- Richey, L.A. ed. (2015) *Celebrity Humanitarianism and North-South Relations: Politics, Place and Power*. Routledge.
- Wheeler, M. (2011) Celebrity Diplomacy: United Nations' Goodwill Ambassadors and Messengers of Peace. *Celebrity Studies*, 21: 6–18.
- Yrjölä, R. (2014) *The Global Politics of Celebrity Humanitarianism*. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research.

Charity

Charity, from the Latin *caritas*, is the voluntary giving of help to those in need. Seen as the “queen of virtues,” the term carries a broad semantic meaning and is often understood as a practice of love that establishes a link between God and humans, therewith constituting a ground of unity among humankind (Agrimi and Crisciani 1998). Over the course of history, charity has changed from the acts of wealthy individuals and mission societies, to the rise and proliferation of major foundations and social networks that complemented the role of the welfare state in the 20th century. However, small, individual givers still continued their “good work” and served as the backbone of religious charity. After World War II, a large range of development and humanitarian actors began to dominate this evolving landscape, which turned into a competitive marketplace. The act of charity itself is seen as a precursor of institutionalized and bureaucratized forms of humanitarian aid and continues to exist in multiple alternative forms of gift-giving, such as philanthropy, alms, orphanages, lotteries, and other types of charitable fund-raising activities. In this classical sense, charity is usually provided by individuals or collectives to those not related to them and implies basic supplies such as money, clothes, health care, shelter, and food, but also bodily substances such as blood. Furthermore, benevolent activities, such as visits to prisons, giving advice, spending time with homeless people, and educating orphans, can be considered “charity.”

In contrast to secular forms of aid, however, the notion of charity still carries strongly religious connotations and refers to different, often overlapping, religious strands. Jonathan Benthall points out that non-Western forms of charity were disregarded until recently when historians and anthropologists began studying forms of gift-giving in Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism, and “deprovincialized” Western assumptions about the “universalism” of Christian charity (Benthall 2018). Practices comparable with the Christian doctrine of *diakonía*, the assumption that anything done for the hungry, homeless, sick, or

imprisoned carries a devotion to God, can be found in several non-Western religious traditions, although with different connotations. In the Islamic charitable foundation of *zakat*, the rules of alms-giving to the poor is the primary purpose. For instance, in her ethnography on Muslim alms-giving in contemporary Egypt, Amira Mittermaier explores the contractual foundations of charity as a kind of “trading with God,” which paradoxically promises an increase in wealth through donating money (Mittermaier 2013). While several works on Muslim forms of charity have shown how religious giving can be framed as a means for socio-economic redistribution and development, others underline the ethical transformation experienced especially among members of the upper class. In her work on middle-aged volunteers in Anatolia, Hilal Alkan-Zeybek shows that charity challenges the hierarchical order of social strata. When members of the educated upper class encounter “the needy” face to face and therefore cross the racially and class-specific bodily boundaries, they alter their discriminatory dispositions (Alkan-Zeybek 2012).

Slightly different but still comparable dimensions of charity are explored by Katherine A. Bowie in Buddhist Thailand, where both givers and recipients of charity may have an interest in the inequalities that are established or confirmed through this socio-economic practice. Merit-making, the definition of who may provide and who may receive charity, can simultaneously protect the status quo of the elite and provide relief for the beneficiaries, who may even execute social pressure on the upper classes (Bowie 1998). In contemporary New Delhi, Erica Bornstein follows the motives and perceptions of philanthropists who build temples, give *dān* (a form of religious donation in Hinduism), construct orphanages, and orchestrate the reception of Hindu temples. She problematizes a clear-cut distinction between unofficial and ad hoc forms of gift-giving and the works of non-governmental organizations and other institutions, and suggests understanding charity as the relational, affectual, and dynamic aspect of the gift, which complements a rights-based form of social welfare (Bornstein 2012).

In our contemporary mediatized world society, charity media events, also called “charitainment,” turn distant suffering to domestic audiences. These mega-spectacles of staged journeys of elite heroism can function as principal motivators but also increase the commodification and secularization of charity. From this perspective, the role of charity celebrities is conceptualized as a form of cultural capital of the most wealthy, which contributes to a simplified, decontextualized, and often depoliticized representation of social suffering.

Heike Drotbohm

References

- Agrimi, J., Crisciani, C. (1998) Charity and Aid in Medieval Christian Civilization. In: Grmek, M., Fantini, B. eds. *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. Harvard University Press.
- Alkan-Zeybek, H. (2012) Ethics of Care, Politics of Solidarity: Islamic Charitable Organizations in Turkey. In: Dupret, B. et al. eds. *Ethnographies of Islam: Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Benthall, J. (2018) *Charity*. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology.
- Bornstein, E. (2012) *Disquieting Gifts. Humanitarianism in New Delhi*. California University Press.
- Bowie, K. (1998) The Alchemy of Charity: Of Class and Buddhism in Northern Thailand. *American Anthropologist*, 100(2): 469–481.
- Mittermaier, A. (2013) Trading with God. Islam, Calculation, Excess. In: Boddy, J. ed. *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*. Wiley.

Children

Nearly 400 million children worldwide lack access to essential health care services, 264 million do not go to school, and, as of the end of 2017, 31 million have been forcibly displaced through war, violence, natural disasters, and other crises (UNICEF 2018, 2019). The world's leading child-focused aid agencies that deal with these major issues include UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, and Defence for Children International. A large number of big, medium, or small national and local organizations also have the protection of children as their main goal.

Images of suffering children capture the moral imperative of humanitarian action. Moving photos of starving babies, walking skeletons with distended stomachs, have become iconic since the Nigerian–Biafran war, one of the first televised conflicts in contemporary history. As a quintessential embodiment of victimhood, decontextualized images of childhood vulnerability articulate specific aesthetics, emotions, and politics that trigger feelings of compassion, mobilize donors' solidarity, and persuade public opinion of the need for immediate lifesaving actions, including those of a military nature. In popular imagination, saving children's lives encapsulates the essence of humanitarianism (Malkki 2015). Child-focused aid agencies operate in contexts of emergency (e.g. war, natural disaster, extreme poverty) to provide protection and care