

Gatherings of mobility and immobility: itinerant “criminal tribes” and their containment by the Salvation Army in colonial South India

Article (Accepted Version)

Arora, Saurabh (2014) Gatherings of mobility and immobility: itinerant “criminal tribes” and their containment by the Salvation Army in colonial South India. *Transfers*, 4 (1). pp. 8-26. ISSN 2045-4813

This version is available from Sussex Research Online: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/48171/>

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies and may differ from the published version or from the version of record. If you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher’s version. Please see the URL above for details on accessing the published version.

Copyright and reuse:

Sussex Research Online is a digital repository of the research output of the University.

Copyright and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable, the material made available in SRO has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Gatherings of Mobility and Immobility

Itinerant “Criminal Tribes” and Their Containment by the Salvation Army in Colonial South India

Saurabh Arora, SPRU, University of Sussex

Pre-print of article published in Transfers: Interdisciplinary journal of mobility studies, 4(1), pp. 8-26, Spring 2014.

Abstract

In retelling the history of “criminal tribe” settlements managed by the Salvation Army in Madras Presidency (colonial India) from 1911, I argue that neither the mobility–immobility relationship nor the compositional heterogeneity of (im)mobility practices can be adequately captured by relational dialecticism espoused by leading mobilities scholars. Rather than emerging as an opposition through dialectics, the relationship between (relative) mobility and containment may be characterized by overlapping hybridity and difference. This differential hybridity becomes apparent in two ways if mobility and containment are viewed as immanent gatherings of humans and nonhumans. First, the same entities may participate in gatherings of mobility and of containment, while producing different effects in each gathering. Here, nonhumans enter a gathering, and constitute (im)mobility practices, as actors that make history irreducibly differently from other actors that they may be entangled with. Second, modern technologies and a modern “institutions” may be indiscriminately drawn together in all gatherings.

Keywords: actor-network theory, colonial classifications, Criminal Tribes Act, India, relational dialectics, sedentarization, subversive mobility

Introduction

During the last decade, the turn to mobility in the social sciences and humanities has made important contributions to understanding trans-local movement of people and commodities in and between modern societies.¹ Building on the work of Zygmunt Bauman and of Deleuze and Guattari,² among others, this interdisciplinary literature has shown that mobility of the elite capitalist entrepreneur, her commodities and technologies, and of the tramp and the vagabond must be viewed as essential elements in the rise of Western modernity.³ Thus, dwelling in modern Western societies and spaces must be thought of as a process in which the sociality and materiality of movement are central.⁴ In addition, it is argued that mobility studies must not privilege flow and movement over stasis and confinement, taking explicit cognizance of the complex relationship between mobility, its affordance by static moorings such as those provided by technologies and institutions of the bus station or the airport, and the surveillance and restriction of some mobilities.⁵

This article aims to provide a new perspective on the relationship between mobility and immobility, as well as on the heterogeneous constitution of (im)mobility, not in Western modernization but rather in colonial modernity's dealings with subjects it classified as "primitive," "tribal," and "criminal." Building on theoretical insights from Science and Technology Studies, I argue that mobility and containment of any individual must be viewed as immanent gatherings composed of human and nonhuman actors that are irreducibly different from each other. Rather than treating nonhumans as "material" conditions that make mobility (of humans or nonhumans) possible, I attempt to demonstrate how nonhuman actors help co-constitute mobility and containment from within, differently from other human and nonhuman actors. Eventually, each gathering of mobility or of containment may be differently *materialized*, leading to an emergent multiplicity of gatherings. Furthermore, gatherings of mobility and containment are hybrid programs not only due to the tying

together of humans and nonhumans, but also because they draw together a wide range of entities that cannot be consigned to colonial modernity or anti-colonial resistance. This heterogeneity may produce some overlaps between the composition of gatherings of mobility and those of containment.

I begin with a brief overview of how the relationship between mobility and immobility is conceptualized in recent mobilities literature. This is followed by a discussion of the concepts I deploy and the narrative about the British colonial administration's attempted sedentarization of nomadic and itinerant communities in south India by classifying them as "criminal tribes and castes."⁶ By implementing the "Criminal Tribes Act," originally of 1871 and applicable first only in parts of north India such as the Punjab and then in all parts of British India from 1911, the British attempted to form a group of compliant relatively sedentarized "criminal tribe" members. My focus is on the Act's enactment in Madras Presidency since 1911.

Mobility and Immobility

The relationship between mobility and immobility has been conceptualized in three interlinked ways. First, mobility is considered as a critical resource in the era of globalization but access to mobility is argued to be unevenly distributed among different people.⁷ Thus, similar to the "digital divide," the world we live in is characterized by a "mobility gap."⁸ Moreover, the production of mobility for some may be accompanied by immobilization of others.⁹ Often the differential access to mobility reflects wider hierarchies that operate in societies on the basis of race, class, and gender.¹⁰

Second, mobilities are always moored in and made possible by immobile institutions and infrastructures.¹¹ For instance, border technologies such as iris scans for identification at an airport facilitate hyper-mobility for some while at the same time helping to immobilize

others (such as “unwanted immigrants”). In this way, unequal access to mobility, as discussed above, is shaped by infrastructural and technological moorings of mobility. These moorings may be viewed as material aspects of friction that always accompanies movement.¹²

Third, as Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out,¹³ mobility of travelling people such as journeymen and nomads has been controlled and regulated by states. This regulation has materialized mobility regimes in which people are permitted to move through well-defined conduits and circuits.¹⁴ Here, politics of mobility do not necessarily arise out of social difference and inequality, exemplified by the co-production of mobility for some and (relative) immobility for others, but rather the same person’s mobility may be promoted on acceptable paths while confining her to those paths only. Such regulation of mobility makes it more appropriate to talk about containment rather than immobility in state-sponsored settlement programs.¹⁵

All three points highlight that mobility and immobility, of the same people or of different social groups, are co-constituted. Some leading scholars in “new mobilities studies” treat this co-constitutive yet oppositional relationship between mobility and immobility (or moorings) as dialectical.¹⁶ This dialectical contradiction between mobility and immobility is argued to be productive of a range of phenomena including “social complexity,” “global restructuring,” “securitization of borders,” individual subjectivities, and indeed new mobilities. In studies forwarding this prolifically “productivist model” of the mobility/immobility dialectic,¹⁷ I did not encounter a theoretical discussion of what the authors mean by the term “dialectic.” This lack of interest in defining the dialectic is even true of studies that aim to “transcend and fold through” the “relational dialecticism of (im)mobility.”¹⁸

Perhaps the most influential “dialectical paradigm” in the social sciences is Marx’s historical materialism.¹⁹ Generally built around oppositions between categories such as forces

and relations of production, nature and society, Marxian dialectic's "binary logic" can become the "engine of history."²⁰ In some interpretations and extensions, for example in Harvey's work,²¹ Marx's dialectical materialism has lost much of its teleological power and unilinearity. In Harvey's "relational dialecticism," the dialectic unfolds in open-ended processes, flows, and relations, "where many trajectories are possible."²² Such an emphasis implies that entities are constituted by others in socio-natural processes and that there are no prior contradictions or oppositions that remain stable. This relational process-based understanding of dialectics resonates closely with the mobility/moorings dialectic in much of mobility studies in which (im)mobilities are viewed as emergent outcomes. For example, Cresswell interprets the relationship between Deleuze and Guattari's notions of smooth and striated spaces as one of "dialectic tension," arguing that these spaces co-constitute each other in opposition, in cities where shantytowns (smooth) and "permanent" housing/infrastructure (striated) coexist while attempting to encroach upon each other. Further, the nomads move in smooth spaces, and may traverse into striated spaces, but are never "fully incorporated" into the latter.²³

Building on this work I study how actions by different humans and nonhumans produce smooth and striated spaces, and any oppositions between free movement and containment, (re)making any relatively (im)mobile social groups that may dwell in these spaces. In my account, nonhumans do not simply provide the material conditions that make mobility possible (as in the moorings proposed by Urry). Instead they constitute (im)mobilities, viewed as immanent gatherings of humans and nonhumans actors,²⁴ from within. Accordingly, the (im)mobility of an individual person or object is a collective, a gathering that can "suddenly disband," which requires its participants to "make it exist" and to "maintain its existence."²⁵ Following Latour, I conceptualize these gatherings as "programs of action."²⁶ The existence of a program of action may be accompanied with an

anti-program that tries to subvert the goals of (im)mobility aimed by the program of action. This relation between a program of immobility (or containment) and an anti-program of mobility is quite consistent with emergent “relational dialecticism,” albeit with one important difference. In retelling the history of colonial containment and of nomadic flight as programs of action, I attempt to add reality to the rendering of (im)mobility (a) by studying the making of (im)mobilities as collaborative composition of human and nonhuman actors that are irreducibly different from each other,²⁷ and (b) by refusing to reduce the richness of socio-material existence to oppositional (dialectical) relations. This refusal permits me to situate the mobilities of “criminal tribes” as more than just anti-colonial responses to colonial domination. These hybrid mobilities drew together a wide range of resources, including “*acolonial amodern*” institutions of nomadism and “colonial modern” railways,²⁸ to build and sustain their programs of action.

Programs of Action

In order to appreciate the making and durability of social power, Latour has argued that we need to look beyond relations between humans alone by weaving nonhuman actors into a re-assembled social fabric.²⁹ Nonhuman actors include concepts, classificatory categories, laws and (state and non-state) regulations, religious idols and texts, animals, lands, and technologies, or any combinations of these. They do not simply *transport* meanings and forces but rather they “*transform*, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry.”³⁰ A nonhuman’s inclusion in a program of action adds force to social relations in ways that are not reducible to effects produced by another (human or nonhuman) actor.³¹

A program of action is initiated by a statement enunciated as a word, a sentence, an object, or an institution.³² A statement’s performative effect on the real world depends on its

successive “listeners or users.”³³ In this way, the same statement can produce different consequences depending on how it affects later users and how these users adapt/deploy it. Any process dynamics and outcomes thus depend on specific transformations produced by different human and nonhuman actors that constitute programs of action.³⁴

A program of action becomes durable by enrolling, aligning, and maintaining a large number of participants. Some of these participants may in fact be persuaded to join by leaving an anti-program. Departure of a human or non-human participant leads to a reduced (anti-)program that is simply less real. Thus, according to Latour,³⁵ we cannot talk about a program of action in dichotomous terms such as real or imagined, mobile or immobile, but rather only in terms of “variations of realization and de-realization” (of mobility and/or containment). In this sense then, (im)mobility is always becoming, relative to other more or less mobile things.³⁶ This relativity however does not refer to different speeds of movement but rather to the differential assembly of specific human–nonhuman gatherings.

Two concepts are central to developing an understanding of programs of action: association and substitution.³⁷ A statement becomes more real as it is associated with newer symbolic/material entities. Through these associations, an enunciator’s statement may be transformed from an initial “verbal utterance” to a chain of associations between different material entities. The “word ‘statement’ therefore refers not to linguistics, but to the gradient that carries us from words to things and from things to words.”³⁸ At the same time, each new association ushers in a new program of action which replaces its previous counterpart. A new entity may be enrolled into a program due to opposition from an anti-program. However, it is not important to determine *why* a new entity is enrolled, but rather what specific *effects* it produces in the form of re-associations and successive substitutions of old programs of action by new ones, leading to multiple variations of realization (of mobility or containment).

Substitution also refers to the replacement of one set of associations of a human or nonhuman entity with another set.³⁹ The gradual inclusion of new entities into a program of action substitutes some older associations of a participant with new ones. Such substitution, parallel association and dissociation, (re)constitutes a subject who is not simply a “master-of-himself,”⁴⁰ but rather one that is acted upon by other associated humans and nonhumans. Thus, subjectivity here is fluid and relational, referring to what one becomes with associations received from other human and nonhuman entities.

Statements

The British colonial administration’s program of action to contain the open mobility of “criminal tribes” started out with a statement composed of categories and classifications, such as those based on caste and tribe, produced through scientific anthropological surveys and administrative censuses carried out or sponsored by the colonial state since the nineteenth century. This anthropological project was central to colonial governance and applied widely across British India.⁴¹ A part of this project directly targeted diverse communities of scattered and highly mobile people. The ultimate aim was to facilitate governmental control of colonial subjects, particularly those “unruly” nomadic subjects who refused to stay rooted in one place.⁴²

An intermediate goal was to form social groups that could be accurately described by the different classifications and sub-classifications of caste, tribe, location, occupation, and physical characteristics. Achieving this goal in practice, locating the so-classified itinerant castes and tribes, however, turned out to be difficult.⁴³ And so to the original statement were added juridico-legal entities in the form of provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) which were used to notify and then register many nomads and itinerant traders as “criminal castes and tribes.” To justify the nomads’ classification as criminal tribes, scientific

anthropology provided evidence for their systematic and collective criminality as a group.⁴⁴

This outrageous classification was made more and more real by associating it with additional human and nonhuman entities. As a start, on the basis of the CTA, local government officials could record fingerprints of any registered members of a “criminal tribe,” and regulate/restrict their mobility by ordering them to report to local police stations every night.⁴⁵

When the CTA was introduced in Madras Presidency in 1911, its sections 12 and 13 enunciated that, if necessary, movements of any criminal tribe members should be restricted to a specified area or they should be sedentarized in a place of residence. As a last resort, “criminal” tribe (CT) members were to be interned in an industrial or agricultural “reformatory” settlement.⁴⁶ Once interned, leaving a settlement for outside work or to visit family for a fixed number of days required CT members to apply for passes. Regulated mobility, acceptable to the colonial administrators, was thus permitted. Any non-compliance with the regulations was penalized. For instance, a failure to return to a settlement within the permitted leave period was treated as a criminal offence, similar to the offence of escaping from the settlement, a crime for which they could be arrested “without warrant.”⁴⁷ The punishment for the first such offence was imprisonment for a maximum of six months or a substantial fine. Every subsequent conviction led to an increase in the duration of imprisonment and the amount of the fine to be paid. These “settle down and reform” provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) acted as material-symbolic actors that modified the initial anthropological statement, substituting it with one composed of the CTA’s provisions, policemen, registrations/roll-calls, *and* anthropological classifications. All these human and nonhuman entities were meant to work together as steps toward containing the mobility of CT members. I focus on how the last of these steps, the (agricultural) “criminal settlement,” was enacted in practice.

Associations with specific entities in practice produced multiple “final” versions of the British program’s statement. This multiplicity resulted from differences among British government officers and settlement administrators in different districts; the diversity of peoples classified as CTs; and the differences between symbolic-material arrangements of individual settlements (such as the disciplinary regimen or land quality or type of industrial machinery). I have attempted to weave this emergent multiplicity of statements, and correspondingly of the programs, into the narrative about colonial containment in the following section.

The anti-program of the nomads and itinerant people was to stay mobile, by avoiding registration or escaping from the settlements, originally enunciated by the many institutions of nomadic mobility in south India.⁴⁸ These were successively associated with new material elements required to escape colonial settlements and surveillance. Entities associated into their anti-program by different individuals could obviously be different. For example, some made use of a found bicycle to escape a region of strict surveillance while others used the train. In this way then, as in the case of programs of action, multiple “final” statements of anti-programs were arrived at. Such multiplicity of anti-programs is however not adequately accounted for in this article, largely due to limitations imposed by the primary (documents of the colonial government in Madras Presidency) and secondary sources used which do not provide detailed accounts of how the nomads managed to stay mobile.

Containment

Settlements for members of the so-called “criminal tribes” were run by the colonial administration in north India since the nineteenth century. Most of these government-run settlements had been largely unsuccessful in reaching the goal of sedentarization and penal reform.⁴⁹ Some government-run settlements even had to be closed down due to large numbers

of absconders and high costs of supervision.⁵⁰ The colonial government therefore decided to involve missionary organizations to administer some settlements. For instance, the Salvation Army (SA) took over the reins of its first criminal tribe settlement in Gorakhpur in 1908.⁵¹ In addition to introducing significant religious elements, the missionary organizations themselves acted as important participants of the British program of action because of their official independence from government administrators and police. They also brought on board the flexibility to adapt to their areas of operation by adopting local names and clothing, as well as their theoretical approaches to “criminology.” Both of the latter were salient characteristics of the SA in India,⁵² on which I focus. Its approach to criminology emphasizing reform of the “crims” by using a firm hand, religion, and hard labor was outlined in a book titled *Criminocurology* by Frederick Booth-Tucker,⁵³ the SA’s commissioner in India until 1919.

Senior British officials considered management of settlements by missionary organizations as necessary for settling “criminal tribe” members at an affordable cost and for introducing a much-needed “human aspect” into the government’s official approach based on efficiency.⁵⁴ Missionary organizations were allotted land and/or settlement buildings by the government and received funds for organizing supervision (often with the assistance of the local police) and education in the settlements.⁵⁵ They were also supposed to provide a less evil way of dealing with “criminal tribes” than police constables who were often accused of harassing criminal tribe members (e.g. for small bribes).⁵⁶ Soon after 1911 in Madras Presidency, the SA was recruited to manage some settlements where itinerant communities were interned.⁵⁷ By the late 1920s, there were 3,707 settlers living in criminal tribe settlements managed by the SA in Madras Presidency.⁵⁸ In addition to adopting Indian names and clothing,⁵⁹ and a “cure-based” approach to criminology noted above, the Salvation Army’s soldiers and officers became known for their “zeal, dedication, and

parsimoniousness.”⁶⁰ Perhaps because of their dedication and assumed Indianness, the SA’s officers felt that the “criminal” tribe members perceived their Christianity as an Indian religion, different from ordinary Christianity of the British in India.⁶¹ Despite the SA’s Indianization, and its own narrative of grand success in “reforming” the so-called criminal tribes,⁶² government documents from the early period (1911–1920) highlight several problems encountered in many “criminal settlements” run by the SA, ranging from bad management to inadequate finance to the lack of general progress.⁶³ Different settlements were thus more or less successful in realizing their goals of containment of the “crims.”

To some members of the itinerant communities, often only two choices were available – go to the prison or to a settlement. Most chose the latter.⁶⁴ Once interned, settlers were associated with the threat of punishment (imprisonment) if caught trying to escape. The actual enactment of a punishment on some of the settlers’ friends and relatives also served as an important warning. To these was added the threat of cancellation of a pass to leave the settlement for work or for visiting relatives, if a settler overstayed the duration of a previous leave.

In a few agricultural settlements, land was collectively cultivated. In others, each settler family was associated with a parcel of land.⁶⁵ This responsibility of cultivating a parcel of land was consistent with the conviction among the British, since the nineteenth century, that sedentary village agriculture was the ideal model of Indian society.⁶⁶ Mobility in an agricultural settlement was obviously not completely vanquished but rather it was contained, restricted to the path between home and farm, and between the farm and a market to sell the produce. In some settlements, wells were sunk and canals were built for irrigation purposes and bullocks were made available to the settlers on loans that they were required to pay back in small installments.⁶⁷ Financial advances were offered to make cultivation and harvest possible, which had to be increased at some points due to unfavorable conditions such as

floods or droughts.⁶⁸ Recovery of these financial advances and meeting the goal of economic self-sufficiency of settlements,⁶⁹ upheld and pushed by most colonial government administrators, associated the settlers with hard agricultural labor which was accentuated by bad quality of land in many settlements (too dry or sandy to be suitable for cultivation).

Settlements were designed to control movements of criminal tribe members and to isolate them from other “respectable moral subjects” of British India. This segregation was achieved through entities such as walls or barbed-wire fences around settlements and watchmen on duty at night. For some settlements in north India (Aligarh and Najibabad), the government had allotted fortresses to the Salvation Army, pre-fitted with high walls and moats.⁷⁰ In another settlement in Madras Presidency, a barbed-wire fence with steel posts, doubled with a thorny hedge, and powerful electric lamps replaced the walls and moats.⁷¹ Such material entities turned the settlements into striated spaces, while attempting to turn the settlers into disciplined inhabitants. The settlers’ collective association with these entities was, however, mediated by other programmatic elements that were differentially targeted. First, government officers and settlement administrators increasingly argued that criminality was not a collective hereditary feature of an itinerant community, but rather an attribute of some individuals who could be *cured* by using methods such as hard labor and discipline in the settlements. Extending this view, a case was made to separate individuals classified as “incorrigibles,” who were viewed as unamenable to moral reclamation in the settlements, by sending them with their families to a place from where they could not make any escapes to conduct alleged criminal raids.⁷² Second, children (older than six years) of the criminal tribe members were to be separated from their parents to facilitate their combined literary and industrial education.⁷³ Despite opposition from some quarters within the colonial administration such as the Jails Committee,⁷⁴ many children were dispatched to boarding schools run by the Salvation Army (SA), away from the settlements in which their parents

lived. Some settlements, instead of dispatching children to boarding schools, raised them in a separate part of the settlement, only allowing them to see their parents during Sunday church activities.⁷⁵ Associations with boarding schools and separate housing for children constituted programs that substituted earlier (and other) versions, while weakening the anti-program by making escape for settlers who had children much less interesting. Leaving their children behind was obviously not an option for most.

Children's education was part of a broader project of everyday schooling undertaken by the SA. The aim of this project was to cultivate new moral and corporeal subjects out of the criminal tribe settlers – a transformation of mind, body, and soul – in order to ensure their adjustment into relatively sedentary existence. First, using knowledge provided by scientific anthropology, the settlers' (assumed lack of) personal hygiene was problematized.⁷⁶ Second, their attire was considered ragged and gaudy, their hair disheveled.⁷⁷ In the settlements, the SA encouraged the adoption of soap and clean shirts and saris by the criminal tribe members, dissociating them from "bodily dirt" and "heavy unwashable" dresses of the past. For encouraging compliance with the SA's ideas of tidiness, monetary prizes were offered to the most neatly dressed women in at least one large settlement (Stuartpuram), while passes to leave the settlement to go to the market were refused to those who did not comply.⁷⁸ Settlers who sustained "neat" appearances and good behavior could earn certificates of good conduct. Such a certificate entitled a settler to a "free pass" to leave her settlement.⁷⁹ These material actors were tied in with spiritual ones (with their own material components such as the bible and the "mercy seat") rooted in the Salvation Army's religious mission.

Proselytizing was central to the SA's work in the settlements. It was deemed critical to the transformation of criminal tribe members' subjectivities. Religious conversion brought the settlers into connection with other humans and nonhumans already enrolled into Christianity and dissociated them from religious idols and rituals of the past. Proselytizing

was also tied in with most other human and nonhuman participants in the program of action discussed above. First and foremost, the SA tied it in with the sedentary village by focusing their missionary activities around the establishment of spiritual halls. These halls made it possible to use an important material-spiritual entity called the “mercy seat,” “a bench at the front of the meeting hall, at which ‘persons anxious about their spiritual condition [were] invited to seek Salvation’ by kneeling and praying.”⁸⁰ Association with the mercy seat was accompanied by confessions.

Boarding schools had already facilitated the development of reading abilities among settler children, who could imbibe the messages of the bible without mediation from their parents.⁸¹ To further promote this, bibles were sometimes given as prizes to children who were regarded as “best boy[s]” by fellow interns (for instance, at the Madras Industrial Home for boys).⁸² Such ownerships of the bible came with early morning prayers and bible reading sessions (in Tamil and Telugu, based on translations) during which settlers were reminded of their duties of the day. But the bible was more (diversely) material than just a book with a crucial message for the settlers. It was variously a pillow on which a man dying from cholera wanted to rest his head, a beautiful thing to pore over for some, and a holy object to sanctify a Christian wedding among two settlers.⁸³ Conversion to Christianity also brought about association with appropriate gender roles of the Christian nuclear family,⁸⁴ and Christian names for newborn children.⁸⁵ At the same time, association with Christian morals and objects entailed dissociation from the idols of nomadic spirituality. Booth-Tucker, surely informed by colonial anthropology, claimed that the nomads practiced a religion of “demonolaters,” restricted “to efforts to appease offended spirits by sacrifices and devil worship of the crudest character.”⁸⁶ Older religious idols belonging to recent converts were destroyed in public rituals organized by the Salvation Army.⁸⁷

The program of action to settle “criminal tribe” members documented above was differently realized in different settlements run by the Salvation Army. Some settlements were more successful than others in containing the nomadic and itinerant people. Some were argued to be more “prosperous” than others and, at least in one case (Stuartpuram), enrolled newer entities such as a railway station, a court, and police administered by the settlers themselves “in accordance with clan customs,” into the program of action.⁸⁸ Other settlements were closed down because their designs and rules were thwarted too often by human and nonhuman inhabitants. Many itinerant settlers also attempted to realize their own anti-programs of flight.

Flight

The British programs (of containment) were never completely successful in subduing the settlers’ anti-programs (of flight) initially enunciated by “nomadic institutions” of mobility. The British achieved varying levels of compliance from the human subjects they attempted to contain. There were always nomads/itinerants who did not *stay* in the program, attempting instead to strengthen or build their very own anti-programs of flight. In the following, I focus on some entities associated into these anti-programs. These associations produced different variations of the anti-programs, and thus different realizations of mobility.

The first element in some anti-programs was in fact a direct consequence of the Criminal Tribes Act’s rule about interning entire communities. This allowed people with extended family connections, similar histories, and nomadic paths, to come together in one place. Oppression in the form of containment came also to be collectively experienced, fostering the development of a shared sentiment against it. Obviously some settlers managed to escape the settlements more often than others. Yet the experience of these “repeat absconders” was associated as something to be emulated by others who desired to escape.⁸⁹

To de-realize these programs of flight, settlement authorities classified repeat absconders as incorrigibles and removed them from the settlements.⁹⁰

Borders between the British-administered Madras Presidency and the Nizam's Hyderabad to its north, and those between Madras and the French-controlled Pondicherry, were associated into some anti-programs. By crossing over these borders into the Nizam's territory or into French Pondicherry, "absconders" were able to avoid being caught by the British police and therefore stay mobile.⁹¹ Obviously, the same borders could contain the nomads' mobility if the Nizam's authorities (or the French) apprehended the "absconders" and handed them over to British territorial administrators.⁹²

In many settlements entities associated into the British programs of action, such as land, also acted as constituent elements in the anti-programs of mobility of the settlers. Much of the land allotted to settlers was dry, sandy, rocky, swampy, or so-called "wasteland," not suitable for cultivation of rice and many other grains.⁹³ The remaining land that was (made) suitable for cultivation was often not enough to meet the needs of the settlers.⁹⁴ Both the inadequacy and bad quality of land then aligned well with institutions of nomadic mobility. A range of unpredictable weather and health-related events sometimes acted in concert with poor land quality and quantity. For example, an epidemic outbreak of malaria that affected almost every inhabitant in a settlement led to bad harvests and eventually to the departure of all but seven settler families from the settlement.⁹⁵

Finally, the nomads' animals and technological artifacts were critical in escaping from the settlements and evading the police. By associating new technologies ushered in by colonial modernity, such as the railway and bicycles into the anti-programs, many criminal tribe members were able to increase their speed of movement. Caught on trains or riding bicycles by the authorities, they were accused of theft.⁹⁶ Other settlers used "non-modern" technologies such as the bamboo ladder to escape from settlements housed in fortresses with

high walls.⁹⁷ In addition to absconding, in at least a few settlements, settlers resisted internment by refusing to work or cooperate in any other way with the Salvation Army. Booth-Tucker documents this refusal to work in Sitanagaram settlement of Madras Presidency from where the settlers (“men, women and children”) were sent to work in neighboring stone quarries.⁹⁸ He also notes the acts of resistance waged by the settlers’ animals who refused to carry stone even though they “had been accustomed to carry heavy loads of salt.” When loaded with stone, they would sit down and shake off their load. Animals accustomed to nomadic smooth spaces thus refused to move through the striated spaces into which they had been pushed.

Conclusion

I have argued that differentiated mobilities and containment of the “criminal tribes” in colonial south India were co-constituted as immanent gatherings of specific human and nonhuman actors that were (collaboratively) entangled with each other. Nonhumans did more than just provide the material moorings that made (im)mobilities possible, they co-constituted mobilities and containment as historical actors in ways that were irreducibly different from the effects produced by other human and nonhuman actors in the gatherings. I also attempted to demonstrate how multiple variations of (im)mobility were realized in and through different programs of action that were gradually assembled by associating different material (including corporeal) and symbolic entities. Some of these gatherings were eventually more persuasive than others in containing or mobilizing the “criminal tribe” members and in producing new moral and settled subjectivities.

All gatherings (as programs and anti-programs) were hybrid collectives not only because they brought humans and nonhumans together, but also because they entangled a wide range of entities with each other. These entities included colonial trains, bibles, and

churches; and acolonial nomadic institutions, bamboo ladders, and uncultivated lands. Often, the same entities (such as the lands and rules of collective containment) participated in a gathering of mobility as well as in a gathering of containment, producing different effects in each gathering. Different configurations of overlapping gatherings (of containment and flight) were thus arrived at through open-ended processes that tied the heterogeneous entities together in unpredictable ways, without respecting any boundaries between what was ushered in by colonial modernity and what may have been considered “primitive” or “traditional.” Such hybridity was clearly observed in the “Indianization” of the Salvation Army’s European officers and the translation of the Bible into Tamil, as well as in the adoption of Christianity by the settlers.

Now to issues not adequately addressed in the article. I have not done justice to the multiple variations of (im)mobility which were realized starting from the same “initial” enunciations, especially in/as anti-programs of flight. Thus, the narrative of anti-programmatic mobility of the absconding settlers needs to delve more deeply into the socio-materiality of their “subaltern” mobility practices.

Finally, although the adaptation of Latour’s theoretical arguments allowed me to document the collaborative co-production of mobilities and containment, it may have imposed an important limitation. In composing a narrative that has refused the charm of grand structural explanations relying on “productivist” dialectics between mobility and immobility, I may have marginalized the massive criminal injustice committed by colonizing agencies against people they classified and interned as “criminal tribes.” In my narrative, explanations applied only to their specific local socio-political situation and domination was never absolute or permanent. How does such a narrative of contingent multiplicity allow one to approach (historical) justice? Can justice also multiply and find its moorings in many different and shifting localities as well as trajectories, no matter how fragile or uncertain they

might be? These are perhaps some of the challenges that must be confronted in order to materialize rooted justices for mobile time-spaces.

Saurabh Arora is an assistant professor at Eindhoven University of Technology. In recent research, he has explored how actor-network theory can help yield new insights into the globalization of food, implementation of sustainability standards, and performativity of colonial classifications in “British” India. Building on histories of colonial and early post-colonial governance in East Africa, he has also contributed to literature on the governance of controversial technologies such as biofuels. Recent work has appeared in *Environment and Planning A*, *Industrial and Corporate Change*, and *Organization*. Address for correspondence: School of Innovation Sciences, IPO 2.35, PO Box 513, 5600 MB Eindhoven, The Netherlands. E-mail: s.arora@tue.nl

¹ I am grateful to five anonymous referees and two members of *Transfers*' editorial team for

² Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

³ See, for example, Tim Cresswell, “Embodiment, Power and the Politics of Mobility: The Case of Female Tramps and Hobos,” *Transactions of the British Institute of Geographers* 24 no. 2 (1999): 175–192; Tim Cresswell, “The Vagrant/Vagabond: The Curious Career of a Mobile Subject,” in *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects*, ed. Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 239–254.

⁴ John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies* (London: Routledge, 2000); Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁵ See, for example, Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, “Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings,” *Mobilities* 1 no. 1 (March 2006): 1–22; Jennie Germann Molz,

“‘Watch Us Wander’: Mobile Surveillance and the Surveillance of Mobility,” *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 377–393; Bryan Turner, “The Enclave Society: Towards a Sociology of Immobility,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 10 no. 2 (2007): 287–303.

⁶ There were many aspects of the British colonial project to “eradicate criminality” of “criminal tribe” members, my focus is on the containment of nomadic mobility. On British administration’s views on hereditary criminality and its control, see Sanjay Nigam, “Disciplining and Policing ‘Criminals by Birth’, Part 2: The Development of a Disciplinary System, 1871–1900,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27 no. 3 (1990): 257–287; and Mark Brown, “Crime, Liberalism and Empire: Governing the Mina Tribe of Northern India,” *Social and Legal Studies* 13 no. 2 (2004): 191–218.

⁷ Mimi Sheller and John Urry, “The New Mobilities Paradigm,” *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 207–226; Tim Cresswell, “Towards a Politics of Mobility,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (2010): 17–31.

⁸ Ronen Shamir, “Without Borders? Notes on Globalization as a Mobility Regime,” *Sociological Theory* 23 no. 2 (2005): 197–217, in Turner, “The Enclave Society,” 290.

⁹ Sara Ahmed et al., eds. *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

¹⁰ Hannam et al., “Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings.”

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cresswell, “Towards a Politics of Mobility.”

¹³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 368.

¹⁴ See also Cresswell, “Towards a Politics of Mobility,” 24.

¹⁵ On “criminal” settlements, see Meena Radhakrishna, “Surveillance and Settlements under the Criminal Tribes Act in Madras,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 29 no. 2 (1992). On post-colonial compulsory villagization/settlement of nomadic people in

Tanzania and Ethiopia, see James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and Leander Schneider, "High on Modernity? Explaining the Failures of Tanzanian Villagization," *African Studies* 66 no. 1 (April 2007): 9–38.

¹⁶ John Urry, *Global Complexity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003); Hannam et al., "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings"; Anthony D'Andrea, *Global Nomads* (London: Routledge, 2007), 89, 224; and Alison Mountz, "Specters at the Port of Entry: Understanding State Mobilities Through an Ontology of Exclusion," *Mobilities* 6 no. 3 (2011): 317–334.

¹⁷ David Bissell, "Animating Suspension: Waiting for Mobilities," *Mobilities* 2 no. 2 (2007): 277–298.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 278; and David Bissell, "Comfortable Bodies, Sedentary Affects," *Environment and Planning A* 40 (2008): 1697–1712, 1699.

¹⁹ Derek Gregory, "dialectic(s)," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, eds. Derek Gregory et al. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 157–158.

²⁰ Sarah Whatmore, "Hybrid Geographies: Rethinking the 'Human' in Human Geography," in *Human Geography Today*, eds. Doreen Massey, John Allen and Philip Sarre (Cambridge: Polity, 1999): 22–39, 25.

²¹ See in particular, David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

²² Eric Sheppard, "Geographic Dialectics?" *Environment and Planning A* 40 (2008): 2603–2612, 2606.

²³ Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge, 2006), 50, citing Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

²⁴ Bruno Latour, "Why has Critique Run out of Steam: From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 225–248.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 235, 246.

²⁶ Bruno Latour, “Technology is Society Made Durable,” in *Sociology of Monsters*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge, 1991): 103–131.

²⁷ Cf. Latour, “Why has Critique Run out of Steam,” 232; and Bruno Latour, “Irreductions,” in his *Pasteurization of France* (Harvard University Press, 1988): 153–238. My aim is to show how nonhuman actors contribute to the making of history (differently from other human/nonhuman actors that they may have helped constitute and are tied to). This goes beyond treating nonhumans as entities that “nominally” shape human subjects and as emergent (more or less stable) products of flows and processes, which are nevertheless governed by overarching logics of capitalism (as in Harvey’s relational dialecticism; see Bruce Braun, “Towards a New Earth and a New Humanity: Nature, Ontology, Politics,” in *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*, eds. Noel Castree and Derek Gregory (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 191–222).

²⁸ Such indiscriminate drawing together highlights that the actions of the “criminal tribes” (a) cannot be subsumed under “colonial modernity” (or as resistance against “primitive accumulation” by colonial capital), and (b) did not constitute a space that was isolated from “colonial modernity.” “Nomadic” mobility instead was a hybrid program composed of diverse (human and nonhuman, modern and amodern) elements. Furthermore, the nomads in question were not socially homogeneous (see note 48).

²⁹ Latour, “Technology is Society Made Durable.” 103.

³⁰ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 39, my italics.

³¹ Latour, “Irreductions.”

³² “Initiated” here does not imply the “beginning” of a program of action. We always start *in medias res*, in the middle of things. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 27.

³³ Latour, “Technology is Society Made Durable.”

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 110.

³⁶ Cf. Peter Adey, “If Mobility is Everything Then It Is Nothing: Towards a Relational Politics of (Im)mobilities,” *Mobilities* 1 no. 1 (2006): 75–94; and Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 352.

³⁷ Latour, “Technology is Society Made Durable.”

³⁸ Ibid., 106.

³⁹ Bruno Latour, “Factures/Fractures: From the Concept of Network to the Concept of Attachment,” *Res* 36 (Autumn 1999): 20–31.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁴¹ See, for example, Christopher Pinney, “Colonial Anthropology in the ‘Laboratory of Mankind’,” in *The Raj. India and the British 1600–1946*, ed. C.A. Bayly (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1990): 252–263; Nicholas Dirks, “The Policing of Tradition: Colonialism and Anthropology in Southern India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39 no. 1 (1997): 182–212; Padmanabh Samarendra, “Classifying Caste: Census Surveys in India in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *South Asia* 26 no. 2 (2003): 141–164.

⁴² Laxman Satya, “Colonial Sedentarization and Subjugation: The Case of Banjaras of Berar 1850–1900,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 24 no. 4 (1997): 314–336; Meena Radhakrishna, “Colonial Construction of a Criminal Tribe: Yerukalas of Madras Presidency,” *Economic and Political Weekly* (July 2000): 2553–2563; Henry Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe in Colonial India: Acting Like a Thief* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2010).

⁴³ Meena Radhakrishna, “Surveillance and Settlements under the Criminal Tribes Act in Madras.”

⁴⁴ See, for example, Muhammad Abdul Ghani, *Notes on the Criminal Tribes of Madras Presidency* (Madras, 1915); and Reginald Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay Presidency* (Bombay, 1920, 1922). In this discourse, “The marginality of these communities, their disinclination to ‘self-improvement,’ their lack of work-discipline, their poverty, their poor standards of hygiene, their nomadic tendencies – all were tokens signifying their criminality.” Rachel Tolen, “Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesman: The Salvation Army in British India,” *American Ethnologist* 18 no. 1 (1991): 106–125, 112.

⁴⁵ Tolen, “Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesman.”

⁴⁶ Radhakrishna, “Surveillance and Settlements under the Criminal Tribes Act in Madras.”

⁴⁷ Criminal Tribes Act III of 1911 (Calcutta, 1915).

⁴⁸ Due to the diversity of nomadic people in south India, it is problematic to assign a single set of meanings to “traditional” institutions of nomadic mobility based on colonial anthropology of early twentieth century. Postcolonial historical scholarship has sought to ascribe the origins of nomadic mobility in Malthusian environmental constraints of settled agriculture; see for example Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India 1200–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 46–47, 56–57. Derived as they are from studies of Central and East Asian nomads, such ascriptions are not without their problems. The problem is further accentuated by the fact that some “criminal settlers” may have belonged to “non-nomadic castes and tribes.” I have therefore chosen to leave the enunciation of the anti-program (in nomadic institutions) undefined here.

⁴⁹ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*, 78, 85; Frederick Booth-Tucker, *Mukti Fauj, or Forty Years with the Salvation Army in India and Ceylon* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1930).

⁵⁰ An example is Kalichedu settlement, Home (Judicial) GO 1044, 4 May 1918.

⁵¹ Radhakrishna, “Surveillance and Settlements under the Criminal Tribes Act in Madras.”

⁵² Mrs Commissioner Booth-Tucker, *India's Millions: Being a Summary of a Lecture on the Work of the Salvation Army in India* (Edinburgh: Marshall Brothers, 1923).

⁵³ Frederick Booth-Tucker, *Criminocurology or the Indian Crim, and What to do with Him, Being a Review of the Work of the Salvation Army Among the Criminal Tribes of India* (Simla: Liddel's Printing Works, 1916).

⁵⁴ The last point was convincingly made by the district collector of Salem in Madras Presidency, E.W. Legh, in Home (Judicial) GO 1759, 5 August 1918. Framing criminality as a "personal and individual problem," he argued that it could only be dealt with by the inculcation of a personal relationship between settlement administrators and the "criminal settlers." Administrators in other parts of colonial India also raised similar objections to hereditary and collective criminality (Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*). By the 1920s, in parts of British India then, rather than interning whole groups of criminal tribe members, individuals with repeated convictions were entered into settlements (see Report on the Working of the Criminal Tribes Act in Bombay Presidency, Government Central Press, Bombay, 1927, p. 6).

⁵⁵ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*.

⁵⁶ Madras Presidency Home (Judicial) GO 1759, 5 August 1918; Home (Judicial) GO 90, 15 January 1919; and Booth-Tucker, *India's Millions*.

⁵⁷ Radhakrishna, "Surveillance and Settlements under the Criminal Tribes Act in Madras."

⁵⁸ Frederick Booth-Tucker, *Mukti Fauj*, 217.

⁵⁹ Such attempts to erase difference between inhabitants of India and the Salvation Army's European/American officers should not be viewed as the decimation of racial difference or civilizational superiority of the British. Such difference manifested openly in Salvation Army publications of the period such as Booth-Tucker, *Criminocurology*, and Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, in which the SA's commissioner in India claimed that the collective nature of

“professional crime” in India made it very different from the largely individual nature of crime in England. Also see Harald Fischer-Tiné, “Reclaiming Savages in ‘Darkest England’ and ‘Darkest India’: The Salvation Army as Transnational Agent of the Civilizing Mission,” in Carey Watt and Michael Mann, eds., *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia* (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 125–164.

⁶⁰ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*, 85.

⁶¹ Booth-Tucker, *India’s Millions*.

⁶² Booth-Tucker, *India’s Millions*; and Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*.

⁶³ For example, Home (Judicial) GO 908, 24 April 1919; Home (Judicial) GO 305, 7 February 1918. Also see Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*.

⁶⁴ Radhakrishna, “Surveillance and Settlements under the Criminal Tribes Act in Madras.”

⁶⁵ In some settlements, land was cultivated collectively and individual ownership of land parcels was promised “given good conduct.” Anand Pandian, “Devoted to Development: Moral Progress, Ethical Work, and Divine Favor in South India,” *Anthropological Theory* 8 no. 2 (2008): 159–179, 166. At other times, land may be owned individually, but cultivated collectively (Home (Judicial) GO 1232, 30 May 1919).

⁶⁶ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*.

⁶⁷ Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*.

⁶⁸ Home (Judicial) GO 1017, 30 April 1918.

⁶⁹ Success of an agricultural settlement was often measured in terms of reclamation of cultivable land from areas that were hitherto uncultivated (Radhakrishna, *Dishonoured by History: Criminal Tribes and British Colonial Policy* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001) in Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*, 87).

⁷⁰ Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*.

⁷¹ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*, 92.

⁷² Letter from Brigadier John Tuley, Officer in charge of the Salvation Army Madras, to the Secretary to Government, Home (Misc.) Department, dated 2 November 1916, in Home (Judicial) GO 1759, 5 August 1918. In the same letter, Tuley proposed the Andaman Islands as appropriate destination for such incorrigibles. Also see Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe in Colonial India*, 90.

⁷³ Letter from Rev. H.M. Pezzoni, Roman Catholic Priest, Bezwada, to the Secretary to Government, Home (Misc.) department, Madras Presidency, dated 15 September 1916, in Home (Judicial) GO 1759, 5 August 1918.

⁷⁴ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*, 95.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁷⁶ Tolen, "Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesman."

⁷⁷ Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁷⁹ Tolen, "Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesman," 119.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 116, quoting the Salvation Army Yearbook of 1940, 176.

⁸¹ Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, 234; Tolen, "Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesman," 118.

⁸² Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, 235.

⁸³ Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, 231, 235, 237–238.

⁸⁴ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*, 105–106.

⁸⁵ Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, 238.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁸⁷ Tolen, "Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesman," 120.

⁸⁸ Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, 233.

⁸⁹ For documentation of “instigation” by the incorrigibles in Bombay, for example, see Report on the Workings of the Criminal Tribes Act in the Bombay Presidency, for the year 1920, Government Central Press, 1921, p. 5.

⁹⁰ Madras Presidency Home (Judicial) GO 1759, 5 August 1918

⁹¹ Madras Presidency Home (Judicial) GO 665, 21 March 1918; Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, 227.

⁹² Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, 227.

⁹³ Letter from Brigadier John Tuley, Officer in charge of the Salvation Army Madras, dated 2 November 1916, in Home (Judicial) GO 1759, 5 August 1918.

⁹⁴ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*, 96.

⁹⁵ Pandian, “Devoted to Development, 167.

⁹⁶ Schwarz, *Constructing the Criminal Tribe*, 104.

⁹⁷ Booth-Tucker, *Mukti-Fauj*, 210.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.