



This paper was originally published by Sage as:
Pernau, M. (2017). **Feeling communities: Introduction.** *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 54(1), 1–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464616683477>

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Feeling communities: Introduction

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Scholarly literature for long only mentioned emotions in passing, although they were ubiquitous in the sources. This article argues that including them systematically can enhance our understanding of groups and communities, if emotions are historicised, and if the unproductive ways to read them as the opposite of interest and rationality are overcome. This allows to investigate emotions in a way which sees the relationship between the experience of emotions, their expression and the practices to which they lead not as a temporal sequence leading from an interior arousal of emotions to their exterior manifestation (or not). Instead, it investigates the interaction continuously moving in both directions—from emotions felt to emotions expressed, but also from the expression and performance as well as the interpretation of emotions back to how a certain emotion is actually felt. The first section shows where a systematic emotion history might either provide a new take on questions that have already been asked or raise new questions. The second section offers an overview of the ways in which collective emotions have been conceptualised and elaborates how this can be linked to the creation of emotional communities. The third section addresses the relationship between face-to-face communities and mediated communities.

Keywords: History of emotions, compassion, anger, communities, crowds, public arenas

The sources historians and social scientists use to investigate groups, collectives and communities abound in emotions. This is true whether they refer to face-to-face meetings or the long-term construction of political and religious communities; whether they are part of the creation of a group, exhorting people to act (and feel!) in a certain manner or depict observations: from audiences being swayed by a speech or a performance to larger groups demonstrating or taking to violence; whether they are authored by the colonial power or by Indians, writing, preaching, talking or choosing non-linguistic means of communication; this is certainly not only

Acknowledgements: This special issue is the result of a collaboration between the Center for the History of Emotions, the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, and Emotions and Political Mobilization in South Asia (Emopolis) at the CEIAS, Paris. We are very grateful to all the participants of the 'Feeling Communities' workshop (Berlin, 2014), where first drafts of the articles were discussed.

***The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 54, 1 (2017): 1–20**
SAGE Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC/Melbourne
DOI: 10.1177/0019464616683477

true of India. Indignation, hurt and fury, trust, compassion, love and devotion and honour and shame are but some of the feelings prominently addressed and evoked.

For a long time, however, this found hardly any echo in the scholarly literature. Emotions were, if at all, mentioned fleetingly. They seemed neither to require an explanation nor to provide one for other phenomena. There was a reason for this. Colonial historiography, as well as the more general historiography on riots and popular movements in both Europe and India, had long favoured emotions as an explanation of what was called crowd or mob behaviour, thereby denying the possibility of rationality to any form of political activity which did not correspond to the middle-class image of debate and deliberation in the public sphere.¹ The historiography that was developed in opposition to these models focused on interests as the central explanatory category—interests, of which emotions were, if at all, only an epiphenomenon.² This was an important step forward, and certainly no one is proposing to return to the old ways of investigating Orientals and other subalterns. However, the very denial of emotions' importance remained premised on a rather traditional conception of rationality which necessarily excluded emotions and the body.

This dichotomy has been successfully challenged over the last few years, clearing the way for an analysis of group and community building processes that take emotions seriously without neglecting other factors which have been convincingly documented in the rich literature on audiences, public culture and communities. This special issue on 'Feeling Communities' aims to show how the systematic inclusion of emotions can enhance our understanding of groups and communities. This implies:

1. The historicisation of emotions. Although emotions are related to the body, they are not universal biological phenomena; they are profoundly shaped by culture. Cultural history, rather than psychology and neuroscience, therefore provides the basic tools and explanatory models. Emotions have a history. Even emotions supposedly as basic as love and anger are not only the object of changing social norms but also relate to a variety of distinct experiences at different times and in different societies. They thus feel different and give rise to widely divergent practices. Saying that a crowd was angry or afraid does not tell us much unless we show the meaning with which the actors endowed anger or fear, how they experienced these emotions and how they linked them to certain actions.

¹ The classic case is, of course, Le Bon's *The Crowd*, and the works that followed his interpretation. Cf. the third section.

² This can be seen as an important impetus for the older Cambridge school. While it has been pointed out how problematic the interpretation of the national movement as nothing but conflicts between factions was, the focus on conflicting interests was initially seen as a possibility of ascribing rationality to the actors. See Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* and Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*.

2. The development of a methodology for their investigation. While emotion norms and emotional behaviour can be gleaned from a large variety of texts, from medieval treatises on morality to modern advice books, and from newspaper descriptions to police reports, discerning what actors actually felt and what meaning they ascribed to their feelings is more difficult. Ego documents such as diaries and letters are not only difficult to come by but also provide less of a window into ‘authentic’ emotions than sometimes hoped for. What I wish to suggest here is that to view the relationship between the experience of emotions, their expression and the practices to which they lead not as a temporal sequence leading from an interior arousal of emotions to their exterior manifestation (or not). It is more helpful to look at interaction continuously moving in both directions—from emotions felt to emotions expressed, certainly, but also from the expression and performance as well as the interpretation of emotions back to how a certain emotion is actually felt. This would not only further our understanding of the character of emotions at a specific time and place and of the way emotions work but also allow us to use sources in a new way.

The introduction proceeds in three steps. As an exhaustive review of the entire, exceedingly rich work on communities is beyond the scope of any single article, the first section will engage with those approaches which in some way address emotions—either by denying their importance or by providing openings for future engagements. This section shows where a systematic emotion history might either provide a new take on questions that have already been asked or raise new questions. The second section offers an overview of the ways in which collective emotions have been conceptualised and elaborates how this can be linked to the creation of emotional communities. The third section addresses the relationship between face-to-face communities and mediated communities.

The articles in this special issue in their majority focus on Muslim actors. This choice is fortuitous, owing to the vagaries of academic networks and the availability (or not) of authors working on emotions. It is certainly not intended to imply that Indian Muslims were more emotional than other groups.³ The focus on compassion and the emotions linked to it, which connects all the articles, is however a conscious decision. Political theory has emphasised the character of compassion as a—if not *the*—basic social emotion responsible for the cohesion of societies,⁴ an emphasis which takes up some of the arguments of enlightenment philosophers on the possibility and necessity of replacing the coercive power of the state with a civil society premised on the sympathy citizens feel for one another. While the

³ Though the overrepresentation of Muslims (notably Shias) and of women in the nascent field of South Asian emotion studies is something to monitor, lest it leads to a reproduction of stereotypes regarding who is emotional and who is rational.

⁴ Nussbaum, ‘Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion’; *idem*, *Upheavals of Thought*.

articles agree on the power of compassionate feelings to create communities, they also emphasise that this is not necessarily a benign power. If it binds together one group of people, it excludes others; moreover, it can become the driving force for mobilising people against what is presented as the enemy. Compassion, as the articles show, can motivate actors to engage in admirable philanthropic activities, inspire movements to better the lot of their neighbours or compatriots and impel a commitment to sustained political or social activity. But it is also in the name of and through compassion that hierarchies can be buttressed, or, in the most extreme case, even the call to riot and terrorism sounded. It is therefore important, as the articles demonstrate, to carefully delineate who is included and who is excluded in feelings of compassion and to define compassion's allied emotions.

The individual articles provide case studies focused on different types of communities. Reading Urdu journals from the last third of the nineteenth century, Margrit Pernau focuses on the ways in which a north Indian Muslim community was created through an increasingly emotional call for compassion and love and practices of charity. The strategic deployment of philanthropy is shown in the transformation of the Punjabi traders of Delhi from a loose conglomeration into a tightly knit community from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. Christina Oesterheld considers Urdu novels and poetry in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. She traces the development of compassion from an emotion creating a virtuous self, as in early reformist novels, to mobilising emotion, highlighting literary attempts to reawaken the community through images of a glorious Islamic past and the depiction of heroic deeds. Carla Petievich and Max Stille shift the attention to the evocation of emotions in face-to-face interaction in the *mushā'ira*, the poetical contest, and the *wa'z mahfil*, a gathering at which religious sermons are delivered, foregrounding the importance of orality and performance in the creation of emotions. Emotions are invoked not only through language in the narrower sense but also through the senses, whether through the melodic chanting of sermons or through the dynamics of physical co-presence of the audience in the performance space. Amélie Blom uses her fieldwork among young born-again Muslims in Pakistan as a point of departure for a detailed look at how group-related emotions, such as compassion, love for the Prophet and his community and the urge to protect its honour and well-being, interact with more individualised emotions: the desire to move from restlessness to peace, to find fulfilment in an activity considered meaningful and the affection and recognition of a group. Lastly, Imke Rajamani takes the Telugu film star Chiranjeevi as a case study to show how anger and compassion come together in the ideal of a political leader in the interstice between filmic media and popular politics. Compassion here not only makes the filmic figure of the angry young man acceptable to a wider range of people but also helps mobilise masses to actions controlled by leaders. Together, the articles showcase what emotions can explain; where they supplement existing interpretations; and where in turn they need to be supplemented by other

explanations. They thus bring out the innovative potential of combining the studies of communities with the study of emotions.

Construction of Communities

Since the publication of the work of Benedict Anderson and others, in the 1980s communities have increasingly been viewed as constructed rather than naturally given.⁵ This idea was taken up at different pace for different kinds of communities: it corresponded closely with the deconstruction of homogeneous religious communities and with caste studies;⁶ the nation followed some years later;⁷ an important subsection of studies on class meanwhile still holds on to the idea that economic structures are giving a reality to the group which goes beyond its imagination by the actors.⁸ Anderson does not mention emotions or sentiments in his book and refers to national feelings only once.⁹ Nevertheless, the manner in which he describes the imagining process makes it clear that what is at stake is not only an intellectual operation.

The possibilities inherent in a closer attention to emotions, however, remained underplayed in Indian contexts for a long time. Even widely divergent approaches to the construction of communities and the manifestations of public culture with which they were linked emphasised the importance of interests, and interests alone. Where they differed was in the interpretation of whose interests triggered these processes. The focus could be on the divide and rule policy of the colonial rulers, the manipulation of political symbols by politicians or the pursuit of class- or caste-based interests by local factions—what remained undisputed was that those who mattered followed interests and not emotions. As Paul Brass succinctly puts it,

Ethnicity and nationalism are not ‘givens’ but are social and political constructions. They are creations of *elites*, who draw upon, distort and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent *in order to protect their well-being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage* for their groups as well as for themselves. (my emphasis)¹⁰

⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

⁶ Among many others, Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*; Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes*; Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India*.

⁷ The interest in historiography as a practice of bringing forth the nation was established early. See, for instance, Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India*. The investigation of print culture soon followed suit (see, for instance, Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*). Most of these works, however, still took the nation as their unquestioned frame of reference. The investigation of nationalism as a transnational phenomenon still needs further emphasis—the new subject of cosmopolitanism might be one, but not the only avenue to follow (see Bose and Manjapra, *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones*).

⁸ Bhattacharya, *The Sentinels of Culture*.

⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 146.

¹⁰ Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, p. 8.

While manipulation still needed the credulous masses as a counterfigure, countering their emotions with the rationality of the self-interested leaders, the wish to ascribe a political character to the actions of subalterns increasingly led to the sidelining of their emotions in favour of rational explanations.

Gyanendra Pandey critiques the emphasis on ‘tangible political and economic interests’ already in his *Construction of Communalism*.¹¹ He claims that ‘the approach is unsatisfactory because it sets aside a false, Orientalist “irrationality of the East” and puts in its place an equally false bourgeois rationality—the pursuit of economic self-interest of the individual above all else’. Instead, he urges the investigation of ‘the units of solidarity, the requirement of status, the understanding of honor and shame, in a word the competing and conflicting meanings of “rationality” in an old, highly developed non-capitalist society colonised by an advanced capitalist power’.¹² While we might doubt the claim that the intertwining of emotions and rationality is specific to pre-capitalist societies alone, this suggestion could have opened the way for a sustained focus on the importance of emotions in the construction of communities, but, again, this possibility was not explored systematically.

This debate about the link between the perception of actors as rational and the political character of movements has been taken up again recently. The history of emotions, as notably demonstrated by Lisa Mitchell, allows us to challenge a concept of the political that either excludes those who do not conform to a certain standard of rationality or reinterprets their actions in order to fit them into this mould.¹³ If in a first step this led to a reconsideration of subaltern political activities which are both emotional and rational at the same time (anger and indignation, for instance, need not always be irrational), destabilising this dichotomy could, in a second step, put emotions back into behaviour perceived as rational—there is, after all, no reason to consider the pursuit of economic interests or political influence as something devoid of strong emotions.¹⁴

Ascribing rationality to emotions does not, however, imply that critical historiography has to accept whatever emotions were brought into the political debate. Even if debates increasingly replace the traditional ‘I think’ with an ‘I feel’, this does not mean that emotions cannot be challenged in exactly the same way that thoughts are—strong feelings do not make an individual or a community right or wrong in and of themselves. Nor does it imply that the object to which emotions refer thereby becomes more real: an imagined community can induce intense emotions without therefore ceasing to be imagined.¹⁵ On the other hand, the

¹¹ Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, p. 17.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹³ Mitchell, ‘Staging the Political’. For the history of the connection between the mob and emotions, see Mazzarella, ‘The Myth of the Multitude’.

¹⁴ Calhoun, ‘Putting Emotions in Their Place’.

¹⁵ This, however, seems to be the position of Ray, *The Felt Community*.

emotions of the actors do not become a less powerful factor in the explanation of historical developments if the scholar or observer disagrees with them politically. Rafiuddin Ahmad is certainly within his rights to challenge Muslim separatism because it 'exaggerated the basis of Islamic solidarity and romanticised to a fantastic degree Islam's imperial past in India'.¹⁶ This is not, however, an argument against the inclusion of emotions as an explanatory category in the analysis of what happened. One can argue that Muslims and Hindus were wrong to forget their common traditions and practices, on which Muhammad Mujeeb, Imtiaz Ahmad and others have produced such forceful work, and that they would have felt differently if they had considered every factor.¹⁷ The fact remains that in the 1940s, an emotionalised communalism reshaped—for certain people and for a certain time—people's feelings about their respective communities and led to corresponding actions, which in turn was one of the factors (though certainly not the only one) behind partition.

What, then, are the aspects which a history of emotions can contribute to the study of groups and communities? The first aspect concerns the relation between knowledge and practices. Social constructivism regards knowledge, the contested interpretation of the world by its actors, as a fundamental category in the creation of power: It is knowledge that permits or prevents practices which transform reality. Knowledge about how society is organised, which categories matter for identification and self-identification and how these categories overlap or are mutually exclusive shape social and political practices and bring about the reality in which they believe. This is certainly an important aspect, though the recent return to materiality has shifted the emphasis onto the ways in which knowledge and material reality become indistinguishable. What neither of these theories addresses is how knowledge, whether abstract or practical, is concretely transformed into action. The assumption, however, that people always or even in most cases act on what they intellectually hold to be right or good, without being motivated by emotions, feeling strongly about their actions or having to invest in the control of emotions, is based on an anthropology which emphasises human rationality more than we perhaps might want to. Introducing emotions enables us to link knowledge and practices in two ways: on the one hand, emotions translate knowledge into actions and practices by providing the motivation and the necessary 'drive'. In the context of our questions, this means that communities do not arise simply out of a transformed knowledge of society and a different way of conceiving religion or caste but rather that this knowledge needs to be transformed into practices. Here, emotions are central. On the other hand, and just as importantly, emotional

¹⁶ Ahmad, *The Bengal Muslims*, p. x.

¹⁷ Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*; Ahmad, *Family, Kinship and Marriage*; *idem*, *Caste and Social Stratification*; *idem*, *Ritual and Religion*; *idem*, *Modernization and Social Change*.

practices make knowledge plausible.¹⁸ It is the emotion-laden sermon which evokes tears as much as the (shared) tears which validate the content of the sermon;¹⁹ compassion leads to charity as much as practiced charity gives the actor a felt stake in the social knowledge on which both compassion and charity are premised.²⁰

The second aspect concerns the integration of material reality. Studies on communities and communalism have for long been keenly aware of economic and political structures, which for most interpretations provide the moving forces behind the construction of communities. But unless we believe that these structures define individual actions to such an extent that they leave no room for interpretation, the question of translation between these categories arises once again.²¹ Emotion studies allow us to incorporate the experience of actors and their interpretation of this experience without relinquishing the importance of reality. The reality of structures, however, does not affect actions directly but through experiences which are mediated by the body and the senses, and which provide the basis for their interpretation before they can lead to practices. This implies neither biologisation nor individualisation. The interpretation of experiences is influenced by material structures as well as by being socially framed, but it is not a simple reflection of these structures. Interpretation, in this understanding, is not an exclusively (or even primarily) rational process but one that equally draws on emotions.²² It is only through these interpretations, which are simultaneously both rational and emotional, that structures lead to the creation of communities. Charity, to return to this example, is certainly premised on specific economic and political structures which engender poverty and declare its alleviation to be the responsibility of private individuals and not of the state. In itself, however, this is usually not enough to create charitable practices or induce donations unless it is backed by emotions—whether compassion, vanity or fear of social unrest. Here, emotions are the driving force behind practices, but they also are also based upon and reinforce a specific interpretation of society.

The third aspect draws on the two preceding ones and points to the social and performative nature of emotions. Looking at emotions from the angle of psychology only tends to emphasise their individual character: emotions are seen as something personal to every actor, sometimes even as linked to his or her innermost personality. The emotions at play in a specific situation are thus not so much linked to social factors as they are to a universal inheritance or to personal and private (as opposed

¹⁸ For the concept of emotional practices, see Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice'; for a brilliant demonstration of how bodily and emotional practices focused on the nation learnt in school provide the foundation for the acceptance of a certain nationalist historiography, see Bénéï, *Schooling Passions*.

¹⁹ See below Petievich and Stille, 'Emotions in Performance'.

²⁰ See below Margrit Pernau, 'Love and Compassion for the Community'.

²¹ For more details on the role of translation, see Pernau and Rajamani, 'Emotional Translations'.

²² *Ibid.*

to social) experiences.²³ History of emotions' interest, however, is geared towards the way emotions and the social are linked. It therefore challenges the chronological sequence of feeling—expression—practice, a sequence which moves not only from the inside outwards but also, and even more importantly in this context, from the individual towards social behaviour. It holds that expressions through various media and practices are already social—they are the outcome as well as the cause of the community to which an actor belongs. Expression in turn needs to be viewed in a reciprocal relation to the feelings experienced: expressions represent existing feelings but they also have a performative dimension, bringing forth what they are describing.²⁴ The writing of a ghazal is rarely a direct expression of an individual emotion; instead it follows the conventions which have been established for the genre. Both the conventions and the feelings to which they are linked are socially learnt. At the same time, writing or reciting a ghazal can very well raise or amplify feelings which previously were not present in this form, and which are shared with others. Experiencing the emotions of a ghazal draws on the community of ghazal lovers and creates it at the same time.

The fourth aspect concerns the relation between emotions, power and their contestation. The emphasis on emotions as social phenomena and specially their relation to the creation of groups and communities already shows that what is at stake here is not a history of emotions as an alternative to a history of power displayed in social relations, in the public sphere and by the state. The most common narrative in this regard was that of a history of civilisation and discipline in which the medieval exuberance of feelings underwent a process of interiorisation and control, at the end of which the external control of behaviour was replaced by the individual's management of his own feelings.²⁵ This dichotomy between the pre-modern and the modern has increasingly been challenged; its image of the Middle Ages rests on the same ascription of emotions to the white middle-class male's other, which also was behind the attribution of unrestrained feelings to women, subalterns and Orientals. More important, however, is the attention which this permits us to draw to processes which lead not only to a disciplining of emotions as a hallmark of modernity but also to processes of emotionalisation. What to feel, how intensely and towards whom are as much areas of contestation which require investigation as the contrary movement, how to discipline and control emotions, and just as clearly marked by power and controversies. The feelings which are at the basis of the creation of communities are neither given nor uncontested but arise in the middle of these simultaneous processes of disciplining and emotionalisation.

²³ As an example for this genre of psycho-history in the Indian context, see Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*.

²⁴ For an interpretation of expressions as emotives situated between constative and performative speech acts, see Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*.

²⁵ For the classic version of this narrative, see Elias, *The History of Manners*.

Collective Emotions and Communities

In 2006, the American historian Barbara Rosenwein published *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, a widely acclaimed monograph in which she claims the existence of a plurality of emotional communities within each society, ‘groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value—or devalue—the same or related emotions’.²⁶ The many emotional communities within each society are overarched by the common ‘fundamental assumptions, values, goals, feeling rules and accepted modes of expression’ which are shared by society as a whole.²⁷ Emotional communities, in her reading, are co-extensive with, and based upon, social communities.

Like these social communities, emotional communities are not static but change over time. However, according to Rosenwein’s interpretation, these changes are rather slow processes. This highlights certain kinds of stable communities, but not others, which come together rapidly and dissolve just as rapidly—it is more apt to explain the emotional community of courtly society and distinguish it from the emotions valued in monasteries, than to account for the sudden flaring up of emotions which went hand in hand with the crusades. The reason for this lies in her almost exclusive attention to emotional norms and rules. This is a good starting point for the history of emotions as these can usually be traced in the sources quite easily.²⁸ In the longer run, however, norms are not the only element shared by emotional communities, and perhaps not even the most important element. The importance of shared experiences (which transcend norms), interpretations (which include norms and values, but are not limited to them) and practices (which are shaped by norms, but cannot be reduced to them) has already been alluded to in the previous section.

The importance of Rosenwein’s work lies in the challenge it offers to the earlier assumption that the changes that mattered necessarily involved society as a whole, a premise which formed the basis of studies like Peter Stearns’ much read *American Cool*.²⁹ Grounding emotional communities in social communities nonetheless somewhat underplays the performative power of emotions and their potential ability to contribute to, or even trigger, the creation of communities, in the long run, but also for communities which only exist for a short period of time.

Taking Rosenwein’s work as a starting point and trying to move further, I would propose drawing a sharper distinction precisely between the different ways in which emotions and groups or communities are linked. This needs to be kept separate

²⁶ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁸ See the foundational article by Stearns and Stearns, ‘Emotionology’.

²⁹ Stearns, *American Cool*. Reddy also challenges this homogenisation. See Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*. The dominant style is, however, only undermined in his work by ‘emotional refuges’ into which people can escape. It is only with Rosenwein that plurality becomes a paradigm in itself.

from the classification of communities according to their degree of mediation, which will form the subject of the next section, though there are some overlaps.³⁰

First, the Finnish social philosopher Mikko Salmela distinguishes between two sets of shared feelings, those which proceed in the I-mode and those in the We-mode. In the I-mode, members of a group feel the same way without these emotions either being created through a group process or premised on an emotional relationship to the other members of the group—the collective character of emotions is an aggregate phenomenon.³¹ An example of this is the anger of drivers caught in the same traffic jam, which is based on a shared experience that roughly feels the same for most of them even if they remain in their cars.³² This example also shows that although they are individually experienced, shared feelings in the I-mode are nevertheless socially learnt and proceed according to culturally defined styles—there is probably no biological script at the basis of road rage. Despite the fact that emotions in this category create a group in the sense of bringing together a number of people who can be classified according to a shared quality, the moment this group starts acting as a group their (non)relation changes and leads to the second category.

This second category constitutes an intermediate between the I-mode and the We-mode. Feelings here are still induced by and geared towards common objects. The difference between this and the first category is that the actors are aware of those with whom they share affection (or hatred)—feelings are now not just a shared quality, such as black hair or a large nose, but something that are experienced as common and thus become the basis upon which a community is created: we are the people who feel in this specific way, we are those who love the Beatles or find pork disgusting. The objects towards which emotions are directed can take multifarious forms, ranging from the common love of a territory to devotion to certain persons, above all religious or political leaders but also founding figures of the community or ancestors, dedication to symbols, to a language, even to an appreciation of a certain lifestyle, modes of behaviour or norms³³—here Barbara Rosenwein's work could be integrated. Such shared affection (or disaffection) for an object frequently spills over into feelings for those who feel (or do not feel) the same way, leading to more or less intense emotions within the community and the demarcation of its boundaries. This relation can also be inverted when the feeling for the community takes precedence and creates its own symbolic objects—the difference between the injunction to love the motherland and the one to love those who love the same motherland and, in a second step, to love the flag which

³⁰ Connor, *Collective Emotions*. For a careful elaboration of the point that the emotions which are experienced collectively in the public sphere need not remain collective in private interaction, even during a time of emotional fervor such as the First World War, see Langewiesche, 'Gefühlsraum Nation'.

³¹ Salmela, 'Shared Emotions'. See also Scheve and Salmela, *Collective Emotions*.

³² Scheve and Ismer, 'Towards a Theory of Collective Emotions', p. 6.

³³ See below how this is reflected in and shaped through Urdu novels, Oesterheld, 'Campaigning for a Community'.

symbolises their community.³⁴ Different objects can create different communities, but they can also overlap without always falling within the overarching emotional community of society as a whole.

To take the Pakistan movement in the 1940s as an example: The emotions of early twentieth-century Muslim nationalism were organised around territory (*mulk* or, more often, the affect-loaded *watan*), the community of believers in the Prophet and his message (*millat*, *ummat*) and a number of symbols, among which the Urdu language was one of the more important factors. In the 1940s, for a number of reasons which need not detain us here, *watan*—even the *watan* of a sacred geography—lost importance for a number of Muslims and was replaced by the symbol of an imaginary future homeland, Pakistan. At the same time, the community of Muslims became an object of emotion in its own right largely irrespective of their belief in the Prophet or the Quran, Jinnah being the prime example. An attack on these symbols could still arouse the furore of Muslims³⁵ but the symbols had subtly changed their character: for a number of the participants in this policy of indignation, they now stood in less for transcendental reality and increasingly for the community itself, or least for both at the same time.

Emotions, as has been elaborated above, are neither purely biological nor a straightforward reflection of social and economic realities; rather they must be learnt through education and self-education and evoked in a concrete situation. While acquiring the disposition and the habit of a certain way of feeling for the community are rather lengthy processes, they are usually interspersed by moments of intense emotion experienced in common by the entire community or at least a section of it. This is where the second category of shared feeling, the conscious sharing of similar emotions for certain objects, shades into the third category, which Mikko Salmela terms the We-mode of feeling. These feelings require the presence of others, either face-to-face or mediated within a short time span, which in turn creates the impression of simultaneity—that is, through television, social media or newspapers rather than through journals and novels (more on the distinctions between these communities in the next section). This is the realm of collective feelings properly speaking. These are premised on anterior learning processes. Someone landing in a *mushā'ira* or in a *wa'z mahfil* without any prior knowledge of what to expect, of the genre conventions and the rhetoric and how to emote in synchronicity with the audience would probably not feel much at all, while an unprepared person in the midst of a crowd celebrating a star's compassionate anger might well feel more scared than elated.³⁶ At the same time, the memory of these collective events and the emotions they generated feeds back into the imaginary. It thus allows the generation and reinforcement of the affection or disaffection

³⁴ Virmani, *A National Flag for India*.

³⁵ Stephens, 'The Politics of Muslim Rage'.

³⁶ See below the articles by Petievich and Stille on 'Emotions in Performance' and Rajamani on 'Feeling Anger, Compassion, and Community'.

for objects as shared feelings properly, even in the absence of those who share them.

Communities between Bodily Encounter and Mediation

Collective emotions have been first and foremost investigated in relation to face-to-face communities in which the participants encounter each other bodily. This interest dates back to the early crowd psychologists of the late nineteenth century who pointed out that congregations of people react differently to the way participants would if addressed as individuals. The explanations for this phenomenon ranged from contagion, an account which equated emotions with viruses that could be caught through sharing the same space;³⁷ to the influence of charismatic leaders, held to mesmerise or hypnotise the crowd or to bring it under their control through their extraordinary personality;³⁸ to imitation, the participants in the crowd reacting to each other's emotional expressions, copying them and thus being induced to feel the same emotions.³⁹ What unites these very different interpretations is the importance they place on the collective character of emotions which here not only draw together a crowd and move it but also can only be experienced in the specific situation of a crowd-event because they draw on the bodily co-presence of a large number of people. These people no longer react as an aggregation of individuals who share emotions. In what seems to be half metaphor, half anthropomorphism, the crowd itself is transformed into a body with a will and emotions of its own, absorbing the individuality of its participants and becoming the moving force behind their bodies, wills and emotions. The problem with this form of crowd psychology is not only its depoliticisation of non-deliberative forms of public activity, which has already been alluded to in the introduction. Making the meeting of bodies central to explanations of collective emotions also limits the analysis to the short-term event of the crowd—it explains neither how the bodies congregate nor how they learn to react in a certain way, nor how emotions continue to exert their influence after the crowd has dispersed.

The research on crowd behaviour, notably crowd violence, has a long history for South Asia and has produced many outstanding works.⁴⁰ This topic, however, has rarely been brought into relation with other situations that also involve

³⁷ Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 17.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68; see also Max Weber's elaboration on charismatic rule, which is usually not discussed under crowd psychology but can be read in the same intellectual tradition: Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 241–55, 1111–58.

³⁹ Tarde et al., *The Laws of Imitation*. For a good summary of early crowd psychology, see Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology and Politics*, which, however, focuses exclusively on the European tradition and leaves out the American contribution.

⁴⁰ Among many others, it is worth recalling Das, *Mirrors of Violence* and Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds*. For the more recent literature, see Verkaaik, *Migrants and Militants* and Blom and Jaoul, *Outraged Communities*.

face-to-face encounters premised on the production of intense emotions: religious or cultural performances which actively involve the audience.⁴¹ In the context of South Asia, these events have been mainly (but by no means exclusively) studied with reference to the commemoration of Karbala, which is known for its evocation of intense emotions.⁴² More than investigations of crowd behaviour, these studies show how emotions which arise in face-to-face interactions and certainly draw on the co-presence of others who feel the same way must also be learnt: the tears that flow copiously at a *majlis* are not just an involuntary reaction to either the poems recited or the fact that others in close proximity are weeping (though these certainly are important elements). Experiencing these emotions and being able to express them in the right way is rather something that requires practice and emotional labour.⁴³ Advice on how to bring about the correct emotions—identifying with one of the protagonists, linking the events in Karbala to the memory of painful situations in one's own life—not only helps in their performance but also shows the efforts which have to be invested; it also shows that these efforts can fail.⁴⁴

The investigation of the role of bodies in the production of emotions in face-to-face interactions is one of the fields in emotion history which has moved fastest in recent years because of the manner in which it can be connected to a number of topics presently evoking much interest. The current re-reading of the classic texts of the phenomenological tradition has revived the notion of atmosphere;⁴⁵ the rediscovery of Gabriel Tarde has led to a renewed focus on processes of imitation and mimesis;⁴⁶ while the attempt to move beyond an emphasis on cultural representations through affect studies has returned concepts of contagion, entrainment and transmission to the foreground.⁴⁷ Most of these approaches converge in a new interest in space. The German historian Benno Gammerl has suggested the category of emotional spaces, each of which would be linked to specific emotional styles, as an alternative to emotional communities.⁴⁸ This not only enables us to overcome the (relative) stasis of communities by drawing attention to the movement of actors between different emotional spaces to which they adapt their styles of feeling. It also places greater emphasis on those factors which influence emotions and come from outside and permeate the actor—be it the atmosphere of a gathering, the properties of a material space or the emotions of those co-present in the same room.

⁴¹ See Petievich and Stille below.

⁴² Bard, *Desolate Victory*; *idem*, 'No Power of Speech Remains'; Hyder, *Reliving Karbala*; Pinault, *Horse of Karbala*.

⁴³ For the concept of emotional labour, see Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

⁴⁴ Bard, 'Turning Karbala Inside Out'.

⁴⁵ For a discussion in English of the work of Böhme, who brought the concept into contemporary debate, see Anderson, *Encountering Affect*, pp.137–63.

⁴⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*; Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*.

⁴⁷ For a good short introduction to affect studies, see Thrift, 'Intensities of Feeling', Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*.

⁴⁸ Gammerl, *Rethinking History*.

These considerations certainly allow us to expand our scope of enquiry and both draw in new material and read it in innovative ways. What they do not (yet) offer is the link to the outside of the specific space. Emotional spaces are not simply 'there'—neither as spaces, which most often are created by humans according to specific conventions rooted in culture, nor as carriers of emotions. Whether religious buildings, malls or dance floors, spaces regularly bear the traces of intense reflection on the emotions their creators desire to evoke, using building styles which bring bodies into close proximity or separate them, the effect of light and sound or specific colours. Moreover, as the Muharram example has shown, even attuning to an atmosphere is not an automatic process but builds on processes taking place over time, inside and outside the particular emotional space.

Face-to-face communities should therefore be viewed in relationship to imagined and mediated communities. Again the Karbala commemorations (together with many other religious functions) can be taken as a case in point. The interaction during the *majlis* is important. But even the texts recited on this occasion transcend the physical emotional space, bringing the audience into an affective communion with people at an event which took place 1,300 years ago as well as all the others who also wept and weep for those slain on the field of Karbala. Careful attention therefore needs to be devoted both to the media utilised during face-to-face interactions and to those shaping the emotional habitus of the actors in a long-term perspective.

The relation between media, genre and emotions is slowly starting to emerge as a field of study. In a pioneering work, Lynn Hunt has investigated the relation between the rise of the novel as a genre in pre-revolutionary France and the possibility of imagining human rights, arguing that it was novels which allowed actors to empathise with the sufferings of people outside the circle of persons with whom the reader usually identified in his or her daily interactions, thus endowing them with the subjecthood central for the ascription of rights.⁴⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty makes a similar argument for Bengal, showing how the depiction of female sorrows transformed the emotions with which they were viewed and through this the self they could develop.⁵⁰ More than other genres, the novel seems particularly suited to the task of developing the capacity for compassion in the reader, its narrative structure providing the time required for a mimetic exploration of feelings and an emotional reaction towards the protagonists.⁵¹

This approach still requires further interdisciplinary endeavours, however, as the use of fictional texts by historians all too often fails to take sufficient account of the tools which have been developed by literary studies for an in-depth reading of texts that moves beyond summaries. This holds true not only of novels but of different kinds of fictional and non-fictional texts as well as the emotionally rich

⁴⁹ Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*.

⁵⁰ Chakrabarty, 'Witness to Suffering'. For the Urdu novel, see Oesterheld, 'Campaigning for a Community' in this volume.

⁵¹ Frevert et al., *Learning How to Feel*.

archives of cassette culture and films. These constitute important sources for a historical investigation of emotions but only if they are read, viewed or listened to with due regard to their medial specificity.⁵² How do they intertwine with other genres exhorting readers or listeners to feel in a specific way, be it recorded sermons, treatises on morality or newspaper articles, elaborating or subverting their message? What are the techniques used by the authors in different genres and at different times to show the emotions of their protagonists? And how do these evoke emotions in readers and listeners? None of the explanations offered for the creation of emotional communities in face-to-face situations seems to work in this context: Literature may certainly create an atmosphere but it is not an atmosphere which can be walked into. On the contrary, it is an atmosphere whose creation the reader must be actively involved in. Imitation and mimesis take place but, again, it is an imitation which is premised less on biology and the activity of mirror neurons or some other bodily mechanisms which make yawning, smiling or fear contagious than it is on the imagination of the reader.

The emotions evoked through media are nonetheless hardly less intense, and possibly even more enduring, than those experienced in and through bodily proximity. They are central for the emotional training which precedes the face-to-face encounter and creates the embodied knowledge and expectation which permits actors to recognise and interpret an atmosphere and thus to feel it. After the event, they are as important to the translation of an emotionally charged yet highly unstable face-to-face community into a stable feeling of belonging together centred on both the emotions of the members of the community (and of those who do not belong) and the assumed knowledge of their emotions and character, which media help create.⁵³

Feeling communities thus need to be investigated both in long-term and short-term perspectives that bring together mediated and face-to-face interactions and focus on their intertwining.⁵⁴ If face-to-face encounters depend on mediation, as shown above—before and after they take place, but also with respect to the use of different genres of texts during the event—the individual encounter with media is never wholly individual. The reader, viewer or listener confronts an imagined co-reader, co-viewer or co-listener with whom he establishes an emotional relationship.⁵⁵ Books bridged the interstice between the written and the oral for a long time in South Asia and continue to do so on certain occasions. But even where reading occurred silently and, so to speak, privately, books and other media often formed the subject of conversation, thus constituting the basis of new face-to-face encounters. This becomes even more evident in many of the articles published

⁵² For cassettes, see Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*; Manuel, *Cassette Culture*; Rajamani, 'Pictures, Emotions, Conceptual Change'.

⁵³ See below Oosterheld, 'Campaigning for a Community'.

⁵⁴ For an early and path-breaking development of this approach, see Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*.

⁵⁵ This of course was the central mechanism in Benedict Anderson's imagination of the nation.

in the newspapers and journals since the second third of the nineteenth century, which often grew out of speeches presented by their authors. In turn, face-to-face encounters, demonstrations and protests at more than a strictly local level are impossible without coordination through media. This regards both practical coordination and—perhaps even more importantly—the emotional coordination through which a community is created at a translocal level.

Conclusion

This special issue argues that communities are fundamentally imbued with feelings. Four points have emerged as central in the discussion of the articles. First, actors belonging to a community share feelings with other members of the same community—whether this is played out in the mode of I-feelings, common feelings for objects or symbols of We-feelings. But communities not only create feelings in their members. Emotions have a performative quality; they bring forth or strengthen the community towards which they are directed and therefore need to be investigated by historians and social scientists interested in audiences, publics and communities as well as the different practices to which they give rise.

Second, emotions allow for a new linking of social and individual factors in the mobilisation of communities. Personal experiences and individual emotions matter and cannot be subsumed under social categories.⁵⁶ Experiences and emotions are shaped by social and political structures but they are not determined by them. Simultaneously, their interpretation is deeply permeated by social factors—not least because the concepts, linguistic and non-linguistic, which are at the basis of any interpretation are themselves social rather than individual. This, however, does not prevent actors from using the common language of emotions to make highly individual statements.

Third, in order to translate this into a feasible research strategy, a double dichotomy has to be overcome. Emotions are not the opposite of interests: Interests can arouse strong emotions and emotions often contribute to the pursuit of interests. Nor are emotions a counter-concept to rationality and knowledge—as laid out above, emotions constitute a crucial element of actors' interpretation of the world they inhabit and in many cases provide the motivation to translate knowledge into action.

Lastly, investigating communities with a focus on emotions requires systematically tapping into new archives beyond written texts—not for every single project but for many of them. Orality and performance as well as visual sources, pictures, moving images and the large field in which different media come together must be taken into consideration and new strategies devised for interpreting them. Emotion studies can only be conceived of as an interdisciplinary area—this is what makes it so challenging, but also so fascinating.

⁵⁶ See the article by Amélie Blom, 'Emotions and the Micro-foundations of Religious Activism' in this issue, on the way the decisions of young Muslims to join jihadi groups are also motivated by their personal life trajectory.

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