

BEYOND VICTIMHOOD AND STIGMATIZATION

Trauma, Ruptured Memories and Agency in the Context of Global Migration

Refugee Women from Myanmar living outside camps in Bangladesh

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Subject / Abstract (1000 characters)

The present contribution begins with the experience of refugee senior women who, after having crossed the border from Myanmar, took shelter in Bangladesh outside refugee camps. The history of this region is strongly shaped by migration, and exchanges. In post-colonial times, however, communities were divided by political borders. Nowadays, not only violent episodes of discrimination force Rohingyas to leave their country, migration policies affect refugees directly in Bangladesh: there is no legal recognition for them, and those who settled beyond refugee camp settings exceed the judicial order.

Traumas emerge in contexts of present persecution, forced migration and postcolonial past. This research will investigate refugees' everyday lives outside camps and relate this experience to traumata. Reflexivity, emic/etic notions, legal anthropology and power relations constitute the basis for this. With an historical approach, anthropology brings in a human gaze to look at migration.

Theoretical approach / analytical framework with regard to trauma (700 characters)

Within the study of forced migration in the Global South (Awad and Natarajan 2018; Harrell-Bond 1986), this research attempts to investigate marginal perspectives on broader logics of power (Foucault 1976:117; Scott 2007). It draws upon the autonomy of migration that does not prevent from observing everyday life as transformative process (Gonzales et al. 2019; De Genova 2017; Mezzadra 2004) or analysing structural logics of power. Anthropology has contributed to the comprehension of violence and marginalization (Das 2006; Das et al. 2000, 2001), psychological care and recognition of refugees (Agier 2008; Fassin 2018), as well as memory (Malkki 1995; Fassin and Rechtman 2007). Significant level of analysis includes post-colonial contexts of traumas (Fanon 1961).



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Empirical findings / observations (700 characters)

By engaging with questions on traumas and migration, this contribution aims to, first, deal with re-traumatisation. For instance, an interdisciplinary study may include the analysis of the psychological support provided within the humanitarian response to refugees. Such considerations serve to researchers as a critical precaution for best practice, since marginalization influences people's lives. Second, the study of traumas among refugees provides significant basis to reflect upon experiences of violence. On the one hand, migration policies tend to depict refugees as mere victims and subjectivities. On the other hand, marginal narratives may counterbalance these and propose alternative narratives. Emic/tic notions may already constitute the anthropologists' tool in this regard.

(Research) Questions with regard to trauma & migration (400 characters)

- How to explore trauma among refugees who underwent a rite of separation from their nation?
- How do refugee senior women experience this in their everyday lives outside camps?
- How are traumas addressed in migration policies?
- What kind of affinities of belonging do refugees develop?
- How can these be linked to traumatic experiences?
- How to address the issue of exile in terms that do not trigger for re-traumatisation?
- How to methodologically approach such contexts?

Methods (700 characters)

This contribution will, first, look at the construction of discourses in post-colonial times and partition, as well as the introduction of political borders. Nowadays, what are the discourses of exclusion designating migration policies in Bangladesh? On a legal level, this contribution will look into refugees' recognition. To put it clearer, it will look into their social exclusion through Bangladeshi law. What is the psychological pressure of living in such conditions? This contribution will relate this to the border and living outside camps. It will look at how traumata are addressed in humanitarian reports, also in terms of psychological support to refugees in the region.

Motivation, Input Thoughts and Questions (400 characters)

- Confront with different meanings of traumata to better interact with research participants in the field;
- Discuss upon migration and the traumata of this experience;
- Discuss upon the notion of precariousness within refugees' experiences;
- Engage with memories and past experiences of violence;
- Deal with the issue of traumas and colonisation/systems of power;
- Exchange doubts and ideas;
- Develop best practices to research in this field.



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Bio (350 characters)

Being born in an island made me always curious of people on the move. Basically, I depended on a boat to travel, but observed people passing through. So, I began to wonder about their trajectories. Right now, you might ask yourself similar questions about me. Why did she study at the border with Slovenia, and spent an ERASMUS year in Vienna? All this explains part of my Ph.D. in Anthropology, and interest in Migration.