayi's role as God's emissary allows him to travel to different locations. Not only has he relayed God's message to nationalist leaders such as Isak and Muivah of the NSCN-IM, but he has also travelled to Burma to meet Khaplang of the NSCN-K. It took him two days on foot, two days by boat, and two days on a bike to

reach Khaplang's headquarters in Western Myanmar. He has also undertaken a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Bethlehem for three days organised by the Naga Baptist Church Council (NBCC). The beauty of the Naga areas, he says, cannot be compared even to the glory of Jerusalem!

One must remember the difficult context of this mission thrust upon Chosayi. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, factional violence between the NSCN-K/IM and the NNC was at its height, remembers Chosayi. The villagers in particular were affected by these events, as they had no strong institutional and state protection like those in the urban areas. As a response to God's message of unity in 1991 and 1993, the Shisa Hoho organised large gatherings in Kütsapomi village. The event in 1991 was primarily for the village as a form of internal unity and purification to prepare themselves for the larger 1993 event when they invited hundreds of Nagas from all over the region.

Another prayer warrior (Figure 3.6) associated with Shisa Hoho, Vechilu Rhakho, recalls the situation. During the village gathering for Naga unity in 1991, Christian revivals also 'spread like wild fire': 1991 was a watershed moment in Kütsapomi history; in 1989 a woman had prophesised that the village would become the main organisation to work for Naga unity (realised in the Shisa Hoho) – that "your language, your water, your source of vegetable will enhance your village" (interview, Kütsapomi, 24.4.15). It was not clear until the events in 1991 and 1993 for unity happened that reminded them of the connection with the 1989 prophecy. Water (in the form of rain) sufficiently watered the fields, and food production multiplied during this time so that a small village could

FIGURE 3.6 Women Prayer Warriors that Rhakho is a part of.

Source: Arkotong Longkumer

host such large events. The language of communication in the village – Sumi, Chokri, and Kheza (the main languages of the Chakhesang tribe) alongside Nagamese and some English – allowed them to reach out to diverse audiences across the Naga areas, particularly during the two events.

Prophesies about the Naga nation, alongside healing and a new feeling of solidarity and revitalisation amongst the villagers, developed during this time. "With Christianity", argues Vechilu, "came a clearer vision of the Naga nation" (interview, Kütsapomi, 24.4.15). Drawing a clear division between their pre-Christian past, and their present Christian identity, Vechilu suggests that Christianity "brought about a moral awakening which was different from 'traditional society'" (interview, Kütsapomi, 24.4.15). For Vechilu, Christianity's association with modernity (schools, jobs) brought about a clearer vision of the future. A plaque commemorating Phizo's visit in 1952 represents a prophecy, perhaps, of what was to come in Kütsapomi in 1991 (Figure 3.7).

To say that the history of the village is intimately tied to the Naga nation is an unquestionable fact, according to the Shisa Hoho. This is how Vechilu justifies the connection:

> Two very important prophecies are these. [1] God really wants the Nagas to come together. [2] Naga sovereignty is not being sought under the Indian government, but if we come together the UNO (United Nations Organisations) – and those who have big nations, they will support the Nagas. So it will not be under the Indian government. But it will be under world organisations or that world organisations will decide Naga sovereignty.

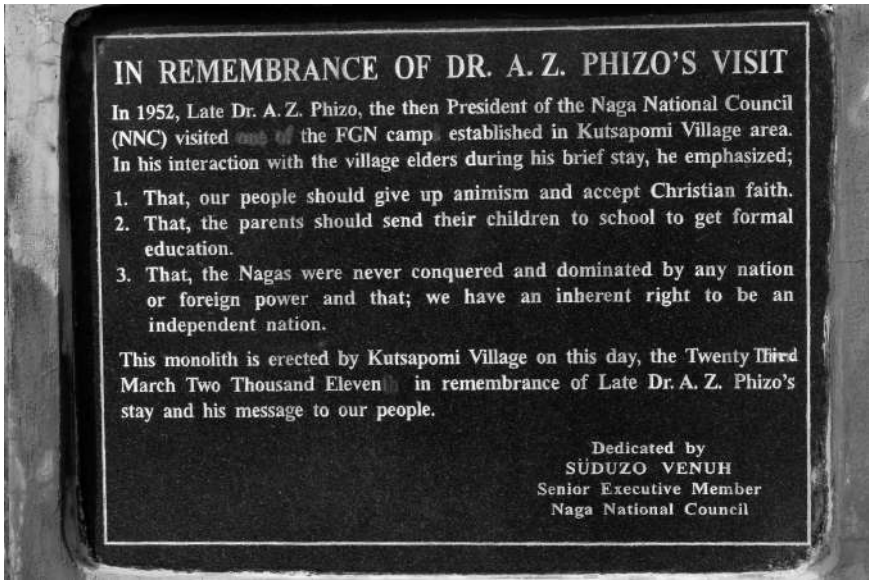

FIGURE 3.7 Plaque commemorating Phizo's visit.

Source: Arkotong Longkumer

> So at noon we pray for the world organisation to deliberate on Naga sovereignty. Though you can't always contribute to Naga sovereignty through your knowledge, we always pray for the leaders of the world powers to grant Naga sovereignty. And this noon prayer is done every day.
>
> *(interview, Kütsapomi, 24.4.15)*

Ecology of practices

Sovereignty as a set of practices is spun out of the tangled web of history. For many of the human actors concerned, whose sole purpose has been to preserve the workings of what it means to belong in a landscape shared with their ancestors, spirits, and deities, it is non-negotiable. These practices are embedded in what David Anderson (2000), in his work on the relationship between animals and their environments in Arctic Siberia, calls 'sentient ecology'. Drawing on Anderson's idea of sentient ecology, Tim Ingold suggests that another word for showing sensitivity and responsiveness to this relationship is *intuition* (2000: 25). This landscape sociality that both Anderson and Ingold evoke suggests a kind of knowledge that is:

> not of a formal, authorised kind, transmissible in contexts outside those of its practical application. On the contrary, it is based in feeling, consisting in the skills, sensitivities and orientations that have developed through long experience of conducting one's life in a particular environment.
>
> *(Ingold 2000: 25)*

Ingold, particularly, questions the kind of 'sovereign perspective of abstract reason' (2000: 25), but rather calls us to value the perspective and skills cultivated, embedded within this landscape sociality, akin to a '*poetics of dwelling*' (2000: 26).

Chungshi, the elderly NNC man, recalls his contribution to the Naga cause for sovereignty in the early years of the NNC – the crushing of his jaw by boots and the pain he feels are a constant memory. His role as a shaman allowed him to read signs through a sense of awareness of the natural surroundings and how they guided him and his troops away from danger. The foresight and vision of an *arasentzur* and a Christian man enabled him to forge paths in his fight towards freedom from hegemony, and protecting his soldiers from harm, are in so many words about being sovereign – unencumbered by 'foreign forces' wishing to dominate and rule. Now he spends his time in a prayer centre, praying for the sins of the national workers, so that they may be forgiven and revived as they continue the fight for sovereignty.

Akok's commitment to sovereignty finds him sequestered in the Transit Peace Camp. Although maintaining the ideology of the NNC, now their path is no longer violence but peace. They fight their battles through words, preserving and archiving the memory of the national struggle, and passing on their knowledge to the younger generation so that they will remember the sacrifice and honour of their ancestors. 'Naga-land' for Akok, even before it was, existed through

the writing of letters that questioned the time-space of addresses and in the process enforced a will. Although it might be a stretch to suggest that Akok and his NNC youth friends' intervention brought about the naming of 'Nagaland', it should not surprise us that for Akok and his friends, they believe they shared in the naming of the 'land'. These names and the accompanying paraphernalia of NNC flags, and stamps, are not only symbols for internal consumption but are also about external recognition, mimicking the way nation-states function, and in a way legitimising their place in the world of global politics. Sovereignty here is both a process of place-making and a "universe of objects and events", as place-worlds, where particular ideas are brought into being (Basso 1996: 6). There are two aspects here noteworthy for examination that are nourished by ideas of place-making and through acts of naming that are, as Paul Carter observes, paradigmatically an act of possession and making it one's own: "By the act of place-naming, space is transformed symbolically into a place, that is, a space with a history" (Carter 1987: xxiv). This 'space with a history' is brought to life through the process of naming 'Nagaland'.

For Chosayi and the Shisha Hoho, unity, peace, and solidarity are the ingredients to achieve sovereignty, though very much based on a male gaze. This gendered-ness of nationalism is very much visible in the power of men who lead, decide, and dictate the direction of the Naga nation. Chosayi and the Shisha Hoho view the historical archive of the Naga struggle from the vantage point of the present without ever dismissing what came before, forging a path towards the future, though inhabited by the plebiscite of 1951, an event that is "now as ever", as Chosayi told me (interview, Kütsapomi, 24.4.15). While obedience and surrender to God's will is characterised by Chosayi's commitment, so too is this about the story of the village, Kütsapomi. Its smallness with its abundance in food, water, and the diverse languages spoken makes it an ideal place to fight for Naga unity, always revitalising and reactivating the 'essence' of Naga sovereignty. Only when obedience is cultivated, then, will sovereignty come, they say. But such a mode of sovereignty also exceeds the nation-state. For the women prayer warriors like Vechilu, Christianity brings clarity to their struggle for indigenous peoples' rights that will be brought to the attention of the U.N. Not the Indian state, but the U.N. will support the Nagas in their fight for their right to self-determination. The method that elevates these concerns purely from the local – such as the stories that I have narrated – to the global are the interventions such as those by Vechilu. The ritual prayer at noon for 'world leaders' to solve the Naga issue, and for those prayer warriors to be open to the presence of God, simultaneously speak about grace, and witnessing a new state of being.

Jiribam represents the dark side of nationalism; it reminds me of unattained dreams and violence, but also that, somehow, hope remains undiminished. Ghatashi and the prophecy of me arriving in the morning sun happened for the very reason that my time, like the time of all those invested in the nation, is intimately enfolded with people, events, and visions from God. How do we develop an analytical tool to probe the workings of the cosmos? Can a 'common world'

populated by different entities be treated as historical cause? It may require that the usual historical methods be suspended, and a space of indigenous sovereignties cultivated.

The global situation

It was a cold and bright February morning in Karasjok in Finnmark, Northern Norway in 2018. Along with friends and colleagues Siv Ellen Kraft and Bjørn Ola Tafjord, we arrived at the Sámediggi (or Sámi Parliament) to learn about the building, the history, and its place within the Norwegian nation-state, but also to understand the complex algorithms of how it stands in relation to the other Sámi Parliaments in Sweden and Finland (and the Kola Sámi Assembly in Russia). What was largely planned as an informal tour of the Sámediggi turned out to be a surprise, serendipitous to say the least. As we were milling around the reception desk and trying to register our names for a tour on the automated machine, unsure if there were any guides to take us around, a man behind the reception desk asked Siv Ellen where her colleague (nodding towards me) was from. When Siv Ellen said "Nagaland", his face immediately lit up, and he walked over from the reception desk and introduced himself as Anders Henriksen. He immediately said that we were his guests and he would take us around.

Anders Henriksen is the Communications Manager of the Sámediggi, and during our conversations he explained that he built a close relationship with the Nagas through his association with the Sámi artist Hans Ragner Mathisen ('Keviselie') and Visier Sanyü, an Angami Naga from Nagaland. In the wake of the Vietnam War in 1974 and sparked by a vision of a "new Asia and a new world" (Sanyü and Broome 2018: 128), a group of young students embarked on a world tour with the musical 'Song of Asia'. It was an opportunity to present "a case for peace in Asia through music, dance and drama" (Sanyü and Broome 2018: 128). Among them was Visier Sanyü. The tour proved life changing, connecting him with several people, one of whom was a young Sámi art-student Hans Ragnar Mathisen during the 'Song of Asia' performance in Oslo in 1974. Since then (1976–present) they have been writing letters and have developed a friendship across national borders that speaks of their common understanding of indigenous peoples' rights and their place in their world.

Anders Henriksen showed us a photograph of various indigenous activists from all over the world taken in 1990 during the World Council of Indigenous Peoples organised in Tromsø, Norway (Figure 3.8).

Henriksen is also part of the Sámi Naga Friendship Association (SNFA) founded by Visier Sanyü and Hans Ragnar Mathisen, and they regularly organise events on Naga Independence Day on the 14th August. For example, during Nana: International Festival of Indigenous Culture in Tromsø (7–17 August 1997), the 14th August was scheduled as 'Nagaland Day' and Visier Sanyü of the SNFA listed as the main speaker. But Nana is not the only moment in which the Sámis and the Nagas, along with other indigenous communities, have interacted.

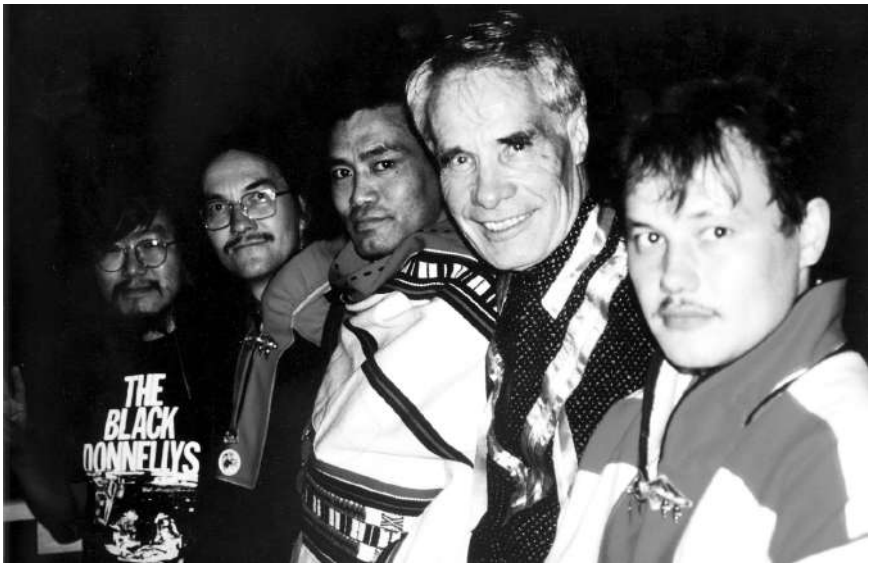

FIGURE 3.8 From right to left: Anders Henriksen (Sámi), Grey Eagle (Native American), Visier Sanyü (Naga), Hans Ragnar Mathisen (Sámi), and Alooktook Ipellie (Inuk).

Source: Used with permission from Hans Ragnar Mathisen.

In 1984, an event called Indigenous Days organised by Hans Ragnar Mathisen in Tromsø brought together participants from Nagaland, Canada, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), and the Sápmi.

I relay these stories and events in order to acknowledge the global reach of indigenous politics but also to affirm the importance of scales and encounters, which may not always correspond with our notions of how indigeneity are circulated and affirmed. The idea of 'indigenous friendships' is an excellent example of how it crosses continents and contexts, with its abiding concern for solidarity and 'cultural intimacy' (Herzfeld 1997). These moments of 'intimacy' do not occur in the institutional corridors of power, nor in the networks that air complicated grievances of cultural and national rights, but in moments of 'common sociality' – through letters, words, art, memoirs, song, ceremonies, and memories that speak to the domain of human life and its infinite possibilities. It is in tracing these intimate archives, I suggest, that the social biography of power lies and the capacity to cultivate friendships – against all odds – over the *longue durée* and over vast stretches of land.

Friendships, connections, networks, festivals, solidarity, and protest movements (see various chapters of this book) are where the shared aspirations of indigenous peoples provide colours beyond the usual striking hues and produce resonances that are primarily beyond the 'local' or the 'official'. It is also in the space of friendships, where there is, as Paul Rabinow explains, "a primary

site of thinking" that enables people "both to think and to act" (1996: 13–14). The result of having friends and cultivating a sense of curiosity for and activities with other peoples is to inhabit a cosmopolitan attitude that transcends normal geographical barriers. It is in these encounters of dwelling, I argue, where its potential has political effects that are not only real, but actualised in the world. These ideas also correspond with Anna Tsing's argument, drawing from Annelise Riles' (2000) work, to take 'networks' seriously – not as naïve or simple formulations of rhetoric, but a coming together of "webs of imagined interconnection through which groups in one area were to exchange information and support with other groups on what was seen as an egalitarian, voluntary basis" (Tsing 2000: 335). Indeed, one can see through this an emergent process of 'future globalism' in which networks, rather than "nations and bureaucracies . . . will be the organising aesthetic" (Tsing 2000: 335).

The INREL project, out of which this book emerges, is very much situated in what these networks are and how they are imagined in scales – in their geographical and transnational lift – but also in the ways they provide the different research interlocutors of interconnecting with ideas of circulation, flows, linkages, and 'scapes' (Sassen 1998; Appadurai 1996; Harvey 1989; Kearney 1995). Such words are not invoked simply in order to capture the global zeitgeist of scholarly fashions; rather, this chapter, like the book itself, has in mind the specific instances through which the complex interplay of media, popular culture, travel, social movements, and national visions, come together through 'sites'. It is in the midst of these global circulations – travelling through four continents, searching through online booking sites, cooking and ordering food and feasting with friends, queuing through immigration, losing luggage, exchanging currency, dealing with exhaustion and jetlag, and feeling the excitement of visiting new places – that key ideas of INREL surrounding sovereignty, performance, translation, media, and comparison were remade. This global epoch of intensified circulations is something that scholars of globalisation have all observed (Hannerz 1989; Kearney 1995; Tsing 2000; Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1997). But what did these experiences bring to this chapter specifically?

Certainly, this chapter is a reflection on what I call *sovereignty in motion* as I encountered different notions of how it is articulated, acknowledged, and lived, sometimes without the excessive and hyper-political realities that often accompany expressions of sovereignty. Tellingly, ideas of sovereignty that were lodged in my thinking as involving only certain forms (like territorial independence) gave way to broader and more innovative ideas about sovereignty. And, in the following few paragraphs I give a sense of how these encounters may inform and equally may be informed by this idea of sovereignty in motion.

Sovereignty in motion

As members of the INREL team travelled to Nagaland, they were struck by open expressions of sovereignty that perhaps I took for granted. En route to the famous village of Khonoma, just west of the state capital, Kohima, as we

navigated through the winding and dusty roads, we stopped at a famous monolith that read "Nagas are not Indians; their territory is not a part of the Indian Union. We shall uphold and defend this unique truth at all cost and always". These words are attributed to Khrisanisa Seyie in 1959, the first President of the Federal Government of Nagaland. Out came the cameras and phones; Greg Johnson, the Hawaiian expert, quickly uploaded the image onto Facebook and circulated it with the phrase "hey Hawaiian friends, check this out from India. Hardcore sovereignty". This is followed by "Hardcore Sovereignty 2"; Johnson uploads an image of a monolith with these words etched onto it: "In Memory of Viyalhu Zhünyü by his Grandsons. Brutally beaten up by the Indian Army in 1956 because he said: 'At any rate the Nagas can never accept anything less than the Naga sovereignty'". Underneath the image is Johnson's comment: "Check this out [specific Hawaiian activists are referred to] the indigenous Naga are super intense about their sov".

'Likes' from all over the Hawaiian and Native American worlds, including friends and family, are made visible through Facebook, circulated and distributed in time and space, highlighting new encounters. Here Facebook and the Internet are powerful sites to generate symbolic and cultural capital (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). They organise the practice of sovereignty as an affective political site around images and their meanings because these images and words are visible in public spaces; politics then takes the form of a "cultural regulation of publicity" (Cody 2011: 45). The practice of sovereignty through these media technologies spread as 'polymedia' (Madianou and Miller 2012) that find their way into numerous other avenues like books, clothes, posters, and public spaces that other chapters in this book also explore.

I refer to these instances specifically because I too was intrigued about what my friends and colleagues thought of these expressions of sovereignty. They were surprised, for instance, that the Nagas owned their lands through customary law that the Indian state recognised, unlike other native peoples in North America, for example, where most lands are part of the state. What was a taken-for-granted practice amongst the Nagas, then, was elevated into a comparative project of how and what sovereignty entails in the global ecumene of practices and traditions that were distinct but yet made comprehensible due to encounters, visitations, and experiences in different research sites.

We drive from the eastern coastal town of Puerto Viejo in Talamanca, Costa Rica. Beaches, resorts, surfers, tourists, and balmy evenings with cocktails are left behind as we drive northwest towards our destination, Sibudi, a Bribri village. We stop at a little trading town, Bribri, for nourishment – the scene, the people, and the landscape change. Suddenly, the smooth tarred road gives way to a rough, rugged one. The transition, like a crossing, brings up questions about development, state-making, and resistance. Fresh from reading James C. Scott's book *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009), a book that has been central to my thinking about Highland Asia, ideas of state-evading, deliberate choice making, and the ability of indigenous people to resist the machinations of the nation-state,

are corporealised through travel in Talamanca. In Nagaland, where all roads are rough and where issues of development are central to the national discourse of progress, here I was struck by the deliberate strategy and agency of the Bribri of resisting development (even when smooth roads could be had) and thus the reach of the state. The buck does not stop at the road.

The river Telire provides another crossing as we take a rickety old wooden boat from Suretka upstream west towards our destination. We land in Sepecue, a place where the boat moors and a bus arrives, taking passengers from the bank of the river inland towards the Bribri villages. The scene becomes familiar now. It reminds me of Naga villages, the waiting for the bus, the dense tropical jungles, the rain, the damp, the sound of insects, the moisture in the air after torrid monsoon rains. Our hosts Yari García and Elías Escalante welcome us, nourish us, shelter us, and speak to us about their lives in Sibudi. I notice the electric lines crisscrossing the village and question our hosts about the lack of electricity in their home – both were adamant and even convinced that this is a choice that they have consciously deliberated on to negotiate change *their way*. I thought about remote Naga villages where electricity was still a dream, an anticipation, a future globalism, and the sacrifices they would make to engineer connectivity. Yet, here, in Scott's anarchic mode, the idea of agency and resisting desires for expediency, access, and connectivity that everybody 'must have', gives way to resistance. These acts of resistance are a powerful reminder of the way sovereignties play out on different levels and scales. I suspect these revolutions are not simply about rejecting these alluring forms; they are alternative ways of dwelling and a way to staying 'in our own time'.

Hawai'i too challenged me in different ways to think about sovereignty, or high altitude sovereignty. The mountain Mauna Kea, standing at around 13,800 feet, looms large in the landscape of Hawai'i Island, in Hāmākua Coast, Kohala, and Mauna Kea regions. At the centre of sovereignty for me was what Mauna Kea signifies in light of indigenous futures. Hawaiian futures were encapsulated and circumscribed through ideas of sovereignty and sacred claims, or what Pamela Klassen calls "spiritual jurisdictions", where the "metaphysical blend of spiritual and political power materialized in symbols, rituals, and stories" (Klassen 2018: 119; see also Johnson, Chapter 5). The technologies of scientific explorations into space with the proposed building of a Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on Mauna Kea, and the resistance involving many native Hawaiian activists, mediators, and interlocutors, bring to the fore complex questions regarding 'future globalisms' for both sides of the TMT debate. Here the register of sovereignty is amplified through shifting categories where protesters become protectors, where European science collides with indigenous knowledge, and where what counts as evidence deeply divides the terrain upon which the future of Mauna Kea are framed. Unlike Nagaland where such sites as focal points of struggle like Mauna Kea are absent, and where the language of 'spirituality' and 'sacred claims' are marked departures from Hawai'i, what was distinctly similar were questions regarding indigenous futures couched in the language of sovereignty, identity,

language, and claims over land. Through these insights, otherwise impossible if not for this project, my own thinking about sovereignty was lifted from tired old demonstrations of political slogans. I began to understand the freighted, creative, pragmatic, inspirational, and indeed worthwhile task of thinking about sovereignty through routes taken – Sápmi, Talamanca, Mauna Kea – through the corridors of international academic conferences, special issues, edited books, and conversations over tables, chairs, and seats in workshops, cars, airplanes, and over numerous dinners where wine and beer soothed our tired bodies and made way for heady conversations well into the night.

Conclusion

Sovereignty as practice, an idea, an inspiration, as hope, as futures are entangled in processes and flows around the globe. Sovereignty takes on many forms and acts as a catalyst to engender other forms. It is never static, nor is it always ever complete, but always in the process of becoming. My attempt in this chapter has been to capture some of the moments through which a 'common world' can be envisaged.

Naga sovereignty, understood by its many mediators, is one such example of sovereignty becoming real through the lives of individuals and their relationship to the landscape, place-making, and prophecy that speak of indigenous futures not as a predictive gaze of uncertainty but where distinctions such as the "struggle in the *present* towards a goal in the *future* . . . [converge, and where] the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present" (Maeckelbergh 2009: 66–67; quoted in Lazar 2014: 95). But sovereignty is not simply this worldly in terms of its temporal and existential struggle, but a cosmopolitical one where humans share a 'common world' with gods, deities, spirits, objects, nature, animals, and ancestors that bring complexity to the idea of sovereignty as shared and distributed amongst different entities. At least in the Naga case this comes out clearly; a practice that is embedded within indigenous Christianity, alongside (and sometimes exceeding) concomitant allies in tradition, custom, landscape, dreams, visions, and prophecies. Thus, via Chakrabarty's insistence on taking account of heterogeneity as part of questioning the European diktat on historical thinking and writing, we see the numerous ways in which the Naga archive is populated with instances where God's active involvement in history itself questions the very nature of what constitute 'social facts' as well as how we think about historical cause.

While the Naga case is an instance of indigenous sovereignties, the global situation is inaugurated by numerous encounters that not only give flesh to how sovereignty, as becoming, expands and exceeds the geographical boundaries of the nation-state, but also how it substantiates those relationships through exchange, flows, and travel. The three comparative examples – Sápmi, Talamanca, Hawai'i – are used as an analogue to hone in on larger issues in the chapter but also to acknowledge my debt to these visions in ways that may now

be already clear. In all these cases, the poetics of dwelling, an idea of Ingold's that I evoked earlier, allows me to observe how encounters, crossings, and flows refract with ideas from Nagaland. In Talamanca, for example, I was struck by the territorial demarcation, perhaps even a physical anarchic space, that spoke of sovereignty through the natural lay of the landscape. The rugged road, the river, the boat, the waiting, the crowded bus, and the choice over to have or not to have electricity provide another analogy of temporal and spatial designs that are counter-intuitive to the neo-liberal time and experience in Puerto Viejo and San José. Perhaps I discovered evidences of Scott's state-evading practices more here than I did in my home turf of Highland Asia. In Hawai'i, the high altitude sovereignty, similar to Scott's description of hill nationalisms as evading state-making projects, and where the recalcitrant landscape hinders access, the route up to Mauna Kea in contrast is paved with pristine grit and tar that makes the drive comfortable. But Mauna Kea is also a sentient landscape for many who participate in protecting its presence from defilement and destruction. Again, here, the neo-liberal time of progress as marching to its own rhythm is interrupted by indigenous timescapes that speak to futures and the capacity to engage with different entities, both human and non-human, amidst the periodic booms of the testing of the latest US military bombs heard in the distance. In Sápmi, I discovered friendship, the forging of relations over vast stretches of land, and the ability for indigenous peoples to envision something different, away from the institutional spaces to the more intimate places of sociality. These encounters are about dwelling in spaces that allow for resistance as well as provide a 'method of hope' (Miyazaki 2004). I suggest that it is very important to go beyond the metaphor of 'resistance', because it often implies that people are only responding to the initial and major agency of others (those whose acts are resisted). An emphasis on a 'method of hope' shifts the focus and highlights more of the agency and the ambitions of the people with whom we collaborate. In distinct ways, Nagaland, Talamanca, Hawai'i, and Sápmi encapsulate Appadurai's eloquent call in his response to Sherry Ortner's (2016) article*, Dark anthropology and its others: Theory since the eighties*. He notes:

> Perhaps we are now ready for an anthropology of and for resistance, which takes the diversity of images of the good life into fuller account when discussing resistance, so that it becomes a matter not just of refusal but of culturally inflected aspiration.
>
> *(Appadurai 2016: 3)*

Geographical differences are vast after all – Central America, Europe, North America/Oceania, and Highland Asia. So too are languages, customs, dress, traditions, and religions – Talamanca is largely Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, Baha'i and Roman Catholic, while Nagaland, Hawai'i and Sápmi are largely Protestant Christians. Thus, landscape and the way people relate to the environment again give rise to a diversity of worldviews. But yet there is a

'common world' that people participate in through the discourse of 'indigeneity' however discrete, open, contested, fragile, or even adversarial. Nagas too participate in these ideas of indigeneity on different scales – ranging from the regional to the national to the United Nations (see Karlsson 2001, 2003). I may not be able to provide any certainty concerning Vechilu Rhakho's vision of how future Naga sovereignty will unfold through the involvement of United Nations Organisations, nor am I able to say how the reverberating effects of prayer for world leaders everyday at noon will bring sovereignty to fruition. It is even more difficult to conceptually think about the prophecy of me arriving at SAK and the effects of that on political events. Interesting, however, is what does that prophecy tell us about indigenous knowledge and its engagement with its futures, and my role in historicising, and perhaps, actualising it? But actuality is different from achieving sovereignty, as a finality that precludes becoming that 'keeps history open' and shifts our gaze from definite outcomes to the daily human struggle and grind that does not halt. I am left with more questions than answers but what I can say to Vechilu, Chungshi, and others with certainty is that Naga sovereignty and their struggles are now part of what James Clifford calls "world-making", where the peripheries are part of an alternative globalisation "from below" (2013: 310). From the vantage point of nation-states where the centre is typical and important, Nagaland, like Sápmi, Talamanca, and Hawai'i, appear remote, peripheral, and an exception. Many might think that the national frontier is where things cease. On the contrary, it is where things begin.

Notes

1 This chapter is dedicated to the memory of my father and the many of his generation who lived through one of the most tumultuous periods of Naga history. Their memories, strength, and resilience provide hope to generations. Thanks to Lindsay Graham, Jacob Copeman, Michael Heneise, and the numerous occasions the INREL-team discussed this paper, which made the chapter much, much better. Along Longkumer and Aheli Moitra accompanied me to the Shisha Hoho and asked insightful questions and provided wonderful company on a long, and bumpy, road journey.
2 Nagaland is predominantly Christian, with almost 95%, mainly made up of Baptists (the majority) followed by the Roman Catholics, Revivalists, Presbyterians, and Pentecostals. Christianity arrived in the mid-19th century through the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society (ABFMS) and through them the slow growth of Christianity ensued. The scale of Christian conversion increased when the Naga national struggle started, partly as a way to express a Christian identity as opposed to a Hindu one that was seen as complicit in aiding the Indian state to suppress the religion of the Nagas (see Longkumer 2019, 2018; Thomas 2016).
3 Usually a person who can see (through visions, dreams) the cause of an illness, foretell future events, and knows the precise sacrifice to be made to a deity in order to appease the deity.
4 The controversial 'Shillong Accord' was signed in Shillong (in the current state of Meghalaya) on 11th November 1975 between the Government of India and the Federal Government of Nagaland (the political wing of the NNC). This required the surrender and disarmament of the NNC and the de facto 'official' recognition of the constitution of India.

5 Aheli Moitra, a journalist with *Morung Express*, accompanied me to Kütsapomi and here is her account (Moitra 2015).

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4

IMAGINING GLOBAL *ADIVASI*-NESS

Celebrating World Adivasi Day in Chhotaudepur[1]

Gregory D. Alles

> In order to ensure that *adivasis* throughout the world receive human rights, and on behalf of their way of life, knowledge traditions, and human development, the United Nations (UNO) established a committee. This committee's first meeting took place on the 9th of August 1982. Ten years later, in 1993, "UNO" planned an "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In this summit as many as 400 *adivasi* leaders from 68 countries worldwide took part. Before the entire assembly these leaders made a strong appeal for global awareness of the need to protect *adivasis* and nature. In connection with that, in 1993 UNO, on the occasion of the first session of the eleventh meeting of the committee, proclaimed that 9th August be celebrated as World Adivasi Day. And after that, from the year 1994 the 9th of August has been celebrated the world over as Adivasi Day.[2]

The preceding excerpt is translated from a flyer that was distributed in the town of Chhotaudepur in eastern Gujarat and surrounding villages in August 2017. I received copies of the flyer from friends via WhatsApp. The U.N. committee that the flyer mentions but never names is the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. It has now been replaced by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and, with greater visibility but a different charge, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. *Adivasis* is a Gujarati word whose etymological meaning is 'first inhabitants'; in much of India it designates what are legally known as Scheduled Tribes (ST). In the flyer it is used where English speakers at the U.N. would use the word 'indigenous'. The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, officially known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), actually took place in June 1992, not 1993.[3] The celebration referred to is officially known (in English) as the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Partly for convenience, but also because it more closely corresponds to the conceptions of the people I am talking about, I will

call it 'World Adivasi Day', a literal translation of the Gujarati *Viśva Ādivāsī Divas* (sometimes *Viśva Ādivāsī Dīn*). On a recommendation of the Working Group, this day was proclaimed by the U.N. General Assembly, not the Working Group, on 23rd December, 1994, and first celebrated on 9th August, 1995, not 1994.[4] This dating makes the 2017 celebration the 23rd World Adivasi Day, as the title of the flyer (not given earlier) rightly states.

After the passage translated earlier, the text of the flyer changes direction:

> What distinguishes us [i.e., *adivasis*] is a life and heritage ordered according to nature. "*Adivasi*" is not just a word; it clearly defines our history, life, and rights. Schedules 5 and 6 of the Indian Constitution and the PESA Act[5] made under them are constitutional provisions for our rights as *adivasis*. It is the responsibility of the entire country, and especially our responsibility, to protect and ensure the implementation of these provisions for the sake of the care and development of *adivasis* and nature. So come, on this World Adivasi Day let us set aside our religious (*dhārmik*)[6] and other private beliefs, our diverse political opinions, and differences of any other kind and together with the whole world let us, too, full of pride and with great ceremony, demonstrate the importance of our constitutional rights and their implementation of the development of our community, and let us make a grand celebration of *adivasi* dignity. It is especially requested that everyone come to this programme in our [traditional] dress and that everyone bring along all family members, including children. By means of a rally through the city, accompanied by our instruments and dancing, and by means of a public gathering we will make our celebration grand and memorable.[7]

Given this paragraph's emphasis on rights, it is odd – and telling – that the text makes no mention of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The U.N. had officially designated the 2017 celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples as an occasion to celebrate the 10th anniversary of UNDRIP's adoption.

It is, of course, impossible to do justice to a celebration with words. As Nicola Frost observed in commenting on Goethe's 'Roman Carnival':

> Because experiencing carnival is fundamentally a process of individual perception, a generalised account will always be found wanting . . . precisely because of the noise and the bustle and general sensory excess, individual participants are unable to gain an overview of the whole event.
>
> *(Frost 2016: 573)*

But part of what fascinates me about the celebration of World Adivasi Day in Chhotaudepur is the manner in which it conjoins elements from a number of scales, from the hyperlocal to the global.[8] As the title of our project, Indigenous Religion(s): Local Grounds, Global Networks, indicates, these conjunctures are

in many ways typical of indigeneity today. To be sure, the translations from, to be overly blunt, the local to the global – 'upscale' – and from the global to the local – 'downscale' – are not flawless. Translation never is (Venuti 2012, 2013). They do, however, say something distinctive about what it means to be indigenous – or better, *adivasi* – in this particular corner of India. To put the point much too bluntly: *adivasi*-ness is characterised by vigorous interactions locally but imagined interactions globally.

Celebrating World Adivasi Day in Gujarat

Chhotaudepur is the name of a district, sub-district (*taluka*), and town in eastern Gujarat, India. In the last Census (2011), the town had a population of a little more than 25,750 people. The majority of the town-dwellers are not *adivasi*. The vast majority of the district's inhabitants, however, live in rural villages, and they are overwhelmingly *adivasi* (roughly 95%). People from several 'tribes' live in Chhotaudepur sub-district, including Nayakas, Dhanaks, Tadvis, and Bhils, but the largest community by far are Rathvas. Rathvas are not just numerically but also culturally, politically, and – among *adivasis*, at least – economically dominant. For example, since the early 1970s, with only one exception, MPs and MLAs from the constituencies surrounding Chhotaudepur have been Rathvas.[9] More to the point here, the organisers of the World Adivasi Day celebrations in Chhotaudepur have almost all been Rathvas.[10]

I have not been able to determine when, where, why, how, or by whom World Adivasi Day was first celebrated in Gujarat. I have heard that *adivasis* decided to start celebrating it when India became a signatory to UNDRIP in 2007 but refused to acknowledge the existence of any indigenous people within its borders. I have heard this, but I have not been able to confirm it. In any case, it is a relatively safe assumption that there were several channels by which people in the Chhotaudepur area learned about the day.

I first became aware of World Adivasi Day from *Adilok*, a Gujarati magazine devoted to tribal culture, which carried an article about it in 2008, its first year of publication. Every year since then, the September–October issue has contained reports about celebrations of World Adivasi Day by *adivasis* throughout Gujarat, although never in Chhotaudepur. But *Adilok* is certainly not the only line along which awareness of this day could have been transmitted to *adivasis* in Chhotaudepur. For example, Ashok Chaudhari, an *adivasi* activist from south Gujarat closely associated with the Adivasi Ekta Parishad,[11] attended the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. From 2001 to 2010 he was associated with the Adivasi Academy in Tejgadh, 10 kilometres from Chhotaudepur, for a time as director. Prof. Arjun Rathva (M.C. Rathva Arts College, Pavi Jetpur), a major planner of the Chhotaudepur World Adivasi Day celebrations, was also associated with the Adivasi Academy for several years, and he suspects that he first learned about World Adivasi Day from Chaudhuri in the early 2000s (Interview, Chhotaudepur, 11 August 2018).

In any case, a year or two after *Adilok* began publication, in other words, in 2009 or 2010, a small group of people – perhaps 500 – began to celebrate World Adivasi Day in the Chhotaudepur area (Personal communication from Madhu Rathva, 7 May 2018). A video on Facebook purports to show the 2012 celebration,[12] but I remained unaware of these celebrations until 2015, when I received photos from a friend.[13] In that year the celebration consisted of performances typical for the area: men playing drums, men performing group dances, men brandishing bows and arrows, and a small ritual – all in a large courtyard. In the photos that I received women and children figure only as spectators, but this may just reflect the interests of the photographer. Unfortunately, because I was not much interested in the event at the time, I failed to ask follow-up questions.

In 2016 Chhotaudepur hosted at least two observances of World Adivasi Day. The one that I have been tracking grew larger. Among other things, it added a short rally through the streets of the town: people carrying formal signs identifying the rally as a celebration of World Adivasi Day, at least one group of motorbikes, and marchers. It also featured a more formal venue, with a backdrop consisting of large Pithora paintings on canvas (see more on Pithora paintings later in this chapter). In India as elsewhere, however, indigenous celebrations are ripe for exploitation by politicians and businesspeople (cf. Phipps 2016: 684; citing Henry 2008), and in 2016 the Congress Party organised its own celebration of World Adivasi Day in Chhotaudepur. Its celebration was attended by state and national officials: Bharatsinh Solanki, the state Congress President, and Amrinder Singh Raja Brar, an MLA from Punjab and Indian Youth Congress President.[14]

In 2017 political and social forces joined hands. There was only a single celebration, and it was a massive, all-day affair. According to one estimate, 5000 people participated; according to another, 10,000.[15] In any case, given that only about 6400 *adivasis* live in Chhotaudepur town, the attendance was huge.[16] It included a lengthy rally through the streets of the town, accompanied, in the words of the flyer (not translated earlier), "according to *adivasi* cultural tradition by *dhol* and *nagara* [two types of drums], a microphone [attached, naturally, to a loud-speaker system], and a D.J.".[17] Following the rally was an assembly at a stage set up at Zanda Chowk in the centre of town. It consisted of a ritual observance; recognitions and awards for outstanding students and community workers; cultural performances; and speeches by various dignitaries, including the district collector at the time, V. J. Kharadi, himself an *adivasi* but a Dungra Bhil from Sabarkantha District some distance away.[18]

In 2018 I was finally able to observe the World Adivasi Day celebration in Chhotaudepur for myself. In form it followed the pattern established in 2017: a rally along the same route through town, followed by an assembly at Zanda Chowk consisting of similar events, minus the collector. Although the 2017 celebration had been a celebration for the inhabitants of Chhotaudepur *taluka* (sub-district), the 2018 celebration was intended to be a celebration for the entire district, but at the last minute – or rather, on the last weekend (4th–5th August) – politics once

again intervened, this time from the direction of the BJP, the ruling party in the state. Despite what had been widely advertised, the Gujarat Minister of Tribal Welfare decided that the celebration for Chhotaudepur district would be held in Pavi Jetpur town instead of in Chhotaudepur. Although I was invited to the Pavi Jetpur celebration, I decided to stay in Chhotaudepur.

The Chhotaudepur rally was scheduled to depart at 9:00a.m., but when I arrived at the starting point at 9:35a.m. – I had been advised to come late – only police officers were present. The rally did not set off until just before noon, allegedly because heavy rains in the northeastern part of the *taluka* had made travel to Chhotaudepur town difficult. As a result, the assembly, originally scheduled for 12:30p.m., did not begin until about 2:45p.m. A heavy downpour greeted its beginning, and except for people sitting immediately in front of the stage, the audience stood on plastic chairs, tightly packed together and straining to see, protected by tarpaulins that were not completely effective. After about an hour, the crowd had become very thin – fortunately so, since around 4:00p.m. I myself was asked to give a short speech. The assembly came to an end around 5:30p.m. After posing for final pictures, the main participants danced together on stage, while everyone else, myself included, left.

There is little to say about the 2019 celebration. It was cancelled due to torrential rain.[19]

The local and the global

Crucial to the functioning of the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day is a conjunction of elements on a variety of scales, combined with a good deal of imaginative linking. The terms 'local' and 'global' begin to capture these elements and scales, but they only begin.

Consider the backdrop to the stage at the 2017 celebration.[20] Prominently displayed in the centre was a sign that read in large, bold letters, "A hearty welcome to all of you on the occasion of World Adivasi Day". This text was superimposed upon a semi-transparent image of the U.N. symbol: the world, seen from the North Pole, surrounded by two olive branches. This symbol was in turn superimposed upon an image of a Pithora painting. U.N. symbol and Pithora painting, transnational and *adivasi*, global and local – what could be simpler?

But look again. Whom is the sign actually welcoming? According to the 2011 Census only 45.6% of Rathvas aged 30 to 34 – people 36 to 40 in 2017 – could read. By contrast, literacy among Rathvas who were teens at the time of the celebration was greater than 85%. These figures mark an important difference: the sign addresses younger people more directly than older ones. But they also conceal an important difference. Literacy among men aged 30 to 34 at the time of the Census was almost 63%, but among women of the same age it was only slightly more than 28% – a difference of more than 34%. Furthermore, literacy statistics drop precipitously with age, so that among women 45 and older at the time of the Census – 51 and older at the time of the celebration – fewer than 10% could read.

To those accustomed to more widespread literacy, these numbers may come as a shock, but the implication is clear: the sign addresses men more directly than women. But this statement, too, conceals an important difference. Since most Rathvas live in rural areas, the general statistics more or less reflect literacy among the rural population. They significantly understate literacy among urban Rathvas. Among Rathvas aged 30 to 34 at the time of the Census who lived in an urban setting, more than 82% of the men and almost 61% of the women could read. Unlike literacy among urban men, however, urban women's literacy drops rather rapidly with age, so that among urban Rathvas aged 50 to 54 at the time of the Census, 56 to 60 at the time of the celebration, almost 78% of the men could read, but slightly fewer than 28% of the women – a difference of 50%.

In other words, although the text of the greeting addresses all people in attendance – and there is no reason to think that it is not sincere – the greeting itself actually speaks more directly to an audience that is young, urban, and male. These terms aptly describe both the organisers and the participants, too – except for residence, which is difficult to determine without conducting a survey. In 2017, one of the nine members of the planning committee was a woman, but apparently she did not attend the 2017 celebration, and she was not invited to participate in planning the 2018 event. The flyer announcing the 2018 celebration lists 22 members of the District Collection Committee, 24 political collaborators, and 23 members of the Local Planning Committee. Not a single one was a woman. The billboards announcing the event were similarly dominated by men's faces (Figure 4.1),[21] and the participants in both the rally and the programme on stage were overwhelmingly male.

In both 2017 and 2018 girls appeared on stage as dancers in school groups, but they constituted a minority, and the women and girls recognised on stage

FIGURE 4.1 Billboard advertising 24th World Adivasi Day celebration, Chhotaudepur, 7 August 2018.

were very few in number. When at the end of the programme in 2018 all of the speakers were summoned on stage for a final farewell, not a single woman was among them.[22]

Indeed, the celebration was thoroughly masculine – hypermasculine – in conception and implementation.[23] The most common sign of *adivasi* identity was the *pāgḥḍī*, a traditional style of turban worn by men, but the second most common sign was weaponry. Men prominently displayed bows and arrows, scythes, clubs, and other weapons as they promenaded through the streets, danced in groups, and posed for photographs and selfies.[24] The weapons signalled male *adivasi* strength, self-assertion, and tradition – even when (as I know occurred in at least one instance) they were bought especially for the occasion. Especially pervasive was the bow and arrow. On billboards it was associated with traditional *adivasi* heroes: Eklavya (an archer from the *Mahabharata*) and Birsa Munda (see more later in this chapter). One common image, pervasive on social media but also emblazoned on polo shirts at the event, shows the stylised silhouette of a bare, heavily musculatured male (sometimes just the upper body) shooting an arrow upwards. In a common phrase, recited in call and response fashion by all of the participants assembled on stage at the end of the programme, myself included, the bow and arrow even functioned as a metonym for the *adivasi* community: "Ek tīr, Ek kamān/Sabhī ādivāsī ek samān!" "One arrow, one bow/All *adivasis* are one and the same!"

Seven scales

Commenting on sociological thought in the decades bracketing the turn of the century, Peter Wagner notes:

> The emergence and assertion of the individual as a being without predetermined strong connections to or within collectivities has moved to the centre of sociological interest. Together with the parallel debate on 'globalization', a sociological image of the contemporary world has emerged in which there are no social phenomena 'between' the singular human being, on the one hand, and structures of global extension, on the other.
>
> *(Wagner 2012: 66)*

Such an atomised individual is most prominent, of course, among rational-choice theorists, but one finds a similar dichotomy elsewhere, as when Anthony Giddens contrasts facework with abstract systems or writes of "the interlacing of distance and proximity, of the personal and the large-scale mechanisms of globalisation" (Giddens 1990: 88).

My contention here is that a simple dichotomy between the local and the global is too blunt to capture much of what goes on at the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day. I find it heuristically useful to identify activities and events on several different scales.[25] Given boundaries imposed and maintained

by both external and internal forces – legal definitions of *adivasis* as Scheduled Tribes, more or less strict endogamy within tribal communities – it may make some sense to talk of bounded communities in the Chhotaudepur area, but these scales also refer to different levels of "bundled connections" (Symons 2016: 710). I am not claiming that all societies reflect just these levels; at least for the moment it is best to think of them as reflecting a particular social imaginary as practised on the ground (Mukherji 2009: 130–133). The scales I identify are, in order of ascending time-space distanciation:[26] personal, group, communal, local, state, regional-national, and transnational. Unless otherwise specified, specific descriptions that follow are of the 2018 celebration.

Personal

It seems self-evident that people bring to celebrations such as World Adivasi Day their own conceptions and aspirations, which intersect with other scales in various ways. Most conceptions and aspirations remain inaccessible to a researcher, but not all. In personal conversation Prof. Arjun Rathva insisted that the celebration was for the entire community and that no politicking, whether by the government or by any political party, was appropriate; Naranbhai Rathva, elected in March 2018 to the Rajya Sabha (India's upper house), echoed similar views. Prof. Shankarbhai Rathva, by contrast, a former BJP MLA, was committed to whatever celebration the state government declared official, even if that meant changing plans at the last minute. Vipul Rathva, who was introduced to me as the 'founder' of the Rath Sena,[27] asked me to emphasise the need for education in my remarks from the stage, which he helped write. I did so, but I also stressed the significance of traditional *adivasi* culture, which the educated often reject.

Of course, different conceptions and aspirations have different degrees of impact that range along a spectrum from, as we sometimes say, private to public. Those that had the most public impact on the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day were probably those of the artist Lakshmanbhai Rathva, who apparently received free rein in all matters of graphic design. From flyers and billboards to the backdrop on the stage, his creations framed the visual experience of the celebration. Most effective, to my mind, were a series of banners, each depicting an *adivasi* hero, that hung from the lampposts in the centre of the streets through which the rally proceeded (Figure 4.2).

These banners were not, however, idiosyncratic creations, or even local ones. They depicted images that were and perhaps still are available for download on Google and Wikipedia and that circulated far beyond Chhotaudepur on social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

Group

Some people – me, for example – participated in the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day more or less as individuals, but I suspect that the vast

FIGURE 4.2 Banners along the rally route in preparation for World Adivasi Day celebration, Chhotaudepur, 8 August 2018.

majority did so as members of a group – or of several groups. Some groups had rather fluid boundaries. Friends or neighbours (often both) would run into each other during the rally, spend some time together, perhaps take a selfie or two, and then go their separate ways. I met several friends this way. In one case I met quite by accident a friend whom I had not seen for many years.

Other groups had more sharply defined boundaries. As often happens in the area, these boundaries were marked by clothing. The musicians who started off the rally wore dark green button-down shirts, white *dhotis* (a cloth wrapped around the waist), a blue triangular cloth around their hips, and red *pāghḍīs* (turbans). Members of the Jay Adivasi Mahasangh Gujarat wore blue polo shirts with the name of the organisation emblazoned on the back. Another group wore pink polo shirts with a logo – widely available online – on the back and on the left-front pocket area: a full-body silhouette of a male archer in a circle with the caption "Jay Adivasi". Members of yet another group wore light green polo shirts with a similar logo – circle, archer, "Jay Adivasi" caption – along with the phrase (in Gujarati) "9th August International Day" scrolled around the top of both logos (Figure 4.3).

FIGURE 4.3 Marchers in the World Adivasi Day rally, Chhotaudepur, 9 August 2018.

School groups that performed on stage were similarly defined sartorially. One group of boys stood out for emphasising *adivasi* identity through a particularly 'primitive' look seen only in festivals. Their mostly bare bodies were covered with painted white and occasionally black decorations, they wore knee-length skirts of leafy strands over shorts, and they sported thick red headbands into which had been stuffed large, green leaves, standing upright.

Yet other groups fell somewhere along a spectrum between the diffuse and the well-bounded. Such groups include the politicians and other leaders who initially marched together at the front of the procession; a group of about 30 women who walked together further back; and persons, dispersed through the crowds, wearing paper badges with the U.N. symbol on a yellow field – the event organisers, I later learned. Not to be overlooked were the police in uniform who accompanied the rally. Some of them, both men and women, were themselves *adivasi*.

Communal

In India the term 'communal' bears a particular meaning. It refers to distinct 'communities' who live side by side in the same locality. A prime example is the phrase 'communal violence', which usually designates violence between communities defined by religion (or *dharma*): Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and so on. Here, however, I am using the term 'communal' to refer to a social, not a religious community, namely, the community of *adivasis*, and specifically to

the community of *adivasis* who can reasonably be expected to participate in the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day.

As we have already seen, this community is fractured in terms of literacy, age, sex, residency, and specific 'tribal' identity (Rathva, Nayaka, Dhanak, Tadvi, and Bhil). The organisers of the Chhotaudepur World Adivasi Day celebration have more or less ignored these divisions, which manifest themselves in the quintessential participant being a relatively young, literate Rathva man who has a close association with Chhotaudepur town. They have not, however, ignored two other divisive factors, as the promotional flyer makes clear. One of these factors is politics: varying political loyalties resulted in competing celebrations in both 2016 and 2018. The second divisive factor that the flyer mentions is religion, *dharma*. Within the *adivasi* community, religion is a powerful divisive force.

In other parts of India, such as the Northeast, indigenous peoples have converted to Christianity in large numbers, but in the Chhotaudepur area the vast majority of *adivasis* self-identify as Hindu. The major religious rift is not between *adivasi* Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Jains. It is between traditionalists and assimilationists, known locally as *jagats* and *bhagats*, respectively. *Jagats* – traditionalists – make animal sacrifices and offer libations of alcohol to gods, goddesses, and ancestors; they generally also eat meat and drink alcohol themselves. *Bhagats*, influenced by the values of caste Hindus, consider these practices to be uncivilised, and they themselves avoid meat and alcohol in everyday life – at least they are supposed to – as well as in ritual. This rift can and does lead to contention within villages, for example during observances at village shrines, and within households, for example between husbands and wives.

The Chhotaudepur celebrations employ two strategies to overcome religious divisions, both of which may strike Europeans and North Americans as quintessentially modern. First, they dismiss religious differences as matters of private belief – *aṃgat manyatā*.[28] At least, those who wrote the flyer do. It is difficult to say how widespread this conception is. Second, they transform various elements of *jagat* religious practice into tokens of communal identity by secularising, aestheticising, and 'heritagising' them.

For example, *badva* – religious leaders who traditionally heal and embody various deities when they become possessed – initiated the formal programme. They did so by, among other things, offering coconuts (in lieu of animal sacrifice) at a table in front of the stage that contained elements familiar from *jagat* rituals: glazed terracotta horses; a *dhabu*, that is, a terracotta residence for a deity; pots and oil lamps set up on mounds of paddy (unhusked rice), all marked with *tipna* (orange-red dots applied when reciting mantras) and tied round with red threads (Figure 4.4).

This opening ceremony was as much secularised culture as it was religion; requiring no assent to specifically *jagat* practices, it could be embraced by all. Even more telling was the widespread use of Pithora paintings on flyers, billboards, and backdrops to performances. Pithoras depict the marriage procession of Babo Pithoro, the most important Rathva god. Originally only a segment of the Rathva community known as Moti Nats used them; they had specialists

FIGURE 4.4 Table with ritual implements in front of the stage at the World Adivasi Day celebration, Chhotaudepur, 9 August 2018.

paint them on the walls of their houses in recognition of healing and in fulfillment of vows. Today, however, painted on canvas, Pithoras have become commodified in handicrafts markets. They have also become general markers of *adivasi* identity, found in such disparate places as the walls of the local Circuit House (a guest house for visiting government officials) and the local Catholic high school, in the latter case combined with depictions of Bible stories. The Rathsena – the 'Rathva army', founded 10th June, 2018 – has envisioned an even more formal recognition of Pithoras as cultural heritage. One of their stated goals is to acquire a 'GI tag' – a geographical indication tag – for the Pithora. The Pithora would then serve as a distinctive marker of Rathva identity, much as champagne characterises a region of France and Nürnberger sausages a city in Germany.

Local

The Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day is conceived of as a local embodiment of a global event. Over time, however, the extension of 'local' has grown. In the early days, the celebration was centred on the area around Chhotaudepur town. By 2017 it had grown to include all of Chhotaudepur sub-district. In 2018 the organisers decided to extend the celebration to the entire district. They asked other sub-districts to hold World Adivasi Day celebrations on Sunday, 5th August. The sub-district of Kavant did so; perhaps others did as

well. Nevertheless, it proved difficult to make the celebration an all-inclusive district-wide event.

The organisers of the Chhotaudepur celebration attempted to define the local character of the event in several ways. One way was through performances by school groups from various parts of the locality served. In this respect the 2018 celebration was disappointing; only three school groups participated. Two other elements of the formal programme in 2018 also served to define the celebration as district-wide: the recognition of the accomplishments of various *adivasis* throughout the district and the speeches by persons with some claim to district-wide significance, most notably Mohansinh Rathva, a politician of long standing.

In other words, the 2018 Chhotaudepur celebration proved to be more locally encompassing in idea than in realisation. The erection of billboards throughout the district to advertise the event communicated the idea, and the flyer did so even more explicitly. While the 2017 flyer had identified the Chhotaudepur celebration as a sub-district one, the 2018 flyer explicitly invited people to participate in a 'district-level' celebration. It underscored this extension by publishing the names of the District Collection Committee. But even this list belied the event's district-wide character. Six members of the committee belonged to Chhotaudepur sub-district, six more to Pavi Jetpur sub-district (immediately to the west), and four to Kavant sub-district (immediately to the south). Only two members each belonged to Bodeli and Nasvadi sub-districts, and only one to Sankheda, all farther away.

As things turned out, it was not so much geography as politics – or geography exploited by politicians – that frustrated the aspiration to hold a district-wide celebration in Chhotaudepur. Both the 2017 and 2018 flyers stated in bold: "This programme is completely non-political". But as already noted, the weekend before the 2018 celebration the Gujarat State Minister for Tribal Welfare determined that the official district celebration should be held in Pavi Jetpur, allegedly because that town is more centrally located. The government also devoted 5 lakh rupees (□ 500,000), a locally significant sum, to the Pavi Jetpur celebration. Buses brought school children from around the district; district, *taluka*, and village officials were present, as well as political guests of honour. School groups danced, and a group consisting of villagers from various villages in Kavant sub-district played the *piha* (a wind instrument similar to a recorder). *Badva* performed *puja*, two guests of honour spoke, and the BJP government touted its programmes for tribal welfare in order to contrast itself with the Congress Party (Interview with Prof. Shankarbhai Rathva, Chhotaudepur, 11 August 2018). While the Chhotaudepur celebration was envisioned as a local embodiment of an event rooted in a global institution – the U.N. – the Pavi Jetpur celebration was oriented towards the state and central governments, both in the hands of the BJP.

State

I first encountered World Adivasi Day not as a local but as a state celebration. In this context 'state' is not simply a political designation. In 1960 the Republic

of India carved out the state of Gujarat on linguistic lines, so that here 'state' also refers to a shared language and to some extent a shared culture. The shared language links the *adivasis* of Gujarat – some 29 distinct communities – to one another. The celebration of World Adivasi Day is a good example. Although *adivasis* often speak their own languages, the medium of the Chhotaudepur celebration, both in the advertisements prior to the event and the event itself, was Gujarati.[29]

As mentioned previously, I first learned of World Adivasi Day from *Adilok*, a bi-monthly magazine devoted to furthering tribal self-consciousness, unity,[30] and rights. Since its founding in 2008 the magazine has been engaged in, to quote its publisher, "a campaign . . . to promote tribal identity through symbols like 9th August" (Personal communication, Vinayak Jadav, 5 May 2018). Over the years its coverage has become increasingly expansive. Recent July–August issues have contained a number of articles on World Adivasi Day, along with advertisements expressing felicitations for the occasion. September–October issues have generally contained news reports about celebrations along with photos sent in by 'correspondents' (not news professionals). For example, the back cover of the September–October 2018 issue contained a photo montage of celebrations at Ahmedabad, Ahva (the Dangs), Bhiloda (Aravalli district), Danta (Banaskantha district), Navsari, Sagbara (Narmada district), Surat, Vadodara, Vansda (Navsari district), and Vyara (Tapi district). Inside the magazine were four pages of reports on celebrations at Bhiloda, Danta, Mandal (Ahmedabad district), Morva Hadaf (Panchmahal district), Sagbara, Surat (two reports), Vadodara, Vansda, and Vyara, followed by a brief article on the state-wide seminar held at Gujarat University on the occasion of World Adivasi Day (A. Vasava 2018). Although *Adilok* has never reported on World Adivasi Day celebrations in Chhotaudepur, Chhotaudepur is not entirely absent. Both the 2017 and 2018 July–August issues featured full-page felicitations for World Adivasi Day on the back cover from Naranbhai Rathva, the member of the Rajya Sabha mentioned earlier, along with his son, Sangramsinh Rathva, until February 2018 mayor of Chhotaudepur.

Some participants in Chhotaudepur celebrations of World Adivasi Day have aligned themselves quite explicitly with state-wide units. For example, signs for the Jay Adivasi Mahasangh Gujarat are visible in photos that I received from the 2015 and 2016 celebrations, and at the 2018 celebration at least a few people wore shirts that identified them with the Mahasangh. Another state-wide group, the Rathsena, was present more subtly. Nor should we neglect the reports of Gujarati news outlets such as teersamachar.com, which carries news of interest to *adivasis*, and of posts before, during, and after the event on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube. Indeed, somewhat to my embarrassment, since my Gujarati is far from flawless, a portion of my own speech made its way to Facebook.[31]

In other words, many different state-wide non-governmental agents and media have contributed to the observance of World Adivasi Day in Gujarat, an observance to which the Chhotaudepur celebrations have varying connections.

Since 2017 the state government, too, has been involved in the observation of World Adivasi Day, although its involvement is somewhat ironic: the government of India refuses to acknowledge that anyone living in India qualifies as indigenous in the U.N.'s sense of the term.

In 2017 the Department for Tribal Welfare decided that World Adivasi Day should be celebrated in the chief towns of all tribal sub-districts. Official responsibility for organising the Chhotaudepur celebration fell to the District Collector and the Deputy Superintendent of Police. On one account, at least, aside from the address that the Collector gave at the celebration, the government's involvement was limited to approving people to sit on the planning and implementation committees. The celebration itself was entirely organised by "Rathva [*sic*; not *adivasi*] leaders", and the organisers themselves bore the expenses. The government "did not give a single rupee" (Personal communication, Madhu Rathva, 6 May 2018; Shankarbhai Rathva, 18 May 2018). The government's involvement in 2018 was considerably more extensive. According to information that I received from Prof. Shankarbhai Rathva, the original idea was to hold a celebration in every electoral constituency. When it became difficult to find enough VIP guests of honour to go around, the government decided to sponsor celebrations in every district.

Understandably, there is resistance to and resentment of the state government's attempt to celebrate World Adivasi Day, certainly in Chhotaudepur and presumably elsewhere. Prof. Arjun Rathva, who regularly runs for office as a candidate of the Aam Aadmi Party, was quite clear that, in his mind, the celebration should only serve social purposes and that it should not involve any politicking, whether by parties in power or out of it. When I talked with Naranbhai Rathva (Congress Party) after the 2018 event, he agreed. World Adivasi Day celebrations, he told me, should be organised by tribals themselves, not by the government. Their purpose is to further tribal culture, lest young tribals forget it. On that day, he said, members of all parties should come together as one to celebrate. When I queried whether the celebration had any connection to the United Nations, he said no. It was a tribal celebration (Interview, Chhotaudepur, 12 August 2018).

Regional – national

A quick search on Google, YouTube, or Facebook is enough to show that Gujarat is not the only Indian state where people celebrate World Adivasi Day. For example, moving east from Chhotaudepur one finds World Adivasi Day celebrations in places such as Alirajpur[32] and Indore.[33] In fact, in 2018 the Madhya Pradesh government, unlike the government of Gujarat, declared World Adivasi Day an official holiday for people living in the state's tribal districts.[34] Celebrations by non-governmental organisations have also transcended the borders of Gujarat. Perhaps the best examples are those of the Adivasi Ekta Parishad. In 2018 the Parishad celebration was held in Palghar, Maharashtra, roughly halfway between the southern border of Gujarat and the city of Mumbai.[35]

While these networks become less populated with greater distance, there are important respects in which the Chhotaudepur World Adivasi Day celebrations downscale regional or national elements. These include the various figures presented as heroes of the *adivasi* cause, especially Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956) and even more so Birsa Munda (1875–1900). Both are represented by full-body statues at prominent places in Chhotaudepur town, and both appeared on the banners hung from the lampposts (see Figure 4.2). Both also featured prominently on the flyers announcing the 2017 and 2018 World Adivasi Day celebrations, and of the ten different billboard designs I saw in 2018, six contained portraits of Birsa, four of Dr. Ambedkar, always in the company of Birsa (see Figure 4.1).

Dr. Ambedkar's presence at the celebration is unmistakable, but it is also muted. He is widely known and respected as a leader of the Dalits, India's former untouchables. Some Harijans (as they are called in this area) do live in Chhotaudepur sub-district; they constitute 6.5% of the population Chhotaudepur town and about 3.25% of the population of the sub-district. Nevertheless, nothing in the use of Dr. Ambedkar's image for World Adivasi Day celebrations signalled solidarity between *adivasis* and Dalits – in legal terminology, between Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Instead, inasmuch as Dr. Ambedkar was the guiding force behind the drafting of the Indian Constitution and of recognising Scheduled Tribes as a population with certain rights and privileges, he serves as a visual icon of the special legal status that *adivasis* enjoy. As we have seen, both the 2017 and 2018 flyers stressed that every Indian citizen, but especially every *adivasi*, has the responsibility to ensure that these rights and privileges are recognised and protected. Indeed, the flyers largely frame the World Adivasi Day celebrations as demonstrations of "the importance of our constitutional rights and their implementation".

Birsa Munda is a somewhat different figure. The flyer refers to him as a "Leader of the People and Martyr", while the banners strung up along the parade route refer to him as "Father of the Earth". In fact, Birsa serves as an icon of *adivasi* self-assertion and independent agency. An *adivasi* leader in Jharkhand – before *adivasis* were known as *adivasis* and Jharkhand was known as Jharkhand – he presented himself as a messenger from God. He advocated rejection of British rule and Christianity and a return to tribal ways. After a series of rebellious activities, he was arrested by the British in early 1900 and died in jail a few months later at the age of 25 (Singh 1983). The realities of transportation and communication being what they were in the late 19th century, especially in the princely state of Chhotaudepur (cf. Parmar 1903: 57, 178–179), it is a good bet that there were no contemporary connections between *adivasis* there, and Birsa and his movement.

In recent years, however, Birsa has come to play a prominent role in the self-consciousness of *adivasis* in Chhotaudepur and elsewhere, not only in Gujarat but among *adivasis* in much of central India. One sign of his growing prominence is that on 30th June, 2017, a little more than a month before the 2017 World Adivasi Day celebration, a statue of Birsa was dedicated on the grounds of the newly

built Nagar Seva Sadan (Municipal Services Centre) in Chhotaudepur. Birsa's great-granddaughter was present, along with her daughter. So was Sangramsinh Rathva, then Mayor of Chhotaudepur, and at least two other members of the 2017 World Adivasi Day planning committee, Dhulkiben Rathva and Prof. Shankarbhai Rathva (Rathva 2017). In both 2017 and 2018 the World Adivasi Day rally stopped at this statue. In 2018 various leaders of the community took turns hanging garlands of flowers on the statue, placing a *tilak* on Birsa's statue's forehead, and having their photos taken with the statue, while two lines of the rally processed around the statue and stationary crowds looked on (Figure 4.5).

This was the only place where the rally paused for ritual activities before arriving at the site of the formal programme.

In contrast to Birsa Munda and Dr. Ambedkar, one national symbol was conspicuously absent from the World Adivasi Day celebrations in Chhotaudepur in 2018 – and certainly from the photos I received of the 2017 celebration – namely, the tricolour, that is, the flag of the Republic of India. In 2018 there were muted allusions to the tricolour: green and orange were used as background colours, and I saw a couple of bows whose arcs were painted in three broad stripes (from top to bottom) orange, white, and green. Much more prominent, however, were red triangular pennants with a simple message, "Jay Adivasi" (see Figures 4.2 and 4.5). A comparison with the celebration held by the Congress Party in 2016 shows how much more could have been done. There the Indian flag was unmistakably present.

FIGURE 4.5 Felicitating the statue of Birsa Munda during the World Adivasi Day celebration, Chhotaudepur, 9 August 2018.

The lack of symbols of the Indian nation does not necessarily signal alienation from the national government, as it might in other parts of India, where *adivasis* have engaged in covert and sometimes open revolt.[36] *Adivasis* in Chhotaudepur live in an area where they are numerically and politically dominant. Indeed, elected officials from this area at the municipal, state, and national level are all required by law to belong to a Scheduled Tribe. Furthermore, *adivasis* in Chhotaudepur district freely employ the tricolour and other national symbols on other occasions, such as Republic Day. But World Adivasi Day is different. The images of Birsa and Dr. Ambedkar and the absence of symbols referring to the Republic as a whole underscore that World Adivasi Day does not celebrate the Indian nation or even the *adivasi* community as a loyal part of that nation. It celebrates *adivasis* as a specific community of local, regional, and national dimensions that enjoys its own distinctive constitutional rights and protections, rights and protections that the state and all of its citizens have the responsibility to further and protect.

Transnational

Since the rise of discussions of globalisation during the 1990s, the terms 'transnational' and 'global' (or 'globalising') have often appeared together and slid into one another.[37] I use the term 'transnational' here to designate a spectrum upon which we may locate structures and events on any scale larger than the national. The term is not without its complications, especially in the context of discussions of indigeneity. On the one hand, the concept of indigeneity lay at the root of the Herderian concept of the nation;[38] on the other, the indigenous is often conceived in contemporary parlance in terms of alienation from or marginalisation within the nation-state. For my purposes the term 'transnational' opens up a conceptual space within which to reflect on global indigeneity. In many ways global indigeneity is an imagined reality, but not one that is imagined consistently. The *adivasis* of Chhotaudepur imagine it one way. Other peoples whom the INREL project encountered imagine it differently.

For the most part, the participants in the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day, as realised on the ground in 2018, were local. Unlike in Pavi Jetpur, no representatives of the state or nation from outside the district were present, at least so far as I could determine. The only *videsi* (foreign) participant that I know of was me. The local participants with whom I spoke share this impression.

It would nevertheless be a mistake to conclude from these observations that *adivasis* in this part of India have no transnational connections. In January 2018, the Adivasi Ekta Parishad held its 25th annual cultural festival in Rajpipla, some 72kms as the crow flies southwest of Chhotaudepur. According to media reports it attracted 500,000 participants, including from several other countries, among them Nepal, Indonesia, and Australia.[39] In April 2018 a delegation from the Parishad visited the meeting of the U.N.'s Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (S. Vasava 2018). At the time of the 2018 World Adivasi Day celebration, the Adivasi

Academy in Tejgadh, located in Chhotaudepur sub-district 10kms to the west of Chhotaudepur town, was in the midst of a district-wide UNICEF-sponsored child welfare study. It was also hosting two (non-indigenous) German interns who were about to leave after a year in residency. More broadly, the Academy has hosted international conferences and exhibitions as well as a number of foreign researchers, myself included. In 2016 it brokered a deal in which Cambridge University's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology commissioned two sculptures from Balubhai Rathva, an artist from Ganthiya village (Chhotaudepur sub-district).[40] But while *adivasis* in the area may have these transnational connections, they were not actualised in the participants in the 2018 World Adivasi Day celebration, myself excepted.

The transnational did, however, put in appearances. The most visually prominent way was the use of the U.N. symbol. It appeared on the backdrop of the stage – at least in 2017; it was omitted in 2018. It appeared on the flyer advertising the celebration, even though the 2018 flyer omitted the 2017 flyer's account of the international proceedings that established the day. It featured on the paper badges that the celebration's organisers wore. It also figured on three of the ten different billboard designs that I identified. In this regard, one billboard particularly caught my attention. Its background featured the U.N. symbol on an (Islamic) green field, without a hint of Hindu saffron or icons of *adivasi* identity. In effect, this billboard downscaled a recognisable icon of cooperation between nations to serve as an instrument for overcoming communal division. It read, "Silver Spoon plaza – on the occasion of World Adivasi Day the entire Muslim community along with Commercial Stone Vanar and Babadev Mining Dadigam sends its heartfelt best wishes to [our] *adivasi* brothers and sisters".[41]

Billboards and speeches at the formal programme occasionally referred to the United Nations and to the celebration as 'international' and 'global' (see Figure 4.1). But as with the 2017 flyer's silence about UNDRIP, the celebrations contained little specific reference to the U.N. as an actual international agency or to its programmes.[42] What seemed to count was the idea of the U.N. as an instrument of legitimation, as a higher authority than the nation-state. More subtly transnational in its resonance was the trope, common in international discourse, that indigenous people live in harmony with nature, unlike their more 'developed' neighbours. One finds this trope in both the 2017 and 2018 flyers, but the backdrops on the stage welcoming people to the 2017 and 2018 formal programmes gave it a pointedly Spinozean twist, as did one billboard. They read, *Prakṛti ej parameśvār*, "Nature – *this* is the highest god".

Imagining global *adivasi*-ness

The Chhotaudepur 9th August celebrations translate the conception of an imagined global indigeneity into an imagined global *adivasi*-ness. One sees this already in the first two words of the text from the flyers: *Viśvanā ādivāsīo-*, "the *adivasis* of the world". The transformations that result should not be overlooked.

It is customary to observe the difficulty of making *adivasis* fit into the international indigenous mould. For example, Megan Moodie writes that it takes "a good deal of work . . . to make 'adivasi' equivalent to the international language of 'indigenous people'" (2015: 190, n. 12). Such a statement, however, grants a certain privilege to international discourse – or rather, to a certain discursive community by virtue of assigning to it the privilege of constituting 'international discourse'. I want to reverse this statement and make *adivasi* the ultimate reference point instead.[43] In a scholarly or legal context, it takes a good deal of work to make Native Americans, First Nations peoples, native Hawaiians, Sámi, and Maori equivalent to *adivasis*; nevertheless, this is the way *adivasis* in the Chhotaudepur area unreflectively think about them. Crucial to the celebration of World Adivasi Day is the imagination that there are *adivasis* throughout the world, and that they are all in fact engaged in the same celebration.

This imagination is not entirely mistaken. Consider activities that took place in 2018 from two areas involved in the INREL project: Sápmi and Costa Rica.[44] On 9th August Alii Keskitalo, the President of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament, issued a statement in both Sámi and Norwegian that recognised the U.N.'s International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples; her focus was on the importance of the Sámi language and the promotion of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages.[45] In Tromsø the Library and City Archive sponsored an activity that highlighted the transnational nature of the day in a manner particularly suited to the INREL project: a launch of the book *A Naga Odyssey*, by Visier Meyasetsu Sanyü with Richar Broome, at which both Visier and Jon Petter Gintal, a member of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament, spoke.[46] Also in Sápmi, Isogaisa, an annual festival of Sámi and indigenous culture, began on 9th August in 2018, although the organiser, Ronald Kvernmo, told Siv Ellen Kraft that any correspondence of the start of the festival with the date of the U.N.'s International Day was purely coincidental – to the extent that coincidences exist at all (Personal communication, 11 August 2018). Meanwhile, in Costa Rica 9th August provided an occasion for politicking. The Costa Rican government used the occasion to announce the initiation of a process for establishing a Public Policy for Indigenous Peoples, 2019–2024.[47] Frenapi – the National Front of Indigenous Peoples, which unites representatives of the Cabécares, Bribris, Teribes, Ngöbes, and Ngöbes Bugle – issued a statement of its own.[48]

Despite these transnational manifestations, World Adivasi Day is not really a global celebration. People in the United States, for example, whether indigenous or not, seem to pay little attention to it. Instead, the second Monday in October – a convenient substitute for 12th October, the day when Columbus and his crew first sighted American land – is being increasingly celebrated as Indigenous Peoples' Day.[49] The various U.S. Indigenous Peoples' Day celebrations include a variety of activities, among them marches and cultural programmes similar to those in celebrations of World Adivasi Day in Gujarat.[50] Some of these events imagine a global celebration, too, although of course the second Monday in October – or 12th October, for that matter – does not have any meaning

for *adivasis* in Gujarat. One example is the screening of the film "The Condor and the Eagle", which addresses environmental issues and depicts, among other things, a ceremony held on Indigenous Peoples' Day (10th October), 2016, at the site of the Standing Rock protests to the Dakota Access Pipeline. Many screenings took place in the U.S., but at least one screening took place elsewhere, too: Siv Ellen Kraft, principal investigator of the INREL project and contributor to this volume, arranged a screening in Tromsø, Norway, that included a virtual interview with the filmmaker.

Another example of the transnational extension of the U.S. Indigenous Peoples' Day, and one that is more clearly global in its framing, is the Global Indigenous Wisdom Summit, a cyber-summit held via Facebook on Monday, 8th October, 2018. Although the programme advertised the involvement of "keepers of wisdom from around the world", only one of the keepers listed on the website, Moetu-Taiha Ransfield, came from outside the Americas, in her case from Aotearoa/New Zealand. Most live in North America, although bio blurbs often emphasise their global activity.[51] A similar pattern appears in the archived talks available on the Global Indigenous Wisdom Summit website. There one encounters 22 speakers from North America (if we include one speaker from Greenland), 11 speakers from Latin America, and two from Uganda.[52] The closest one gets to South Asia is Mikuak Rai, who seems to have South Asian interests, but these interests are difficult to judge from web searches. At least at the time of writing, Rai's Instagram posts from India concentrated on typical tourist destinations and had no discernible *adivasi* content. What hints there are of his working with the marginalised in India have more to do with Dalits (the former untouchables) than with *adivasis*.[53] Even more curious is the online context of the Global Indigenous Wisdom Summit. In 2018 the Summit was broadcast on the Facebook site of the Shift Network.[54] Here proponents of indigenous wisdom with a decidedly American slant hobnob not with representatives of tribal peoples of South Asia but with people purveying the wisdom of the *adivasis'* historical oppressors – perhaps because their knowledge of South Asian history and society is slim and because they conceive of indigeneity according to what some call the 'saltwater theory': any victim of European colonisation, whether of the settler or administrative variety, counts as an indigenous person (Uddin, Gerharz, and Chakkarath 2018: 12; Baird 2018: 50, 60). Such a view completely misses the social condition – and in fact the existence – of *adivasis* such as Rathvas.

12th October – or the second Monday in October – is not the only alternative to 9th August as a day for celebrating indigeneity. For example, according to one source, although both days are celebrated in Costa Rica, few indigenous people there may actually be familiar with the U.N.'s International Day (9th August), and because the 12th October holiday is often shifted to the Monday after 12th October (rather than the second Monday in the month), it provides many Costa Ricans with the opportunity for a long holiday weekend but has little meaning for many indigenous people, who, as agriculturalists, generally cannot afford to take the time off. The most important day for celebrating

indigeneity in Costa Rica may well be 19th April, known as 'Costa Rican Aboriginal Day' or 'The Day of the Indigenous'. (This date, too, has a transnational dimension; it is celebrated in Brazil as the Dio do Indio.) Of more local importance is 4th July, a day important for the indigenous people of Talamanca because it is the date on which Pablo Presbere, the leader of indigenous Talamancan resistance to colonisation, was killed in 1710 (Personal communication from Heidi Mayorga Escalante, 11 January 2018).

My purpose here is not to criticise *adivasis* in Chhotaudepur for imagining that there is a global *adivasi* population celebrating World Adivasi Day. Indigenous people are hardly alone in imagining that their celebrations are universal when strictly speaking they are not. For example, people who use the Gregorian calendar often imagine that the entire world celebrates New Year's Day on 1st January. Of course, at the present these latter societies exercise transnational economic and political force and cultural hegemony in a way that *adivasi* societies do not. Thus, celebrations on the night of 31st December are becoming increasingly widespread, even in places like Chhotaudepur, where 31st December and 1st January remain workdays. But rather than explore these differentials of power and their consequences, which on the surface, at least, seem rather obvious, I want to explore a little more themes that are closer to the INREL project: the translation via performance of the U.N.'s International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples as World Adivasi Day, and the translation of indigenous religion(s) as *adivasi* religion or *dharam*.

Translation in performance

For many indigenous people, a principal issue is sovereignty. Among people visited in the INREL project, native Hawaiians are a good example.[55] So are the Nagas in Northeast India (cf. Longkumer, Chapter 3; more generally Mukherji 2013: 124). At least at the time of writing, however, sovereignty issues have had little traction among Rathvas. A small minority in and around Gujarat is interested in establishing a separate *adivasi* state known as Bhilistan – the land of the Bhils - within the Indian Republic, but in 2018 a different issue had much greater significance: identity, both *adivasi* identity generally and Rathva identity specifically.[56] Here are the high points.

On 14th January, at the gathering of the Adivasi Ekta Parishad in Rajpipla, Gujarat's Minister for Tribal Welfare, Ganpat Vasava, was booed, pelted with stones, and forced to flee. His alleged offence was threatening tribal identity by suggesting that the category 'Scheduled Tribe' (ST) be broadened to include more communities.[57] On 9th March the Rathva community effected a complete *bandh* – a commercial and public shut-down – of Chhotaudepur district in protest against efforts, started farther north, to have them re-classified not as tribal but as belonging to the 'Other Backward Classes'; those efforts, if successful, would have deprived the Rathvas in Chhotaudepur district of political representation and employment, since political offices and some government jobs

there are reserved for persons belonging to Scheduled Tribes. On 10th June, at a meeting in Pavi Jetpur, the Rath Sena – the 'Rathva Army' – was founded to further Rathva causes; among its 13 stated objectives are achieving "a permanent solution to questions that have been raised about the identity of the Rathva community" and "establishing a global identity for Rathva culture", for example, by acquiring a GI tag for Pithora paintings and promoting the Kavant *gerno melo* (a large festival) as an opportunity for national and international tourism.[58] From 30th August to 2nd September the Don Bosco High School in Chhotaudepur hosted a public programme, involving both *adivasi* and non-*adivasi* speakers and aimed at preserving tribal culture and identity. On 21st October Rathva politicians from across the political spectrum gathered in Chhotaudepur and signed a pledge to boycott all political parties until the question of Rathva identity was solved once and for all.[59] Later, *adivasis* across the state called for a complete, statewide *bandh* on 31st October, the day on which Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 'Statue of Unity', that is, a statue of the Gujarati leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel located in the middle of the area from which *adivasis* have been displaced by the Sardar Sarovar dam (on the dam, cf. Baviskar 2004). Finally, on 28th December Ganpat Vasava, still Minister for Tribal Welfare, appointed a six-person committee to examine the ST status of Rathvas. In response, on 30th December, at a gathering of the Rathva Adivasi Samaj Mahasabha in Kavant, the attendees, reported to be 5000 persons, resolved to boycott all political parties and activities until the issue of identity was resolved.[60]

Clearly, identity is a current issue among Rathvas, and one that the enthusiasm with which *adivasis* in Chhotaudepur have embraced World Adivasi Day celebrations articulates.[61] In doing so, they have employed patterns that transcend purposive, ethnic, geographical, political, religious, and perhaps historical boundaries. One sees some resonance with the protests at Alta, Norway, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in the protests against the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea, Hawai'i, that began in 2014, and in the protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock in 2016 and 2017. In form, however, the celebration of World Adivasi Day more closely resembles Nazi Party rallies, Corpus Christi celebrations (in places where there are public processions with a monstrance followed by a Mass), protests against the American invasion of Iraq in Washington, D.C., in 2003, and gay pride parades. To say the least, this is a disparate set of events, politically and culturally. Nevertheless, each involves marches through an urban area, followed by speakers on a stage.

Before I participated in the 2018 Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day, I was under the impression that the formal programme of awards and speeches was the core of the celebration and that the rally was simply prefatory. This is also the way at least one news report represented the 2018 event.[62] I now think, however, that this impression is mistaken. For most of the people involved, the rally was the more important component. It provided *adivasis* with an opportunity to revel in public: to wear traditional *adivasi* clothes that one might not ordinarily wear;[63] to wave traditional *adivasi* weapons that one might

not ordinarily carry; to march and dance as an *adivasi* with fellow *adivasis*; to mark with one's presence – indeed, to occupy – public streets and spaces; to render *adivasi*-ness visible; to make it audible with music, whistles, ululations, and repeated shouts of "Jay Johar! Jay Adivasi!"; to feel one's *adivasi*-ness in one's muscles and one's movements and one's bones; and to identify with it, take pride in it, share it on social media, in short, to make *adivasi*-ness and one's own *adivasi*-ness unmistakably, inescapably, irresistibly present.

One recent attempt to theorise this kind of public presence has been developed by Judith Butler (2015). Engaging with the thought of Hannah Arendt (cf. 1998 [1958]), for whom politics consisted of words spoken rationally by free men in public assembly, Butler stresses that politics can take place simply through bodies appearing in a public space, before any words are spoken. Indeed, she notes that "the gathering signifies in excess of what is said" (Butler 2015: 8).

Butler is largely reflecting on events in the early 2010s, and she has certain movements in mind: Tahrir Square and the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, and, of course, resistance to cis- and heteronormativity in matters of gender. Although she herself focuses on movements that, in contrast to Arendt's assembly, arise from social precarity, she recognises that the power of corporeal public presence is hardly limited to these. She writes, "There are, after all, all sorts of surging multitudes . . . and they would include lynch mobs, anti-Semitic or racist or fascist congregations, and violent forms of antiparliamentary mass movements" (Butler 2015: 183; cf. 19 for assemblies orchestrated by the state, also 124). She also notes that "no one assembly can rightly become the basis for generalizations about all assemblies" (Butler 2015: 155). And referencing Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers, she wonders whether "negotiating the sphere of appearance is . . . one of the investigative capacities of the organism" (Butler 2015: 87). To my mind, this conjecture is too academic, too oriented to the cognitive, at least as far as the Chhotaudepur rally and assembly for World Adivasi Day are concerned. I would rather attribute marching through the streets and assembling in the public square to a human and more broadly animal propensity to claim and signal ownership of territory by moving through and occupying it.

There is much in Butler's account that resonates with the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day. For example, she draws our attention to the significance of assembling in cyberspace as well as in physical space: "The streets and the square are not the only way that people assemble, and we know that social networking produces links of solidarity that can be quite impressive and effective in the virtual domain" (Butler 2015: 153). Yet there are also significant differences, and they may help to sharpen our focus. For example, it is understandable that someone concerned with events at Tahrir Square during the Arab Spring as well as with the Occupy Movement would envision agents of state power as physically opposed to the assembled: "Heightened bodily exposure happens when assemblies deliberately expose their bodies to police power on the street or in public domains" (Butler 2015: 125). But such was not the case at the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day, where police accompanied

the rally (see Figure 4.3) and generally facilitated it by managing traffic. So far as I could see, the rally provoked no opposition and required no protection. Butler also purveys a view of universal mutual interdependence: "The opposite of precarity is not security, but, rather, the struggle for an egalitarian social and political order in which a livable interdependency becomes possible" (Butler 2015: 69). World Adivasi Day may or may not have egalitarian implications, but it is not a celebration of the interdependence of *adivasis* with the greater Indian community; it is a celebration of *adivasi* independence and distinctiveness. Furthermore, a central division in Butler's analysis, perhaps derived from Arendt, is the division between the private and the political; such a division would seem to leave little room for what some saw as the salient distinction between the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day and the government-sponsored celebration in Pavi Jetpur: a distinction between two public realms, the political, which is necessarily divisive, and the social, which is preferably unitive and apolitical. Perhaps most importantly, Butler's analysis rests firmly within the European-American tradition of political theory. She invokes both the ideal of unity that one finds embodied in the U.S. Constitution – 'We the People' (the title of her fifth chapter) – and the assertion of the right to freedom of assembly under international law. I happen to cherish these ideals, too, but they do not capture the spirit of World Adivasi Day. In that celebration unity is not the unity of 'We the People' – the parity of all as citizens of the state – but of *Ame adivasi chhie*, 'We are *adivasis*' – the unity of all *adivasi* peoples everywhere, not just in one particular nation-state: "One arrow, one bow; all *adivasis* are equal and one". It is in this sense that the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day is indeed a celebration of imagined global *adivasi*-ness.

Where's *adivasi* religion?

Translation transforms the U.N.'s International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples into World Adivasi Day. It also transforms the category 'indigenous religion(s)'.[64] One could translate this phrase as *Adidharam*, the first, primal, or original *dharam* (*dharma*), as in the German *Urreligion*. Such a translation has both antiquarian and normative connotations: it is the religion that existed at the beginning of time (whenever that happened to be) and the religion proper to a group of people identified with those first people (cf. Munda 2000). Unfortunately, such a translation does not help in making sense of the diversity of "*dharmik* and other private convictions" that the World Adivasi Day flyers ask people to leave at home. A better translation, at least in the present context, would be *Adivasi dharam*, the *dharam* of *adivasis*. Unlike the English word 'indigenous', however, the word *adivasi*, whether used as a noun or an adjective, always refers to a group of people who, in whatever social imaginary is operative, are conceived of as first inhabitants. In this case *Adivasi dharam* could refer to the traditional *dharam* of *adivasis*, that is, the *dharam* of *jagats*. An analogy would be the phrase *adivasi bhasha*, '*adivasi* language', used to identify the language spoken

exclusively by *adivasis*, in contrast to a language spoken more broadly, such as Gujarati or Hindi. Given the *dharmik* diversity that the flyers envision, however, I would rather take *adivasi dharam* as referring to whatever *dharams adivasis* happen to adhere to, whether these *dharams* are *jagat*, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Sikh, or some other. All of these constitute the private *dharmik* beliefs that are to be excluded from the Chhotaudepur World Adivasi Day celebration.

Of course, one can always raise questions about the extent to which *dharam* is an exact synonym for religion (Alles 2013), but there is no need to determine that extent here. Let us simply say that whatever else *dharam* may or may not include, in the present context it involves beliefs concerned with extraordinary beings (*devs*, *devis*, ancestors, Bhagwan, God) or – to accommodate *bhagats* who do not think in theistic terms – an ultimate source underlying all reality, such as the *atman* (self). Both types of belief are seen locally as *dharmik*. But *dharam* is not just limited to beliefs. It also involves practices such as rituals, persons such as ritual leaders, material objects associated with these practices and leaders, and probably other things as well.

Despite what the flyers request, the Chhotaudepur World Adivasi Day celebration does not actually exclude all *dharmik* beliefs. One belief survives, presumably because it is widely seen as constitutive of the *adivasi* lifestyle, as it is of the global indigenous worldview: nature is the highest Lord. The flyers do, however, single out *dharmik* beliefs for special mention. They say nothing about practices, persons, or material objects, and in actual practice at the celebration, these elements are treated as separable from beliefs. If one sets aside beliefs associated with traditional practices, persons, and objects, along with beliefs that favour alternative practices, persons, and objects, and if traditional practices, persons, and objects do not offend the sensibilities, moral or otherwise, of a large segment of the community, as meat eating and alcohol consumption do, then these practices, persons, and objects can be transformed. Instead of being components of a specific *dharmik* complex, they become cultural markers distinctive of the community as a whole. To judge from the example of Chhotaudepur, material objects seem to be particularly open to this process of 'de-semantization', although this is not always the case (cf. Longkumer 2018). Pithoras, glazed, stylised terracotta horses, *dhabus*, oil lamps set atop piles of paddy, *tipna*, tied red threads (see Figure 4.4) – these no longer function in efforts to communicate and maintain relationships with *devs*, *devis*, and ancestors, as they do in *jagat* traditions. When these objects are divested of particular religious meaning, *bhagats*, Jains, Christians, and all other *adivasis* can, and in Chhotaudepur do, embrace them as distinctive markers of *adivasi* culture and identity.

Inspired especially by the work of Grace Davie (1994), scholars of religion in Western Europe and North America have frequently made a distinction between believing and belonging: certain groups of people have a penchant for religious or spiritual believing without feeling a need to belong – often phrased in Christian terms as belonging to a church (Davie 1994). Like any binary, this one, too, is capable of inversion, although a quick search for the phrase "belonging

without believing" turned up only the use of the phrase for theological purposes: as a phrase denoting people whose intellectual commitments make it difficult for them to assent to traditional Christian teachings but who nevertheless belong to and participate in Christian churches, their participation providing some sort of access to a transcendent (Mountford 2011: 7; cf. Shaw 2008; both Mountford and Shaw cite Taylor 2007).

The Chhotaudepur celebrations of World Adivasi Day present a case of belonging without believing, too, but in a very different sense. For *adivasis* in Chhotaudepur the challenge is not intellectual but social, and what one belongs to is not a specific religious community but the *adivasi* community, regardless of what one's *dharmik* beliefs and loyalties might happen to be. In this way, *adivasi* religion provides the organisers of World Adivasi Day with powerful means to create a sense of belonging. In presenting beliefs as private matters, they divest religious elements, especially material ones, of their connection with divisive factors. In the process they aestheticise, secularise, and 'heritage-ise' them as markers of *adivasi* identity.

The INREL project has observed that in some cases the sense of a shared religious perspective facilitates transnational links between various indigenous communities (Johnson and Kraft 2018). This is one reason for the parenthetical 's' in the phrase 'indigenous religion(s)'. In other cases, however, people are forced to negotiate local religious diversity and division (e.g., Longkumer 2018). The latter is the case in the Chhotaudepur area. Especially given the tensions between *jagats* and *bhagats*, World Adivasi Day celebrations in Chhotaudepur can hardly embrace religion *in toto* and remain fully inclusive.[65] They have, however, been able to disaggregate the various components of traditional religious complexes by classifying specific religious commitments as private beliefs and convictions. Doing so has freed some persons and practices (but not all practices, such as animal sacrifice) to function as general cultural markers. It has especially done so for material objects. Such markers contribute to the agenda of the World Adivasi Day celebration: to celebrate, protect, and further *adivasi*-ness.

Acts of translation are acts of transformation and creation, and the translation of the U.N.'s International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples into the celebration of World Adivasi Day at Chhotaudepur is no exception. Part of that translation is finding significance in global *adivasi*-ness: in recognising that, to whatever extent some in 'mainstream' society may marginalise *adivasis* as 'backward' and in need of 'civilisation', *adivasis* belong to a group of peoples spread throughout the globe, a global *Gemeinschaft* – a community or family – of peoples who are important enough to be recognised and celebrated by the premier global institution of our time, peoples – in the eyes of some Rathvas – upon whose cultures all civilisations have been built and upon whose ability to live in harmony with nature the very fate of the planet may well depend. For the moment, at least, this global network is mostly imagined. Like the INREL project itself, few if any indigenous people from other parts of the world have shown any interest in visiting or establishing relations with the *adivasis* of Chhotaudepur.

The actual transnational networks that exist are largely populated by interested and sympathetic non-indigenous persons, like myself, and they have often been carefully managed by institutions, such as the Adivasi Academy in Tejgadh, that are ultimately under non-*adivasi* control. Nevertheless, however imagined the global *adivasi*-ness of the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day may be, its consequences in the lives of the participants – the pride it gives, the unity it promotes – are very real. To quote a Rathva friend, a retired government employee whose health precluded participation in the 2018 World Adivasi Day celebration:

> For *adivasis* like me the celebration of this day is a matter of extremely great pride. Knowledge of *adivasi* culture will spread throughout the entire world. The traditions and customs of *adivasi* society are different from those of other societies. What is especially good is one-ness (*ektā*), unity. Everyone comes together to make this festival, this celebration.
>
> *(Personal communication via WhatsApp, 10 May 2018)*

Notes

1 Special thanks to Prof. Vinayak Jadav (St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad), Prof. Subhash Ishai (S.N. College, Chhotaudepur), Prof. Arjun Rathva (M. C. Rathwa Arts College, Pavi Jetpur), Dashrath Rathva (Kocvad and Chhotaudepur), Madhu Rathva (Vanar), Najroo Rathva (Devhant), the Hon. Naranbhai Rathva (Chhotaudepur), Naranbhai Rathva (Tejgadh), Prof. Shankarbhai Rathva (S.N. College, Chhotaudepur), Vipul Rathva, and Prof. D. B. Vadera (S.N. College, Chhotaudepur).

2 In 2018 a similar flyer was distributed, but the text of this paragraph was truncated: "In order to ensure that *adivasis* throughout the world receive human rights, and on behalf of their way of life, knowledge traditions, and human development, was [*sic*] made in 1993 by the United Nations (UNO). And after that, starting in 1994, the 9th of August has been celebrated in all the world as World Adivasi Day. For us it is also a matter of pride that the year 2019 has been designated by UNO as Adivasi Language Year". According to Prof. Arjun Rathva, possibly the principal author, the text was shortened because people were not really interested in reading so much detail.

3 www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html accessed 28 April 2018.

4 www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday/background.shtml accessed 28 April 2018.

5 Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996; cf. https://pesadarpan.gov.in/en_US/home, last accessed 14 October 2019.

6 "Religion" is, in fact, the way local English-speakers (who are all multilingual) refer to *dharma*. I have checked my entire translation with locals, and any translation of *dhārmik* besides "religious" would strike them as wrong.

7 The flyer distributed in 2018 preserved this text more or less intact, replacing the words "let us, too, full of pride and with great ceremony, demonstrate the importance of our constitutional rights and their implementation and of the development of our community", with the shorter and more poetic expression, "let us take up the beat" (as in rhythm).

8 In terms developed by Holbraad and Pedersen (2017: 127), following Marilyn Strathern, the concern here is primarily with quantitative scales, although to the extent that politics and religion constitute two separate domains, it may also be at times implicitly qualitative.

9 MPs and MLAs in this area are required by law to belong to a Scheduled Tribe.

10 In 2017 all nine members of the planning committee as well as all five members of the programme committee were Rathvas. In 2018 there was one Dhanak among the 23 members of the local planning committee; all the rest were Rathvas.
11 Cf. www.counterview.net/2015/09/south-gujarat-tribal-rebellion-spreads.html, accessed 18 August 2018.
12 www.facebook.com/298584443572626/videos/374411179296626/ uploaded 14 August, 2012
13 The celebration was held in the village of Vasedi just north of Chhotaudepur municipality. To judge from a banner displayed at the event, it was held under the auspices of the Chhotaudepur sub-district chapter of the Jay Adivasi Mahasangh Gujarat.
14 http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/with-eye-on-polls-congress-to-hold-rallies-in-tribal-areas-2962899/ Accessed 9 June 2018.
15 Personal communications from Madhu Rathva, 6 May 2018, and Shankarbhai Rathva, 4 May 2018, respectively.
16 According to the 2011 Census the Scheduled Tribes population was 6377; http://censusindia.gov.in/pca/pcadata/DDW_PCA2419_2011_MDDS%20with%20UI.xlsx, last accessed 16 October 2019.
17 For a portion of the rally, see https://youtu.be/2rYiYRPB1aw, last accessed 16 October 2019.
18 For an example of the cultural performances see https://youtu.be/_36Z5Pt79AE, last accessed 16 October 2019.
19 In a 16-hour period on 8th August Kavant taluka received 346 mm (13.6 inches) of rain. On the same day Pavi Jetpur and Chhotaudepur talukas received 264 mm (10.4 inches) and 139 mm (5.5 inches) of rain, respectively – and the rains continued. See "Kawant pounded by 346mm in 16 hours", Times of India, 9 August 2019, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/vadodara/kawant-pounded-by-346mm-in-16-hrs/articleshow/70595555.cms, last accessed 14 October 2019.
20 The backdrop at the 2018 celebration was similar in design, but it lacked the U.N. symbol, apparently a decision made by the artist, Lakshmanbhai Rathva.
21 The only exception that I saw was a sign expressing World Adivasi Day felicitations erected by the Chhotaudepur Nagar Seva Sadan (municipal services centre); 13 of the 29 faces on that sign were of women.
22 My claims about 2017 are based on documentation of the event by a professional photographer.
23 For (hyper)masculine displays in other indigenous contexts, see, e.g., Hokowhitu (2014) and Tengan (2014).
24 I, too, was often asked to hold weapons when I appeared in selfies – an act of solidarity but also, one suspects, of affirmation from an outsider.
25 A similar complexity of scales is noted in many of the chapters in Gerharz, Uddin, and Chakkarath (2018). Holbraad and Pedersen note that movement from the individual to the global does not entail a change in complexity. As they write, "The potential for complexity remains constant no matter what the scale" (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 124). Similarly, Joanna Cook, James Laidlaw, and Jonathan Mair: "We do not change the quantity or detail of the data we encounter merely by changing scale; we simply encounter different details"; cf. Cook, Laidlaw, and Mair (2009: 56–57). Both are developing points made by Marilyn Strathern (2004: xiii–xxv); cf. "similar intellectual operations have to be performed on the data whatever the scale – classification, composition, analysis, discrimination, and so forth" (xv), and "The idea of perspective suggests one will encounter whole fresh sets of information as one moves through various scales – from organism to cell to atomic particle, from society to group to individual" (xix).
26 I borrow this phrase from Anthony Giddens (e.g., 1990: 14–21, 63–65), without adopting his distinction between premodernity and modernity.
27 An advocacy group; the name literally means "Rath army".
28 I asked Arjun Rathva, the principal author of the text, whether he thought he might have picked up the idea of private beliefs during his M.A. studies at the University of

Leeds. He replied that this suggestion was ludicrous; it had nothing to do with what he was studying. Conversation with Arjun Rathva, Chhotaudepur, 8 August 2018.

29 With one exception. After I spoke (mostly in rough Gujarati), the former mayor of Chhotaudepur, Sangramsinh Rathva, addressed me directly from the podium in English.

30 *Akhaṃḍitatā*, literally, "indivisibility".

31 Cf. https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2085134648204477&id=100001238868580, posted by Sangramsinh Rathva.

32 https://youtu.be/FaflbtZi3HI

33 https://youtu.be/m9Hjp-xxjoM

34 https://naidunia.jagran.com/madhya-pradesh/bhopal-government-holiday-for-the-first-time-on-the-world-tribal-day-in-20-districts-of-the-mp-1842557

35 www.facebook.com/aep.mh/photos/a.582469901873108/1748733275246759/?type=3&theater

36 The literature is immense. For one attempt at analysis, see Mukherji (2013), especially 118–124.

37 E.g., Mark-Anthony Falzon (2009): 6 refers to transnationalism as the "cousin" of globalisation. See further the talk of transnational connections in terms of a global ecumene in Hannerz 1996 (the concept is introduced on p. 7) and www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/introduc.htm. "Transnational" is an older term, dating from the 1960s, but at least in the Google Ngram database it was eclipsed in prominence by "globalization" in 1997.

38 I do not mean to claim that Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) actively employed our contemporary conception of indigeneity. He did, however, conceive of the *Volk* – the nation or ethnic group – in terms of a distinctive conjunction of language, thought, culture, religion, and habitat, undistorted by cosmopolitan education. Cf. Ulrich Gaier 2009: 169: "For Herder . . . each language – and accordingly each mythology – is intimately linked to the character of the nation where this language is spoken. . . . The mother tongue lays the foundation of our cognition of the world, of our sensibility and reasoning, because language and mode of thinking are intimately linked. . . . At the basis of this process of the formation of language, thought, and mythology is the *Volk*, the people, in Herder's use of the word the mass of simple men and women who are not deformed by civilization". This view lay at the heart of various 19th century nationalistic disciplines of folklore studies, for example, in the Baltic region, and informed various European movements of national awakening.

39 www.dnaindia.com/india/report-fight-for-rights-5-lakh-tribals-to-gather-in-gujarat-2575219. Information at hand does not specify whether the attendees from Indonesia and Australia were native Indonesians and Australians or *adivasis* who had emigrated and were now returning for the celebration.

40 http://adivasiacademy.org/chhotaudepursculptureatcambridge.aspx, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/vadodara/tribals-artwork-adorns-uk-museum/articleshow/56117792.cms. The Adivasi Academy did not, however, explicitly celebrate World Adivasi Day. According to Naranbhai Rathva, director of the Museum of Voice there, members of the Academy observed the day individually. He was in Bodeli, while his colleague Vikeshbhai spoke on Rathva culture at the Don Bosco school in Kavant, which remained in session.

41 Silver Spoon is the name of the restaurant from which the rally set off, but the billboard was actually set up on Station Road, about 1.4kms into the rally route. Vanar and Dadigam are villages in a part of Chhotaudepur sub-district that has extensive dolomite mines.

42 There was recognition that 2019 was to be the year of indigenous languages. This theme has local resonances. The museum of the Adivasi Academy is called The Museum of Voice (cf. Tilche 2011), its grounds contain a Bhasha Van, that is, a 'Language Grove', and the Bhasha Research and Publication Center, Vadodara, of which the Adivasi Academy is a unit, has coordinated the publication of the massive, 50-volume *People's Linguistic Survey of India* (Devy 2014).

43 This is somewhat in the spirit of the ontological or, perhaps better, the recursive turn in anthropology – "to keep *open* [*sic*] the question of what phenomena might comprise a given ethnographic field and how anthropological concepts have to be modulated or transformed the better analytically to articulate them" (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 11; cf. Holbraad 2013) – although I doubt that it is ever wise or even possible to surrender the writer's second-order terms completely.
44 Information for Sápmi kindly provided by Siv Ellen Kraft and for Costa Rica by Bjørn Ola Tafjord.
45 www.facebook.com/aili.keskitalo.3/posts/10155417507122553
46 www.facebook.com/events/190519488335482/
47 https://presidencia.go.cr/temas/dia-internacional-de-los-pueblos-indigenas/ https://presidencia.go.cr/comunicados/2018/08/gobierno-inicia-proceso-para-construir-politica-publica-para-pueblos-indigenas/
48 https://surcosdigital.com/comunicado-de-frenapi-en-el-dia-internacional-de-los-pueblos-indigenas/
49 Cf. Curl 2017; http://ipdpowwow.org/. According to one list, in 2017 four U.S. states, 58 U.S. cities, and three U.S. universities recognised the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples' Day (http://time.com/4968067/indigenous-peoples-day-columbus-day-cities/). In 2018 the number was higher – six states and more than 100 cities (www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2018/10/08/indigenous-peoples-day-2018/) – and one can only expect that number to grow. In Canada this Monday is celebrated as Thanksgiving Day; the Canadian National Indigenous Peoples' Day is 21st June, which, by declaration of the United Nations General Assembly, is the International Day of Yoga, celebrated in India and presumably elsewhere as such. In Australia First Nations people prefer to recognise 26th January as Invasion Day; cf. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/25/you-can-have-australia-day-any-other-day-we-wont-accept-26-january-without-resistance.
50 https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/news/it-s-a-good-day-to-be-indigenous-a-list-of-indigenous-people-s-day-events-6q820YDFykOi9igt00JURQ/
51 https://indigenouswisdomsummit.com/library/8681
52 https://indigenouswisdomsummit.com/library/8681#library
53 Cf. www.linkedin.com/in/mikuakrai, which lists an organisational connection to the International Commission for Dalit Rights. Rai does not, however, appear as a member of the board, staff, or advisory committee on the ICDR website.
54 www.facebook.com/shiftnetwork/videos/553583125080526/
55 Even www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/15037594/abercrombie-signs-bill-recognizing-native-hawaiians/
56 Just how limited support is in this area was evident in the Lok Sabha (national parliament) elections in April and May 2019. The winner, Gitaben Rathva (BJP), received 651,093 votes (61.92%). The runner-up, Ranjitsinh Rathava (Indian National Congress), received 333,339 votes (31.7%). Rajesh Vasava, the candidate of the Bharatiya Tribal Party (which advocates for Bhilistan), received only 8400 votes, less than 1% of the total votes cast.
57 https://indianexpress.com/article/india/tribal-development-minister-ganpat-vasava-chased-out-of-tribal-fair-in-narmada-police-launch-probe-5026125/
58 http://rathsena.abletribals.com/2018/06/12/objectives/
59 https://teersamachar.com/chhotaudepur-rathwa-jati-na-dakhla-mudde-tamam-pax-no-bahishkar/
60 https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/demand-for-tribal-status-rathwas-to-boycott-political-activities-in-chhota-udepur-5516414/. The issue was relatively quiet in 2019 until 1st October, when four persons from Dahod district filed a public interest litigation petition with the High Court, asking the court to negate Rathva ST status. In response, a demonstration was held in Chhota Udepur to present a formal complaint to the district collector; news media reported that it was attended by

more than 20,000 people. Subsequently, a complete, district-wide bandh was called for 14th and 15th November. See "Chhoṭāudepur Jillo Tā. 14 ane 15 Navembere Saṃpūrṇ Baṃdh Raheśe", Gujarat Samachar (Chhotaudepur edition), 11 October 2019.

61 As noted earlier, some attribute the general celebration of World Adivasi Day in Gujarat and other parts of India to the Indian government's refusal to acknowledge *adivasis* as indigenous when it ratified the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Similarly, the proposal to re-classify Rathvas as non-tribal was first seriously floated in 2013 (Rathva, Rai and Rajaram 2014), and in the eyes of some participants, the agitation surrounding that proposal sparked greater interest in issues of Rathva identity and as a result in the Chhotaudepur celebration of World Adivasi Day.

62 https://teersamachar.com/chhotaudepur-adivasi-din-ni-ujavni/

63 e.g., many of the younger participants had to stand in line to have one or two older *adivasis* tie their turbans.

64 On 'indigenous religion(s)' see Tafjord (2013, 2017).

65 One option for doing so might have been to embrace notions of Hindutva as culture rather than religion, but this would be to surrender a distinctive *adivasi*-ness and to embrace of form of politics that many of the organisers reject.

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5

ENGAGED INDIGENEITY

Articulating, anticipating, and enacting tradition on Mauna Kea

Greg Johnson

HE AHA LA HE KŪKULU, HE MAUNA
What is a pillar, a mountain
HE AHA LA HE KŪKULU, HE ʻAHU
What is a pillar, an altar
HE AHA LA HE KŪKULU, HE PŌHAKU
What is a pillar, a rock
HE AHA LA HE KŪKULU, HE KANAKA
What is a pillar, a person
– Kaʻi Kūkulu, composed by Pualani Case[1]

Holding space: engaged indigeneity between eruptions on Mauna Kea

Volcanic metaphors should not be used lightly with reference to anything in Hawai‘i. The potency of the land is all too real. Consider the eruption of 2018 that lasted for several months and reconfigured a large region of Hawai‘i Island. It had been decades since a major eruption, but those who understand the *ʻāina* (land) and its *moʻolelo* (stories) knew what to expect. Pressure had been building. The only question was when, where, and with what consequences an eruption would occur on the flanks of Mauna Loa, one of the two enormous mauna (mountains) that make up the island. The other monumental peak is Mauna Kea (aka Maunakea and Mauna a Wākea), which has not erupted in centuries, at least not geologically speaking. Culturally, it has been the site of two momentous eruptions in recent years, including one that is ongoing (as of April 2020). I am referring to widespread and highly visible protests over the TMT (Thirty Meter Telescope) project that took place in the summer of 2015 and the summer of 2019. This chapter focuses on this context, which happens to span the

FIGURE 5.1 Kia'i (Protectors) on June 24, 2016, posing for the daily crosswalk picture on Mauna Kea.

duration of the INREL project. My analysis of the dispute is directly informed by involvement with INREL, the questions I have framed are inspired by the team's collective research trips and years-long conversations, and I was fortunate to receive real-time feedback from the team concerning portions of this chapter during their visit to Hawai'i in 2018.

This chapter unfolds as follows. It opens with background regarding Mauna Kea, the TMT project, and resistance to it, sketching an account of the key issues and events leading up to the 2015 protest, which involved numerous arrests and served as a cultural catalyst in a range of registers. Once this groundwork is established, the core of the chapter turns to the time and space between the two protests in order to focus on the work of engaged indigeneity in a lower key through analysis of *Kūkulu: Pillars of Mauna a Wākea*, an exhibit at the Hawaiian Cultural Center of Hāmākua. After addressing *Kūkulu*, the chapter shifts to consider the 2019–2020 protest, which as I write is ongoing and of an unprecedented scale in modern Hawaiian history. For our purposes, this protest is instructive for a number of reasons, especially with regard to the way religious life and ceremonial action are foregrounded in the movement. Concluding, I return to key INREL-inspired questions to work through the role of religion – both on and off stage – in the Mauna Kea context and how this relates to indigenous religion(s) in a comparative frame.

The choice to focus on the *Kūkulu* exhibit as my core example of engaged indigeneity is in part a response to critics of the Mauna Kea movement who have suggested that it is a fad and will die down once the novelty of protest has worn off. Such a response fails to fathom the depth of connection many Hawaiians feel to the mauna, and it surely misconstrues the diachronic ebbs and flows of tradition in action. Traditions often persist in unexpected ways, their protagonists adapting to conditions in ways that merit attention. All too often indigeneity is studied in its peak expressions, its eye-popping manifestations, wearing its most media-ready face. Such a focus is important, to be sure, and scholars of religion are obviously drawn to maximal expressions of tradition. Taken too far, however, such a focus tends towards exoticism and even fetishisation. If our goal is in part to understand indigenous religion(s) in the round, then some of our attention should be diverted to the ways they 'hold space' between eruptions.

It is for this reason that I attend primarily to the time between the protests in order to explore what happens when the world *is not* directly watching. How are passions, resources – and, ultimately, tradition itself – cultivated and channelled during the sometimes long periods between episodes of indigeneity on display? With this approach, I seek to build on previous work I have done that explored the day-to-day grind of Hawaiian involvement in administrative law, primarily with regard to burial protections (Johnson 2014). My theoretical concerns in that context and here have do with the way movements are sustained 'off stage' (Scott 1990; Povinelli 2002; Niezen 2003) and what this down-swing in the dialectics of identity maintenance can tell us about the social life of indigenous religion(s) in a more general frame.

The direct carry-over from my earlier effort in this regard pertains most obviously to the contested case hearing regarding Mauna Kea, a quasi-legal administrative process that lasted from 2016–2017 and involved more than 20 Hawaiian petitioners and intervenors who gave over countless unheralded hours to holding space for Mauna Kea and holding up time vis-à-vis development of the TMT project (Johnson 2018). Their painstaking effort kept the movement alive at a time when it appeared to be waning. Some of the same people who persisted through that grim and arduous process are active on the front lines of protest now, garnering considerable attention at home and abroad. But had it not been for their efforts navigating tortuous state processes, there would likely not be such a robust movement unfolding on the mauna. In such contexts, tedious legal processes and forms of mass civil disobedience – especially in their dialectical unfolding – are rich fields for discerning the contours of indigenous religion(s) in action.

For all that the administrative and legal processes deserve analysis, my attention in this chapter is focused on another compelling way members of the Native Hawaiian community held space for Mauna Kea in the years between protests by means of staging a unique *Kūkulu* exhibit, the explicit purpose of which was to keep the mauna front-and-centre in the community's consciousness during a relatively dormant phase of the movement. Core INREL categories (e.g.,

FIGURE 5.2 Images of images at Kūkulu.

sovereignty, mediation, translation, and performance), I suggest, are useful for understanding the work of *Kūkulu*. In the course of illustrating this point, I employ the idiom of 'engaged indigeneity', by which I mean ultra-contemporary acts of indigenous self-fashioning and performative sovereignty. This framing language is intended to encourage insights about indigenous representation, especially with reference to questions that drill down to explore the specific ways religion is *articulated* in the unfolding present, with a debt to an interdisciplinary array of theorists, including Stuart Hall (1986), Angela Gonzales (1998), Tania Li (2000), James Clifford (2004), and Thomas Tweed (2006). Further, I hope to show how aspects of *Kūkulu* shed light on features of indigeneity in a comparative frame, at least some of the time in some places (Figure 5.2).

Background to Mauna Kea-related issues

Rising to 13,800 feet (4206 metres), Mauna Kea is the highest point in the Pacific Ocean and a mountain regarded as sacred by many Hawaiians. This majestic mauna and the cultural life sustained and perpetuated on its slopes are the beginning and end of *Kūkulu*. I mean this in two senses: a historical sense, insofar as the exhibit is about protective actions by the community on behalf of the mauna, which I will describe shortly; I also intend to signify a pragmatic sense. The exhibit is a storehouse of tradition that began on and has returned to the mauna.

The conceptual frame this dynamic establishes is critical. For here we are dealing with the intentional curation of protest objects as a site of memory and sentiment cultivation, but also in a more literal sense. *Kūkulu* is where some implements of collective protest were stored until they were called into service once again during the summer of 2019. Questions about sign, symbol, materiality, and use value, for example, compound rather intensely in such a setting.

But why has the TMT project on Mauna Kea become such a flashpoint issue in the Hawaiian community? Critical information about the cultural background, protest actions, and legal history of the dispute has been published by a number of Hawaiian and ally scholars, including Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2017), Marie Alohalani Brown (2017), Iokepa Casumbal-Salazar (2017), and Candace Fujikane (2019). My own contributions to this emerging literature include an INREL project essay about material religion and performativity in the 2015 protests (Johnson 2017); a piece reflecting on my role as a witness in the administrative proceeding regarding the construction permit (Johnson 2018); and a comparative piece written with Siv Ellen Kraft that juxtaposes three protests across a several-decade period (Kraft and Johnson 2018). Here I will sketch the most salient episodes that led up to the establishment of *Kūkulu*.

Hawaiian lands have been subject to dispossession and desecration since the early 1800s, a trend that accelerated intensely in the mid-1800s as non-Hawaiians laid hold of vast tracts of land through various means, including by way of legal machinations (Merry 2000; Osorio 2002). The overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani in 1893 and the illegitimate annexation of Hawai'i by the U.S. in 1898 exacerbated this trend. Industrial farming of sugarcane and other crops was another blow, as was the profound militarisation of the islands that took hold early in the 20th century and has not abated, often with shockingly disastrous consequences for the land and ocean. Homes, livelihoods, burial grounds, and sacred places have been damaged and lost throughout this history. But Hawaiians have remained culturally strong nonetheless and have built legal and political might in recent decades to complement their considerable cultural renaissance. Direct action protest has emerged as a staple of Hawaiian cultural life over the past 50 years, the focus of which ranges from protecting particular places and practices to articulating full-throated decolonisation agendas. The Mauna Kea movement sprung from the intersection of these vectors and also from something the state consistently under-estimates: Hawaiian religious sensibilities about place and *kuleana* (responsibility) that are uncompromising.

Many Hawaiians have a particularly strong felt sense of kuleana to Mauna Kea, as it holds a central place in their oral traditions as a *kino lau* (embodiment) of Wākea (Sky Father). It is also a long-time pilgrimage site that is home to numerous of *ahu* (altars) and burials. It is understood to be *Wao Akua* (the realm of the gods), not a place for humans to linger, let alone develop. For these reasons, many Hawaiians have reacted strongly to the development of astronomical facilities and related infrastructure on Mauna Kea, which began in the 1960s. State and federal laws have offered little recourse for protection of Mauna Kea,

which comes as no surprise to those familiar with U.S. land-use jurisprudence. As of 2019, 13 telescopes are located on the mountain, along with other scientific apparatuses and support structures. Many of these are proximate to or on top of recorded sacred sites, which has hurt and incensed many Hawaiians.

This is the context for widespread resistance to the plans of the State of Hawai'i and the Thirty Meter Telescope Corporation to build an extremely large telescope (with a footprint of 5 acres and a height of 180 feet) on the northern plateau region, a previously undeveloped area near the summit of the mauna. Plans were first promulgated in the early 2000s, resulting in legal challenges and other resistance, which came to a head in a 2011 contested case hearing (a quasi-legal administrative process). This process had little impact on development plans; by 2014 construction was slated to begin. In October of that year a groundbreaking ceremony was held at the site with various dignitaries attending from sponsoring entities and countries, including Japan, Canada, India, and various U.S. institutions. Hawaiian *kia'i* (protectors) were aware of the event and sought to stop it and garner press attention for their cause. Lanakila Mangauil, a young teacher from Hāmākua, led the charge, storming onto the site of the ceremony in ritual garb, chanting, shouting, and otherwise bringing a stark halt to the proceedings. He helped spark a movement in the process.[2]

The state and TMT shelved construction plans for the winter and reinitiated attempts to build in April 2015. Construction vehicles were met by praying protestors who occupied the mauna in resistance and demonstrated a willingness to be arrested in support of the cause. Meanwhile, the emerging protest scene was receiving international social media attention and growing support from allies, including other indigenous groups. In the late spring of 2015 a group of kia'i established an encampment on the mountain as a means to detect and stop construction vehicles coming up the mountain. Matters came to a head on 24th June, 2015, when state police attempted to escort construction vehicles up the mauna once again, which I witnessed directly. It was an eruption of cultural energies at a level not seen in Hawai'i for decades. Approximately 800 protestors stood in the road in ceremony, chanting, praying, and making offerings while deliberately stopping the vehicles.[3] This set the stage for the ceremonially-grounded framework of the 2019 protest. Police arrested 11 people that day in attempts to clear the road, but protestors managed to prevail by rolling large rocks into the road making it impassable. The police capitulated and the kia'i celebrated. Subsequently, the governor declared a temporary halt to construction efforts.

Meanwhile, a legal case about the project was grinding through the courts. The suit was brought by kia'i who claimed that the state had issued the construction permit without proper consultation, let alone consent.[4] In late 2015 the State Supreme Court ruled that the state had not conducted adequate consultation and remanded the matter to The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) for another contested case hearing. This process lasted a full year and involved 44 days of hearings. I was involved in a modest capacity as a witness for one of the intervenors, William Freitas (Johnson 2018). In the end, the

DLNR approved the permit, all the while without having engaged in meaningful or sustained consultation, despite the length of the process. The kiaʻi appealed the decision, and the case went back to the State Supreme Court. The Court affirmed the DLNR permit in late 2018, a decision that most observers expected based on precedent and the financial stakes, with the projected costs of construction estimated at $1.4 billion dollars.[5] The *Kūkulu* exhibit took shape in this context, birthed in a waiting period between legal decisions and direct action.

Exhibiting engaged indigeneity

Kūkulu is humble, homespun, and utterly approachable. It is also, I will argue, a manifestation of representational sovereignty at the cutting edge of indigeneity. Let me describe the scene as I experienced it in the spring of 2018. The space is open and airy. Muffled sounds from the main street of sleepy Honokaʻa town waft through the open doors of the Hawaiian Cultural Center of Hāmākua, the original home of the exhibit. A kitten naps on the porch, another on the hood of a car parked outside. Children from a Hawaiian language class chase one another on their way out the door. Given this bucolic setting, in what way is it also a frontline site of engaged indigeneity? Importantly, there is the wide-ranging content of the exhibit. This alone makes *Kūkulu* significant in the context of Hawaiian cultural displays. Indeed, its range of materials, genres, and inviting aesthetics merit ranking *Kūkulu* as 'serious' when compared to most contemporary cultural exhibits. Beyond these notable features, what strikes me most about the installation is its movement-based model of accretion and its function as an armoury. It is a moving storehouse of signs that was waiting for future deployment. That future came in 2019.

Let me unpack these two signal features of *Kūkulu*. First, it was conceived by its curator, Pualani (Pua) Case, and her team as being of and for the kiaʻi of Mauna Kea. Tourists, drifters, and the odd scholar are all welcome, to be sure, but the intended audience is the self-same as the subject of the exhibit, the kiaʻi, who recognised almost immediately that their protests in 2015 were history-in-the-making and engaged in various acts of *in situ* tradition formation. This project of collective self-fashioning and memory consolidation persisted after the protests on the mauna itself, on social media, at other protest sites such as Standing Rock, where numerous Hawaiians visited, and concertedly during the annual commemorations of the main protests. Pua Case and others decided that the movement deserved its own exhibition as a means to maximise and amplify the moment's significance through celebrating its people, songs, prayers, art, signage, and other objects.

Conceptualised thus, and in a Hawaiʻi Island spirit, the exhibit would need to be mobile so as to be available to people in each *moku* (region) of the island and to serve as a locus for their objects and memories. So *Kūkulu* has been designed to travel, moving in turn to four representative moku over a span of several years. At each resting place the objects from that particular community will be added

and foregrounded. The final disposition of the exhibit remains an open question, however. This is not due to a lapse in planning but has more to do with the ways kia'i are keenly aware that they and *Kūkulu* are plotted in an unfinished story insofar as the struggle over the TMT project is not yet resolved. For example, the exhibit will require further installations to accommodate the massive amount of material culture fashioned during the 2019 protest, and the exhibit is currently experiencing a relatively fallow period while some of its objects and their makers go back to mauna to protect once again. Indeed, the current exhibit space is used for staging supplies and as a logistical support centre for the movement. In this respect, *Kūkulu* is an exhibit that has literally returned to its origins – repatriation in a radically indigenised key that hinges on questions of activation rather than claims to ownership or rights of possession. Signs from the walls of the exhibit wave in the crisp air of the mauna once again.

I find this tremendously compelling and instructive. Here we have a museum anticipating history rather than merely capturing it. This bespeaks the genius of contemporary indigeneity in the mode of *Kūkulu*. As activist Lākea Trask put it to me with regard to the prospect of renewed protests in 2018, "We will be out front of them this time" (Personal communication, Humu'ula, 26 March, 2018). This kind of claim is not only tactical, though it is that. I take it to be indicative of a zeitgeist. In this case, to be traditional is to be positioned ahead of and prepared for other kinds of historical forces and actors, and to have the confidence and traditional grounding to assume and hold that position, steadfastly. Indigeneity here reverses the would-be arch of causality, at least as imaged by the status quo of nation-states and their apparatuses. By all appearances, this approach to the future as a site of tradition-making is coming to pass on the flanks of the mauna.

Bodies politic

Before diving further into an analysis of the exhibit, an important facet of indigeneity in Hawai'i deserves to be noted here, for it has considerable ramifications for all aspects of the story I am telling. Namely, political leadership in Hawai'i is radically acephalous. Some features of this headless body politic are the following: a recent but failing history of attempts to have a Native Hawaiian government recognised at the federal level (Kauanui 2013); special (if seldom acted upon) status and rights as articulated by the State Constitution;[6] a state-level entity, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, that is charged with managing resources and programmes for Native Hawaiians; a land management entity, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, that is charged with making land grants and housing awards for Hawaiians of 50% and greater blood quantum; and a bewildering array of state and county level positions designated for the purpose of 'community consultation'.[7]

Individually and together, these entities and mechanisms do not amount to a functioning tribal government or its proxy. My purpose here is not to comment

further on this situation in political terms other than to note the important fact that many Hawaiians are profoundly frustrated by attempts to manage their identities, lands, and futures. Out of this frustration a strong but internally variable sovereignty movement has emerged (Tengan 2008; Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Hussey, and Wright 2014). For our purposes, the critical observation to make is that the fractured nature of Hawaiian political authority has corollaries and consequences in the realm of cultural representation. No one group controls or claims to control representations of culture and tradition. Representation is thus managed outside any formal mechanisms or constraints (see Teves 2018). As with all human activity, but in a particularly intense way, navigation and negotiation make all the difference in this context, including in the staging of museum displays.

Space, realms, objects, words, and signs

Kūkulu has all the trappings one might imagine to be included in an exhibit devoted to a culture-based protest event. Here I will enumerate and briefly describe some of these features before moving to analyse several of the standout components of the exhibit. The exhibit is highly visual. Artwork and photographs bedeck the space. Also immediately notable are various clothing items, which range from ornate ceremonial garb to quotidian objects such as work boots. It is also a space of words, some recorded in audio formats, but many printed and posted on the walls. These include narratives of several varieties: traditional histories of the mauna; a history of the legal dispute; a micro-history of the protest actions; and so forth. Another presence of words is in the form of *mele* (song) lyrics, *pule* (prayers), and a range of *oli* (chants).

To provide concrete examples of the content of exhibit's many words and the way these words depict and set the larger frame of the exhibit, here I briefly consider two chants. The first, *Oli Mauna Kea*, is eminently local, a tribute to the mauna composed by Nona Beamer that centres the mountain thus in line 2: "*Ka mauna ki'eki'e, i luna Kū kilakila* (The mountain high above, standing in great majesty)". Taking my cue from this oli, I wish to emphasise up front that the exhibit foregrounds Mauna Kea in numerous ways, not least for the reason that the original exhibit was on the flanks of the mountain and in the *moku* (region) of Hāmākua, which includes its *piko* (summit). Due to this relationship, the people of the moku feel and exert a special *kuleana* (responsibility) to the mauna and display a reverence for it that veritably seeps from the walls of *Kūkulu*. Beyond words, such as those in Beamer's oli, Mauna Kea is celebrated in the exhibit spatially. The exhibit is organised by *wao* (realms), which are represented vertically in Hawaiian cosmology and in the installation space. The top-most space honours various *akua* (deities) of the mauna, including Poliahu (Snow Goddess), Lilinoe (Mist Goddess), and Mo'oinonea (Lake Lizard Woman). Other deities are understood to inhabit the mauna and the Hawaiian world generally, including

Kū, whom we will encounter later. But Hawaiian reverence has a fine-grained and place-specific texture, so the mauna goddesses receive primary attention in *Kūkulu* by means of banners hanging from the ceiling dedicated to each.

Next is the wao of the mauna itself. One cannot escape the horizon of the mauna in the exhibit. From wall-sized murals to photographs, the manua is omnipresent inside the exhibit, just as it is outside the door and in the Hawaiian cosmic imaginary. Then comes the *Wao Kanaka* (realm of humans), which occupies the lowest but most fully developed aspect of exhibit. In this way the exhibit is about and for local Native Hawaiians, but it is clear in situating them beneath other realms and in a subservient position of *mālama* (care) relative to the other wao. It is this inverted frame of dominion that has yielded political and theological nuances in protest idioms and action. "We are Protectors not Protestors" – a phrase that echoed at Standing Rock – communicates this positionality as an ethos and imperative. Even while Native Hawaiians self-situate thus, *Kūkulu* is manifestly focused on human action. From eye level on down, Wao Kanaka is the topos, which one encounters by moving randomly about. The exhibit space is not organised in a way that directs movement, at least not in any obvious way.

Wao Kanaka is itself a tiered domain. Ritual protocol (e.g., song, prayer, dance, and offerings) is foregrounded as it was in the 2015 protest and again in 2019–2020. Artistic production (prints, textiles, and sculpture) is the next most privileged class. Accounts of protest and legal actions follow. Of course each of these domains is not wholly separable from the others, but they are often marked and remarked upon as such by the exhibit organisers. In any case, I submit that this stratified yet imbricated arrangement is indicative of Hawaiian cultural stratigraphy in general. While there would be no exhibit if it were not for the protests and the legal struggles that underpin them, so too would it not be a particularly Hawaiian exhibit if those facts dominated experience of the space. Further, this articulation of ritual action, aesthetic production, and protective action configures many indigenous protest settings today, if in non-identical ways.

Now let us turn to a second oli (chant), as it shifts attention from the mauna to the human realm and its contemporary entailments. Consider the following eponymous chant, *Oli Kūkulu*, composed by Pua Case, which has a distinctly outward thrust. It names the contemporary moment and the trans-indigenous engagements it entails.

> Natives the backbone of Hawai'i
> Relatives of the big ocean of Kiwa
> Relations of the first nation of Turtle Island
> Friends support from around the world
> Pillars, the four cardinal points
> We are beloved warriors,
> We are strong (wearing our top knots on our heads)
> Rise . . .

> I am a mountain guardian, a standing rock, a sacred stone, a water Protector
> Rise[8]

Declared so emphatically in the oli, the theme of local-global networks is also unmistakable on some of the protest signs curated in the exhibit. These are not signs of signs. They are the actual signs used in the protests and immortalised in numerous newspaper pictures and in a huge number of videos easily found online. The signs are mostly slogan-based. Classics include, "We Are Mauna Kea", "Kū Kia'i Mauna", "Aloha for the Mauna", "Desecrating is Not a Tradition", and "Warriors Rising". I am interested in sign making and staging, and the poetics of slogan craft, which has deep Hawaiian roots but also connections to global indigeneity and modern protest movements in general.

Kū is perhaps the most famous of Hawaiian deities. He lives at *Kūkulu* in his incarnation as Kūkia'imauna (Protector of the Mauna). Or at least one of his *kino lau* (manifestations) does in the form of a *ki'i la'au* (wooden idol or icon). Actually, Kūkia'imauna has two ki'i in the exhibit. One is the ki'i crafted for and used during the protests (approximately 2 feet tall). The other is a bit larger and more ornate image of the image, with equal potential for activation (see Figure 5.3). Just this much tells us volumes about living Hawaiian tradition. For it is a particular Hawaiian way of being to manufacture gods in moments of crisis and to

FIGURE 5.3 Pua Case with Kūkia'imauna and Hale Kūkia'imauna II in background.

care for – even curate – them after, until the next time they are needed. Then they are called into action through song and prayer, through ceremony. During the 2019 protest the Kū images were present on the mauna until the arrival of the Makahiki season, which is signalled by the appearance of Makali'i (Pleiades) in the night sky in November. At that time, the complementary ki'i of Lono replaced Kū.

The season has to be right, which is just the catch, as well as a provocation to think more about the stratigraphy and folds of living tradition. The Kū tradition is layered, to be sure, but it is not uniformly sedimented (Tengan 2014). Certain features of it break to the surface of the present if the need is great enough. Invention of/and/or tradition. None of this gets at the Hawaiian context, and I suspect this is true for most if not all settings of robust indigeneity. Kū is hardcore traditional. But his priests are long dead, and his appetite for human sacrifices and flesh appears sated (Valeri 1996). Today, he is called forth by young activists who command Hawaiian language and protocol, and who face a different source and order of threats than their ancestors did (Kraft and Johnson 2018: 190). Moreover, in a seeming paradox, Kūkia'imauna is called by the kia'i at the same time that they announce and enact 'kapu aloha', their governing ethic of non-violence.[9] Some observers of such innovation might wonder if such a Kū is anything but bluster, wishful thinking, and indigeneity gone wrong.

Admittedly, Kūkia'imauna does not map perfectly on his ethnographic predecessors. 'Authenticity', however, turns out to be a poor judge of character. So what do we make of this latter-day Kū? We might look to the *ki'i* (image). It is not as if the kia'i regard the image as Kūkia'imauna in the flesh. Theirs is a theology of activation and focus – of calling and using, of inspiration and metaphor. Kūkia'imauna enables a ritual idiom of stark presence that is also a pragmatic technology not unlike a weapon, a way of focusing ritual rhetoric and action to desired ends, if those ends involve an enemy or a threat, but only if the season is right. Here is where analyses of contemporary indigeneity as watered-down tradition fall flat. Kū is changing, no doubt. But not beyond recognition, especially to those who risk calling on him. They still operate according to a schedule. This is not a move on my part to displace authenticity discussions from things to calendars. But timing is everything, at least for Polynesians. The endurance of seasonally configured ceremonial attention tells me that place, people, and the environment conduce here in a specific way and that their favoured expression of this is to say that Kū has his time and Lono (god of peace, playfulness, and related themes) has his.

Crosswalk – the exception that keeps on giving

The Mauna Kea crosswalk (see Figure 5.1) and its simulacrum in the exhibit exemplify Hawaiian genius twice over. In the first instance, the genius of the crosswalk was the way the kia'i harnessed efficacious protest to a ritual frame of memory making, all the while exploiting a loophole of the state. Anyone who

has followed the Mauna Kea protests on social media has seen the crosswalk, whether they knew it or not. During the 2015 protests, it became the paradigmatic site for photographic rendering of protest-as-history. Namely, each *lā* (day), kia'i who were on the mauna would take a picture of themselves in the crosswalk with a sign stating the day and other signs of the sort described previously. In this way the crosswalk was the site of a daily growing archive of resistance, showing who was there, how the discourse (signage) was shifting, and what the weather was doing.

But why the crosswalk? Early on in the movement the kia'i learned that they could not be arrested if they were in the crosswalk, which is a state-designated safe space for pedestrians, of course. For a period of time in 2015 this was the chief means of direct action for the kia'i to stop construction vehicles from going up the mountain. In this way the crosswalk at the Visitor Center (9000 foot level) became ground zero for the protests and hence also the site of daily photographs. Subsequent to the protests, the State of Hawai'i engaged in a range of efforts clearly aimed at stifling future actions of a similar nature. It is hard to overstate the range of enterprises engaged in by the state, including promulgating 'emergency rules', new legislation criminalising protest, state agency policy changes such as those described with reference to the hale and ahu below, and sundry other tactics of the strong.

Perhaps the most banal of these acts took place in July 2017 when state crews erected a guardrail adjacent to the Visitor Centre, which blocked access to the primary gathering spot of the kia'i, Hale Kūkia'imauna. In the same spot the crew painted over the crosswalk, literally erasing it from the mauna. The kia'i were not to be outdone easily. In their second instance of cross-walking and back-talking genius, they made a portable one themselves out of rubber mats and paint. It was then installed in the *Kūkulu* exhibit, where it maintains its function as the site of daily photographs of the status of the ongoing protest. When I asked her if the portable crosswalk might make it up to the mauna, Pua Case laughed heartily: "Of course!" (Personal communication. Honoka'a. 12 January, 2019). I invite readers to theorise with me about this 'hyper-real' prospect, which is complicated and enriched by the fact that the simulacrum of a state apparatus functions theologically in a Hawaiian way, being called into action for a particular purpose. Kūkia'icrosswalk?

Hale Kūkia'imauna I and II

On 27th February, 2018, I saw a curious Facebook post circulating among some of my Hawaiian acquaintances. It was a picture of Billy Freitas, my friend and sometimes collaborator, cutting trees in Waipi'o Valley. The caption mentioned "traditional hale building knowledge".[10] I wondered, where and why is Billy building a new hale? Such construction would indicate preparations for a significant event. The next day the answer was as clear as it was unexpected: *Kūkulu*. Billy and Lanakila Mangauil were working with others to build a traditional

Hawaiian ritual house inside the exhibit, which was set to open only days from then. A Facebook post from the Hawaiian Cultural Center of Hāmākua had a picture of Billy and others building a more-or-less life-sized version of Hale Kūkia'imauna, the headquarters of the kia'i during the protests, a site of much ritual action and numerous arrests. The 'replica', though not as long as the original, was at least as stout. I called Billy to check in and hear the story. Interesting to me, he reported having to seek out some old friends who knew particular building methods outside his considerable experience, in that way keeping a specialised knowledge in practice.

As with the crosswalk, the new hale raises compelling questions about objects and their simulacra, about labour and representation, and about houses within houses. The latter function, of archiving a house, is not idle museumification. It is also anticipatory. The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), the state entity with jurisdiction over the land on which the 'original' hale sits, was then in the process of promulgating new policies and rules regarding the building of 'unauthorised structures' and one component of their new plan is to deem it retroactive and thus applicable to the hale. In this frame, the urgency of Billy's labour is more legible. Indeed, as I describe later, the state subsequently removed the hale on 20th June, 2019, in a major sweep of the mauna.

Several ahu (stone altars/offering sites) on the mauna have received attention at *Kūkulu*. Thus far, no physical ahu have been built in the *Kūkulu* space (in part due to the weight-bearing limitations of the floor), but future sites of the exhibit may well entail the building of ahu. For now, the ahu of Mauna Kea are remembered at *Kūkulu* through words and images. The exhibition includes homage to ahu past, present, and absent. I have written about this history elsewhere, so I will be brief here (Johnson 2018). Suffice it to say that ahu construction on Mauna Kea is a storied affair, with episodes ranging from the ancient past to the almost certain future. Ahu quite literally dot the mountain, from sea level to the very summit. They are recorded in myth, history, and in the archaeological record. More important for my analysis, they function as a circuit whereby Hawaiians and allies follow ritual paths. Specific paths vary according to practitioners, purpose, and destination, but they all share common features. The ahu serve as protocol way stations, places to stop, regroup, and 'set intentions'. Modest offerings of libations and objects (*'awa* [kava], salt, bundled leaves) and words (prayers, songs, chants) are made before setting off to the next destination, frequently another ahu further up the mauna.

A feature that many ahu – past and recent – share is that they have been built in times of struggle. In such moments, or in commemoration of such moments, ahu focus collective will and become sites of articulation of joint purpose, often conveyed in the idiom of devotion (to a place, a deity, a lineage, and the intersection of these). In short, they are born of conflict and anchor specific people to places they regard as theirs or, what is functionally the same in a Hawaiian way, their *kuleana* (responsibility or obligation). One site, Ahu o Kauakoko, was bulldozed by the state in 2015. This fate was then shared by the ahu at the

TMT site.[11] Here the State of Hawai'i constitution falls flat in practice, as does a sorry history of U.S. jurisprudence relative to indigenous places and things. Hawaiians are ritually stubborn and aesthetically driven, so no amount of state arrogance or ignorance is likely to deter ahu construction and consecration for long. Indeed, during the 24th June, 2018 protest commemoration, a new ahu was built and consecrated on the mauna, and the 2019–2020 protest has resulted in the same practice.

North American and transnational connections

An eye-catching aspect of *Kūkulu* is the way it calls forth connections to other sites of recent protest actions, especially in North America. Hawaiians have a long history of working with American Indian and First Nation groups on various causes and consider them to be relatives. Just how the stakes and strands of relationality are represented is precisely the kind of issue INREL has trained its attention upon in other contexts. Here my observations are primarily cast at the level of Mauna Kea-related actors and actions. The 2015 Mauna Kea protest preceded Standing Rock, for example, but not by much. Certainly a clear template for non-violent direct action campaigns was long established in North America prior to the Mauna Kea dispute. Already, then, we are addressing a setting of common and shared actions, tropes, as well as grooved pathways of travel between North America and the Pacific.

Hawaiians and Native Americans have shared in one another's protests. On Mauna Kea this was true early on, with visitors coming from various native nations. Once matters calmed on Mauna Kea, some Hawaiians returned the favour. By autumn 2016 several Hawaiians were living in the Stand Rock camps. Numerous others visited, including Pua Case, Hāwane Rios, and Andre Perez, all of whom have played central roles in the 2019–2020 protest. These connections and reciprocations are, I would argue, as central to contemporary Hawaiian indigeneity as many other far more local acts. Travel of this sort builds a grander sense of indigenous resistance and purpose, one that is not predicated on the success of any one action.

Beyond North America, connections and awareness have been fostered in such settings, including with Sámi and other people encountered at these fraught sites. *Kūkulu* names and celebrates such exchanges. Photographs, signs, and clothing objects bespeak engaged indigeneity on the road. This is not a finished story. The back and forth continues. For example, in the summer of 2017, Lakota elder Arvol Looking Horse visited Mauna Kea for World Peace Day with a group of American Indians.[12] Flowing the other direction, Pua Case has been working concertedly with LaDonna Brave Bull Allard to keep the Standing Rock agenda – namely, protecting water resources – in the public eye, especially through various social media campaigns. In return, Allard visited Mauna Kea in the early phases of the 2019–2020 protest.[13]

Local stones and global flows – the Hōkūleʻa pohaku

The final object in the installation that I wish to discuss here is a very well-travelled *pohaku* (rock). Its itinerary tells a story of maximally global indigeneity in a key that is at once micro-local (a hand-picked, vision-informed stone) and emphatically inclusive, even proselytising. The pohaku was chosen by Hāwane Rios, Pua Case's daughter, to travel on the Hawaiian ocean canoe, Hōkūleʻa, on its Mālama Honua (Caring for Earth) voyage, which circumnavigated the globe from 2013–2018.[14] A product of the Hawaiian Renaissance, Hōkūleʻa was built in the 1970s in part to demonstrate Polynesian navigational and sailing capacities. It is 'neo-traditional' in the sense that it incorporates modern materials and has a motor-powered escort craft (Finney 2003). But it is heartily Hawaiian in an abiding sense, which is most clearly registered by way of its crew's orientation to ritual protocol. Manifest in numerous ways, especially in settings of departure and arrival, Hōkūleʻa is a veritable floating oasis of Hawaiian ritual comportment and symbolisation. The pohaku served metonymically in this capacity, providing the crew with a rock-strong reminder of home and serving as a tactile beacon of Hawaiianess in destinations afar. There it is, resting like Kūkiaʻimauna in the exhibit. It too may be recalled to duty in the future.

Back on stage: the 2019 eruption

As noted previously, on 30th October, 2018 the State Supreme Court ruled in favour for the TMT construction permit. It was a decision that relied heavily on the state's findings and documents, which in turn directly parroted positions and arguments proffered by TMT's legal team. The tainted nature of the decision caused considerable frustration and misgivings among the kiaʻi and increased the scepticism of many Hawaiians about the state's ability to deliver justice to their community. In any case, this decision marked the end of the road for direct legal challenges to the project. Now the terrain shifted from the courts back to the mauna itself. When would an attempt be made to resume construction? How would the kiaʻi respond?

Matters festered in the winter and spring of 2019. I was fortunate to visit *Kūkulu* in January. Pua Case and Lanakila Mangauil conveyed a sense of urgency at the time and the exhibit seemed more relevant than ever. During that trip I was able to 'go mauna' twice, once with Ku Ching, a long-time pro-Mauna Kea activist and kupuna, and once with Billy Freitas to document him conducting ritual protocol at the TMT site ahu (see Figure 5.4). I had served as a witness for Billy during the contested case hearing wherein I specifically addressed his role in building the ahu and caring for them subsequently. He and I had made a number of trips to visit them and for me to document Billy conducting ceremonies at the site, including with INREL team in July 2018. Now, with the Court ruling issued, this trip had a special significance. Due to his work schedule and other demands upon his time, Billy wasn't sure when he would be at the ahu next,

FIGURE 5.4 William "Billy" Freitas conducting protocol at Ahu Kūkia'imauna Ekahi.

and I wasn't scheduled to return soon. We both knew we might not see the ahu again, which proved to be true.

On 20th June, 2019, agents from the DLNR removed the ahu and Hale Kūkia'imauna, declaring them to be "unpermitted structures".[15] In defence of these actions, state representatives cited language from the Court to underscore their claim that the structures were not representative of sincere religion, but instead were mere relics of politically motivated protest that did not warrant

constitutional protection. From the perspective of the kiaʻi community, these actions were egregious and highly inflammatory. Several kiaʻi, including Billy Freitas and Kahoʻokahi Kanuha, were on the mauna during the middle-of-the-night removal of the structures. They responded in vigil, praying through the process. Their actions were live streamed by other kiaʻi, and once again social media helped to ignite a movement. Many in the Hawaiian community were outraged, especially by the removal of Hale Kūkiaʻimauna, which was nowhere near the construction site, and by the removal of another protest-related structure the same night. In their view, the state was showing its hand: force would be used without regard for the sensibilities of cultural practitioners. But the plan did not pan out well. In some respects, it is fair to say in hindsight that the state created the very problem it sought to dampen. By removing cultural structures the state catalysed an intense cultural movement. The very next day social media was flooded with images of the ahu and the hale. That same day a new large ahu was constructed on the site of Hale Kūkiaʻimauna and another at the TMT site. Dislodging Hawaiian presence was not going to prove easy, especially when thousands of kiaʻi arrived on the mauna less than a month later.

Meanwhile, based on a strong hunch that the mauna would erupt once again, I devoted my 2019 summer research time to being on Hawaiʻi Island. I arrived on 23rd June, just days after the state's removal of the ahu and hale. At first I enjoyed a comparatively quiet few weeks learning what I could about the present state of the movement and the mauna itself, which involved numerous hikes in solitude on its vast expanses and a few visits with practitioners to the TMT site to observe them ministering to the mauna and giving *hoʻokupu* (offerings) at the provisional replacement ahu erected there. On one trip, which was made on 3rd July, my family and I accompanied Billy to the TMT site to check on the new ahu. We found that it had been removed. Billy calmly rebuilt a small ahu in its place and then proceeded to perform a ceremony in his modest style. This culminated in making hoʻokupu. We documented his ceremony upon his request and participated in making hoʻokupu. Our presence was in turn documented by a state ranger, a further indicator of escalating tensions on the mauna. In the days following, I began to hear rumours of imminent action by the state to prepare for protests.

Later that same week, the word from the state and on the street was that construction equipment for the TMT would be escorted up the mauna on 15th July.[16] Things went into high gear on both sides. Police from several jurisdictions, including from other islands, were moving into place and the construction equipment was staged at an army base below the mauna. On the kiaʻi side, there was a large community-based strategy meeting on the 12th, which took place ominously adjacent to Puʻukohalā, Kamehameha's famed war temple. People were ready to mobilise and to strategise.

The next day, Saturday the 13th, a pivotal event took place. Working with the Royal Order of Kamehameha, a highly respected group of elders, the kiaʻi established a basecamp for the impending movement at Puʻuhuluhulu, a small nature reserve. It is also the site of a prominent ahu used for ceremonies on behalf of the

mauna and therefore has a long-standing significance for the kia'i. Moreover, it sits in a very strategic location at the entrance of the Mauna Kea Access Road, the only suitable road up the mauna for construction equipment. Crucially, and of signal importance for our purposes, the camp was established as a *pu'uhonua*, which means sanctuary or place of refuge. This is a specifically religious designation with a deeply traditional genealogy that also carries an undeniable political valence. Going far back in Hawaiian history, pu'uhonua were places one fled to in order to gain relief from political foes and physical struggle, among other reasons.[17] Mobilisation of a potent Hawaiian trope as a means to name the camp and its ethos could not have been more apt. This stroke of cultural genius troubled the state's facile habit of distinguishing the religious from the political and gave living example to how these forces are often one in the same, especially in moments of cultural crisis.

Sunday the 14th was declared a day of ceremony at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu, with elaborate protocol (prayer, songs, and dance) every hour from sunrise to sundown. This commitment to ceremony set the tone of the movement internally and conveyed an outward facing message that has been profoundly efficacious. I arrived at Pu'uhuluhulu mid-afternoon to witness the ceremonies. The amount of activity on the mauna immediately captured my attention, as did the peacefulness of Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu, despite the numbers of people who had gathered, many for the long haul with camping gear and bail money. Milling about through the crowd and seeing many old friends, I was struck by the diversity of Hawaiians at the camp. While 'the usual' folks were there – the core kia'i from the 2015 protests, parties to the various legal proceedings, and other long-time supporters – numerous others were there as well, including hula dancers from various schools, chanters, academics, and many, many everyday Hawaiians. It was abundantly clear from the very first days of the Pu'uhonua that the work of holding space, including that performed by *Kūkulu*, had been a success. A community had been fostered, and now it was mobilising. What struck me most was the way this collective was represented in ritual terms, with a nearly seamless flow from highly complex chanting and hula by some, to comparatively simple forms of worship by others. This was an eclectic movement that demanded supple ceremonial sensibilities and actions from its constituents. This collaborative ritual way-finding has become a hallmark of the movement, about which I say more later.

As more and more people streamed in from Hilo and Kona that evening, there was an intensity in the camp that bespoke anxiety about expected police presence in the morning but also reflected resolve and the already considerable momentum of the kia'i. My travelling companions and I obeyed the harsh instructions to be up at 2:30 a.m. in order to be organised and in place on the Mauna Kea Access Road, which was to be blockaded, before the police arrived. Over the short period we had tried to sleep, the camp had grown yet again, with cars lined up far down the highway from the Pu'uhonua. The *kahea* (call) had gone out, and the community responded. Infrastructure was already being

developed in the camp: a large kitchen tent, a medic tent with a sizable group of volunteers, a strategy tent, a *kūpuna* (elders) tent, portable toilets, and a road crossing-guard station were all in place by the early morning of the 15th, and the people in the camp had been self-assigned into three contingents: 'arrestable' (red armband), 'arrestable if needed' (yellow), and 'not arrestable' (green). This level or infrastructure and personnel organisation prefigured the kind of strategic acumen possessed by the group collectively that would be on display day after day for the coming weeks. The state, it became clear, had no idea how organised and disciplined the kia'i would be.

Central to their discipline was the ethic of *kapu aloha* (non-violent action), which had been so formative in 2015, and which had figured so centrally in the messaging of the *Kūkulu* exhibit. Over and again in the camp meetings this was emphasised. Maintain the high ground or leave, we were all told. To facilitate the role of kapu aloha, Pua Case let the community know that a group of people would be designated to wear blue kapu aloha shirts and that they would serve to assist people in whatever capacity, but primarily to make sure kapu aloha was abided by at all times, including through a prohibition on drugs, alcohol, and any form of violence. This emphatic attention to kapu aloha has traditional sources, but it is also strategic insofar as it is the group's primary means for controlling media optics and, relatedly, for making sure conflicts with the state do not escalate and become an unwinnable contest of force.

Once we gulped down our coffee and made our way to the road, we became aware of the day's primary form of direct action. A core group of eight kia'i, including several professors and some long-time activists, had chained themselves to a cattle guard that crosses the road. Other 'reds' were instructed to occupy the road in front of them to slow the progress of the police. Frankly, I found this tactic potentially dubious, as a similar blockade recently deployed on Maui, during a telescope controversy there, had been overcome by the police.[18] But the morning wore on with the police keeping some distance and only a small group approaching the kia'i chained to the cattle guard. Meanwhile, the ranks of the kia'i grew by the hour in ways few expected. By midday there were hundreds of protestors on the mauna whereas the police force was comparatively small, possibly by design insofar as the state was likely reluctant to have the media broadcast images of an outsized police force arresting kia'i. In any case, by late afternoon the police received orders to back down for the day. At that moment it seemed like a very temporary victory. In hindsight, it was a day that emboldened the protectors and gave them a chance to implement phase two of their strategy.

Phase two is still in progress as I write and it is a testimony to strategic foresight and endurance. On the morning of Tuesday the 16th, after *pule* (prayers) and *oli* (chants), a line of *kūpuna* (elders) took up a position in the Access Road. It was announced to the assembled crowd that the kūpuna wished to be arrested. Regardless of the colours of our arms bands, the remainder of us were instructed not to interfere with their arrests. Additionally, we were instructed to remain silent so that the respective kūpuna could address the police and the crowd with

their *mana'o* (thoughts) as they were taken away. Somewhat surprisingly, the day passed without incident and with much ceremony and strategising.

On Wednesday the 17th, the kūpuna line was again in the road, this time fortified by other kūpuna who came out to be arrested, including some very prominent members of the community with considerable state-wide visibility. These included a trustee of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, several senior professors, famous musicians, renowned hula teachers, long-time activists with credentials going back to the struggle over Kaho'olawe in the 1970s, and a highly respected religious leader who had not previously been particularly visible among the ranks of the kia'i, Pualani Kanaka'ole Kanahele. Revered by many as a singular icon of living Hawaiian religion, Kanahele's presence marked a shift in the credibility of the movement for those outside its core group. Her presence corresponded with a swelling of the camps and with heightened media coverage of the protests, which amplified tremendously with the arrests that day of 38 kūpuna, some of them in wheelchairs or otherwise struggling with health issues. The media optics of that afternoon profoundly favoured the kūpuna, especially when more than a hundred *wahine* (women) entered the road to prevent further arrests, singing in arms-locked unison for hours in the face of riot-gear donning police. By late afternoon, the police backed off yet again.

Two days later Governor Ige announced an "Emergency Proclamation" for the mountain, saying he had received reports of drugs, alcohol, and other health risks in the camps.[19] These unsubstantiated claims provoked a strong reaction from those in the camps, but also from some politicians and other observers.[20] The tide continued to turn against the state and TMT. In just a few short days the kia'i succeeded in establishing a camp and a sacred discourse to go with it, stalled the police on several occasions, and generated public sympathy by having willing kūpuna be arrested for the cause (Figure 5.5). Meanwhile, the state bungled at every turn, enabling the kia'i to dig in. By Thursday of that week the Pu'uhonua infrastructure was all the more substantial and a sub-camp was developed at the kūpuna line in the road. They were not going anywhere.

Of direct relevance to the INREL project, what happened next was decisive. The kia'i did not take a defensive posture or rest. They invested energy in consolidating the message that the movement was 'in ceremony' (cf. Johnson and Kraft 2018). Their messaging insisted that this was a ritual event in a sacred space, and this message was conveyed and reinforced through highly mediatised and translatable actions. Three times a day, every day, for now more than five months there has been 'full protocol' in the road in front of the kūpuna tent. Led by members of the Kanaka'ole Kanahele family and other experts, including Pua Case, this ceremony begins with traditional chants, which are followed by songs, prayers, and hula. The core pattern was set early on by high-level practitioners, but each ceremony involves some improvisation depending on who is present, weather conditions, and so forth. Some recently composed chants and songs have been central to the ceremonies as well, including ones that have figured in the *Kūkulu* displays, demonstrating the living quality of traditions on the mauna.

FIGURE 5.5 Police action and kapu aloha on July 17, 2019.

Chief among these is *Ka'i Kūkulu*, the oli used as the epigraph for this chapter, which has been featured on t-shirts across Hawai'i and now is the closing chant and hula of a generation-shaping ritual.

Redolent of ceremonial forms at Standing Rock, each day during ceremonies formal protocol is held for visiting dignitaries and other guests who present offerings and gifts, including songs, dances, and flags. Media outlets have broadcast images of the ceremonies on a regular basis, including of visiting superstars such as Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and Jason Momoa paying homage to the mauna and the kūpuna. It is safe to say that the unfolding events on Mauna Kea are unprecedented in terms of numbers of people involved, media reach, and religious innovation.[21] Here I mean innovation not in the sense of mere invention, but the capacious manner by which tradition has been deployed and reshaped in and as real-time means for addressing the needs of the people, politically and spiritually.

Conclusion: engaged indigeneity and indigenous religion(s)

Engaged indigeneity is supple, persistent, and resistant to the truncating effect of authenticity discourses, and performed in many registers. Further, as I hope to have made clear by way of *Kūkulu* and its relationship to the 2019–2020 protests, engaged indigenty functions on and off stage. Much more could be said about

engaged indigeneity, of course, but these features strike me as particularly relevant for understanding the work of indigenous religion(s). With reference to Mauna Kea, one could not begin to make sense of the daily ceremonial protocol during the 2019–2020 protest, for example, without accounting longitudinally for the ebbs and flows of the movement and how it was animated along the way by various people who performed a range of roles and drew upon a diversity of experiences and cultural capacities to do so. If one charts the trajectory of Hawaiian care for Mauna Kea, it becomes clear that several strands of religious practice have been individually and collectively important. My point here is not to give a full account of these different styles of Hawaiian religiosity, but rather to call attention to the ways they are jointly expressed on Mauna as a unified voice.

The analytical usefulness of the INREL construct 'indigneous religion(s)' is *apropos* here. As noted previously, at least three kinds of Hawaiian religious practice are evident in the daily protest protocol. Examples include: highly formalised hula and chanting as guided by revered cultural teacher Pualani Kanaka'ole Kanahale, her family, and her students; Mauna Kea-specific forms of contemporary practice, including songs, chants, and slogans, led by Pua Case and her community; and grassroots, site-specific forms of prayer and offering made by people such as Billy Freitas who have comparatively little formal training but who have tremendous experience on the land and garner respect accordingly. The three kinds of practice I have sketched here have different participants and audiences off the mauna, and these bespeak variable degrees of resources they can command and the differential influence they enjoy in other contexts. I do not mean to overstate their differences, but they do operate in different spheres and at different scales. One could go so far as to say, schematically, that they constitute diverse Hawaiian religions – plural, in the INREL sense.

Collectively on Mauna Kea, however, I would argue that they have been functioning together as a form of Hawaiian religion, singular. Representatives of each group have coordinated their practices and accomodated one another. The very protocol for each day illustrates this beautifully.[22] But working together to establish a shared ritual format does not itself render these diverse Hawaiian religions into a singular expression of Hawaiian religion. It is the formal feature of this convergence that is so powerfully unanimous. Namely, the various ritual articulations consistently convey a macro-order message: "The mauna is sacred and we are its protectors". The persuasive capacity of the movement is found just here. When such a range of practitioners coordinate their message, and when that message is announced from the literal and moral highground, they make the strongest possible claim for indigneity in a religious key. In doing so, they also cast their sacred claims at a level that opens up translational possiblities with other indigenous communities and causes, and with allies.

In closing, I would like to expound a bit more about how the INREL framing of indigenous religion(s) has facilitated my interpretation of what is happening on Mauna Kea. Early in our endeavour, the INREL team set out a model of

religion/religions and stipulated an analytical frame focused on scaling dynamics as means best to understand their relationship (between local-specific 'religions' and more general and increasingly shared 'religion'). In some of our project-related publications we settled on the device 'religion(s)' in an attempt to convey both modalities and the relationship between them (Johnson and Kraft 2017). What we found compelling by way of the religion(s) construct was confirmation of the rhetorical and communicative *savoir faire* of indigenous people who use religious idioms and ritual actions in a variety of settings to confront challenges and expand their audience reach. Form, not content, was the answer to the question we posed, with the particular twist here being that the formal categories pertaining to religion marshalled by indigenous actors frequently are ones commonly invoked by scholars of religion: e.g., ceremony, story, prayer, and above all, sacred. What we found is that translation and scaling of concerns happen less often by means of generalising content and more by way of formal assertions.

Here the work of analysis is to backtrack from substantive expressions to assess the rhetorical function of the formal claims being instantiated and advanced. Comparison is critical in this mode, as one needs to consider multiple instances of such discourse to begin to see how this rhetoric does its work. 'THIS (thing, act, word) is *sacred'*, we came to appreciate, is a means to say it is a group's highest register of concern, engagement, and commitment and that no mundane reality is a suitable corollary or substitute. On Mauna Kea, it is this inflection of indigenous religion that is on display every day of the protest and it is precisely the form of religion that other people are resonating with and responding to.

Thus transacted, *sacred* comes to signify a working agreement between diverse indigenous people along the following lines: various culture-specific traditions that animate such claims stand in a more or less metaphorical relationship to one another. Sacred here is not the noumenal 'really real' (though some might intend that, too), but a way of marking and remarking upon highest order agreement and congruence: an assertion about diverse indigenous spiritual realities being comparable or parallel in contrast to those of the non-indigenous world that are perceived to be at odds with the former. Sacred, in this mode, is a beacon of sorts on the global seas of indigeneity, enabling indigenous peoples to locate and identify with indigenous others elsewhere, what Kraft and I have called "distant selves" (Johnson and Kraft 2018: 7–8).

In this way, sacred – and other ways of indexing singular indigenous religion – functions as *a claim about claims* in order to insist on a superior and shared register of understanding and engagement. This indigenous inflection of the sacred, I am persuaded, is strongly consistent from micro-local to macro-global invocations. It might be said that my observation is banal insofar as many if not all invocations of the sacred could be said to entail highest order positionings of ontological, cosmological, and moral claims. I agree, but would add that overwhelmingly – at least in contexts of indigeneity directly shaped by

European-American colonisation, technology, and market forces – contemporary indigenous sacred claims constitute a contrastive discourse vis-à-vis the presumed failure of broader society's extractive and alienating treatment of nature and indigenous peoples themselves. Sacred here refers to the entities that make up the environment itself, from earth to sky, and to a relationship of mutual care between these entities and humans.

However, even as I stretch to stipulate formal features of indigenous religion(s), I find myself making potentially unsustainable generalisations. What of indigenous religions not directly impacted by European-American historical forces or subject to the habits of European-American scholarly enquiry? This question unsettles my confidence, nudging me to retreat to the specifics of familiar ground, if now differently understood. That is one of the productive features of a comparative and collaborative project on its best day – one stretches to find resemblances and similarities (of phenomena and possibly also of causes, consequences, meaning, and significance), but in this very act is chastened by stubborn particularities and unyielding differences. Comparison, of course, is thus best approached as a means to trouble rather than simplify conceptual maps, a point Jonathan Z. Smith (2004), among others, has long insisted upon. Having collective experiences in several highly diverse settings with the INREL team certainly has driven home the point for me.

Notes

1 Used by permission from Pualani Case. A video of the chant, along with all of the protocol chants used in the Mauna Kea protest ceremonies of 2019–2020, can be found at www.puuhuluhulu.com/learn/protocol (accessed 7 February, 2020).
2 For an account of Mangauil's actions, see: www.nytimes.com/2016/10/04/science/hawaii-thirty-meter-telescope-mauna-kea.html (accessed 24 September, 2019).
3 For a news account, see, e.g., "Telescope protestors pile rocks in the road", *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, 24 June 2015.
4 For a complete record of the primary legal and administrative documents pertaining to the dispute, see http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/mk/documents-library/.
5 For the court's decision, see https://law.justia.com/cases/hawaii/supreme-court/2018/scot-17-0000777.html
6 The relevant passage is Article 12, Section 7: "The State reaffirms and shall protect all rights, customarily and traditionally exercised for subsistence, cultural and religious purposes and possessed by ahupua'a tenants who are descendants of native Hawaiians who inhabited the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778, *subject to the right of the State to regulate such rights"*. (emphasis added) (1978).
7 To give but one example, each major island has a burial council charged with administration of the state burial law. These councils are frequently quite outspoken and effective but for many years have been hampered by insufficient state funding and other administrative shortcomings. For a rich account of the successes and failures of the burial councils, see Nāone Hall (2017).
8 Used by permission from Pualani Case. The core refrain of the Hawaiian language version of the chant has been performed in call-and-response fashion at the end of the thrice daily *aha* (ceremonies) during the 2019–2020 protests. See later in this chapter.

9 For an excellent discussion of the religious and political sources and implications of kapu aloha, see this video of Pua Case and Andre Perez filmed at the 2019 protest site: www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2350192721897375 (accessed 22 September, 2019).
10 Hawaiian Cultural Center of Hāmākua, Facebook post. 27 February, 2018.
11 See: www.bigislandvideonews.com/2019/06/20/video-kanuha-arrested-on-mauna-kea-as-police-dismantle-ahu/ (accessed 15 September, 2019) and www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2019/06/20/authorities-dismantle-structures-mauna-kea-set-up-by-tmt-protesters/ (accessed 15 September, 2019).
12 See www.huffpost.com/entry/lakota-chief-to-honor-hawaiian-sacred-sites-in-2017_b_5860424ae4b068764965bd32 (accessed 24 September, 2019).
13 For an account of Allard's connections to the Mauna Kea movement, see: https://howzitkohala.com/2019/07/28/standing-rock-yields-insight-on-mauna-kea-by-andrew-gomes/ (accessed 23 September, 2019).
14 See: www.hokulea.com/worldwide-voyage/
15 See: https://governor.hawaii.gov/newsroom/latest-news/office-of-the-governor-news-release-state-issues-notice-to-proceed-for-thirty-meter-telescope-project/ (accessed 24 September, 2019).
16 See: https://governor.hawaii.gov/newsroom/latest-news/governors-office-joint-news-release-thirty-meter-telescope-set-to-start-construction/ (accessed 24 September, 2019).
17 See: www.bigislandvideonews.com/2019/07/13/puu-huluhulu-to-be-designated-a-puuhonua-tmt-opponents-say/ (accessed December 20, 2019).
18 See: www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/6-arrested-during-protest-maui-solar-telescope-n789156 (accessed 24 September, 2019).
19 See: https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/1907086-Mauna-Kea.pdf (accessed 24 September, 2019).
20 For example: www.thegardenisland.com/2019/07/23/hawaii-news/councilmembers-call-for-ige-to-reverse-mauna-kea-proclamation/ (accessed 24 September, 2019).
21 For a media account of the religious aspects of the protests, see: www.ncronline.org/news/environment/hawaii-mauna-kea-protectors-fight-telescope-project-prayer (accessed 12 September, 2019).
22 I encourage readers to watch videos of the ceremonies, which are archived on several Facebook sites, including Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhluhulu, Kāko'o Haleakalā, and Kanaeokana.

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CONCLUSION

What could go wrong? With such an ambitious agenda as ours, surely pitfalls lurked. Indeed, we did occasionally stumble, though seldom disastrously, and often the result was comic relief. We can report that the ability to laugh at and with each other should be a precondition of any long-term collaborative project. Our shortcomings are important to address. For instance, as much as the project was designed to help us get beyond our parochial habits, especially conceptual ones, we stand humbled by our limitations to do so. Even on ground central to our project, such as understandings of our core terms, we have continued to talk past each other at times. This is a sobering lesson about the difficulties of effecting real change, for if a devoted group of scholars who work together over years sometimes fail to communicate clearly and persuasively with one another, what hope might we reasonably have for less intensive forms of intellectual engagement?

Yet, in some respects it was precisely our working misunderstandings that enabled us to forge ahead. Had we paused at each impasse to get on the same page, the predictable result would have been collective paralysis. We have worked hard to strike a balance between revisiting points of conceptual incongruity and simply moving on. Overall, this has proved productive if not always satisfying and it mirrors the intellectual biography of our discipline in a general sense. The more troubling feature of our conceptual failures was precisely their unrecognised presence at times, including in the field when we sometimes expected and sought forms of indigenous religion that matched our preconceived expectations of them. Reifications live strong and die hard.

Consider our inheritance. As we have reflected upon throughout this book, both 'indigenous' and 'religion' have numerous usages, intended and otherwise, including a vast range in academic and everyday contexts, evermore so in their conjunction. Functional but not always congruent equivalents of 'indigenous'

in English include native, tribal, local, aboriginal, all of which can and do have specific legal, political, and social frames and consequences. 'Religion' receives articulation as tradition, culture, spirituality, ritual, practice, protocol, ceremony, lifeway, and any number of local idioms. This partial list only notes the variegated landscape in English.

Adding to this complexity, is the incongruence of diverse disciplinary frames and their differential relationships to colonial genealogies. To take only the most obvious examples, consider how anglophone religious studies and indigenous studies construct and refer to each term and their conjunction. Within religious studies, generally speaking, discourse about indigenous religions is more global than what one finds in anglophone indigenous studies circles. Perhaps due to the world religions model and a philological orientation, religious studies conversations about indigenous religions routinely look to Central and South America, Africa, Oceania, and some parts of Asia. Indigenous studies conversations do the same in principle but far less so in practice; there Native American studies and other anglophone colonial contexts and concerns predominate.

With regard to religion and its cognates, approaches in religious studies still frequently reify the category and its presumed turf, shortchanging other domains such as culture, history, and political life as a result. Indigenous studies often has the opposite effect, largely ignoring the category for a variety of understandable reasons in view of the legacies of missionisation and its disciplining tendencies, on the one hand, and anthropology and its fetishising habits, on the other. In both cases, religion and representations of it are often regarded as distorting of indigenous experience. Added to this, certain domains of living practices, which missionaries and researchers historically have associated with religion, are often shielded from scholarly view and regarded as inappropriate subjects of enquiry and analysis. This sets up an impasse of considerable complexity for a project such as ours.

In both contexts – as in the classroom and in courts – each term can be ascribed a positive and a negative valence. 'Religion' can and frequently does signal colonial institutions, ideologies, and practices, and all of the constraints and disfigurations this implies, as noted previously. It can also signal the realm of the spiritual, the more-than-human, and so forth, and, as we have suggested, it sometimes becomes the translative term of choice for globalising movements. 'Religion' is thus, at turns, shielded from analytical view and yet also foundational to some contemporary forms of indigeneity. In many contexts today, 'indigenous' carries a largely positive charge in the communities that invoke it. But this is not always true. Diverse people across the world associate it with negative discrimination and violence. Some communities do not invoke it at all. In others it is mostly rejected.

Hawaiians, to take one example, sometimes announce their sovereign aspirations *against* the category. In this usage, sovereignty is a maximal frame of nationalist memory and future-oriented ambitions. It is also the guiding category for academic and grassroots framing of Hawaiian identity claims (Kauanui

2018). Iterated thus, 'indigenous' is at counter-purposes with restored nationhood, at least with regard to United Nations-style frameworks that structurally enforce the idea that indigeneity is predicated on subordination within colonial nation-states. Likewise with 'tribe'. For many Hawaiians, 'tribe' is a construct of the U.S. federal government that implies and enacts encapsulation and usurpation. So whereas many Hawaiians have strong connections to and sympathies with Native Americans, they insist upon decolonised frameworks for articulating such relationships. 'Native', 'aboriginal' and 'first peoples' are terms of choice in such contexts. Similarily, 'religion' is not usually invoked when Hawaiians and Native Americans address sacred matters. Here the language of ceremony, responsibilities, and honour is foregrounded. In most locations we visited, members of the group had the unnerving experience of announcing our intention to study indigenous religion only to have locals respond with a bemused look, as if to say: "Good for you. But why here?"

The foregoing is not intended as an exercise in excuse-making. It is an attempt to render explicit some of the dilemmas we faced throughout the project and the writing of this book. Overall, collaborative comparison has inspired new questions and ideas, but it has also chastened us, and motivated us to assume less.

Initial questions – preliminary answers

Bringing our project to a close, we return to two of the questions that we presented in the introduction, and reflect upon some of our findings. In doing so, we draw on our five chapters primarily, but also on the work of other INREL collaborators, including our Ph.D. students. The following is thus a short synthesis, an exercise in critical comparison, and a starting point for future research.

> *Who speaks about indigenous religion, when, where, to whom, for which reasons, on which scales, and what are the consequences of such discourses?*

All of our five case studies comprise examples of usages of the term 'indigenous religion' by different actors, with divergent referents, and for varied purposes. We encountered more extensive and elaborate usages in Hawai'i, Sápmi, and especially at Standing Rock, than among the Bribri, the Naga, and the Rathva. In her INREL dissertation, Liudmila Nikanorova (2019) found that scholars, tourists, and UNESCO classify the Siberian Sakha as an 'indigenous people' and speak about an 'indigenous religion' much more frequently and categorically than most Sakha people themselves. In comparison, INREL Ph.D. student Helen Jennings has reported the extensive usage of 'indigenous religion' and especially 'indigenous spirituality' in tourism run by indigenous persons in British Columbia, while her colleague May-Lisbeth Brew has identified this terminology in Mapuche translations of their own practices to wider audiences in Argentina, Chile, and Europe.

These varied findings resonate with our earlier studies published in the *Handbook of Indigenous Religion(s)* (Johnson and Kraft 2017), in special sections of the

journals *Numen* (Tafjord and Alles 2018) and *Religious Studies and Theology* (Alles and Tafjord 2017), and in diverse conference panels over the past five years. Overall, a globalising discourse of indigenous religion seems to have a marked presence in North America and Scandinavia, as well as in parts of Central and South America, the Pacific, New Zealand, and Australia. The forms this discourse takes in these 'Western' regions, seem somewhat less audible and visible in Africa and Asia, including India and Siberia, although they are becoming increasingly present there, too. Many who speak about indigenous religion today make global claims and refer to a global indigenous 'we'. Paralleling this maximally upscaled discourse and outlook are numerous pan-indigenous movements and orientations in or across states or regions of different size.

Contexts of usages of indigenous religion(s) include protests, celebrations, politics, tourism, education, scholarship, missionisation, litigation, art, exhibitions, and popular culture and media. The users are similarly diverse, and have shifted over time. For instance, self-identification as indigenous was embraced by some politicians and artists in Sápmi during the 1970s, and more broadly from the 1980s. In India, references to some people as indigenous became used from around the 1990s, but disproportionately. In many Indian contexts, 'tribe/tribal' is the preferred term because it conveys a certain legal designation and constitutional rights associated with positive discrimination ('Scheduled tribes'), or articulates more vigorously cultural and social self-understandings.

Emerging from our material, are usages of 'indigenous religion' for several purposes. Many of them relate to sovereignty in a broad sense of the term, as protection of identities, homelands, and traditions. Indigenous religion often serves as a scaling and translation device, a foreign relations tool, and a diplomatic register (cf. Tafjord 2016a, 2016b, Kraft 2017): a method and a language for building and extending communities and solidarities, or a means through which people recognise each other, form alliances, and distinguish themselves from others. Indigenous religion is also a language of sacred claims – directed to one's community and to others, including state institutions (evident in the Standing Rock protests and the protection of Mauna Kea). The communities that rally around and become constituted through articulations of indigenous religion are sometimes much larger, and reach much farther, than distinct cultural groups locked in their nation state contexts. When mobilised as a global movement, indigenous peoples are collectively a substantial group and alliance. The Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2014) shows how sacred claims come with the potential for refusals, as they imply appeals to ultimate concerns and authorities, situated above the mundane political world of negotiations and compromises.

Furthermore, indigenous religion is sometimes used as a frame, model or format for the reclaiming, rebuilding and restoring of partially lost or threatened traditions, as when traditional practices become animism, and traditional specialists become shamans. Indigenous religion is also used as a resource for indigenising new, mixed or foreign traditions. The ways in which Christianities in many places have been indigenised is an obvious example, for instance

through Naga assimilation of Baptist Christianity with indigenous practices (see Longkumer 2018a; 2018b), or through recent theological portrayals of the pre-Christian Sámi religion as an equivalent to the Old Testament (e.g. Johnsen 2007). In tense opposition to such indigenisation stands uses of indigenous religion as a synonym for idolatry, superstition or primitive religion, when this phrase is deployed to reject or demote traditional knowledges and practices, such approaches also exist in and around the communities where we do research. One finds a somewhat different use of the concept in eastern Gujarat, where missionaries within various 'caste Hindu' movements, building on claims that *Adivasis* are actually degenerate Hindus, represent conversion to their movements as a return to the true, purified indigenous religion (Alles 2016, 2017).

Last but not least, it is important to note how scholarship and schooling continue to function as prime venues and motors for claims about and presentations of indigenous religion. Tourism and art are perhaps the only other venues where it is performed and taught with similar frequency all across the world today. In diverse educative settings, people learn to translate their own and others' traditional knowledges and practices into indigenous religion. Across all the contexts we have mentioned, indigenous religion is a resource. It enables people to do, pursue, and sometimes achieve divergent things which are on their agendas, including things which they consider urgent and even existential.

> *How are indigenous and religious registers – acts, words, gestures, material objects, or assemblages that somehow index indigeneity and religion – means through which people recognise each other, form alliances, and distinguish themselves from others?*

As we have shown in our case studies, there are multiple answers to this question, depending on the context. Here we present a few provisional observations of acts, words, gestures, material objects, and assemblages that recur in the globalising discursive formation that we have come to discern from the vantage points of our joint project – what we call indigenous religion (in the singular). Their recurrence is central in making things recognisable as 'indigenous' and 'religious'. Our original project proposal identified indigenous religion as a "globalizing discourse, consisting of notions of an indigenous *we* and a flexible, but fairly standardized, vocabulary of assumed similarities: harmony with nature, healing and holism, antiquity and spirituality, shamanism and animism" (Kraft *et al.* 2014). This observation still holds, even though many of our findings have taken us beyond the domain of words.

What we, the people with whom we work, and others recognise as indigenous religion is evoked also by materials (e.g. skins, feathers, bodily decorations, clothing), artefacts (e.g. drums, bows and arrows, spears, scythes, shawls, necklaces), architectural structures or decorations (e.g. *ahu, lávvu, morung*, palm roofed Bribri houses, Pithora paintings), substances (e.g. herbal medicine, rice beer, kava, mahua liquor), performances and gestures (e.g. song, dance, *pow*

wows), patterns (e.g. on clothes or as tattoos), competences (e.g. in native arts, languages, and skills, such as archery), and sounds (e.g. drumbeat, yoik, throat singing, ukulele, ululations, whistles). Alone, any one of these elements may be insufficient for a person to be recognisable as indigenous and religious, and for an act or a setting to be recognisable as indigenous religion. Collectively they constitute a dynamic pool of resources, comprised by connected inventories, repertoires, and vocabularies, that through various assemblies enable articulations of indigenous religion.

Also circulating is what one might term liturgies or protocols of indigenous religion, used particularly in cross-cultural encounters, ranging from events hosted by the U.N. or the World Council of Churches, to protests like the one that took place at and for Standing Rock. Welcome ceremonies is one example of such liturgies, which often include the extension of kinship to brothers and sisters from other parts of the world.

Issues left insufficiently explored

What did we not notice? What has been marginalised through our approach? From a global perspective, this book (and project) merely scratches a surface. The U.N. estimates there are 400 million indigenous peoples spread across the world with highly diverse cultures and histories. Yet, since indigenous religion(s) in practice involve not only indigenous people, the globalising networks that we have begun to engage actually reach much farther than this U.N. estimate.

Our bottom up approach has implications for what we have found and what has been left out of our descriptions and analyses. All of us have focused on specific local grounds, and the ways in which they are connected to globalising processes and discourses (through travels, encounters, media, and translations). None of us have done fieldwork at relevant international venues like the U.N., the Parliament of the World's Religions, or the World Council of Churches, and none of us have followed networks starting from these institutional grounds.

Among the dynamics left insufficiently explored are gender, class and economy. Our targeting of sovereignty has foregrounded colonial histories and contemporary processes of defending ancestral grounds, performing identities, and renewing traditions. We have generally focused less on internal diversities and disputes. Some of us have discussed gender issues, but surely there is much more to say about the ways in which gender is shaped at the intersection of ancestral traditions, contemporary revivals, and encounters with near and distant selves and others (cf. Kuokkanen 2019). Questions about class are hardly raised at all, although the roles of different indigenous elites are noticeable in all our case studies. Economic issues are basic to all the processes we have explored, but have only been mentioned in passing. Among our thematic shortcomings as historians of religion, the most obvious is perhaps our relative lack of attention to Christianities. This has happened despite the fact that, apart from the Rathva in Gujarat,

Christians are the majority in all of the communities where we do fieldwork. In the present book, Longkumer's chapter is the only one to focus extensively on Christianity (cf. Longkumer 2018b; Opas 2017).

One of the most important issues we have seen, but not engaged enough, concerns the importance of 'nature' in many articulations of indigenous religion(s). Ideas and practices of special relationships to nature have become entwined with notions of sacred places and actions to protect them, more broadly with environmentalism and combating climate change, and operationalised as a means of establishing indigenous, as distinct from non-indigenous, identity. This issue was not addressed in our original project proposal. We left it out partly in fear of confirming established stereotypes. Since then, we have realised how important such ideas and practices have become for collaborations between activists within and across different indigenous and religious communities, and how articulations of indigenous religion(s) increasingly take place in such collaborations. Claims and practices of sovereignty and sustainability meet and merge here. No longer merely a matter for particular peoples and their particular places, sovereignty is increasingly claimed for the sake of the planet or Mother Earth, for her sustainability and the future of humankind at large.

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