

## Materiality and Mobility: Comparative Notes on Heritagization in the Indian Ocean World

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### Introduction

This chapter investigates the politics of cultural heritage in the Indian Ocean World by scrutinizing the interrelatedness of the materiality and mobility of artefacts in the Maldives on the one hand, and between Germany and India on the other. We compare two different and at first glance seemingly incompatible cases of heritagization processes. The first case concerns an eighteenth-century coral stone mosque in the Maldivian Islands that has repeatedly been dismantled, relocated and reassembled in the recent past. The second case examines a now digitized colonial photographic archive that has moved back and forth between India and Europe over the last one hundred years. While the coral stone mosque is connected to the international heritage framework of UNESCO, the (digital) photo archive is embedded in heritage-making within the contexts of national and transnational ethnographic museums. These two cases represent two extremes of a wider concept of cultural heritage. While the coral stone mosque is an architectural entity – an almost ‘classic’ example of a heritage site – the photographs and later binary code of the image archive constitute what the United Nations terms ‘movable cultural heritage’. Both cases are instances of heritage politics that demonstrate the entwining of the materiality and mobility of artefacts in processes of heritagization.

Our analysis contributes to an increasing number of studies that explore the ‘multi-faceted, middle-ground and complex nature of heritage’ (Macdonald 2009: 141) by re-introducing the agency of objects in discussions of heritage valorization. Heritage discourse and heritage studies in particular have evolved from object-centric perspectives that overemphasized the ‘primacy of the heritage object’ by proclaiming that ‘value exist[s] independently of people’ (Loulanski 2006: 215) to approaches that prioritize the human factor in the production of heritage (ibid.: 216). The more recent approaches perceive heritage value as a *Prädikat* (Hemme, Tauschek and Bendix 2007) – an ascription or attribution – that is the outcome of social processes. Such heritagization processes have become the primary concern of research on cultural heritage,

since heritage is seen as ‘a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995: 369). Consequently, studies of cultural heritage production that focus on human agency are predominantly concerned with identity politics, power relations, commercialization, legal issues, and so forth (see Harvey 2001; Hemme, Tauschek and Bendix 2007; Macdonald 2009; Smith 2004; *International Journal of Heritage Studies*; *International Journal of Cultural Property*).

In line with this shift in heritage studies, UNESCO has opted for wider definitions of cultural heritage in the past few decades. The inclusion of intangible and digital heritage in UNESCO’s heritage concepts reflects the notion that cultural heritage does not require a site.<sup>1</sup> This broad conceptualization of cultural heritage might be understood as depreciating the crucial role played by the materiality of artefacts in processes of heritagization. This is clearly not the case. Instead, the materiality of artefacts needs to be regarded as one factor contributing to the making of heritage.

By focusing on the materiality of cultural heritage objects – but not in the object-centred tradition just mentioned – we argue that a processual understanding of heritage valorization depends on how the materiality of objects affords or hinders claims to heritage. The very substance artefacts are made of impacts on how they might or might not be constructed as heritage. This becomes particularly relevant when heritage objects are subject to material modifications or transformations, as in cases of the digitization and relocation of artefacts. Both cases discussed here represent instances of artefacts being modified or transformed. The alterations of the artefacts’ material, in turn, either enabled or obstructed their valorization as cultural heritage. In the case of the coral stone mosque, the dismantling and relocation of its structures first turned it into an artefact of heritage value but later prevented it from gaining official heritage status. In the case of the photographic archive, the digitization of images increased the archive’s mobility and thereby enabled heritage valorization in various contexts such as European museums and local community settings in India.

Drawing on research by Boris Wille in the case of the mosque and by Katja Müller in the case of the photo archive, both studies demonstrate that the transformation of the artefacts’ material impacts on their ability to move. The movement of objects and consequently their re-contextualization

1 For UNESCO’s definition of intangible heritage, see <<https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>> (last accessed 22 January 2018); for its definition of digital heritage, see <<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/preservation-of-documentary-heritage/digital-heritage/concept-of-digital-heritage/>> (last accessed 22 January 2018).

also influences whether they are designated as heritage. The mobility and materiality of artefacts intersect at crucial junctures, triggering acknowledgements and contestations over their heritage value. These junctures are particular points in time when artefacts are materially transformed and moved, as when the Maldivian mosque is dismantled and transported or the photographic archive is digitized and electronically transmitted elsewhere. Moments like these are particularly likely to raise concerns over heritage.

The mobility of artefacts features in heritagization processes in two ways. On the one hand, the movement of objects raises questions about their 'authenticity'. On the other hand, their mobility enables them to be appropriated as heritage. For example, a local community in India appropriated the colonial photographic archive in heritage terms only after the images had travelled to them. In contrast, the Maldivian eighteenth-century coral stone mosque's heritage value was jeopardized because it had left its original location. This ambivalence confirms the processual character of cultural heritage, while at the same time cautioning that objects' materiality and mobility need to be understood as essential factors in processes of the 'authentification' and valorization of heritage.

Current debates that prioritize human agency in the production of heritage appear to underplay the material aspects of heritage. This chapter suggests a new way of incorporating materiality and mobility back into these debates by drawing a relational matrix that takes serious account of materiality and mobility as elements in the making of cultural heritage. The matrix demonstrates that stable and mutable materialities both enable and prevent the mobility of artefacts, which in turn either fosters or hampers heritagization. The comparison of the two contrasting cases of artefacts being moved in the Indian Ocean World reveals various nuances of such processes and permits a more relational assessment of heritagization processes.

### A 'Travelling Mosque' in the Maldives

The first of the two cases we describe here involves the moving of a mosque in the Maldives. This building, which has locally acquired the nickname of the 'travelling mosque', is officially known as the Kalhuvakaru Miskit, literally 'black wood mosque' or 'ebony mosque'. It is a relatively small building, just big enough to accommodate about twenty worshippers. It was erected in the island nation's capital city of Male' in the late eighteenth century, and is made of coral stone and ebony timber. According to Jameel (2012: 69–70), the Kalhuvakaru Mosque is one of twenty-one historic coral stone mosques still preserved



FIGURE 4.1 The Kalhuvakaru Mosque's compound with well at Sultan Park before being dismantled in 2016. *Source:* <[http://photos.wikimapia.org/p/00/05/17/82/78\\_full.jpg](http://photos.wikimapia.org/p/00/05/17/82/78_full.jpg)> (last accessed 10 September 2017, CC-BY-SA)

in the Maldivian archipelago today and the only one with a ceiling made of ebony timber, itself distinctive in the Maldives. Yet the really unique aspect about this mosque – and for our discussion the most relevant one – is that it has been relocated three times in the course of its more recent history (1978–2016). Indeed, it is remarkable that an entire historic ensemble of structures has been repeatedly dismantled, shifted and reassembled.

Before considering the mosque's itinerary, its substance, construction and the controversies surrounding its heritage value more closely, we need to contextualize the Kalhuvakaru Mosque briefly within the Maldivian heritage landscape. The Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve is the Maldives' only UNESCO Natural World Heritage site (since 2011), and thus far it has not registered any UNESCO Cultural World Heritage sites. To change this, from about the mid-2000s the Maldivian government has attempted to have the country's coral stone mosques inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. These efforts culminated in an application being submitted to UNESCO by the Maldivian Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture in 2013 nominating six of the twenty-one historic coral stone mosques (two in Male' and four on the off-islands), which are now included in UNESCO's tentative list. Although the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was not among the nominees, it still featured in the government's application in an

interesting way. To boost its argument in favour of UNESCO listing the six mosques, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture made the following claims:

[S]ome of the coral stone mosques of Maldives have lost their *authenticity* and *integrity*. For instance, *Malé Kalhuvakaru Miskiiy*, is an exemplary mosque with its beautiful carvings and designs however, the authenticity of this mosque has been *compromised because it has been relocated*. Such is the case for many other mosques therefore; the above listed mosques were selected on the basis that they are the most authentic and hold the most integrity of all the coral stone mosques in Maldives. (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture 2013, emphases added)

The Ministry's key proposition here is that relocation as a form of mobility compromises the authenticity and integrity of heritage structures. For the Ministry as the applicant, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque presents the paradigmatic antithesis to the mosques it wishes to include in UNESCO's World Heritage list, although it also acknowledges in the very same application that the Kalhuvakaru Mosque might also be feasible for inclusion since it is an 'exemplary mosque with its beautiful carvings and designs'. Its only problem is its having been relocated. This suggests that the relocation of material is a kind of mobility that undermines the authenticity and integrity of heritage, at least in the view of the Maldivian Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture. By the same token, the Ministry's argument implies that stable and unaltered structures are a prerequisite to an object maintaining its value as cultural heritage. Despite listing such shortcomings in its UNESCO application, the Maldivian government entered the Kalhuvakaru Mosque as a 'heritage site' in an unofficial register. According to Jameel (2012: 67–68), the Heritage Department has denied that it keeps a 'National Heritage Inventory' (ibid.: 68), stating instead that it maintains an 'unofficial heritage list' (ibid.) the purpose of which is not entirely clear. In any case, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque is listed there not least because of its remarkable, widely praised coral stone structure with its decorative Islamic ornamentation, as Maldivian cultural heritage experts Mohamed (2007) and Jameel (2012) have also acknowledged. Local heritage activists share this view, which is why the mosque has repeatedly been a contentious subject. However, their objections rested less on religious issues than on the argument that the mosque should be valued for its historic craftsmanship and architectural features. But what exactly is controversial about this particular mosque in terms of its heritage value? The mosque's history of the past forty years and the political dynamics that accompanied its travels help to address this question.

### *The Kalhuvakaru Mosque's Itinerary*

As noted in an inscription found in the basement of the Kalhuvakaru Mosque, Sultan Shams al-Dīn II, who briefly ruled the Maldives between 1773 and 1774, started building the mosque in 1774. It was completed fifteen years later in 1789 in the reign of Sultan Hasan Nūr al-Dīn, who ruled from 1779 to 1799 (inscription translated by Bell and De Silva 1940: 178; see also Forbes 1983: 61; Reynolds 1984: 62). The mosque was erected in Male's Henveru ward, right at the intersection of the capital's main thoroughfare, Majeedhee Magu, and the smaller Karankaa Magu. Like other early mosques, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was made of coral stone, the most easily available local construction material, which was frequently used to erect monumental buildings in the city. The mosque was embellished with decorative carvings in Islamic style. It served a Sunni neighbourhood community, but never gained privileged status in the religious life of the royal capital.

About two hundred years later, in 1978, the mosque attracted greater attention. The 1970s were a decade of widespread transformations in the Maldives, most notably in the economy, with the active promotion of tourism after 1972. The revenues generated by tourism enabled infrastructural modernization, which also entailed the development of Male' from a semi-rural town into an urbanized centre. In the wake of urban modernization projects came plans to reconfigure the layout of the capital, which required relocating the Kalhuvakaru Mosque. This led to a plan to dismantle the mosque and move it to a new location, a project that was initiated under the Maldives' first president, Ibrahim Naseer, who had occupied this post since independence in 1965. In an unprecedented move, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was also put up for auction. An Australian businessman and manager of Treasure Island Enterprise, Wayne Reid, entered the highest bid and purchased the mosque in 1978 for MVR 9715.26 (at the time about US\$ 700) for his 'Furana Island Resort'. This resort had only been established in 1976 and was located on the island of Furana-fushi, a ten-minute speedboat ride from the capital (today this is the Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa). Subsequently the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was transported to Furanafushi. Unfortunately, existing sources are not clear whether it was at any point integrated into the resort, or what plans Wayne Reid had for the disassembled pieces.<sup>2</sup> Most likely, the mosque was intended to serve touristic purposes, and it is uncertain whether or not it was also meant to cater for the resort's Maldivian Muslim staff. It is clear, however, that it was

2 The ACCU (2009: 14) report states that the Kalhuvakaru mosque was taken to Furanafushi in October 1978 and had already been returned to Male' in February 1979. It seems unlikely that the mosque was actually set up and taken down again within only four months.

separated from its original Male' community (or vice versa), because the local residents (other than staff) were prohibited from landing on resort islands due to the Maldives' policy of strict segregation between islands with a local population and those devoted to tourism.

Naseer's retirement in 1978 and his succession by Maumoon Abdul Gayoom as Maldivian president signalled the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the Kalhuvakaru Mosque. Gayoom, who had been trained as an Islamic scholar at Cairo's Al-Azhar University, showed a high commitment to religious issues. Among his first official acts was to return the mosque back to the islands' capital. The exact circumstances under which the mosque was returned to Male' are also contested. On the one hand, the Gayoom government framed the return of the mosque as a mixture of national heroism and religious duty, arguing that it had to be rescued from the grip of infidels and placed back into the hands of its true community. On the other hand, the archaeologist Abdullah Waheed claims that the resort 'donated the mosque to the government' (2009) presumably to avoid conflict and to establish good relations with the new president, as the leasing contract for the resort island was due to expire within the next few years (see interview with Reid in Liddle 1984). Likewise, a 2009 UNESCO report asserted that the resort 'presented [the mosque] back to the government, realizing its historical importance' (Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) 2009: 14). In any case, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was shipped back across the lagoon again.

Despite its return to Male' in 1979, the mosque could not be re-built at its original location because construction of a new two-story concrete mosque had already been initiated at the site. Instead the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was reconstructed inside the national museum complex at Lily Magu. The chosen spot was within Sultan Park, one of the very few areas of public recreation in the city and the location of the former Sultan's palace, which the Naseer administration had destroyed in the late 1960s, shortly after independence. This meant that, although the mosque had returned to the capital, it had not returned to its original neighbourhood community. Instead, it was now located at a new site and was thus contextualized differently than at its previous two locations. Despite the fact that it was made accessible to worshippers again, the spatial integration of the mosque into the national museum complex elevated its value from being merely an old mosque standing in the way of modernization to a cultural artefact of national significance. It should be noted that at this time the 'heritage idea' was not as widespread and sophisticated as it is today in the Maldives. Rather, the 'return' of the mosque appeared to support the new president's rhetoric of prioritizing religious concerns.

Although the mosque had survived its two relocations surprisingly well, this did not mean that it did not need any refurbishment. A 1986 UNESCO technical advisory report prepared for the Maldivian government recommended that the restoration be professionalized, which required the establishment of a conservation laboratory (Agrawall 1986). The advisors also recommended that conservation measures for individual mosques be undertaken one at a time in 'special projects' (Agrawall 1986: 8). For the Kalhuvakaru Mosque it took twenty years for a special project to be put in place. On 1 April 2009, renovation of the mosque was finally completed, and it was reopened a fortnight later by President Mohamed Nasheed, who had succeeded Gayoom in 2008. At the function marking its reopening, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was celebrated as a 'cultural relic' (Republic of Maldives 2009) displaying 'the skills and workmanship of the Maldivian people, as well as, many [sic] historical information' (ibid.). The president emphasized that 'history and heritage were the most important distinctions of a country' (ibid.), and he praised the Kalhuvakaru Mosque as an example of this.

Although the mosque had just been refurbished and was recognized as a cultural artefact, this still did not mean an end to its travels. The latest chapter of its odyssey began in 2016. As before, the mosque's fate was closely linked to the actions of a new president. By this time, Gayoom's half-brother, Yameen Abdul Gayoom, had become the president. Yameen's presidency has been characterized by massive reconstruction projects in the capital area, including reconfigurations of traffic flows, the relocation of the Tsunami monument, the construction of a new artificial beach, the mega project of the China-Maldives friendship bridge between Male' and the airport island of Hulhule', and most notably for the Kalhuvakaru Mosque redesigning Sultan Park. The current plans are to construct a recreational park for urban dwellers and tourists alike. For this purpose, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque had to yield to the Maldives' first open-air ice-rink. These plans were heavily debated, particularly in the social media, where they were dismissed as a trick to divert public attention from Yameen's harsh treatment of his political opponents. However, some of the activists who raised their voices against the plans to relocate the mosque also put forward an argument relating to heritage. This included Gayoom's daughter and President Yameen's niece, Yumna Maumoon, who, as a sign of protest against the relocation, quit her post as head of the Department of Heritage. In a number of tweets, she argued that 'It is unacceptable that a 200-year-old ancient mosque of Male is being relocated' since the Kalhuvakaru Mosque is 'a symbol of our religion, culture, craftsmanship and unique identity' (Yumna Maumoon, quoted in Fathih 2016).



FIGURE 4.2  
The Kalhuvakaru Mosque's itinerary in the North Kaafu Atoll. *Map data source:* <<http://openstreetmap.org>.  
*Modifications:* Boris Wille>. (CC BY-SA)

Despite the protests, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was dismantled once again, packed up and stored away through a joint operation by the Heritage Department, the Military, and the Housing and Islamic Ministries (Sun.mv 2015). At the time of writing, it seems evident that the mosque will at some point be reconstructed. What is not so clear is where and under what premises this might happen. The initial suggestion was to move it to the recently completed section of the artificial island of Hulhumale as part of a heritage ensemble. This was not only planned to attract tourists, for the government also argued that a mosque should be the first construction on the newly settled island, as this would be auspicious for its residents. This approach was heavily criticized on the grounds that it would diminish and violate the heritage of the mosque. It

also raised concerns about the preservation of the mosque's material fabric. Consequently, an alternative option was considered.

On the island of Thinadhoo, located approximately four hundred kilometres away from the capital in the southern atoll of Gaafu Dhaalu, archaeologists have recently unearthed the foundations of a historic mosque. The alternative idea is now that the Kalhuvakaru Mosque could be placed on top of it. The local administration argued in favour of this idea, as their atoll lacked tourist attractions, and the historic Male' mosque would provide just that. This too was criticized by heritage activists. Yumna Maumoon again voiced her concerns: 'When a historic building is relocated, it results in a loss of history. The Kalhuvakaru Mosque is part of Male's heritage; it is not connected to the history or the memories of the people of Thinadhoo. The first of our concerns is the loss of heritage' (Yumna Maumoon, quoted in Hameed 2016). At the time of writing, a final decision on relocating the mosque is still pending, but it seems certain that it will leave the capital and be re-established in such a way as both to allow religious practices and to turn it into a tourist attraction, though this time not within a closed-off resort.

Due to its repeated relocations, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque has appropriately acquired the nickname 'travelling mosque'. During its travels, the mosque underwent multiple transformations and acted in various roles: it was a site of religious worship, a piece of decoration for tourists and a monument of national heritage. At present, however, it lies packed away as an assembly of historic coral blocks waiting to assume its multiple roles again.

### *Substance, Construction Technique and Mobility*

The fact that the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was able to travel is, in part, due to its design and construction technique. As the Maldivian UNESCO application and also Carswell (1976), Forbes (1983), and Jameel (2012) acknowledge, the Kalhuvakaru Mosque is an exemplary mosque in terms of historic coral stone edifices. In the drafting process for the 2013 UNESCO application, until 2011 the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture considered including the Kalhuvakaru Mosque (cf. Sinha 2011), probably because of its unique features, but then decided to remove it from its list. One of the core arguments in the UNESCO application was that Maldivian coral stone qualifies Maldivian mosques for world heritage status. The Maldivian application sees the coral stone as an instance of travelling pasts that is inscribed into the mosques' structures:

The Coral Stone Mosques of the Maldives represents [sic] a unique example in the Indian Ocean of an outstanding form of *fusion coral stone architecture*. [...] The Coral Stone Mosques of Maldives also exhibit an

interaction of elements of architectural form and design which come from the maritime cultures of the Indian Ocean, providing testimony to a coming together of cultures due to travel in the Indian Ocean in a mode that no longer exists. They are an outstanding example of a *fusion of Indian Ocean seaborne cultures* witnessed never before in one place, giving profound weight to the idea that these cultures commingled to an unprecedented extent. (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture 2013: 6, emphases added)

This ‘fusion’ argument is elaborated in two distinct ways: first, by contending that the particular ‘stone carving techniques’ (ibid.: 1), the blending of architectural features and the mingling of styles of ornamentation and iconography show ‘influences from [the] Indian subcontinent, Swahili Africa, Arabia, and the Malay Archipelago’ (ibid.: 7). Moreover, the ‘resulting style is a distinct fusion’ (ibid.), only apparent in the Maldivian mosques in this way. The movement of cultural elements such as styles, techniques and ideas is the key ingredient in the Ministry’s argument. Hence, traces of travelling culture support the Maldivian government’s heritage claim in favour of the listing of coral stone mosques by UNESCO.

The second argument concerns the uniqueness of the material used to construct the mosques. The application argues that, although coral stone – of the ‘porites’ genus of stony coral to be exact – has also been used as building material elsewhere around the Indian Ocean rim (in Lamu, Kilwa and Zanzibar, for example), the technique used in the Maldives is distinct. This is because, compared to other Indian Ocean sites, Maldivian craftsmen never used mortar to join their coral stone blocks, but instead used a construction technique locally known as *hirigaa* (see Jameel 2012: 28, 52), where coral stones are shaped in such a way that they interlock and thus create a firm construction.<sup>3</sup>

This construction technique is crucial for understanding the mosque’s mobility. It involves a number of steps: after rough coral stone blocks are broken from the reef, they are shaped as long as they are still wet and soft, which may also be why Maldivian experts speak of crafting coral as carpentry rather than masonry. The shaped blocks are then sun-dried to harden them and make them ready for use in construction. By applying the tongue and groove method, a technique where a slot is carved into one piece and a key into another so they fit together, the entire mosque structure can simply be put together without any sort of mortar. This interlocking method also allows for damage-free dismantling, since each and every block can simply be lifted off. Thus, the

<sup>3</sup> *Hirigaa* is the Dhivehi word for stony coral.

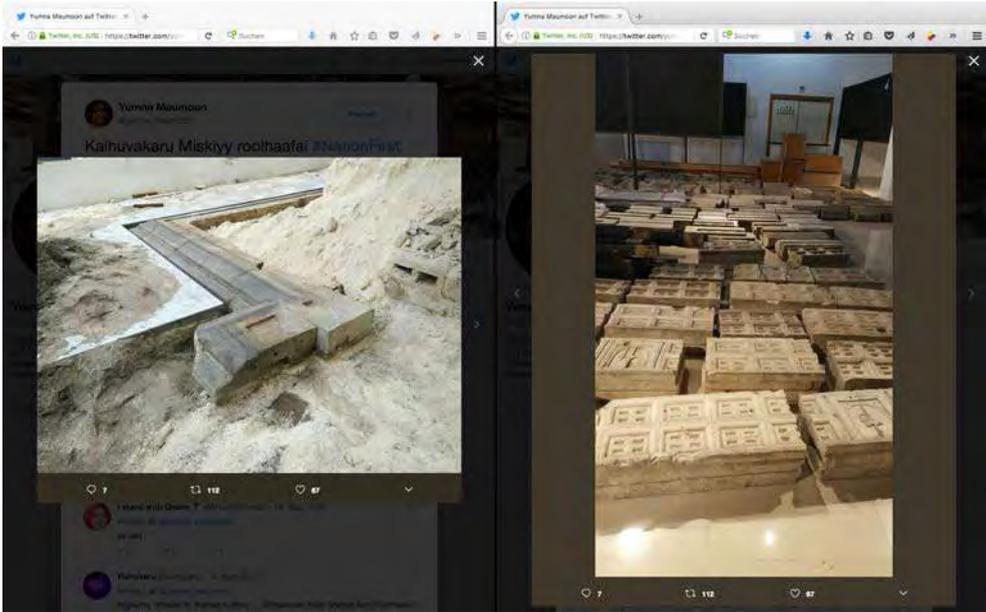


FIGURE 4.3 As part of a Twitter campaign, images of the dismantled Kalhuvakaru Mosque circulated in social media. For a broader audience, these were the first images to show details of the *hirigaa* construction technique, clearly displaying the ornamentation and the tongues and grooves of the individual puzzle pieces. (SCREENSHOT: BORIS WILLE)

*hirigaa* construction technique results in such coral stone structures having an in-built mobility potential, because they can be disassembled and reassembled like blocks of Lego.

In fact, disassembling and reassembling construction techniques can be found quite often in the Maldives. Coral stone buildings, at times even entire settlements, have been dismantled, shifted and reconstructed, often for environmental reasons, such as erosion or depletion of freshwater reservoirs, or due to resettlement policies. The technique applied to construct dwellings, called *thelhigaa* (Jameel 2012: 28), is not as elaborate as the *hirigaa* technique because it makes use of mortar and coral gravel rather than neatly shaped blocks. Nevertheless, it also reflects the in-built mobility potential of coral stone structures. One has to bear in mind that solid construction materials like coral stone are a scarce and valuable resource in the Maldives and that, before the introduction of cement in the twentieth century, it was the only durable construction material other than wood available in the archipelago, at least for the ordinary population. Not surprisingly, therefore, whenever people

relocated, they tried to take the materials for their residences with them, for example, in cases of enforced resettlement (see Wille 2017).

### *Matter and Mobility in the Determination of Heritage*

In sum, in the case of the Kalhuvakaru Mosque, the Maldivian government argued that relocation compromises the authenticity and integrity of heritage structures, which is why they have excluded it from the application for UNESCO World Heritage listing. In other words, they have stated that immutable matter is necessary for authentic and integrated heritage, whereas mobile matter undermines this very authenticity and integrity and hence rules out heritage claims. However, a closer examination of the mosque's materiality and construction technique shows that the mutable object also has a potential for heritagization. The conjunction of mobility and materiality does not need to be a hindrance to heritagization per se – quite the contrary. The government had argued that Maldivian coral stone mosques have cultural heritage value on the grounds of the traces of mobility inscribed in their material. Their reasoning was based on the argument that Maldivian construction techniques capture and combine cultural expressions found across the Indian Ocean World.

Furthermore, the Maldivian coral stone mosques of the *hirigaa* construction type in particular have an in-built potential for mobility, since they can be dismantled and reconstructed without causing unavoidable damage. The integrity of entire mosque structures is thus not necessarily at stake with this type of building. Yet, if integrity is understood as also entailing that buildings need to stay put where they were initially constructed, then this suggests that location rather than movement or transformation is a key component of their authenticity. In the case of the Kalhuvakaru Mosque, its multiple re-locations are framed in discourses of authenticity, integrity, movement and heritage. The solid coral stone may support claims to the stability of heritage, yet its (two-fold) in-built mobility puts such an argument (like any argument regarding the immutability of cultural artefacts) on shaky grounds.

### **A Photo Archive Moving between India and Germany**

The second of the two cases demonstrating the links between materiality and mobility in processes of heritagization concerns a photo archive travelling back and forth between India and Germany. The archive in question consists of 12,000 photographic images taken in India in the 1920s in the course of a German anthropological expedition to the subcontinent. The archive, which in reference to the photographer is called the 'Eickstedt archive', is probably

the only photo archive from the period between the two world wars that combines Indian photographic subjects with a German research agenda and perspective. After being shipped from India to Germany, the photos were subsequently included in a German museum archive. Being commissioned by a state museum and entering this museum's collections turned them into a part of a nationally framed cultural heritage. This initial reception as cultural heritage through inclusion as a collection in a state-owned and nationally recognized ethnographic museum was hardly disputed, despite the fact that it 'only' consisted of photographs functioning as 'objects' referring to the past. The photo archive's itinerary allowed its comparatively unproblematic heritagization. The movement of the photographs from India to Germany and within Europe, discussed below in more detail, did not reduce the archive's value. Including the photo archive in the state museum was tantamount to recognizing it as cultural heritage, because it then became subject to preservation, interpretation and promotion, all according to the standards of ICOM (International Council of Museums 2009). In practice this meant that the Eickstedt archive has been stored under climate-controlled conditions, that it became part of an academic research agenda (Müller 2015; Preuß 2009), and that it was used, among other things, in the current permanent exhibition of the Leipzig ethnographic museum (Müller 2017a).

However, the archive's value as cultural heritage was questioned when it became mobile after an alteration in its materiality. In 2011 some hundred photographs from the Eickstedt archive were digitized and sent to Gujarat in western India in this digital format. In early 2012, reprinted versions of the digital surrogates were included in a remarkable exhibition-cum-worship event. This change in their materiality challenged the photos' value as cultural heritage, because museums conventionally do not consider digital surrogates of stored and preserved originals to be cultural heritage. But, as shown below, the altered materiality and the gained mobility of the archive were precisely what allowed an alternative process of heritagization in India and subsequently also added value to the 'originals' of the Eickstedt archive in Germany.

### *The Photo Archive's Itinerary*

In 1926, at a time when Germany had lost the First World War and all its colonies, but when the British Crown still governed and exploited India as a crown colony, the Leipzig ethnographic institute and museum commissioned the German anthropologist Egon von Eickstedt to carry out an anthropometric survey, collecting measurements, photographs and objects in India. In late 1926, Eickstedt boarded a steamship in Rotterdam and travelled across the Indian Ocean. His wife Enjo accompanied him on what was to become a two and

a half year-long anthropological expedition to South Asia. He shipped not only clothing, a bathtub, several fitments and accessories, but also a movie camera, a kit for measuring humans' physical traits, skin- and eye-colour, and two photographic cameras. Thus equipped, he was well prepared for the expedition, during which he aimed to substantiate his anthropological theories (see Preuß 2009) by means of metric and visual data. Hoping to develop an theory of the settlement of the Indian subcontinent and subsequently a 'racial history of mankind', Eickstedt's approach combined assumptions about the 'primitive other' with an emerging racial anthropology. The rationales for the expedition and archive were in this respect in accordance with developments in German anthropology in the 1920s and 1930s (see Müller, in press).

In the twenty-six months the expedition lasted, Eickstedt, often together with his wife, went to Ceylon, the Madras Presidency, the Andaman Islands, Burma, the Malabar Coast, Chhota Nagpur and western India. He covered more than 30,000 kilometres, visited about fifty different Indian communities, measured approximately 3,700 individuals, created a photographic archive of more than 12,000 photographs, and collected 2,000 artefacts. The photographs, some of which had already been developed in India, were subsequently sent to Germany. Eickstedt kept them in his own archive, first in Breslau and later in Mainz, where he held a chair in anthropology. After his death in 1965, the archive remained at the Mainz Institute for Anthropology, stored away in the basement. Only forty years later, when the Mainz Institute was due to be renovated, did the archive come to the attention of the university staff again. Because of a lack of space they offered the archive to the Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen. In the mid-2000s the photo archive was transferred to the Ethnographic Museum in Dresden, which, following a number of recent administrative restructurings, has close ties with the Leipzig Ethnographic Museum. The Dresden museum staff saw through the formal and time-consuming transfer of the archive, accomplished the safe transfer and inclusion of the archive into the museum collection. Eventually, then, the photographs returned to the larger institution that had initially commissioned the expedition at the beginning of the twentieth century. The photographs, which were taken in the context of an expedition across the Indian Ocean and had travelled from India to Germany, as well as within Europe, form part of the body of objects preserved in this museum institution, the Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen.<sup>4</sup>

4 The photographs are available online at the Deutsche Fotothek <<http://www.deutschefotothek.de>>. For a photo of Eickstedt working in South Asia, see for example <<http://www.deutschefotothek.de/documents/obj/71581244>>.

The Dresden and Leipzig museums are mainstream institutions with histories of more than a century. As public institutions with government funding they are well established in the local as well as national heritage landscapes, a position strengthened through the Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen/Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden as the overarching institution. While the function, mission and understanding of the museum have changed over time (Walz 2016; te Heesen 2012; Kraus and Noack 2015; Macdonald 1998), its collections, including the archive, are recognized in a most general sense as cultural heritage. The museum's self-perception and the perceptions of others are characterized locally and nationally by the following museum definition, which has become a contemporary standard:

[A museum is] a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits *the tangible and intangible heritage* of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (ICOM 2009, emphases added)

Consequently, the museum's reception of the Eickstedt archive, with its 12,000 negatives and corresponding number of positives, marks not only the return of the photographs to the museum that had commissioned the expedition associated with them in the 1920s, it also recognizes the archive as a body of cultural heritage worth preserving.

### *The Materiality and Heritage Value of Photographs*

Within museums and similar institutions, however, photographic artefacts possess something of an in-between-status. Museums often treat photographs as primarily two-dimensional representations of some three-dimensional scene or object through their handling and sorting of them. Only at a second glance do they perceive them as artefacts in their own right (Edwards 2002). Outside museums too, photographs are often characterized as being easy to manipulate, since positive prints – the usual medium of viewing them – can be produced in different formats and materials. These comparatively easy reproduction techniques led not least Walter Benjamin to his famous diagnosis of the loss of aura and authenticity of works of art and historical documents through reproductive photography. While Benjamin acknowledged the positive aspects of broader access through technical reproduction, he bemoaned the demise of the permanence and uniqueness of the original: 'The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity' (Benjamin 1968: 220). To reproduce an original is to deprive it of its authenticity: 'Since

historical testimony rests on authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardised by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardised when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object' (ibid.: 221).

However, since the 1950s at the latest, photographs became an established art form and have rightly received increased attention both within and outside academic and museum discourses in recent decades (see, for example, Edwards 1992; 2011; Barthes 1981; Pinney 1997; Wiener 1990). Their materiality can play an essential role, particularly once they have been heritagized. The Eickstedt archive consists of positive prints mounted on index cards and the corresponding negatives. After staff at Mainz University 'discovered' these objects stored in a large drawer, the Dresden and Leipzig museums made it a point to transfer them back to the Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen and to reunite them with the Eickstedt collection of about 2,000 artefacts already stored there, arguing that they are an essential (complementary) part of the collection. As part of the ethnographic museum archive, they are housed in a temperature-controlled room. Museum regulations determine access to and use of the photographs. The museum's curators used them, among other things, to set up a new permanent exhibition in Leipzig (see Müller 2017a). Including the photographs along with other important documents and objects in the museum collection elevated them from merely being two-dimensional representations to objects and documents regarded as cultural heritage. Their inclusion and appropriation in the museum context as a practice of heritagization continued in their subsequent processing, which entailed storage, preservation, research and communication about these material traces of the past.

For the Eickstedt archive, the particular context of its position in an *ethnographic* museum is equally important, because it indicates the necessity of a certain mobility of objects: ethnographic museum objects are largely transnational, since most of them have moved from former colonies to the centres of colonizing powers. Ethnographic museums relied on material objects being withdrawn from one context and transplanted into another. Hence, the mobility of objects is essential for setting up ethnographic museums that exhibit material culture from elsewhere. Likewise, the Eickstedt archive was regarded as a collection of ethnographic documents (which, as shown, oscillate between two-dimensional representations and three-dimensional objects) and was henceforth included in the museum's collections as heritage on the basis of the mobility of the photographs from one context to another. But once they entered the museum and therefore the national heritage, archives and museums ascribe a stable and immutable character to the items in the collection. Museums take particular care of the materiality of the housed objects,



FIGURE 4.4 The photo archive in the Dresden museum of ethnography. Positive prints.  
(PHOTO: DANIEL RYCROFT, REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION)

preserving and securing them in climate-controlled conditions. The stable materiality gives the objects heritage value. The mobility of such artefacts of cultural heritage is usually restricted and only allowed within closed circuits of exhibitions or other museum activities.

About two decades ago, the introduction of digitization into the museum world challenged these notions of the immutable materiality that characterises museum objects. The Eickstedt archive is an example of this transformation. A workshop on the future of anthropological archival knowledge at the Leipzig Museum in 2011 (Rycroft and Müller 2013) presented the prelude to the archive's new materiality, mobility and emergent alternative valorization of heritage. On that occasion, researchers and activists from India, Germany, Britain and France discussed possible developments and appropriations, one of the most important outcomes being the clear formulation, particularly by the two Indian stakeholders, Ganesh Devy and Joy Raj Tudu, to make the photographs available to those Indian communities where the photographs were taken. Consequently, parts of the Eickstedt archive photos were digitized to meet these demands and to follow the contemporary trend to provide access to museum collections through virtual means. The digitization changed the archive's

materiality, as well as increasing the mobility of the photographs. It also offered a different take on conventional understandings of cultural heritage as immutable artefacts.

*Digital Photographs, Their Materiality and Heritage Value*

Digitization is a reproduction technology that involves the transformation of an object's materiality. By being scanned or digitally photographed, objects are translated into binary codes of zeros and ones that can be read, accessed, viewed and manipulated with the help of computers or other electronic devices. In a narrow sense, digital objects, whether digitized or digitally created, can be understood as immaterial, non-physical or intangible, as void of physical substance. In a wider sense, they create rather the illusion of immateriality because they are reliant on IT equipment, such as screens or displays. This means that digital objects necessitate at least an infrastructural materiality, which is usually only noticed in moments of dysfunction (Horst and Miller 2014). Applying Benjamin's reflections on technical reproduction mentioned above to digitization in museum contexts could mean that with digitization the authenticity of the object and its historical testimony will be forfeit. One may add that in museums the heritage value of the object will be equally lost, since such value relies on the stable materiality of artefacts.

When the Eickstedt archive was digitized, it was the immaterial digital surrogates that left the German museums, not the originals. The idea of the preservation of originals and the authenticity of only fixed and immobile objects were upheld when the original negatives and prints of the Eickstedt archive remained within the museums. Only the digital surrogates were allowed to travel back to India in 2011, as this posed no risk to the preservation or authenticity of the eighty-five-year-old 'original' photographs. Their status as cultural heritage remained intact, as only 'immaterial' counterparts – digital photos burned on a CD – left the museum and were allowed to embark on the journey to India, eventually to become part of a postcolonial re-appropriation event.

In late 2011, the digital images reached Ganesh Devy, who consigned them to the Adivasi Museum of Voice's care. This museum, situated in Tejgadh, Gujarat, western India, is part of the Adivasi Academy. It is run and frequented in large parts by members of the local Rathwa community. In early 2012, the curators of the Museum of Voice, Narayan and Nikesh Rathwa, and their colleagues collaborated with the local Rathwa community to conceptualize an exhibition-cum-ancestral-worship event based on the photographs. The CD contained sixty-five digital reproductions of those images that were labelled 'Bhil' in the

Eickstedt archive.<sup>5</sup> The workshop participants included these on the assumption that they have the closest regional connection to Tejgad and the Rathwa. The curators in India used the digital images to conceptualize and display an exhibition at the sacred site of Koraj Hill near Tejgad. The photos were presented as enlarged print-outs, all depicting Adivasis in pre-Independence India. The event, called *Purvajo-ni Aankh* (English: 'Through the Eyes of the Ancestors'), was a multifaceted cross-cultural experience combining ancestral rituals, public spectacle and anthropological museum exhibition. Both visually and performatively, the Rathwa perceived the digitized and now re-materialized photographs as ancestors. Some of the images were consecrated at Koraj Hill and later arranged in homes of members of the community. Others were presented to a wider range of spectators at Koraj Hill only. Overall, during *Purvajo-ni Aankh* the Rathwa celebrated the photographic exhibition as a return of ancestral images. They also understood parts of the images as educational documents and as part of the Museum of Voice's collection that need to be maintained.<sup>6</sup>

The appropriations at Koraj Hill, as well as later, in four nearby homes and the Museum of Voice, indicate that the digital and rematerialized photographs were valorized as cultural heritage. In contrast to the politics of heritagization surrounding the Eickstedt archive in Germany, which are based on the preservation and storage of material photographs, heritagization in India did not stress immutable originality. For the local population, the photographs' materiality was interchangeable and thus entailed no loss of authenticity. Neither their movement from India to Germany and back, nor their altered matter reduced the documents' value as cultural heritage.<sup>7</sup> Rather, the images' mobility allowed a novel or extended valorization process: the digitized and re-materialized photographs acquired authentic heritage value because they were placed at an ancestral site and embellished with adornments. This was possible, despite or precisely because of their unstable materiality and their increased mobility. Contrary to Benjamin's argument, the authenticity and value of the documents of the past were not jeopardized in the least by technical reproduction. Rather, the material transformation turned the images into 'authentic' objects of the past and enabled local appropriations by incorporating

5 The CD was complemented with another one coming from the Archer archive at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, and the online Fürer-Haimendorff archive of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

6 For a video documentary of the event, see <<https://vimeo.com/66922942>> (last accessed 13 September 2017). For more details on local perceptions, see Müller (2017b).

7 One of the British partners offered to narrate the 'social life' and previous involvements of the photographs. The present Rathwa, however, were not interested.



FIGURE 4.5 Visitors at Purvajo-ni Aankh. (PHOTO: BEATRICE VON BISMARCK, REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION)



FIGURE 4.6 Reprints of the archival photos at a house near Tejgadh. (PHOTO: BEATRICE VON BISMARCK, REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION)

them into local knowledge and belief systems by celebrating, performing and appropriating the images.

Moreover, the increased attention that the photographs, in their new materiality attracted in India, added to the notion that the 'originals' are a cultural inheritance of mankind, being shared in a transnational space and valued by different stakeholders. For the German ethnographic museum, the digitization of the Eickstedt photographs was beneficial in the sense that their 'originals' won increased attention and heritage value. The conjunction of the mutable materiality of photographs and their comparatively easy reproduction, which was further enhanced through digitization, fostered the value of the photo-archive stored in Germany.

In sum, materiality and mobility impacted on the Eickstedt archive in three ways. First, as a photographic archive, it was characterized by the objects' in-between status, thereby fitting well into the ethnographic museums' dependency on transnationally moving objects. Secondly, its incorporation into the museum collection valorized the archive as national heritage, along with which came prescriptions about preservation, restricted mobility and the need for conservation. Thirdly, the photos' digitization transformed the archive's material characteristics profoundly, challenging prevailing ideas about the necessity of stable materiality for heritage valuation, as the Indian appropriation aptly illustrates. Performing the historic photographs in their new form in India and the implicit gain in value for the 'originals' in Germany was a consequence of the changed materiality and increased mobility, which was only achieved through digitization.

### Conclusion: Coral Blocks and Binary Code

The Kalhuvakaru Mosque and the Eickstedt archive are both instances of heritage-making that exemplify the entanglement of artefact materiality and mobility in processes of heritagization. Both show that the politics of heritage centre around the materiality of historic artefacts, as well as the movement of material. Despite and because of the apparent dissimilarities between the cases, the comparison has brought to light various nuances of artefact materiality-mobility connections and allows us to draw the following relational matrix (see Figure 4.7). The mobility potentials imbued in the artefacts' materials is at the core of how object agency may be re-integrated into approaches to studying heritage as process.

In both cases, the determination of heritage value involves considerations about the mutability or stability of artefact material, yet in contrasting ways.



FIGURE 4.7  
Relational matrix of heritagization

Whereas the repeated dismantling and reassembling of the Kalhuvakaru Mosque’s structures raised questions about its heritage value, the digitization of the Eickstedt archive’s photographs both challenged and nurtured the production of heritage value. The mosque’s heritage value was in jeopardy once its structural completeness and stability had been compromised and no longer determined the mosque’s ‘authenticity’ as an architectural entity and heritage site. The dismantling and fragmenting of the building conflicted with ideas about the preservation and maintenance of fixed heritage objects. Altering the building’s structures and exposing its material mutability meant compromising its heritage value. In the case of the photographs, such concerns arose only after the museum had established their cultural heritage value by incorporating them into the collection. As the digitization of photographs entails the dematerialization of the ‘original’ matter, the ‘authenticity’ of the heritage artefact was at stake, too. Yet at the same time this was a prerequisite for heritage-making in India. Eventually the material transformations and fragmentations permitted amplified heritage valorization not only in India, but also for the ‘originals’ in German museum storage, because the virtual copy rested on the original’s existence and thereby rendered it even more valuable.

The movement of artefacts influences reassessments of the cultural heritage values in both cases, yet again in varying ways. Whereas the initial construction technique applied to the Kalhuvakaru Mosque provides the entire building with an in-built mobility potential, the increase in the Eickstedt archive’s mobility rested on material transformation through digital photographic technology. Nevertheless, in both cases, the mutability of artefacts enables their ability to move in ways that are not harmful to the material. The relocation of artefacts entailed re-contextualization and consequently enabled novel appropriations. At every other site the Kalhuvakaru Mosque was produced

afresh in religious, touristic and heritage terms. In every other context the photographs were imbued with value, whether as ethnographic specimens worth preserving or as ancestral depictions worth worshipping. Yet the contrast between the two cases is that the photographic archive's mobility alone did not threaten its heritage value, whereas the mosque's mobility prevented official recognition of its heritage value, as it violated conventional UNESCO norms of heritagization.

In conclusion, our comparison strongly suggests that correlating artefact materiality with mobility is decisive for analysing heritagization processes. Whether or not heritagization leads to official recognition of an artefact's heritage status or entails appropriations of objects in heritage or other terms, the entangling of artefact materiality and mobility appears as a crucial frontier in the process. Despite the multiplicity and widening of definitions of 'cultural heritage', the 'fixing' of heritage value still relies on an object. This becomes most apparent in moments of transformation, when conventional notions of heritage are stretched. As both of our cases show, the 'authentication' of heritage objects, whether coral blocks, binary code or anything in between, is closely intertwined with artefact materiality and mobility.

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